

## TRANSGENERATIONAL IMPACT OF THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT: CLINICAL ISSUES IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN OF FORMER INTERNEES

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*The transgenerational effects of World War II Japanese-American internment on third-generation Japanese-Americans whose parents were interned are evaluated. Issues related to the impact of the internment are discussed. Strategies for eliciting internment-related themes are examined.*

The psychotherapeutic literature has paid increasing attention to the need for culturally sensitive interventions. Included among the recent publications are those which highlight particular issues to be addressed when working with Asian and Asian-American clients (e.g., Chien & Yamamoto, 1982; Leong, 1986; Root, 1985; Sue & Morishima, 1982). This literature provides important information and guidelines for practicing clinicians. However, there is a significant degree of diversity between various Asian-American groups and it is critical that therapists recognize the unique socio-historical past of each group when treating a given client.

For Japanese-Americans, the World War II removal and imprisonment of 120,000 men, women, and children by the United States government represents the most traumatic and salient episode of the past. Over 60 percent of those incarcerated were United States citizens. Despite this, the Japanese-Americans, both citizen and alien alike, were ordered into concentration camps presumably for fear that they presented a threat to national security. In reality, there was no evidence to support

the need for this massive and racist military action (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 1982). No formal charges were ever brought against them nor did they have an opportunity for a trial of any kind. Often given less than a week's notice of their removal, the Japanese-Americans took only what they could carry and had to sell businesses, property and personal possessions for a fraction of their worth. Most were forced to move twice, first to temporary assembly centers located in animal stalls at horse tracks and fair grounds and later to the internment camps themselves in desolate areas of the interior. The Japanese-Americans lived an average of two to three years in the camps enclosed by barbed wire and armed guards.

The trauma of the internment affected virtually all those who were interned (Mass, 1986; Morishima, 1973). In addition to the severe economic losses, Japanese-Americans suffered psychologically from the indignity of being suspected of disloyalty and the harsh communal conditions imposed upon them. Those who were second-generation Japanese-Americans, the Nisei, felt especially victimized having been rejected by their own country of citizenship.

Numerous studies document the long-term, transgenerational effects of the Holocaust trauma upon the children of Holocaust survivors (e.g., Barocas & Barocas, 1979; Danieli, 1988; Davidson, 1980; Robinson & Winnik, 1981; Rose & Garske, 1987). As Laub and Auerhahn (1984) have noted, such massive trauma may serve as an "unconscious organizing principle for future generations" such that "subsequent generations may construct inner psychic representations which are reflective of this external massive trauma" (p. 153). There are clearly important differences between the Holocaust and the internment. However, similar transgenerational effects also have been documented with respect to the Japanese-American

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experience. Interview and survey studies conducted by the present author (Nagata, 1987, 1988, 1990) for the Sansei Research Project indicate that the victimization experienced by the Nisei during the internment has also shaped the lives of their children. Now primarily in their thirties to early forties, the offspring of the Nisei are referred to as the Sansei or third-generation Japanese-Americans. The majority of Sansei were born after the war and hence did not directly experience the internment trauma. Yet, data from the Sansei Research Project, which included survey information from over 700 Sansei and in-depth interviews with an additional 42 Sansei, indicate that the internment has had important cross-generational effects. Virtually all Sansei reported that their parents maintained a silence about their experiences in the camps, a silence which inhibited communication within some families and created a sense of foreboding and secrecy about the internment in most (Nagata, 1987). Sansei who had a parent interned also felt a significantly greater sense of vulnerability than Sansei who did not have an interned parent. Not only were they more likely to perceive a future internment as possible, but they were also more likely to feel that their rights as U.S. citizens might be violated. In addition, children of former internees showed a higher degree of preference for Japanese-Americans over Caucasian Americans (Nagata, 1990).

These results have important implications for therapists who work with the adult Sansei children of former internees since they suggest that Sansei who enter therapy may present areas of concern which reflect the transgenerational effects of victimization. This paper will describe how issues related to the internment may emerge in therapy as well as provide treatment techniques for eliciting and processing these issues. (More general cultural factors to be considered in working with Japanese-American clients will not be discussed and the reader is encouraged to refer to other sources for this information (e.g., Henkin, 1985; Kitano, 1981).

