MODERN JAPANESE PSYCHOLOGY AND HOW IT COMPARES TO WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

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Abstract: «Collectivism» has been, and still seems to be, the label used to stereotype Japanese society. However, in this modern world, this label given to Japanese culture can be very misleading due to the plasticity of human behavior. In this paper, we explore how Japanese society has been perceived through the eyes of Westerners. In addition, we gathered research data on how this perception of Japanese culture compares with actual Japanese society. We suggest that «collectivism» may not be perfectly apt for describing the Japanese population, as modern Japanese society also enforces individualism in many ways.

Key words: japanese culture; modernization; dynamic cultures; cross-cultural psychology; collectivism and individualism.

Psicología moderna japonesa y su relación con los conceptos psicológicos occidentales

Resumen: El término «colectivismo» ha sido siempre la etiqueta utilizada para estereotipar la sociedad japonesa. Sin embargo, en este mundo modernizado, esta etiqueta nos puede dirigir a una conclusión errónea debido a la flexibilidad de la conducta humana. En este artículo, se abordará la forma en que se ha percibido la sociedad japonesa desde la mirada occidental. Además, se aportan datos para ilustrar cómo dicha percepción se contrasta con la sociedad japonesa moderna real. Sugerimos que «colectivismo» puede no ser del todo apropiado para la descripción de la sociedad japonesa actual, teniendo en cuenta que la sociedad moderna global promueve el individualismo de muchas maneras.

Palabras clave: cultura japonesa; modernización; cultura dinámica; psicología cultural; colectivismo e individualismo.

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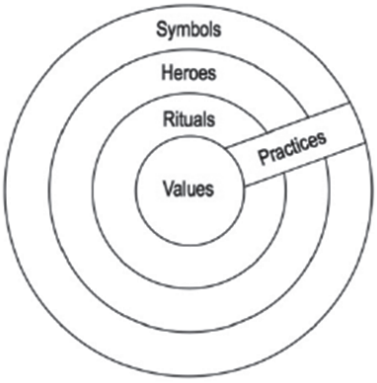
INTRODUCTION

Studying culture is truly complex. Culture is defined by Organista, Marin, and Chun (2009) as a multi-dimensional and dynamic construct, composed of internal dimensions such as attitudes, values and beliefs, as well as external dimensions focusing more on social structures and institutions in which culture is expressed within the society. Similarly, dimensions of cultural identities include both external and internal factors: the external focuses on participation in cultural practices, whereas the latter focuses on the cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions (Chang & Kwan, 2009). In the same manner, Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) assert that culture manifests itself in many ways, as shown in Figure 1. The layers of the diagram represent the stability of cultural changes that can occur: changes in the superficial layers can be easy and fast whereas values, which are found in the epicenter of the figure (the deepest level), are relatively stable. One can easily agree that during a lifetime, new habits and practices are formed parallel to socialization, thus producing changes in the outer layers of the diagram; however, this does not necessarily mean that this change is easily followed by a modification of values stressed in a culture.

Moreover, as Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) illustrate nicely, there are many common mental programs represented by groups of people that shape our culture, some of which are: a national level, a regional/religious or linguistic affiliation level, a generational level, and a social class level.

FIGURE 1
LAYERS OF MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURE



Each of these levels has its own unique culture, which creates cultural variations in any population, and leads to the development of personal identity. Similarly, Kagitcibasi states that cultural differences have intracultural variability, which is important to understand when talking about individual psychological characteristics (as cited in Gómez & Martinez-Sanchez, 2000).

Taking this into consideration, is it not possible that different practices of individuals may not be fully represented by the values of the culture? If this is the case, why then do researchers tend to attribute cultural differences to individualist and collectivist values?

Japan, as an example of an Asian country perceived by the West as modern, illustrates how cultural values are expressed in different ways with the passing of time. However, the Western world has over-generalized Japanese culture by integrating it in traditional Asian culture, with the erroneous expectation that traditional Confucian values shape the way in which people interact in modern Japan. This has lead to what has been called a collectivistic stereotype; hence, differences between Japanese and Western individuals have been attributed to this stereotype. Nevertheless, although it is true that many aspects of Japanese culture may be predicted using this idea of traditional values, others cannot.

Many authors nowadays are attempting to contradict this stereotype that has lead to a misperception of the Japanese culture. Levine (2001), uses the term «cultural psychology wars» (p.xiii) to refer to an attempt to give emphasis to the evidence that counters previous theoretical explanations. In other words, it is important to highlight how a general understanding of Asian cultures may not properly serve to illustrate Japanese culture. However, this is made difficult by the lack of research in Japanese psychology: more disaggregated data is necessary to fully concentrate on the extent to which Asian values play a role in the lives of the Japanese population and understand the distinct characteristics of the individual groups. Drawing attention to this area, however, is essential to be able to obtain a more accurate understanding of the Japanese culture and hence comprehend how different aspects of this culture may create cross-cultural variability.

Due to the lack of research on this topic, this bibliographical review intends to show the equivocal conceptions of the Japanese that have remained to this day, and provide an update of how social practices have changed in recent years. This is not only important for understanding culture but also for the Psychological profession: indeed, working as a clinical psychologist with a Japanese population may not necessarily be equivalent to working with a collectivistic society. Thus, the objective of this paper is to enumerate

reasons behind this collectivistic population and moreover illustrate how this collectivistic stereotype is not adequate when understanding the practices of the people in modern Japanese society.

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING CULTURES

1. THE COLLECTIVISTIC STEREOTYPE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

In order to comprehend the full reality of the Japanese culture, it is first essential to understand how it has traditionally been perceived by the eyes of foreigners. To do so, this first part of the paper will discuss the dominant method in studying cultures as well as its opposing arguments.

