

Symposium | Immigrant, Refugee : [Symposium 5] A Cross-cultural Comparison of the Impact of Immigration on Parent-Child Relationships in Japan, Spain, and the U.S.

📅 2025年9月25日(木) 13:05 ~ 14:35 🏢 Session Room 6 (Conference Room B)

[Symposium 5] A Cross-cultural Comparison of the Impact of Immigration on Parent-Child Relationships in Japan, Spain, and the U.S.

Moderator: Nelida Tanaka (Yotsuya Yui Clinic), Cheiron McMahonill (Kannon Healing Counseling)

Discussant: Chizuko Tezuka

[SY-5]

A Cross-cultural Comparison of the Impact of Immigration on Parent-Child Relationships in Japan, Spain, and the U.S.

Nelida Tanaka¹, Cheiron McMahonill², Vera Alvarez³, Chizuko Tezuka (1. Yotsuya Yui Clinic (Japan), 2. Kannon Healing Counseling (United States of America), 3. Hospital Universitario 12 Octubre (Spain))

[SY-5-01]

The impact of immigration on Spanish-speaking Latin American families to Japan- with particular consideration to the experience of familial separation in children and youth

*Nelida Tanaka¹ (1. Yotsuya Yui Clinic (Japan))

[SY-5-02]

Immigration and the Loss of Shared Language and Cultural Identity Between Parents and Children: Clinical Reflections on East African and East Asian Families in the U.S.

*Cheiron Sariko McMahonill¹ (1. Kannon Healing Counseling PLLC (United States of America))

[SY-5-03]

Migratory Traces: A Descriptive Analysis and Clinical Implications of Transculturality in Adolescents Admitted to a Brief Psychiatric Inpatient Unit

*Vera Álvarez González¹ (1. Hospital Universitario 12 de Octubre (Madrid, España). (Spain))

[SY-5-04]

Culturally Sensitive Intervention and Support in Dealing with Negative Impacts of Immigration on Parent-Child Relationships in Japan, Spain and the U.S.

Discussant: Chizuko Tezuka

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 キーワード : Migration、Parent-Children Relationships、Mental Health、Cross-cultural comparison、Japan、Spain、United States of America

Over the past five decades, international migration has significantly increased, as indicated in the World Migration Report 2024 published by the International Organization for Migration. Migration, irrespective of its underlying motivations, entails numerous separations and losses, including disconnection from familial and social networks, linguistic and cultural displacement, loss of territorial ties, social status, and a sense of belonging, as formulated by Achotegui (1999) in "The Seven Mournings of Migration and Interculturality." This loss, also referred to by researchers as "migratory grief" and "ambiguous loss," may contribute to the clinical symptoms of trauma, guilt, anger, sadness, anxiety, and grief presented by our child, adolescent, and parent clients.

Of these factors, as mental health practitioners we are in a position to assist with the loss exemplified by the disconnection from familial networks, in particular when it comes to the parent-child relationship. It can present in many forms in our work, from helping to establish or re-establish clarity of roles, expectations, and trust in parents and children reunited after a period of physical separation, to gaining the understanding and support of immigrant parents in the in-patient treatment of a child in a country where the concept of mental health differs significantly from the parent's country of origin, to supporting older teenage clients in mending the relationship with a parent or grieving the temporary or permanent loss of a relationship due to internal and societal forces.

This symposium uses specific clinical cases to illustrate how immigration impacts the bond between children and parents in host countries and contributes to mental distress and impairment, and how we have supported the repair of or healing from disconnections between parents and children either in family or individual sessions.

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Discussant: Chizuko Tezuka

[SY-5-01] The impact of immigration on Spanish-speaking Latin American families to Japan- with particular consideration to the experience of familial separation in children and youth

*Nelida Tanaka¹ (1. Yotsuya Yui Clinic (Japan))

キーワード : Migration、 Latin American Nikkei children and parents、 Loss and separation、 Family-centered approach

This study investigates the psychological impact of migration on Latin American Nikkei children residing in Japan, with particular emphasis on how familial separations affect mental health and the processes involved in rebuilding parent-child connections. Utilizing a retrospective mixed-method approach, data were collected from 47 cases who received monthly outreach counseling in a region with high concentration of Latin American migrant workers. Counseling sessions were conducted in Spanish and Japanese, and most children were brought by their parents. Findings indicate that the majority of children were second-generation immigrants, primarily from Peru and Bolivia. Problems brought were 12 with school truancy. Less frequently reported issues included symptoms suggesting autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual disability (ID), and academic difficulties. A significant portion of the sample experienced familial disruption: 38% had experienced physical separation from one or both parents, and 51% had parents who were divorced or separated. These disruptions contributed to emotional difficulties, including feelings of abandonment, guilt, and resentment. A vignette highlights how joint-family counseling sessions helped uncover unexpressed emotions and facilitated open communication. These sessions normalized behaviors often misinterpreted as defiance or indifference, and showed that emotional reconciliation required more than physical reunification. Counseling revealed that long periods of separation strained parent-child bonds, and rebuilding trust and emotional closeness demanded an active engagement and emotional processing on both sides. Additionally, the study underscores the need to support immigrant families in navigating unfamiliar educational and healthcare systems. Outreach efforts included connecting families with appropriate institutional resources, aiming to reduce cultural and systemic barriers. The findings call for culturally sensitive, family-centered mental health services tailored to the unique experiences of migrant populations in Japan.