### **Role of the Internment in Therapy**

From the outset, it is important to recognize that the theme of the internment may not be relevant to all Sansei in therapy and that the presenting problems of Sansei for whom this issue is relevant will not necessarily focus upon the impact of their parents' internment. More immediate concerns such as marital problems, job conflicts, depression,

low self-esteem, or child management difficulties are likely to serve as the initial concerns. However, there are a variety of ways in which the theme of the internment may underlie or be related to the assessment of a given case. The following section describes the emergence of this theme in differing contexts.

*Family Communication.* Inhibited family communication can be an indicator that a Sansei is the child of a former internee. Respondents from the Sansei Research Project reported their parents as being evasive, cryptic, or entirely non-communicative about their internment experiences. With respect to the Holocaust, it has been noted that "the more profound the outer silence, the more pervasive was the inner impact of the events" (Laub & Auerhahn, 1984, p. 154). In many instances, lack of communication about the internment created a sense of foreboding for the Sansei as they grew up. One woman described the topic of internment as being like a "skeleton in the closet" or "a relative in the family who's retarded or alcoholic." "Everyone tiptoes around it . . . like a family scandal." This absence of information increased the Sansei's curiosity about the camps and heightened their sense of parental trauma. According to Laub and Auerhahn (1984), "It is the child who finds himself compelled to experience more fully and to amplify the parents' suppressed themes" (p. 155). Yet, a fear of uncovering the pain and emotions of the past combined with a respect for their parents' privacy prevented the Sansei from pursuing conversations further; as a result many Sansei experience frustration between their desire to know about the internment and their hesitancy to ask about it.

It is useful for therapists to explore the role of this silence in a Sansei client's family as well as the client's interpretation of that silence. For example, the lack of communication surrounding the internment may have created a feeling of emotional distance between the Sansei and their parents, as the following case illustrates. (*Note: This and all following case illustrations have been altered to maintain the anonymity of the persons involved and may represent composites of case, interview, and/or survey information.*)

### *Case Illustration 1*

M, a 30-year-old Sansei, came to therapy seeking assistance regarding a recent separation from his wife. He reported feeling "abandoned" and lacked a sense of direction in his life. In exploring M's feelings of abandonment, M revealed that he had always felt isolated from his own father whom he described

as being emotionally distant and “shut down.” For example, although the father was a writer, he never shared his work with M. In addition, M reported that his family moved frequently throughout his childhood and that these moves were instigated by the father. Assessment revealed that M’s father was interned during the war. Once the therapist investigated the role of the internment in M’s family history, M became visibly relieved. He eventually identified parallels between the feeling of “rootlessness” created by the family’s nomadic lifestyle and his father’s experience of being uprooted and imprisoned during the internment. M also came to recognize that his father’s emotional distance might be tied to the camps. The “shutting down” of emotions and reluctance to share his writing were seen as reflecting the father’s coping mechanism for suppressing the anger and frustration experienced during the war rather than a rejection of his son.

The preceding case illustrates the utility in exploring issues of silence and repression in the family communications of Sansei clients. However, while a sense of silence dominated most Sansei families, the complete absence of communication regarding the internment was rare. Therefore, it is also useful to explore the nature of communications which did take place in the family as well as the client’s response to them. For example, many Sansei reported feeling hurt, confused, and/or frightened by their parents’ sporadic communications about camp. One 35-year-old woman recalled a childhood incident during which she had made her first jello mold and proudly served it to her father. Rather than praise her efforts, her father blurted out “I hate jello. It reminds me of camp!” The daughter not only felt rejected and hurt, but puzzled by her father’s negative reaction to a food she found so appealing. Other Sansei found themselves in similar situations, where a positively valued object or activity was rejected by a parent because of its association with the internment.

Still others have found that while their parents refused to discuss the camps with them, they have discussed their experiences with individuals outside the family. In one Sansei woman’s case, her mother would talk about the internment with Caucasian American friends but not with her. Another Sansei reported that he learned the details of his father’s experiences for the first time at a high school assembly where his father had agreed to speak publicly on the internment. Finally, in families where only one parent was interned, it was often the non-interned parent who discussed the camps. Sansei reactions to such situations to be explored in therapy can include feelings of anger, a sense of rejection and exclusion, confusion, or sorrow over the barrier of silence.

The silence may also be experienced as an emotional burden carried by the Sansei. Some report that they feel the need to express the unspoken emotions of their parents. One woman stated that she “stews” on the anger she feels when she thinks about her parents’ victimization. Another Sansei stated that he carries the anger his father never expressed. The emotional aftermath of the internment may also emerge in clinical work with Sansei clients in indirect ways, as the following case illustrates.