1.1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

One of the most influential techniques to investigate cultures is the one conducted by The Hofstede Centre (n.d.b). In this study, they find that there are six dimensions that are considered to illustrate best the cultural differences (power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence) and they have used this method to rank countries according to these dimensions. Over the years, many other authors have studied these dimensions: for example, Schwartz (1990) who discussed some limitations of this type of study. Yet, two of these six dimensions, individualism and power distance, have shown to correlate with Schwartz´s model (Gómez & Martinez-Sanchez, 2000; Gouveia & Ros, 2000; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Therefore, this paper will focus on these two dimensions, especially on individualism. In turn, power distance will also be discussed, but to a lesser extent, due to the fact that individualism and power distance correlate positively (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

1.1.1. Individualism and Collectivism

To begin, the Western and Oriental culture has been distinguished in cultural psychology using the broad terms of individualism and collectivism, a distinction first introduced by Hofstede in the late 1960s (The Hofstede

Centre, n.d.b). Due to the fact that the individualism v collectivism opposition is arguably one of the most used when it comes to comparing cultures, it is essential to first understand these basic concepts.

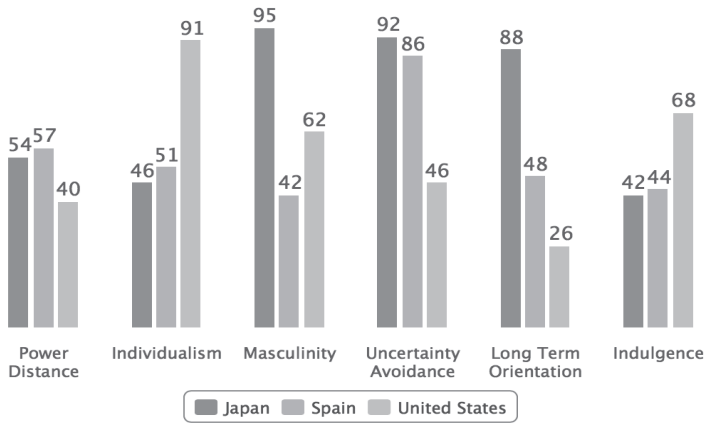
People within individualistic societies are generally expected to fend for themselves and their immediate family, with ties between individuals being quite loose, according to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010). Those countries that fall under the category of individualism, such as the USA, considered as one of the most individualistic countries, give importance to values such as affective and intellectual autonomy and hedonism. As an example, the English language is the only language that writes «I» with a capital letter, stressing emphasis on the individual (Kashima & Kashima, as cited in Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Moreover, in such societies, wellbeing is based on individual achievements (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Organista, Marin & Chun, 2009; Paez & Zubieta, 2003a; Shimizu, 2001).

On the other hand, those with low levels of individualism are dependent on their pre-determined group, as they have an interdependent self-construal: this type of culture is dominant in Asian and African countries (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Organista, Marin & Chun, 2009; Paez & Zubieta, 2003a; Shimizu, 2001). These countries have been denominated as collectivistic cultures: poorer countries tend to be more collectivistic because people are born into strong, cohesive in-groups that will protect themselves as long as there is loyalty (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). In addition, collectivism, in many ways, has been highlighted in agricultural societies, which requires coordination of tasks, through the sense of obligation of the group (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010; Paez & Zubieta 2003a).

1.1.2. Limitations of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Results from Hofstede´s cultural studies and the dangers of confirmation bias

FIGURE 2
JAPAN IN COMPARISON WITH SPAIN AND UNITED STATES



In Hofstede's cultural studies, one of the leading countries as regards individualism is the USA, scoring a high 91 in comparison with the 46 of Japan and the 51 of Spain (Figure 2[3]; The Hofstede Centre, n.d.a.). Although Japan has a score lower than that of the USA and Spain, it is necessary to mention that it ranks in the middle, relatively speaking, and therefore this culture does not necessarily tend towards individualism or collectivism.

Despite this, there are many articles of cultural research that attribute differences between the USA and Japan to collectivism: this is because when one compares Japan with the USA, Japan seems relatively collectivistic. Stemming from this idea, confirmation bias plays a big role in contributing to the collectivistic stereotype. Although these studies have contributed to increasing knowledge about Japan, it may also be the reasons as to why Japan is seen through a collectivistic lens by many researchers.

[3] Reprinted from Japan, in *The Hofstede Centre*, n.d.a, Retrieved March 9, 2017, from http://geert-hofstede.com/japan.html

Other limitations to individualism and collectivism

Similar to what is mentioned above, the terms *individualism* and *collectivism* are too broadly construed and are often used to explain almost any cultural or cross-cultural difference, according to Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002a). These authors say that it is not possible to make sense of the way people act and their minds by viewing them as individualistic or collectivistic; in fact, this can only help understand the general cultural meta-schema and provide limited insight to possible differences in cognitive behaviors of individuals but does not explain their behaviors in specific situations.

To start off with, it is necessary to understand that categorizing a country under individualism and collectivism is not as easy and accurate as it seems. Azuma (2001) says, «the concept of collectivist tends to lump together virtually all cultures that is not characterized by Western individualism» (p. 32). But does this really help researchers understand and illustrate cross-cultural differences?

Moreover, Schwartz (1990) claims that «the dichotomy leads us to overlook values that inherently serve both individual and collective interest [… and] it ignores values that foster the goals of collectivities other than the in-group (e.g. universal pro-social values)» (p.151). As a limitation to Hofstede's cultural dimension scale, it is essential to mention that although individualistic cultures accentuate independence and gives emphasis to the interest of the individual that prevails the interest of the group, individualism and collectivism should not be illustrated as polar opposites (Schwartz, 1990), especially when it comes to comparing cultures. Some collectivistic attributes are observable in individualistic groups, such as relationalism (assessment of relationships with others), the importance perceived of the opinions of others, and the sense of belonging (Paez & Zubieta, 2003b). This agrees with the idea of many authors, based on Schwartz's critique, that individualism and collectivism should be two separate dimensions: in other words, one could be both individualistic and collectivistic at the same time (Gómez & Martinez-Sanchez, 2000; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002a; Paez & Zubieta, 2003b).

