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## The Role of Japanese Culture in Psychological Health

### *Implications for Counseling and Clinical Psychology*

精神的健康に日本文化の果たす役割: カウンセリング・臨床心理学への影響

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Japan consists of four large islands (Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu) and more than 1,000 lesser, adjacent islands. About 70% to 80% of the country is forested, mountainous, and unsuitable for agricultural, industrial, or residential use, which has resulted in a high population density in the habitable zones located mainly in coastal areas. Japan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and has the world's 10th largest population with about 128 million people in 2008. The capital city of Tokyo and several surrounding prefectures represent the largest metropolitan area in the world with more than 30 million residents. For the most part, Japanese society is linguistically and culturally homogeneous with small populations of foreign workers. Japan's history has been characterized by openness to influences from the outside world followed by long periods of isolation. A major economic power, Japan has the world's second largest economy as assessed by nominal Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2007). It is also the world's fourth largest exporter and sixth largest importer and a world leader in technology and machinery.

This chapter begins with a discussion of important cultural beliefs that inform concepts of self in Japan. It is followed by a discussion of psychological problems in Japan, approaches to counseling in Japan, and a discussion of contemporary issues in clinical and counseling psychology.

#### THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF JAPAN

##### Religions and Beliefs

Estimates indicate that 84% to 96% of Japanese people identify themselves as Shintoist or Buddhist, with a large number of believers endorsing the

syncretism of both religions (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Taoism and Confucianism from China have also influenced Japanese beliefs and customs.

Japan has traditionally been identified as a Buddhist country. Buddhism first arrived in Japan in the sixth century from the southern part of Korea. Buddhism has been influential vis-à-vis the thoughts, senses, and behaviors of the Japanese people. Buddhism looks to convert worldly desires to enlightenment by making one take note of causalities with respect to worldly desires.

Another dominant Japanese religious belief is Shinto, the native religion of Japan, which was once its state religion. It is polytheistic and involves the worship of *kami* (spiritual essence), which is sometimes translated *god*, though perhaps *soul* or *spirit* would be more accurate; an even better translation would actually be *the sacred* (Sugimoto, 2003). Some *kami* are local and can be regarded as the spiritual being/spirit or genius of a particular place, but others represent major natural objects and processes (e.g., Amaterasu, the Sun goddess, or Mount Fuji). Shinto is an animistic belief system. Shinto's *kami* are collectively called *yaoyorozu no kami*, an expression literally meaning *8 million kami* but interpreted as meaning *myriad*. After World War II, Shinto ceased to be Japan's state religion, although it is still considered the native religion of Japan.

Whereas liberalism and individualism became the dominant philosophies that delineate concepts related to the self and society in Western Europe and North America, Confucianism became the dominant moral-political philosophy of Japan (Kim, 1994). Confucianism promotes collective welfare and harmony as its ultimate goal. Individuals are thought to be embedded and situated in particular roles and positions and are encouraged to put other people's and the group's interests before their own. The distinction between liberalism and Confucianism can be seen in the differences between individualism and collectivism.

### Collectivism

Japan is typically described as a collectivistic country. Collectivism is often seen in the undifferentiated

boundaries between self and others, which are porous among in-group members and allow thoughts, ideas, and emotions to flow freely (Kim, 1994). Markus and Kitayama (1991) described this relationship as one in which there is a willingness and ability to think about and feel what others are thinking and feeling, to absorb this information without being told, and to help others satisfy their wishes and realize their goals. Collectivism's qualities have been discussed in relation to the concept of *amae* (dependence) in Japanese culture (Doi, 1973/1981), which is another common concept used to describe the Japanese character.

Apart from the predominance of collectivism at the cultural level, there are other dimensions that differentiate collectivistic cultures from each other. For example, Kashima et al. (1995) showed that the dimension that distinguishes Koreans from Japanese is *relatedness*. Although both Korean and Japanese self-construals may have been relational in the past, World War II may have served as a watershed in affecting subsequent cultural changes in the two countries. After the war, the Japanese abandoned the traditional values inherent in interpersonal obligations, as they were seen as being too closely linked to the ultranationalism of the prewar government (Doi, 1973/1981). Japanese people today, especially those of the younger generation, may have disavowed the relational self. At the same time, those in their 30s and 40s seem to evince this loss of relatedness through retrospective nostalgia, and the recent Korean cultural-boom phenomenon (e.g., Korean TV series and movies) might reflect the longing for these emotional bonds.