### *Case Illustration 2*

A Sansei couple sought therapy for their adolescent son who was reported as being defiant and resentful toward his parents. Assessment soon revealed the presence of marital difficulties. Parents of both the husband and wife were interned during the war. When issues related to the camps were raised, the wife revealed that her father had been alcoholic and that she attributed his alcoholism to the effects of the internment. As an adult child of an alcoholic, the wife focused her attention on catering to her husband and tried to monitor his behavior as much as possible. The husband, however, expressed strong needs for independence and resented any efforts on the part of his wife or others to control his life.

In this case, neither the wife nor the husband initially identified a link between their parents’ internment and their presenting problems. However, it is possible to interpret the marital difficulties as related to this past. For example, the wife’s constant monitoring of behaviors as the child of an alcoholic now contributes to the marital distress. Because her father’s alcoholism has been attributed to his camp experience, her difficulties may be seen as reflecting the cross-generational impact of the internment. Similarly, the husband’s need for independence may stem from the fact that the internment denied his own father of independence and freedom, making this issue particularly salient in his family.

*Issues of Self-Esteem.* Issues concerning self-esteem may also be related to the internment. Following the camps, many Nisei felt especially pressured to prove their worth after being rejected by their country. Their Sansei children were also expected to be the best and garner the respect of others. Some Sansei may experience a lack of self-esteem because they perceive themselves as having failed to achieve the high standards of personal or career goals set by their parents.

### *Case Illustration 3*

One 35-year-old Sansei entered therapy after experiencing feelings of depression and low self-esteem. His mother, who had been interned, continually pressured him to “be the best”

in his job. However, the client felt alienated from his work and had not advanced in his career as much as his mother wished. He noted that her relentless focus on achievement seemed to stem from a need to "prove" that both she and her family were "super-Americans" worthy of their citizenship.

In other cases, a lack of self-esteem may have been passed from the parents to their Sansei children as the following illustration suggests.

#### Case Illustration 4

A 28-year-old Sansei woman had earned a bachelor's degree and wanted to go on to an advanced degree but did not have the confidence to pursue that goal. Her father was once a talented musician with plans to attend music school. However, the internment curtailed these plans and after the war ended he took the only job available to him, becoming a gardener for the remainder of his life. The woman noted that she detected a sense of shame in her father about his work and linked this to her own lack of confidence.

As this example illustrates, it may be useful in therapy to explore the parallels between both a Sansei's self-esteem and the parent's experiences during the internment.

*Vocational Issues.* Exploration of a Sansei's motivations for career choice may also prove useful. A parent's internment may have had positive as well as negative effects. On the positive side, a Sansei may have chosen a specific career or educational institution in order to finish the unfinished dreams and goals of their parents whose lives were disrupted by the internment. This choice provided some Sansei with a sense that they contributed in their own way to heal the past pain of loss experienced by their parents. Other Sansei may have chosen specific careers to help prevent the recurrence of future injustices such as the internment. For example, several respondents in the Sansei Research Project noted that they became lawyers so there would be more Japanese-Americans in law knowledgeable about constitutional rights and in a position to combat future civil rights violations. Others now work as community activists advocating for underserved and disadvantaged groups and cite their parents' internment as a primary factor in determining their political and social consciousness. On the negative side, Sansei may experience conflict with their parents over their choice of careers. One individual, for example, reported that his parents disapproved of his successful career as a salesman since his business required him to aggressively pursue customers and market his product. The parents worried that his interpersonal style would antagonize others,

particularly Caucasian Americans, and wanted him to adopt a more "subdued" career.

*Issues of Assertiveness.* Sansei clients may also express conflict and frustration with issues of assertiveness which relate to the internment of their parents. The Nisei were largely powerless to combat the internment at the time. As a response to their victimization, most attempted to "blend into" the mainstream as much as possible, maintaining a low profile in what has been observed to be an effort to avoid further anti-Japanese antagonism after the war. This often resulted in what has been observed to be a non-assertive, reserved interpersonal style (Miyamoto, 1986/1987). The consequences of this style can be seen as playing a role in the following case.