Lastly, it is also important to mention that, as many authors (Azuma, 2001; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002a; Schwartz, 1990; Shimizu, 2001) come to realize, not all individuals from a supposedly collectivistic society have only sociocentric orientations and not all individuals from individualistic societies have only egocentric orientations. In the end, everyone, to some extent or another, has a desire to be harmonious and a desire to stand out.

1.2. Distal approach to understanding cultures

Apart from the method mentioned above that is used to understand cultures, there are other reasons why Japan has obtained the collectivistic stereotype. One of these is the use of distal approach to understanding cultures: in other words, the investigator looks into the origins of the culture, such as their history. In this sense, it is true that Japanese society illustrates a collectivistic society especially due to the Chinese influence it has received in the past.

1.2.1. Before and during the Tokugawa regime

It is without doubt that Japan and China have a lot in common. In the early times, the Chinese had a significant influence on Japan: they introduced different cultural variables such as Chinese writing (kanji) and philosophy, which has shaped the origins of Japan. Later on, during the Tokugawa regime (1641-1853), Japan found itself in isolation, limiting any contact with the Western world while maintaining the Chinese culture. Due to the fact that a major part of Japanese history revolves around Chinese influence before the closure of gates, leading to the isolation of Japan in the seventeenth century, these Chinese cultural variables have had a pervasive influence on Japan and are at the root of traditional Japan; equally, the values that were introduced by the Chinese were strengthened, as no other cultures could influence the people of Japan.

One principle cultural factor that Chinese influence contributed to Japanese culture is philosophy. One of the things that mark Asian countries, as seen as collectivistic societies when compared to the Western world, is philosophy and religion: it is undeniable that while Christianity plays a crucial role in the Western world, Buddhism, Shintoism and the ideas of the famous Chinese philosopher, Kong Fuzi (known as Confucius) have had an equally great influence in the oriental world (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013; Kramer, Kwong, Lee & Chung, 2002). Buddhism and Confucian ideas, in this way, have stressed compassion, harmony and interpersonal relationship, promoting collective welfare and contributing to the social values of Japan as opposed to the liberalism and individualism of Western cultures (Kasai, 2009). Hence, in traditional Japan, important emphasis was given to the collectivistic values of group orientation and harmony.

Not only does the philosophy stress collectivism in Japan, but some of the traditional Asian values are emphasized with the existing Japanese vocabulary; these terms are necessary to describe the context in which Japanese

individuals are raised. For example, one key term that encompasses many others is that of *omoiyari*. This term is defined by Lebra as «the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling, to vicariously experience the pleasure and pain that they are undergoing, and to help them satisfy their wishes» (p. 3, as cited in Shimizu, 2001). This, because of the importance as regards relationships built between people, has been used in many occasions to depict collectivism. However, it is hard to define some of the vocabularies well due to the many ways in which the words can be interpreted and the multidimensionality: it is hard to fully capture the variety of personal experience illustrated by these words when these vary with the situation as well (Shimizu, 2001).

1.2.2. Limitations to the distal approach: Post Tokugawa regime

Over two centuries later, the country opened up to foreigners once again. The Japanese term *Wakon Yosai*, emphasizes that, while integrating Western society, one should maintain the Japanese spirit: in other words, this simple term illustrates an intent to conserve traditional values and ways of thinking as well as learning about Western habits (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013). Despite this, incorporating Western practices to Japanese habits little by little starts to play an important role in Japanese society and its values. For this reason, this is a challenge in itself: even when the traditional concepts create a drastic difference between the cultures of Japanese and the West, one can observe how the modern and traditional values coexist or if not, lose weight or importance.

As proposed before, and in concordance with Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), such ideas stressing national cultural differences apply to societies and do not fully represent the individuals of the society. In other words, although the roots like religion and language may be stable and are harder to change in significant ways, the practices and behaviors of each individual in this present day is more dynamic. To be more specific, this society, after the end of the Tokugawa regime, started incorporating Western concepts and beliefs such as Christianity. Even if the percentage still remains small, Christianity comprises 1% of the society of which most people are atheist; moreover, recent events such as the March 11th earthquake in 2011, have weakened the barriers between Christianity and traditional Japanese religions such as Buddhism and Shintoism (Foxwell-Barajas, 2012).

Consequently, Watabe and Hibbard (2014) state that although research about modern Japan is lacking, research on this topic is necessary due to rapid changes in this culture especially when one can observe that Japanese

culture has become more individualistic and Westernized than its Asian counterparts. As people acquire more experiences and are culturally influenced, individuals of each country adapt their mental schemata, rapidly changing their behaviors and, more slowly, their values. Therefore, many examples that emphasize that Japan is a society enforcing collectivism may be outdated as more foreign influence is coming into Japan and the stress on some traditional values is slowly being lost.

1.3. Other reasons behind the collectivistic stereotype and effects of modernization

Not only has the methodology used for studying culture created misconceptions of the modern Japanese culture; other factors have been used to represent collectivism. Some of these ideas are listed below.