Although the influence of traditional Japanese values has declined with modernization, some researchers agree that two important features of the relationship patterns still persist in Japan: devotion and indulgence (Azuma, 1986; Kim, 1994). According to Azuma (1986), when a Japanese child is born, the mother remains close to the child to make the child feel secure, to minimize the boundary between herself and the child, and to meet all the child's needs, even if that means a tremendous sacrifice on her own part. Japanese caregivers often say, "We

can understand you, without you even saying anything,” and they encourage children to understand not their own but rather others’ intentions, emotions, and motivations and to be aware of others’ expectations of them (Lewis, 1995).

This type of socialization creates, as previously mentioned, the bond of *amae*. Children’s strong dependency needs, both emotional and existential, are satisfied by their mothers’ indulgent devotion. As a child grows, he or she senses that it is through the mother that one obtains gratification, security, and love. As the child matures, he or she is motivated to maintain a close relationship with the mother and does so by pleasing the mother and behaving according to her wishes. The fear of potential separation from the mother is sometimes used to discipline the child (Azuma, 1986), and psychological and physical distance is often used by mothers to shape or correct children’s behavior. By comparison, in the United States the punishment for children is to be “grounded,” restricting them from leaving their bedrooms or houses. In Japan, the punishment might involve locking children out of the home (Vogel & Vogel, 1961). This physical distancing symbolizes the psychological separation that is considered traumatic to Japanese children (Kim, 1994).

This close mother-child relationship has been intensified by the cultural idealization of motherhood, which Ohinata (2002) calls “the motherhood myth.” Ohinata (2000) writes that Japanese society glorifies motherhood while simultaneously exploiting it. Ohinata (2002) also points out that the motherhood myth has led people to believe that maternal love is sublime and that only women possess the innate ability to nurture children. In addition, many people in Japan believe that a mother should raise her child by herself for at least the first 3 years of the child’s life. This belief pressures women to put their careers “on hold” when their children are born, and mothers are often blamed when their children later present problematic behavior. This also discourages women from fulfilling their potential in domains other than child-rearing and domestic work. Ohinata suspects that the continuing social pressure for Japanese women to choose either family or

career (but not both) has been one of the factors that has enhanced the current trend of late marriage among women and a low birth rate. According to a survey conducted in 2007 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the proportion of people, both male and female, who disagree that “a wife should stay at home” exceeded 50% for the first time.

## Ego Development

In the field of Japanese clinical psychology, Hayao Kawai theorized a model of Japanese ego development and relationships based on Japanese mythology and Jungian psychology. He proposed that mythology is a deep cultural entity that works to formulate the very foundation of a nation and the existential substructure of a people (Kawai, 1986). He concluded that Japanese society is based on matriarchal consciousness.

Based on his analysis of Western myths, the Jungian analyst Erich Neumann (1954) proposed that the European ego attains its independence by slaying its parents, and the ego regains a relation with the world through the mediation of a woman. By comparison with Western patriarchal consciousness, matriarchal consciousness is explained in terms of “inclusion”: It wraps up and unifies everything, regardless of its goodness or badness, and assumes that everything has absolute equality (Kawai, 1976/1994). In Japan, Kannon, who accepts everything as it is, is the positive Great Mother. Japanese religious belief is matriarchal and views mother-child unification as its foundation. Matriarchal religion accepts and saves everything, and everything is unified: There is no distinction between the subject and the object, human and nature, or good and bad. Ethics based on matriarchal principles value absolute equality among the children on mothers’ laps. Everything is equal in a matriarchal society, and maintaining this equality is of the utmost importance. In contrast, patriarchal principles place emphasis on people’s abilities and potential—that is, on individual differences and individual needs, satisfaction, and growth.