#### Case Illustration 5

A 36-year-old Sansei man sought therapy after experiencing a lengthy period of irritability and depression. He attributed his difficulties to the fact that he had been fired from his job two years prior to seeking treatment. The client had developed an innovative product which he then developed into a business. Several Caucasian American businessmen joined him in this venture and the company was very successful. Eventually, however, his Caucasian American associates banded together and fired him, stating that he could not speak English well enough to interact with potential customers. (Note: The client, who was born in the United States, spoke only perfect English). For two years after the firing, the client questioned his own behaviors and actions, searching for reasons why he had been fired. Although both his family and friends assured him that he was not to blame and encouraged him to file a lawsuit, the client did not feel he had grounds to do so. Once in therapy, he revealed that his parents had been interned. Initially he saw no connection between his current situation and the past of his parents. However, after the therapist provided the client with readings on the impact of the Holocaust on children of survivors, he began to make connections between his own life and that of his parents. The client realized that just as his parents had been powerless to prevent being rejected by their own country, he had felt powerless to prevent being fired from his own company. In addition, his parents felt that they were somehow to blame for their victimization during the war. They wondered if the internment could have been prevented if Japanese Americans had been "more American." Similarly, the client questioned the contributions of his own actions to the loss of his job. The recognition of themes allowed the client to view his experience in a larger context and he eventually felt increasingly empowered to challenge his associates. Several months after therapy was initiated, the client filed a successful lawsuit against his former partners.

While most Sansei experienced their parents as communicating a message of passivity and "don't rock the boat" (Nagata, 1987), a few attribute their assertiveness (rather than passivity) to a parents' internment experience. These individuals were encouraged to "stick up for their rights" by parents

who had felt the frustration of being unable to speak out during the war. Therefore, the impact of a parent's internment may be linked to either the presence or absence of behavioral assertiveness.

Therapists should also be wary of the fact that not all Sansei clients may share the view that assertiveness is necessarily a positive characteristic. Such a view is based upon Western societal definitions of valued behaviors. While the Sansei have been most influenced by these Western values, they are also likely to have been exposed to Japanese cultural values which emphasize the internalization of emotions and deference to authority and may have mixed feelings about their assertive or passive stance.

*Issues of Identity.* While Sansei today have more opportunities available to them than their Nisei parents, the camp experience of their parents may continue to affect their sense of ethnic identity. Results from the Sansei Research Project (Nagata, 1990) indicated that Sansei who had an interned parent felt a sense of vulnerability about their status in society and preferred associating with Japanese-Americans over Caucasian Americans. In describing the impact of the internment upon her identity as an American of Japanese descent, one Sansei woman stated, "It reminds me that I can never really assimilate." Another noted that the internment reminded her of "what it means to be a minority in this country." Other Sansei clients may struggle with conflicts related to their parents' views about outmarriage to Caucasian Americans or their own feelings about marrying non-Japanese-Americans. Still others may struggle with feelings of guilt around their relatively privileged lifestyle in comparison with the past suffering of their parents. For example, while being Japanese-American led to the victimization of the Nisei, it has at times led to positive outcomes for the Sansei in various affirmative action programs.

### **Treatment Techniques**

It has already been noted that the issues discussed above will rarely occur as immediate presenting problems for Sansei clients. Even if the topic of internment is raised, many Sansei clients may resist pursuing the topic further. The following section provides some suggestions in working with Sansei for whom issues related to a parent's internment are being evaluated.

*Family Therapy.* The intergenerational nature of issues related to the internment camps has clear implications for family therapy. Miyoshi (1980)

proposed a technique of family therapy for Japanese-Americans based upon the model of Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973). The model suggests that there are important values and motivational determinants which profoundly affect the identities of family members down through the generations. The focus of the family work is to "unburden relationships by encouraging dialogues among family members whereby protected, hidden, and even unconscious conflicts of loyalty obligations, myths, and legends can surface and be examined" (Miyoshi, 1980, p. 41). In her work, Miyoshi held seven to ten multigenerational family sessions to process the camp experience. Such an approach provides an opportunity for rich and valuable interchange between the Sansei and their parents. However, there are important limitations in conducting such family work. Many Sansei no longer live within close proximity of their parents and increasing numbers of Nisei are dying. In addition, the presence of parents may inhibit some Sansei clients from discussing their individual concerns which, while related to their parents' past, are not directly tied to them. For these reasons, individual therapy is often more practical.