- Japan as an Asian country, along with many Asian societies, shares traditional values that stress harmony and group obligations.
- Japan has a big rice culture: in many studies, collectivistic values are prevalent in agricultural societies. Meanwhile, individualistic societies are more prevalent in hunter-gatherer societies. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Inglehart as cited in Paez & Zubieta, 2003a)
- The concept of *amae* (dependent-indulging love): Unlike in Western culture where dependence is seen as problematic or undesirable in the DSM-IV, it fits the Japanese cultural values, customs and beliefs (Hein, 2009). This concept has been used to describe the collectivism of Japan (Doi, as cited in Kasai, 2009).
- In psychological terms, while Western culture emphasizes attending to self and the importance of asserting self as well as appreciation of differences, the oriental group emphasizes attending to, and fitting with, others as well as the importance of harmonious relationships (Chang & Kwan, 2009; Kasai, 2009; Kramer, Kowng, Lee & Chung, 2002; Organista, Marin, & Chun, 2009).

With these reasons in mind, many cross-cultural Psychology textbooks have created generalizations as to Asians being collectivistic and Westerners being individualistic and little attention has been given to individual cultures within the Asian populations, such as how Japanese culture has moved away from the Chinese culture.

What are the effects of modernization?

As mentioned earlier, culture is dynamic: Paez and Zubieta (2003a), along with Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002a), mentions the idea that as the country becomes more developed economically, it moves toward individualism, while a less developed country would tend towards collectivism as they need more familial and societal support. In this case, the modernizing Japanese societies could therefore develop from a collectivistic society to a more individualistic one. In fact, as we explore Tokyo and other fast developing cities, it seems like this traditional culture could be lost (Hamamura, 2012). Put in terms of imagery, when asked to imagine Tokyo, how likely is it that one will imagine an agricultural society? The likelihood is indeed low, if not zero. Thus, the field of cultural studies in this sense has to be constantly verifying its results and updating itself.

As seen with Japanese society, changes in traditions and customs are occurring on a daily basis, especially in the last ten years: yet, how these changes are occurring is unclear. Japan, as the primary example of this paper, seems to be moving towards acceptance of individualism in a way that has never been seen before. As a matter of fact, Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) assert that, compared with many Asian countries such as China and Korea, Japan ranks higher in individualism.

Another study comparing cultures is that of Inglehart's World Value Survey (2015). It has been conducted yearly since 1981 and this clearly illustrates a continuous movement of Japan towards the more secular-rational value and self-expression, leaving behind traditional values. Here, it is possible to observe that Japan is high on secular-rational values, which manifests in a modern society where there is less emphasis on religion, traditional family values, and authority (see Appendix A). This, by itself, questions the extent to which Confucius' values and other traditional values still hold in this specific culture. Moreover, it has been said that collectivistic values are more common in traditional cultures (Paez & Zubieta, 2003a); a movement towards secular-rational values would therefore signify an individualistic country. Hence, to a certain extent, it seems as if Japan's modernization is moving them away from other Asian countries, as there are increasingly less emphasis given to the traditional values.

Furthermore, on the self-expression value, depicting the importance of participation in decision making of political and economic life, Japan finds itself relatively neutral (see Appendix A). This is shown to the same extent in Spain. However, between the years 1986 to 2002, there was a constant movement towards the self-expression values (World Values Survey, 2015). In fact, Inglehart postulates that after the Second World War, people have

become post-materialistic which comes with quality of life, giving importance to self-expression (as cited in Paez & Zubieta, 2003a). Moreover, this change can also be explained by the societal industrial development, observable in modern Japan. As Paez and Zubieta (2003a) put it, a major industrial development would lead to a greater level of individualism and less stress on agricultural societies.

Despite all this, it is important not to forget that a country could be individualistic and collectivistic at the same time. In fact, Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002b), state that the unlike popular belief, Japan does not rank higher in collectivism when compared to the European Americans and only differ in individualism in subtle ways that are not understood yet. One example of the studies confirming Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier´s statement concludes that Japanese college students tended less towards both individualism and collectivism compared to the Americans (Kobayashi, Kerbo, Sharp, 2010). Similarly, Japan has been shown to have lower degree of collectivism but at the same time, a low degree of individualism (Paez & Zubieta, 2003b), which might differ from other Asian countries such as China.

2. OTHER WAYS OF STUDYING CULTURES

The way in which many past studies have attempted to understand culture has been based on attributing the differences between two or more cultures to individualism and collectivism. However, as seen until now, interpreting individualism and collectivism as dependent variables may be dangerous because it does not consider any specific situations, and as we saw before, in concordance with the criticism stated by Schwartz of the individualism-collectivism dichotomy model (1990), a culture can be both individualistic and collectivistic at the same time. Moreover, using distal approaches to understand culture is limited to the extent that it may not consider the changes of the modernizing world. Given all the challenges to studying culture described above, we consider it is more important to view the cognitive behaviors at the individual level as opposed to the societal level: these studies should examine specific situations, the mental schemata of each individual and how these influence their behavior.

As a result of this, Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002a) suggest mixing the following approaches to fully comprehend the different aspects of culture and the effects these have on the individual. Although there are more, below, we list four approaches:

- Distal approach: this approach studies the roots of culture such as language, history, religious and philosophical traditions.
- Individual level approach: this approach studies the internalized values, attitudes, scripts and norms of individuals.
- Proximal level approach: this approach studies parenting and childrearing systems, educational system and legal/economic systems.
- Situated culture approach: this approach studies everyday situations encountered by individuals and how this leads to a different way of thinking.

Taking this into consideration, in the next section we will try to contribute to the limited understanding of individualism and collectivism in Japan by integrating the rest of these approaches, especially focusing on the proximal level approach. Understanding how culture is expressed in Japanese family organizations and school settings, and how these might be different from families in the USA or in Spain, might facilitate a more accurate understanding of cultural psychological concepts.