Until Western democracy and egalitarianism were introduced to Japan, inequality was accepted in real life, and Japanese people resigned themselves to their own fate or understood it as an element of their social position. The social order in Japan consists of positions and statuses that are based on age, career years, and so on; these are called *seniority systems* (Nakane, 1967), and they cannot be changed by the individual. When Western principles came to Japan, Japanese culture struggled to integrate Western individualism into its matriarchal thinking, and this shift may have contributed to personal and social problems in Japan.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN JAPAN

In recent years, various psychological problems of Japanese children and adolescents have increased, including nonattendance at school (*futoukou*), social withdrawal (*bikikomori*), bullying (*ijime*), and interpersonal relationship problems. Depression among adults has also increased. A culturally distinctive phobia, *taijin kyofusho*, also exists and resembles in some ways the social phobia detailed in the American Psychiatric Association (APA), *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (*DSM-IV*; 1994). People with these psychological problems, as well as the parents of afflicted children, have increasingly asked psychologists and psychiatrists for help.

### Nonattendance at School

*Nonattendance at school* refers to a pattern of behavior in which a child does not attend school and stays mainly at home, often with his or her parents' knowledge (Lang, 1982). At first, the term *school refusal* was used to describe this problem. The term was gradually replaced with *school phobia*, which implies an explanatory concept for the behavior; it is also distinguished from truancy, whereby the child also stays away from home when absent from school (Kameguchi & Murphy-Shigematsu, 2001). Although the problem of school refusal in Japan dates back to the 1950s, the number of children

who refuse to go to school in the absence of specific physical reasons has increased dramatically. More than 127,000 cases were reported in 1998 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology–Japan, 2007), the year in which the Ministry of Education officially started to use the term *nonattendance at school* (*futoukou*) for this problem. Most children involved are described as “good children” who want to go to school but for some reason cannot, to the great dismay of both their parents and themselves. Many psychologists have blamed schools or the education system for contributing to problems related to conformity, extreme pressure, or exclusively exam-oriented curricula. In response, the education system has changed to become more flexible and contain fewer curricula. The problem of nonattendance, however, has not decreased. Earlier reports on school refusal focused on a student's desire to escape from a bad situation at school, such as bullying; later, that pressure seemed to be replaced by pressures related to more general human relations problems (Ishida & Takei, 1987). This trend toward bullying has resurged in recent years, and there have been severe bullying cases that resulted in suicide or murder. In 2006, 4,688 children cited bullying as their reason for nonattendance (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology–Japan, 2007).

Some psychologists blame family and societal perspectives (Kawai, 1976/1994), such as changes in the structure of the Japanese family. Companies have removed men from the emotional and instrumental activities of their homes and families by demanding men's extreme loyalty and dedication to the workplace (Sugimoto, 2003). Men's preoccupation with work and their concomitant absence from the home has given rise to what have been aptly described as “fatherless families” (Wagatsuma, 1977). The resulting separation and imbalance in the family dynamics has been referred to as a pathology of the maternal society of Japan (Kawai, 1976/1994). As Kameguchi and Murphy-Shigematsu (2001) mentioned, this “mother-centered family” has long been blamed by some psychologists as a major contributor to school nonattendance. According to

Doi (1973/1981, 1988), the contemporary mother-child relationship has changed in such a way that many mothers are not capable of supplying security to their children or adequately addressing the dependency needs of their children. These mothers have ambivalence concerning their roles as mothers. In some cases, anxiety, depression, feelings of inadequacy, and a lack of self-identity significantly impair the child-rearing abilities of mothers whose children will not attend school.