*Narrative Therapy.* Recently, Polkinghorne (1988) noted the value in focusing therapy upon personal histories, myths, fairy tales, and novels as a way of explaining one's own and others' actions. He suggests that humans use narrative structure to "organize the events of their lives" and "provide a scheme for self identity" when constructing their life stories. The evaluation of the stories clients share with therapists can, according to Polkinghorne, serve several functions in clinical practice: (1) to "make the latent manifest," (2) to "help construct a unifying narrative," and (3) to "reconstruct a more useful and coherent interpretation of past events and future projects than the client's present narrative" (p. 178). Exploring the internment theme in these ways can be useful in therapy with children of former internees. For example, not all Sansei will readily recognize their parents' internment as relevant to their personal stories. They may openly deny such a relationship exists or simply present a restricted life narrative which omits this aspect of the past. Therapists can assist such clients in making the latent theme of the internment manifest by drawing attention to events and attributes not accounted for by the client's present narrative or by challenging their stories as told. In the previously described case involving the Sansei couple the

therapist could challenge the husband's narrative regarding his marital difficulties (a story in which he may identify himself as victimized by a smothering wife) by encouraging him to reconstruct the story, enlarging the "plot" to include the internment experiences of both his own and his wife's parents.

Drawing a client's attention directly to the significance of a parent's internment in their life may prove to be too threatening. Under these circumstances it may be more useful to present an existing myth or fairy tale (where the narrative is already available) and assist the client in exploring the parallels between that story and their own. For example, the Roman deity Saturn is fabled to have been a beneficent ruler who held the feast of Saturnalia once a year. During this feast, slaves were given great liberties and their masters took the role of servants to show the natural equality of men (Bullfinch, 1965). The themes of power, equality, and freedom, or the lack thereof, can be related to the Japanese-American internment and minority group experience. For the Sansei woman cited earlier who saw the internment as a constant reminder of what it means to be a minority, further discussion of these themes might be elicited through the myth of Saturn.

Another useful method of employing the narrative technique in therapy is to invite clients to engage in "what if" narratives. These are stories which allow the client to construct a scenario of events in a hypothetical context. Interviewees from the Sansei Research Project stated that they had often asked "what if" questions about their own and their families' lives in relation to the internment. One woman was aware that her family lost a valuable farm during the forced evacuation and relocation. Today, she estimated that the farm would be worth over a million dollars and wonders how her life would be different if the internment had not taken place. Other Sansei described "what if" stories which focus on their parents. For example, several wondered if their fathers and mothers would have been more outgoing and assertive without the internment experience. A 30-year-old Sansei woman thought that perhaps her father would have been a more effective parent if not for his years in the camps. From her perspective, the camp's communal living conditions led to the breakdown of her father's nuclear family. Because her father did not spend as much time with his own father, he failed to learn how to effectively relate to and father his own children. Hence, the use of "what if" questions can assist a client not only in evaluating the impact of the

internment on their lives, but also in encouraging them to express their sense of grief over the losses, both real and hypothesized, stemming from that trauma.

*Dreams and Imagery in Therapy.* Andrews, Clark and Zinker (1988) suggest the use of Gestalt dreamwork to discover or dramatize themes which have been handed down through multiple generations. Using this technique, the client is asked to identify and reenact all or parts of a dream as if it were occurring in the present. Dream analysis of this kind can also provide a way for Sansei to address the unfinished business of family members. One Sansei woman, for example, reported having recurring nightmares that she was interned. Analysis of the dream would allow her more fully to explore this theme in her life. Similarly, the use of guided imagery may assist Sansei clients in processing the impact of the internment in their families. Much of the communication within Japanese-American families is nonverbal. Therefore, guided imagery may help Sansei clients focus on their parents' unspoken messages concerning the internment. Therapists may, for example, have clients image their parents in an internment camp as well as in the present and describe these images along with their reactions to them.

*Videotape Stimuli.* Finally, videotapes may provide a novel way of encouraging Sansei clients to examine the theme of the internment. One therapist who found many of her Sansei clients reluctant to discuss this theme in depth is now considering two possible uses of pre-recorded videotapes to stimulate discussion with her clients. The first use employs videotapes of first-generation, or Issei, Japanese-Americans (the grandparents of the Sansei) describing their own life histories including the internment. This technique has been found to be therapeutic for the Issei themselves, allowing them to express thoughts and feelings never before communicated to their children or grandchildren. Sansei who view these tapes of their grandparents, however, may also find them therapeutic in that the tapes provide a personal bridge to both their cultural past and to the internment. One asset of this approach is its potential for opening up an intergenerational dialogue about the camp experience.