PART 2: THE CASE OF JAPAN

In many cross-cultural psychology studies conducted in the past, differences of Asian and Western cultures have been marked as individuals having either an independent or an interdependent self-construal based on the cultural values. For example, Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that behaviors in Western cultures are more likely to stem from an independent self-construal, while the Eastern cultures foster an interdependent self-construal, where harmonious relationships are valued. They also add that European structures favor independence, individualistic orientation to increase the self-esteem of children and personal wellbeing while Asian structures enforce interdependence, high academic achievement and the importance of bringing honor to the family. However, this raises questions regarding if cultural differences are really as clear as they seem. Do they really represent the cognitive process of each individual?

In cases like these, it is important to remind ourselves that structures of culture, like those mentioned about Japan, are changing. For this reason, we question whether modern European structures really favor individualism and an independent self-construal while Asian structures foster collectivism and interdependent self-construal. Along these lines, and in concordance with Schwartz's (1990) criticism to the dichotomy of individualism and

collectivism, Azuma (2001), and Chang and Kwan (2009) state that one does not maintain one type of self-construal in different contexts. In this sense, it gives emphasis to the importance of considering a situated culture approach (Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier, 2002a) as it becomes hard to accurately assess differences between the moral scripts of individuals of two or more countries. However, we consider that by understanding how each individual is educated, we will be one step closer to understanding how he or she will act in a given situation as well as taking into account the effects of modernization.

1. SOCIAL PROGRAMMING OF A CHILD

To approach a clear understanding of the mental script and schema of an individual, a thorough investigation of his or her socialization process is necessary. Children first develop emotionally and cognitively through being exposed to culture by their surroundings: Bronfrenbrenner's ecological systems theory stresses the prominence of five environments that may influence individual behaviors, one of which is the individual's microsystem, composed of the individual's family, friends, teachers and neighbors. Thus, cultural variations of one's mental schema between Western and Asian individuals would first derive from the access of this newborn to the culture script represented in their microsystem; the mental schema developed in the early years of one's life will then determine the behaviors manifested in both cultural structures (Azuma, 2001; Organista, Marin, Chun, 2009; Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002a).

To understand the importance of the microsystem in an individual's socialization process, it seems essential to mention that Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002a) found that individualism being associated not only with modernity and urbanism, but also parenting and education systems focused more on autonomy and positive regard. On the other hand, collectivism was associated not only to less education but to parenting and education systems focused on self-improvement, obedience and authority and acceptance of social structure (Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002a). With this in mind, we can explore if the Japanese microsystem is more likely to foster individualistic or collectivistic values.

In the following examples of family and school contexts, it is possible to observe that Japanese society does in fact maintain both collectivistic and individualistic attributes as mentioned earlier by many authors such as

Schwartz (1990). In addition, it is possible to perceive a change of practices stressing collectivism and individualism not only during the development of the individual and the situation experienced by them, but also with the modernization of the society.

1.1. Family settings

A child first has contact with the world through his or her family: thus, it is the first social programming that determines the type of relationship that the child forms which is then generalized to other settings. In this section, therefore, we take a deeper look into family organizations and parenting styles of Japan to see whether this culture is more likely to foster individualistic and/or collectivistic values in different individuals.

1.1.1. Family structures

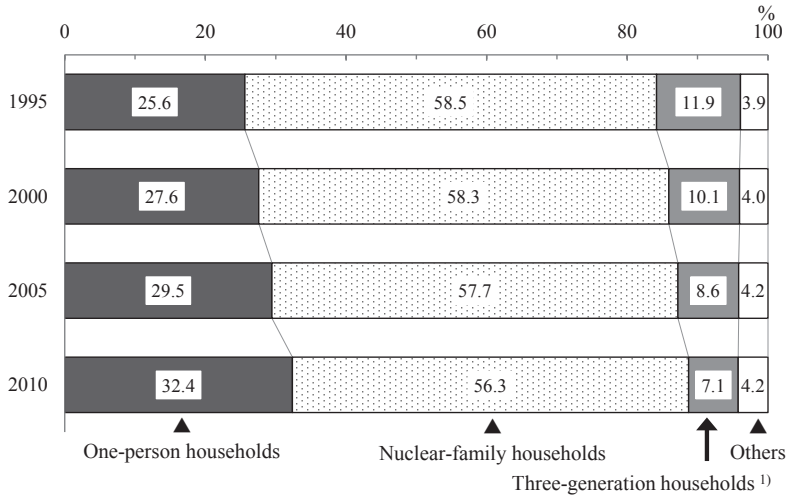
First of all, similar to the USA, Japan has gone through important social changes in the last ten years: declined birth rates, decreased family size, and increased prevalence of divorce and urbanization (Watabe & Hibbard, 2014). This may have a great impact on Japan such that collectivistic values of family dependence are harder to maintain, as the young adults move out of their home to big cities such as Tokyo for studies or work. Also, it is important in the sense that depending on family is made harder: for example, less and less are maintaining the role of caregiver for their parents. According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), traditional Japanese families may be characterized as being a collectivistic culture by the idea that the children have to take care of their parents as they age but this is only true for the oldest son. Hence, the urbanization and increasing numbers of working females has made it hard for the parents to depend on their children for caregiving.

Not only are the demographic changes mentioned above important, but also changing family structures. Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) describe that a positive correlation has been found between individualism and nuclear family structures, and collectivism with extended family structures. Moreover, a child that grows up with his or her extended family is much more likely to conceive one's identity as part of an in-group.

In many European countries, especially in Spain, the economic crisis that started in 2008 has made becoming independent difficult: the younger generation became more dependent on their family members, increasing

the percentage of third generation households. In contrast to the former example, the case of Japan presents itself differently; more people are increasingly living independently while both nuclear family households and three-generation household are decreasing (Figure 3[4]). Hence, this would signify that with the passing of time a large percentage of the Japanese population is transitioning into a context that promotes individualistic values.