Reports of clinical cases of children with disorders such as separation anxiety (Imai, 1998; Kawanaka, 1998) suggest that such children are trapped between their desire to separate and a need to remain with their mothers. The mothers in such families are overprotective and overinvolved and interfere in their children's lives. These children do not progressively develop the ability to separate psychologically, and when they reach the age at which they should be more autonomous, they are unable to engage in age-appropriate identity tasks. As a result, children simultaneously wish to rebel against their mothers' overinvolvement, while wanting to be indulged by their mothers (*amae*). By refusing to go to school, children use their strongest weapon against all-powerful and controlling mothers whose identities are defined by their children's academic performance. As the children become stronger, their actions may escalate to more overtly aggressive behavior (Kawai, 1986) and can lead to domestic violence from children against their mothers (Kasai, 1998; Kawai, 1986).

### Freeters, NEETs, and Hikikomori

The term *freeter* refers to an adolescent or young adult who only works part-time and switches jobs freely. In contrast, adolescents or young adults who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) are not participating in any of the typical activities of young adulthood. Conflicts about not wanting to grow up and be independent may contribute to the growing number of NEETs and freeters. The increase of NEETs and freeters may also be related to Japanese family dynamics. Fathers in matriarchal societies become "understanding

fathers," which means that they cannot stand up to their children or offer their own judgments, or they leave these matters to others. Some Japanese fathers seem to have only a weak sense of their role as fathers. Adolescents who cannot reject their child-like bonds with their mothers are called "eternal boys," as it seems that they cannot become adults. They cannot adjust to adult society because they live in a fantasy world—they believe that they have unique potentials and it is not easy for them to find a perfect place. They also believe that their maladjustments are caused by the negative aspects of society, that they do not want to be a part of society, and that they are not at fault for their own problems. They do not want to have full-time jobs, nor do they want any kind of full-time commitment (Japanese Institute for Labor Policy and Training, 2008).

In more severe cases, individuals exhibit social withdrawal (*hikikomori*), shut themselves in their rooms, and do not have any contact with people other than family members for several years (Zielenziger, 2006). In 2001, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan defined *hikikomori* as "socially withdrawn at home for more than 6 months without going to work or school, and have no close interpersonal relationship other than with their family members." There are no reliable statistics regarding *hikikomori* cases, but it is estimated that there are between a half million and 1 million afflicted individuals across Japan. *Hikikomori* has also been cited as contributing to several murders, so it has become one of the more urgent problems to solve.

The behavior of some freeters, NEETs, and *hikikomori* may be related to the changing values of society, especially the value of work. Ishii-Kuntz (1989) analyzed data collected from the Public Opinion Survey on Attitudes Toward Society, conducted by the prime minister's office in 1986, which found that younger males had the most individualistic attitudes of all males, while older males had substantially stronger collectivistic attitudes and values. The analysis of data collected annually since 1971 shows a consistent decrease in collectivistic values and an increase in individualistic values. Many Japanese youths question the reward

system of the mainstream, collectivistic culture. As a result, Japanese work managers view many youths with disdain as the youths are often preoccupied with individual rewards without bearing the concomitant obligations of individual sacrifice and the work ethic, which characterized an earlier generation.

In keeping with this new, individualistic trend, many companies have adopted principles based on individual capacities and abolished the lifetime employment system, which was the typical system for many Japanese companies. As a result, many workers have the option of changing jobs, but they also face the risk of being laid off. Work values have changed, and some youth do not look for full-time work; rather, they choose to stay in easy, part-time jobs. People who have competencies are more likely to be promoted to higher positions, and people who stay in a permanent, part-time position won't earn enough money to support themselves. This causes a disparity in economic power, which is a dominant social problem in Japan today.

### Taijin Kyofusho

*Taijin kyofusho* refers to a culturally distinctive phobia in Japan, and in some ways, it resembles social phobia in the *DSM-IV* (APA, 1994). This syndrome refers to an individual's intense fear that his or her body, its parts, or its functions will embarrass the owner and either displease or be offensive to other people in terms of appearance, odor, body language, facial expressions, or movement. This syndrome is included in the official Japanese diagnostic system for mental disorders, and it involves sensing others' thoughts and desires. If a person is afflicted and becomes very sensitive, he or she may not be able to behave or perform at all. Taijin kyofusho can be influenced by the "group-oriented principle." According to Neumann (1954), the ego of Western culture is established after cutting the bonds with the mother and father, but the Japanese ego establishment process follows a path in which an individual emphasizes the balance and stability of the field as a whole. People with taijin kyofusho have difficulty maintaining relationships with others

and experience the conflict of wanting to establish their own individuality in a society based on the group-oriented principle (Kawai, 1988/1992).