A second possibility is to show Sansei clients a videotape of someone describing their internment experiences who is not personally related to them. This would provide a more indirect and less threatening stimulus to elicit their feelings about the internment. Although these video interventions

have not yet been tried they each seem quite promising. (Yabusaki, personal communication, May 26, 1989).

### **The Role of the Therapist**

What is the role of the therapist in implementing the previously described techniques, and can the therapist who is neither Nisei or Sansei effectively address internment-related issues with clients who are children of former internees? These questions are not answerable with broad generalizations since clearly the individual needs and concerns presented by Sansei clients must be taken into account. However, a discussion of the range of issues related to the therapist's role in these cases is instructive.

The presence of a Japanese-American therapist would be beneficial for many Sansei clients. A shared sense of social history and experience is particularly helpful in establishing the sense of trust useful in exploring the ramifications of the internment. In addition, many of the questions which touch upon the more subtle effects of a parent's camp experiences upon a client's life may occur only to a Nisei who was interned or a Sansei who is the child of a former internee. There are, however, problems in presuming that internment issues can only be addressed by Japanese-American therapists. A Sansei client may actually feel more inhibited in exploring feelings around the internment if the therapist is a Nisei. In addition to the potential transference issues in perceiving the therapist as "parent," the client may worry about discussing material which is personally painful for the therapist.

A Sansei therapist would be more similar to the client in terms of age and cultural experience. (However, it should be noted that while the average age of most Sansei is between 30 and 40 years, the full range of ages in this generational cohort is much broader). Yet, age and generational similarity also do not guarantee a more positive therapeutic relationship. A Sansei therapist from Hawaii, for example, may actually encounter considerable resistance from her Sansei clients in discussing the internment. The government did not impose mass internment orders in Hawaii and significantly fewer Japanese-Americans in Hawaii were sent to camps. Thus the client might feel that the therapist from Hawaii could not understand the significance of the internment. In addition, since Asian-Americans have typically represented the majority in Hawaii, a client may question the therapist's ability to understand the minority group experience of mainland Japanese-Americans.

Therefore, there can be both advantages and disadvantages for a Japanese-American psychotherapist.

Non-Japanese-American therapists would clearly not share the sociocultural past of their Sansei clients. However, with knowledge and background on the internment they can begin to explore with their clients the potential impact of a parent's past internment experience. Reading an historical account of the internment would be critical in allowing such psychotherapists to generate hypotheses and questions about these issues. The significance in doing so is highlighted by the following quote from Roger Daniels (1988), a scholar on Japanese-American history:

First and foremost, it must be understood that whatever the significance the relocation, as it is usually called, might have for American history in general, it remains *the* central event of Japanese American history. "Before the war," "after camp"—these and similar phrases punctuate the life history of almost every mainland Japanese American family. (p. 201).

Although American history books are woefully inadequate in their coverage of the topic, individual volumes on the internment are quite thorough (e.g., Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 1982; Daniels, 1971; Weglyn, 1976). Therapists may also learn about the personal reactions of former internees by reading published autobiographies and oral histories (e.g., Tateishi, 1984; Tsukamoto & Pinkerton, 1987; Uchida, 1981). Such works would provide a range of individual reactions and experiences, illustrating the variety of ways in which the internment may have impacted Japanese-American families.

There are, however, important limitations in this approach to understanding the internment. Sue and Zane (1987) note that simply suggesting that therapists know more about the culture of a client is inadequate since "such recommendations often fail to specify treatment procedures to consider within group heterogeneity among ethnic clients" (p. 37). The application of any knowledge gained through reading must take into account the unique family experience of each client prior to, during, and following the internment and with a recognition that the internment theme may not be a central one for all Sansei clients.

### **Summary**

This article describes a variety of ways in which the transgenerational effects of the Japanese-American internment can emerge in the experience of Sansei clients and suggests techniques to examine these effects in therapy. It is hoped that the present

information will encourage clinicians to include an assessment of internment themes with their Sansei clients whenever possible. However, the suggested techniques must be evaluated in light of other therapeutic issues. There are Sansei for whom the internment carries minimal significance and clearly not all concerns presented by Sansei clients will be linked to the internment. In addition, not all effects of a parent's internment are necessarily negative and it is useful to explore the possibility that positive coping strategies have been transmitted from Nisei parents to their Sansei children. Finally, it is important to remember that each Sansei will present a unique response to the internment theme, depending on their own personal history, the age and circumstances under which their parents were interned, and the manner in which their parents have responded to their experience.

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