FIGURE 3
CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



1) A household in which at least three generations out of five generations in a direct line live together, regardless of the presence of other household members.

Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC.

In addition, Confucius, an important philosopher in Asian culture, once said that unequal relationships of the people created the stability of society (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010): unequal relationships would refer to those of father and son, husband and wife etc., where each individual has their obligations to their superior. However, it has been found that Japan has less Chinese influences in comparison to other countries such as Singapore and Korea, thus presenting a lower power distance index (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). In Gouveia and Ros' (2000) meta-analysis,

[4] Reprinted from Statistical Handbook of Japan, in *Statistics Bureau*, 2015, Retrieved March 8, 2017, from http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data.handbook/c0117.htm

individualism correlated negatively with power distance for which we can conclude that the less power distance of Japan presents more individualism than the other Asian countries.

Along the years, family structures have been greatly influenced by the modernizing environment and changes are clear in many demographic studies. Thus, changes in such factors correlated with individualism and collectivism suggest that the cultural values expressed and transmitted across generations in these families may differ from the past and therefore there is a necessity to revise them.

1.1.2. Parenting

Not only do we have to consider demographic changes of modernization but it is also important to observe if individual behaviors have changed as well. More specifically, since parenting practices and the interpretations of the practices impact child outcomes (Organista, Marin & Chun, 2009), it is necessary to explore this area of study.

Until recently, it has been considered that, compared to the Western society, the Asian society gives limited importance to the stage of adolescence because the step to individualization and defining self outside the individual's family is not encouraged (Kramer, Kwong, Lee & Chung, 2002). Moreover, in 1986, Kawai compared Western and Japanese individuals and their ego development: he states that the prior holds a more patriarchal principle while the latter has a more matriarchal principle (as cited in Kasai, 2009). According to this clinical psychologist, a patriarchal principle emphasizes people's abilities and potential towards growth while parents with matriarchal principles long for equality and union. In this sense, Western parents seem to orient their children towards individualism while Japanese parents seem to emphasize collectivist values.

On the other hand, it seems as if it is not as easy to compare Western and Eastern parents. A common method through which parenting and its effect on child development has been studied is the use of Baumrind's parenting styles: depending on the degree of responsiveness and demandingness of the parent, the parents are categorized as authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful or indulgent parents. Yet, there is a limitation to this: these terms may not be applicable in the Asian world. For instance, Chao (1994) identified that authoritarian and authoritative parenting implied a different parenting concept: authoritarian parenting in China was motivated by the importance of teaching culturally appropriate behavior and skills for academic success and meeting societal and family expectations that were not considered in

the European authoritarian parent population. There is a challenge, therefore, in understanding parenting styles in Japan and its impact on the child when researchers use Western concepts to study Japanese parents.

Despite the lack of research on the Japanese population and the limitations of using Western concepts, Uji, Sakamoto, Adachi and Kitamura (2014) observed that in their study of 1,320 Japanese participants aged 17 to 69, the older respondents perceived their parents to be more authoritarian and less permissive than the younger respondents. Moreover, in the study conducted by Watabe and Hibbard (2014), with 208 American children and 312 Japanese children, Japanese children scored lower than American children on «obeying your parents», which is said to reflect the modern parenting styles of Japan, contradictory to previous stereotypes of strict Asian parents. Hamamura (2012) agrees with this statement, arriving at the conclusion that Japanese families have diverged from some of the family and parenting traditions. The changes in parenting styles observed in Japanese parents in the past few years may illustrate environmental influence of modern societies. Changing parenting styles can also foster a new form of individuals that orient themselves towards individualism and/or collectivism and thus, further research is needed to ascertain if matriarchal and patriarchal principles still hold in today's society.

Similarly, in a generalized Asian culture, children are educated by the reinforcement of the idea that failure to meet family expectations leads to shame: for example, authors claim that self-assertion is not emphasized in the adolescent period of the individual, as it is in the Western culture (Kramer, Kwong, Lee & Chung, 2002), and young adults are defined by what they can achieve for the family and meeting the expectations of their parents (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Yet, along the lines of Westernization, Uji Sakamoto Adachi and Kitamura (2014), as well as, Watabe & Hibbard (2014) mention that Japanese parents are putting more effort in raising their child to be more assertive; while passivity, modesty and maintaining sense of in-group was a traditional virtue respected in the past, it no longer promises lifetime employment and mental wellbeing. This, therefore, gives more strength to the individualistic nature that the children of Japan are now developing. Along the same line, family and parenting traditions have seen a shift in a different direction, such as the raising of children no longer focusing on conformity and obedience, but rather a promotion of independence and autonomy, according to Hamamura (2012). These studies seem to suggest that Japanese parents may not be justly represented in the generalized understanding collective Asian culture.

1.2. School settings

Although family setting is the primary socialization system illustrated by Bronfrenbrenner's ecological system, it is true that each family will educate their child in their own particular way, be it focused on autonomy or not. Children can also modify their mental script and schemata in other environments, such as their schools. For these reasons, it is also important to mention school systems especially because this environment will be essential in determining what values are taught throughout their developmental process.

1.2.1. Elementary schools compared to higher education

Due to lack of research in this area of study, below, we will mention first hand experience of some specific examples that illustrate collectivism and individualism. Although this comes with a lack of methodological rigor, it is important to take these examples into consideration. The following examples enforce the idea that both traditional and modern values are emphasized during one's academic development: while in an elementary school setting, children seem more likely to come across traditional values, this changes in higher education.