In Western countries, people's behaviors are controlled through verbal contact; in Japan, however, people's behaviors are often controlled through non-verbal feelings of shame, and shaming may be used by parents to control children's behavior. The symptoms of taijin kyofusho resemble overresponsive, nonverbal reactions to experiencing shame. Taijin kyofusho has traditionally been a problem experienced by adolescents because it is a problem associated with ego establishment. Since the numbers of freeters and NEETs have increased in Japan, there are now more number of hikikomori than before. Japanese people have typically been afraid of how others see and think about them, and so the expectations of others become their standard for behavior. Inasmuch as one does not have a confident and autonomous self-identity, one will be afraid of such judgments; this is especially true of adolescents and people who have interpersonal difficulties.

### Ijime (School Bullying)

Many features of school bullying are, on the face of it, similar across different countries (Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006). Major types of bullying include physical, verbal, shunning or social exclusion, and "indirect" forms (i.e., not face-to-face), such as sending nasty notes and rumor spreading. *Ijime* is the Japanese term most similar to bullying and has been the subject of a research tradition spanning 20 years (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999). Following a chain of suicides of pupils in the mid-1980s, *ijime* was identified as a prominent social problem (Morita, 1996). In 1996, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture assigned school counselors to 150 schools to help victims of *ijime* (Toda, 2001). The number of incidents of *ijime* decreased through 2006, but there were several *ijime*-related suicides in 2007, and *ijime* is still prevalent in Japanese schools. There is also a new type of *ijime* using the Internet, called *cyberbullying*; to date, there have been no effective means of mitigating this new type of *ijime*.

While similar to bullying, *ijime* is more weighted toward verbal and indirect aggression and is more frequently characterized by within-grade relationships rather than older pupils bullying younger ones (Morita et al., 1999). The most common methods of *ijime* in Japan are social exclusion and rumor spreading, and a national survey of *ijime* in Japan reveals that 22% of elementary school children report having been bullied once per week (Morita et al., 1999). The majority of victims were found to have done nothing about it, and many children were also found to have done nothing when they saw someone else being bullied (Morita, 2001). A national survey on *ijime* found that 43% of victims did not tell teachers, and about half of the victims' parents did not realize that their children had been victimized (Morita et al., 1999). Toda (1997) argued that Japanese pupils who experience *ijime* are reluctant to tell adults as they feel too much shame, or they blame themselves for the problem and feel that they should deal with it on their own. In any case, most victims believe that they must simply put up with it. The importance of face-saving in Japanese society might suggest that seeking help would be more difficult for Japanese pupils than students in Western countries; Kanetsuna and Smith (2002) found that the fear of being attacked or becoming a new target of bullying discouraged most bystanders from intervening during occurrences of bullying. The difference between Japanese and Western cultures vis-à-vis ego structure reflects their relationships with others and may inform how problems arising from bullying and other problems are typically treated.

### Depression

There is considerable evidence that Japanese and North Americans differ in the extent to which they emphasize intrapsychic and interpersonal concerns and that North Americans report positive feelings more frequently than Japanese (Mesquita & Karasawa, 2002; Oishi, 2002). North Americans tend to focus more on the positive aspects of their feelings as these are more relevant to having a successful life. The

experience of having positive feelings is more closely tied to subjective well-being for North Americans than for Japanese; for people from collectivistic cultures (such as Japan), the fulfillment of role expectations is more closely tied to well-being (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998).

Many studies have also found clear positive correlations between independence and positive self-views, regardless of culture or negative (i.e., weaker) correlations between interdependence and positive self-views (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). Focusing on what is good about oneself tends to be associated with subjective well-being and self-efficacy, and it is negatively associated with dysphoria and depression (Taylor & Armor, 1996).