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Discussant: Chizuko Tezuka

[SY-5-02] *Immigration and the Loss of Shared Language and Cultural Identity Between Parents and Children: Clinical Reflections on East African and East Asian Families in the U.S.*

*Cheiron Sariko McMahonill¹ (1. Kannon Healing Counseling PLLC (United States of America))

キーワード : Attachment theory and immigration、 Parent-child estrangement、 Immigrant families in the U.S.

Immigration is a transformative and often traumatic experience that can disrupt parent-child bonds. According to attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby, stable caregiver relationships are essential for a child's emotional development. Research shows that immigrant children frequently experience prolonged separations from their parents, either because parents migrate first to establish stability or due to legal and logistical delays in reunification (Berger Cardoso, 2018). Even after reunification, these early disruptions can lead to altered attachment dynamics, including emotional distance or conflict (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). This presentation builds on existing literature by exploring how, in addition to or even without physical separations, the loss of a shared language or cultural identity can lead to emotional estrangement, unresolved grief, and shame within the family system (McMahonill, 2024). Examples are drawn from cases of young adult clients of East African and East Asian heritage in a U.S. psychotherapy setting. The aim is to enhance cross-cultural sensitivity among mental health professionals working with immigrant families.

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[SY-5-03] Migratory Traces: A Descriptive Analysis and Clinical Implications of Transculturality in Adolescents Admitted to a Brief Psychiatric Inpatient Unit

*Vera Álvarez González¹ (1. Hospital Universitario 12 de Octubre (Madrid, España). (Spain))

キーワード : Transcultural psychiatry、Adolescent mental health、Psychiatric hospitalization、Migration

Short-term hospitalization of adolescents with psychiatric conditions poses a clinical challenge potentially shaped by cultural and migratory factors. To investigate the role of transcultural dimensions in psychiatric admissions, we conducted a retrospective descriptive study of 230 adolescents admitted to the Adolescent Brief Hospitalization Unit at the 12 de Octubre University Hospital in Madrid (Spain). We collected sociodemographic and clinical variables, including first- or second-generation immigrant status, primary diagnosis, the presence of migration-related trauma, and average length of stay. Findings indicate that the immigration experience, often characterized by processes of migratory grief and adaptation to the host country, may influence symptom presentation and clinical progression. Moreover, variability was observed in the challenges and needs of patients depending on their cultural background (for instance, language barriers, unfamiliarity with the healthcare system, or specific parenting practices), which could affect family engagement and treatment adherence. To illustrate these observations, brief clinical vignettes will be presented, highlighting how the migratory process and residency status can heighten adolescents' vulnerability, shape the availability of family support, and guide mental health interventions. These vignettes cover diverse scenarios, ranging from difficulties in expressing emotional distress to the need for integrating cultural perspectives in psychotherapy and therapeutic relationships. In conclusion, this study provides a transcultural perspective on adolescent psychiatric hospitalization, underscoring the value of a comprehensive, culturally competent approach. Tailoring care to the diversity of backgrounds and experiences—while recognizing the central role of family in migratory contexts—can enhance the quality of care and foster both improved treatment adherence and better clinical outcomes for this population.

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[SY-5-04] Culturally Sensitive Intervention and Support in Dealing with Negative Impacts of Immigration on Parent-Child Relationships in Japan, Spain and the U.S.

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I have worked in multicultural counseling for international students and in teaching English-based psychoeducational courses such as Japanese psychology and intercultural communication, where Japanese and international students learn together at a private university in Tokyo.

The studies to be presented are retrospective and descriptive analyses coupled with case examples from Japan, U.S.A and Spain on culturally diverse children and youth and their families in migration process.

Immigration is a complex, often traumatic experience challenging migrants to deal with cross-cultural adaptation, which might produce migratory grief like loss of language and cultural identity, and other negative mental health consequences for both youth and their families, resulting in hospitalization of migrant youth sometimes. Though family support is essential in this adaptation process, it cannot always be available. Moreover, immigration itself may cause familial separation, both physical and emotional, damaging emotional bonds between parents and children, when such bonds are valuable.

Thus, to provide effective interventions, mental health practitioners working with these populations need to adopt transcultural perspectives on their mental health challenges and provide culturally sensitive approaches. Our three presenters with extensive transcultural mental health expertise, which has been strengthened by their own migration/sojourn experiences, will provide inspiring presentations. As a discussant, I will highlight their unique strengths, and common takeaways for you. Furthermore, drawing upon my several years of providing an alternative learning space, both safe and playful, outside of campus for Japanese and international students, I want to discuss what a host community can do to provide a welcoming *ibasho* (a place where one feels safe and accepted as one is) for immigrant families through facilitated intercultural communication.