To begin, in an elementary school setting, where most of the kids are first exposed to their peers and other programming systems other than their closest family members, it is possible that collectivistic values are stressed. One of the aspects that clearly differentiate Japanese education from many other education systems around the world is the reinforcement of the concept of respect and equality in both classroom and outdoor activities to maintain group harmony.

Examples of such behavior and activities come in many different forms. In most schools, when the teacher enters the classroom, the students are expected to stand up and bow as a sign of respect: the power distance here stresses collectivism. In addition, everyone, from teachers to peers, call on each other by their last name, stressing the idea that each individual is identified as part of a family, and not just an individual. By referring to each other by last name only, success and misbehaviors will both equally affect not just the individual student, but also the family as a whole. Furthermore, the idea of *omoiyari* is important: not only is one respecting teachers and their family, but the community as well. Respect for communal space comes in the form of each student moving tables of the classrooms, mopping the floors, wiping the tables and windows, cleaning the bathrooms, and serving

lunch to each other. To expand further on respect for community beyond the walls of the school, students are also required to give thanks to the farmers who provided the food, and to the people who prepared it, by verbalizing the word *itadakimasu*. These habits that they develop may or may not be stressed in a family setting yet, education will make it necessary for any individual to learn such concepts of respect and equality amongst classmates and others.

Furthermore, collectivist values are stressed in «sports day» where grades one to six compete with one another and parents cheer for their child and their team. One irreplaceable event is *tamanage* (ball throwing) where everyone has to work together to get beanbags into a basket and the team with the most beanbags wins. Like this one, a many other activities require teamwork, hence stressing the importance of working together. However, individualistic values are also stressed. Almost ten years ago, many schools tried eliminating first place and second place winners in activities of competition because they saw it negatively; this failed. Many parents did not agree with eliminating the status of being the best. In fact, they thought that individuals should be rewarded for their outstanding skill: in other words, it was necessary and adequate for leaders or individuals to receive positive reinforcement for their differentiated ability, suggesting that group harmony was no longer considered a predominant value.

Once the child grows into junior high and other higher education systems, many of these collectivistic practices of elementary schools disappear. In higher education, although the concept of respect and equality is internalized by this age, there is little to no stress given to the idea of working together as a group for the wellbeing of all. In fact, group work is not common and each individual starts to compete against one another, studying hard in *juku* (private after-school tutoring classes) just to get into the best schools and universities. Each individual realizes his or her own potential and weaknesses, working hard to improve and stand out from the rest of their classmates. Achieving good results may carry family name such as «Yamamoto's eldest daughter got into medical school», but now, it is the individual efforts that are highly recognized. This personal effort is prized by the compliments received from the individual's parents and teachers, making it more likely to gain autonomy and self-confidence.

Globalization has also allowed Japanese companies that were once resistant to change to consider remodeling. Hein (2009) claims that this increase of social pressure resulted after the war, under the influence of the USA, stressing emphasis on individualism. Traditional Japanese recruitment practices enforced that one year prior to graduating their university, many

university students with a general education of liberal arts would get hired so that the company could begin training them. This can facilitate a collectivistic idea of group belonging: a long-term relationship between the individual and the company would facilitate the efficacy and harmony of the company. However, after studying many companies and newspaper articles, Firkola (2011) found that companies are now considering hiring candidates who have been graduated for years, during which time they may have studied abroad and gained numerous skills for strengthening their individual potentials. Moreover, once the individual gets accepted to university or finds a job, it is likely that autonomy is emphasized, for not only do they move out of their homes, but they also develop differentiated skills. In this manner, therefore, it is not adequate to say that Japanese school systems raise children to be part of an in-group, for we can also observe the emphasis put on each individual, especially in the older ages.

It is also interesting to add that the interaction with peers in school settings also reinforces an emphasis of certain values that cause changes in the cognitive behaviors of the Japanese youth. In 2002, a song titled *Sekai ni hitotsu dake no hana* was released by a band named SMAP. To illustrate the influence this song has had on the Japanese population, in 2012, it became the most sold record in 30 years (JASRAC, 2012). Contrary to the collectivist stereotype, this song highlighted the importance of each individual and their unique abilities. The listeners were moved by this message, appreciating the message of standing up for oneself and being different from the rest. Hence, here it can be observed that individualist values are fortified with the interaction of the young population despite what the school setting may enforce.

1.2.2. Stigma of disability in school settings

It is also important to add that, over the years, individuals with disabilities have been significantly stigmatized. Indeed, the concept of loss of face and shame has played a crucial role in isolating them from the rest of the collectivist society with the idea that they are worthless and a burden. Data collected by Meyer (2010) suggests that the USA, compared to Japan, exhibits higher rates of disabilities: in 2006, the USA recorded that 14% of students had a disability, while only 1.6% were recorded in Japan in 2003. Due to the stigma in Japan attached to having a disabled child, it is likely that the actual numbers were underreported. However, in the case of children with disabilities in school settings, there has been an observable change in the impact of stigma in Japanese society.

Kayama (2010) illustrates a change in Japanese society relative to disabilities of children in the school system. It is hard to believe that even though the government realized that some children needed additional support in school in the 1980s, in order to avoid stigmatization, they were hesitant to label children with learning disabilities, such as ADHD and high functioning autism. Children with disabilities did not want to be differentiated from the rest in order to maintain harmony, which lead to a concealment of their needs. It was not until the first decade of the 21st century that the government actively approached the issue. In 2007, a new special education system was implemented in Japanese society after studying the USA special education system (Kayama, 2010). This was only possible because, over the years, there were more parents who spoke up for their necessities and those of children with disabilities; giving the parents an opportunity to speak up for their challenged children and their special needs separated them from the collectivistic orientation that had once made this expression hard.