Japanese individuals' greater emphasis on maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships compared with North American individuals has been discussed in a variety of domains. These concerns about harmony are seen as leading to less confrontation and more compromise in negotiations, such as bargaining and mediation (Leung, 1987). They are also thought to lead to a preference for a seniority-based reward system over a meritocratic system (e.g., Nakane, 1970), as the former is associated with less competition among colleagues. Doing things collectively, in a group, is important for Japanese; individuals behave in ways that will allow them to fit in with others (e.g., Kim & Markus, 1999), and they adjust their behaviors to conform with the expectations of significant others (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002). However, many Japanese companies have started to adopt the Western style of work values, which focuses on people's abilities. This shift in the work-value system is related to overwork, health problems, and depression.

In societies characterized by hierarchical interdependence, *saving face* is important in work settings. As an individual's performance on group-relevant tasks affects the group's success, it becomes critical for individuals to be perceived as doing their best toward what are, in many cases, the shared goals of the group. Performance in working toward these group goals is viewed as being closely tied to effort,

which means that how hard one works becomes a matter of moral significance. One's face will be maintained to the extent that one is seen as making an effort to do one's best and contributing to the group's welfare. Some evidence for this moralization of effort can be seen in the Japanese language. Effort (*doryoku*) and persistence (*gambaru*) have been rated as the first and second most frequently used words in Japanese, respectively. The extent of the value placed on hard work for the common good is also evident in certain cultural practices in the Japanese workplace, such as remarkably high rates of voluntary overtime (e.g., Kumazawa, 1996), the tendency of many to refuse to take paid holidays, and occasional instances of death by overwork (*karoshi*) (Nishiyama & Johnson, 1997). These situations tend to increase the incidence of depression among Japanese company workers; however, even when they are diagnosed with depression, they feel that they must continue working as much as they can, and this overwork can lead to suicide, especially among individuals in their 40s and 50s (Heine, 2005).

## COUNSELING APPROACHES IN JAPAN

### Indigenous Approaches

As would be expected then, positive or desirable feelings—and thus the goal of psychotherapies—differ between Japan and Western cultures. In Japan, the goal is to unite the self with the environment and lead the self into a natural, unselfconscious flow with the environment. The goal is not personal gratification but an actual merging or uniting with one's surroundings. Merging with the environment and dissolving the concept of the self as a separate entity—by focusing away from the self and forming a strong emotional connection with the environment—is the end in itself (Sato, 1998).

The first psychotherapy-related book was published in 1905 by Inoue, who integrated Buddhism with Eastern and Western psychology; it was titled *Psychotherapy* and revealed many of the parallels between Buddhism and psychotherapy processes.

Two indigenous psychotherapies, Morita therapy and Naikan therapy, originated in Eastern philosophy (Buddhism) and integrated Western psychotherapy into their methods.

Morita therapy, as established by Shoma Morita, is a uniquely Japanese form of psychotherapy established in the early 1920s (Kondo, 1974). The goal of Morita therapy is to help the client dissolve the self by accepting his or her own feelings and problems, and those of significant others, just as they are. Clients are taught not to worry, even if they cannot experience control over their feelings (Reynolds, 1980). The client learns that the key to recovery and a good life is to work, fit in, and become a constructive member of society by behaving in a correct manner (Reynolds, 1981).

A second form of psychotherapy to originate in Japan, Naikan therapy, has been practiced since the 1940s, and its method was derived from a common sect of Japanese Buddhism (Jodo-Shinshu) (Murase, 1974). The Naikan therapist focuses on helping a client focus away from and dissolve the self by helping him or her understand what others feel and think and accept significant others as they are (Sato, 1998).

In Japan, people maintain a sense of well-being by fitting in, merging with the social environment, dissolving the self, and preserving harmony with significant others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994). The most important features of the self are external and public—namely, status, roles, and relationships. Intersubjectivity results from interdependence and connection, and this intersubjectivity gives way to a heightened sense of the other and of the nature of one's relationship to the other, as well as the expectation of some mutuality. The goal is not to achieve individual awareness, experience, and expression but rather some attunement or alignment of one's reactions and actions with those of another; and intersubjective experiences result from these efforts and in turn foster these efforts. Thus in Japan, the positive or desirable emotional states or feelings are those of friendliness, affiliation, calmness, smoothness, and connectedness. The emotional state of anger experienced in an in-group setting is very troubling and considered extremely negative.



### Approaches Adapted From Western Psychotherapies

Many theories and interventions vis-à-vis counseling and various psychotherapies have been introduced in Japan. Their compatibility with collectivistic cultural values, interdependence, and matriarchal consciousness has affected the degree to which these theories have been adopted. For example, the maternal principle, which values empathy, acceptance, and support, is consistent with humanistic theories. Following the American psychologist Carl Rogers's visit to Japan in the 1950s, his theory spread rapidly across Japan, and many Japanese people still believe that counseling is nondirective, empathic, and accepting. Psychoanalysis was also introduced to Japan in the 1910s and taught in many universities. In addition, Kosawa (1954) developed his concept of the "Ajase-complex," which was a complex the child had with his or her mother. Okonogi (1978) explains this complex from the vantage of the Japanese matriarchal principle and finds its patriarchal counterpart in the Oedipus complex.

Kawai (1976/1994) studied Jungian psychology and introduced *hakoniwa*, or sandplay therapy, to Japan as a formal therapeutic medium. Kawai was a past president of the Japanese Clinical Psychology Association and the president of the Office of Culture. He has been a powerful and influential person not only in clinical and counseling psychology in Japan but also in Japanese society and culture, domestically and internationally. He integrated sandplay therapy principles with Japanese cultural practices (Enns & Kasai, 2003). The literal English translation of the Japanese word *hakoniwa* is box garden or miniature garden, and *hakoniwa* is embedded in values that focus on nonverbal communication, an action orientation rather than the expression of abstract emotional constructs, and an emphasis on holism that is nonlinear and views the integration of physical and mental well-being as necessary for growth.

### Culturally Related Techniques and Interventions

In most Western contexts, the characteristics of the psychotherapy contract are to verbalize as much

as one can. However the Japanese people have, in their long history, considered sensing and feeling others' thoughts nonverbally to be a virtue, as is acting on those sensations before saying a single word. These behaviors presume an unconscious sense of unification: If a Japanese person talks to another person and receives counseling about his or her private life, he or she wants to feel close to that person, as if they are mutual members of an in-group. He or she values the relationship with the therapist more than the therapeutic techniques or effectiveness offered therein and typically wants to give gifts and thank the therapist for his or her favors. It is a relatively new concept for Japanese individuals to pay for counseling or psychotherapy. If clients pay for counseling, they tend to feel distant from the therapist; it feels like a financial transaction and is therefore lacking in intimacy. For this reason, it is sometimes difficult for Japanese clients to have relationships that are at once professional and trusting.

The collectivists' emphasis on harmony within the in-group is also associated with saving the face of the other, avoiding conflict, and "smoothing out" interactions with others (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994). It is easier for Japanese to display anger and fear toward members of out-groups than those of their own in-group (Matsumoto, 1990). Therefore, if a therapist confronts or presents ideas different from those of the client, the client will tend to agree with the therapist to save the therapist's face and maintain the relationship.

Finally, changing one's surrounding environment for one's own sake is difficult and in conflict with the prevailing value system that emphasizes acceptance. Therefore, clients tend to think that there is nothing they can do to change the problematic situations they are in and may feel helpless. The only thing they can do is endure those problems, and such endurance is a virtue in Japanese culture. It is common for clients to go to therapy or counseling as a last resort, when their problems have become severe.

Consistent with the close parent-child relationships established in Japan, parent-child side-by-side counseling sessions are common (Kawai, 1986). Typically, the mother takes her son or daughter to

the session. Sometimes the child, the identified client, never comes to sessions, and sometimes the sons and daughters are in their 20s and 30s. The content of the counseling sessions with the mother depends on the therapist's theoretical orientation or the characteristics of the problem discussed. Together, they discuss parental guidance; the children's specific problems; the mothers' problems, if any; the mothers' personalities; family dynamics; and so on. It is often easier for Japanese mothers to come to counseling for their children's sake than for their own. From a counseling perspective, it is very important for the therapist to have clear goals for the therapy, and it is equally important to acknowledge that for Japanese people, presenting these goals too clearly makes clients anxious and defensive. Since parent-child side-by-side counseling sessions are very common, issues related to this practice have been well discussed and published in the Japanese psychotherapy literature (Yoshida, 2005).

### COUNSELING AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN JAPAN

A variety of professional associations related to counseling and clinical psychology have developed along separate tracks. One of the reasons for this situation is that counseling has developed in the practical and community fields, whereas psychotherapy has developed in the medical and university fields. All psychology fields, including counseling and clinical psychology, were divided into small associations. To increase the prosperity and wider understanding of psychology, however, the Japan Union of Psychological Associations (JUPA) was organized in 1999 and brought together 30 psychology-related associations. By the end of 2005, the number of associations in JUPA had increased to 41.

According to JUPA, in 2007 16 different qualifications, certifications, or licenses were issued by the various independent associations, although none are national licenses approved by government legislatures. For example, the Japanese Psychological Association, which was established in 1927 and has more than 7,000 members, has issued the *certified*

*psychologist* designation since 1990. This certification is reserved typically for those with psychology backgrounds. The Japanese Association of Counseling Science, which was established in 1967 and has more than 5,000 members, has issued the *certified counselor* designation since 1986. In 1982, some of the members of the Japanese Psychological Association diverged and established the Association of Japanese Clinical Psychology and proposed a *clinical psychology* licensure in cooperation with several other psychological associations. This group started to designate graduate schools for accreditation in 1988. As of 2007, there were 147 accredited graduate schools and 4 professional schools that train clinical psychologists (Otsuka, 2007), and there are more than 16,000 certified clinical psychologists in Japan.

Among many different associations and qualifications, the Association of Japanese Clinical Psychology and its license are considered the most prestigious and influential. One of the reasons for the recent growth in the number of clinical psychologists can be traced to the Ministry of Education's 1995 decision to send counselors into schools (especially, junior high schools) in response to the increasing number of problems, such as bullying and nonattendance at school. Since there is no licensing procedure with regard to counseling training for school counselors in Japan, the majority of school counselors in Japan are clinical psychologists.

For several years, national qualifications for clinical psychologists have been the most-discussed issue in this field. In 2006, a member of the Japanese government proposed national qualifications. Since that time, however, the prime minister has changed, and as of 2007, a bill for national qualifications for clinical psychologists had not yet cleared the Japanese Diet. Discussions about the future continue (Hiraki, 2006) and include (a) collaboration within the world of professional psychology; (b) the organization of professional licensing for different workplaces under different ministries; (c) the integration of the different statuses related to professional psychology; and (d) the limitations and jurisdictions of the license, as well as the educational

and training levels required for the qualification. The Association of Japanese Clinical Psychology organized an international symposium in 2006 and conducted research (Tatara, Natori, & Kume, 2005) involving global comparisons of psychology professions, the present state of education and training systems for Japanese clinical psychologists, and the effects of psychotherapy and the abilities of clinical psychologists. These kinds of projects concerning the national-qualification process are ongoing.

## CONCLUSION

Japan is an island country, and due to a long history of national isolation, it was a monoculture country. After the Meiji Period and World War II, Japan was internationalized rapidly, and family and value systems have changed. Historically, Japanese people coped with problems by applying traditional cultural methods. During the past 50 years, these traditional methods have been augmented with counseling and psychotherapy options. It is just in the past 20 years, however, that knowledge of counseling and psychotherapy has permeated the general population in Japan. The definition of and licensure issues for counseling and psychotherapy in Japan need to be discussed and resolved in culture-specific ways in the near future. We, the Japanese people, need to define our own identity in terms of this field, and not only advance it within our society, but offer it to the world.

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