Not only is the collectivistic orientation a cause of the low incidence of disability in Japan (Meyer, 2010), but also the number of psychological problems of Japanese children has increased (Kasai, 2009). Such psychological problems include *hikikomori*, which could be related to collectivism: this symptom has been expressed by individuals who lock themselves in their rooms due to their fear of society and has been also denominated as a «silent epidemic», Jones and Zielenziger, as cited in Iwakabe & Enns, 2013: 210). It would make sense that in a collectivistic society, where complying with group obligation to maintain harmony is important and seeking professional help is seen negatively, these symptoms were prevalent. However, this psychiatric disorder, which was once thought to be a cultural-specific disorder, most common in the young adults, is now becoming diagnosed in other parts of the world such as the USA and Spain. In fact, in 2014, there have been 164 cases of *hikikomori* reported in Spain, and this number is probably higher due to the disorder remaining unreported in many cases (Malagón-Amor, Córcoles-Martínez, Martín-López, & Pérez-Solá, 2015). With this in mind, it would be erroneous to directly attribute the increase in the prevalence of such disorders to an increase of collectivistic values in these societies.

2. CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN JAPAN

In recent times, increasing numbers of individuals have been breaking out of the values of collectivism and loss of face, and are starting to seek professional help (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013; Kasai, 2009). A clearer and updated understanding of how Japanese individuals may or may not differ from an individual who grows up in a Western society, therefore, increases the likelihood that the clinical psychologists can effectively intervene on these interpersonal and intrapersonal problems. Nevertheless, Japan does not seem prepared for such practices. There are two main reasons why.

First of all, there is no national licensing system for psychologists in Japan (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013). A clinical psychologist in this country only requires two-years master's degree in an accredited program that was first established in 1996, and is still relatively new compared with other countries. To make it harder, according to Naver Matome (2016) in August 4th of 2014, during the general meeting of the evaluation committee of state universities, the education minister of Japan proposed that national universities were to close or downsize their Humanities and Social Science departments, since they do not meet society's needs. A survey conducted by J-Cast News in June of 2015 shows that 80% of the universities were considering downsizing and restructuring the Humanities department (as cited in Naver Matome, 2016). Thus, in a country where Psychotherapy is not yet well accepted and understood, recent events have made access to an efficient and effective mental health services even harder.

Secondly, traditional healing methods have been oriented towards a collective social life (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013) even though Japan is rapidly incorporating individualistic values (Kasai, 2009). Such therapies, as mentioned by Iwakabe and Enns (2013), include Naikan and Morita therapies: while Morita Therapy involves unblocking psychological paralysis by accepting their anxiety and self-criticism by accepting oneself, and productive immersion in life tasks, Naikan Therapy focuses on cognitive reframing by moving from blaming others towards acceptance of others. With Buddhist origins, these therapeutic techniques are done as solitary introspection, guided by the therapist; but how effective are these techniques now? Lack of research and methodological rigor in Clinical Psychology techniques (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013) makes it difficult for a growth in this area of study and a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of these treatments in modern Japan.

Some of the dominant psychological problems in Japan are depression and *hikikomori*: while the former has been related to high rates of suicide in this country, there are 700,000 reported cases of *hikikomori* in 2010

(Wingfield-Hayes, 2015), which calls for effective intervention. Depression has most commonly been treated mainly with psychopharmacological treatments; this seems to be effective based on the idea that depression is a biological problem, named *kokoro no kaze* (cold of the heart). However, the medical model has some limitations and Western style talk therapy counseling techniques have also been seen as an effective treatment for the Japanese population and can overcome these limitations (Hein, 2009). Another psychotherapeutic approach that is used in Japan is the *Boshi heiko mensetsu*, which has been translated as mother-child parallel therapy (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013). In short, this type of therapy is mainly used as psychoeducation for the mother to understand her anxiety and the child development process, which is seen to be the root of the child's problems: in other words, the mother is seen as responsible for the child's problems. Considering that the past collectivistic notion of parental responsibilities is slowly changing, it is also important to consider to what extent this technique will remain effective. Despite this, to treat children with *hikikomori*, «mothers often become clients and receive long term consultation before children experiencing withdrawal agree to treatment» (Iwakabe & Enns, 2013: 208). Given the different manners in which these psychological problems are perceived in Japanese society, the treatment differs from Western treatments, but one might have to consider adapting these treatments to the changing environment and population.

Moreover, with the rise in numbers of psychological problems such as *hikikomori* and depression (Kasai, 2009), it has also come to the attention of many professionals that effective strategies are needed to combat these mental illnesses. Nakao and colleagues found that Japanese people have a high threshold for visiting psychiatrists due to it not being well perceived by society (as cited in Nakao & Ohara, 2014; Wingfield-Hayes, 2015) but many authors also state that there is an increase in psychological and physical vulnerabilities after the 2011 earthquake (Foxwell-Barajas, 2012; Iwakabe & Enns, 2013). One of the approaches taken to treat the symptoms caused by traumatic events is psychosomatic medicine. Even though Japanese people do not explicitly state that they belong to a religion, the religious notions in the culture allow for a mind-body monism that can help teach relaxation techniques and combat stress-related illness and decrease suicide rates, which is associated with depression (Nakao & Ohara, 2014).

Most importantly, in Psychology, there are attempts made to better integrate the study of Psychology into Japanese society. According to American Psychological Association (APA), a conference of International Mental Health Professionals Japan (IMHPJ) was held in 2007, bringing together

clinicians of various disciplines to discuss challenges and opportunities in this society as well as «improving the quality, quantity and accessibility of mental health services available to the international communities in Japan» (Enns & McRae, 2007: 12). Once Clinical Psychology is accessible to foreigners in Japan, and the stigma of resorting to mental health professionals is diminished, we may see an increase in future Japanese clients and an emphasis on increasing the effectiveness of these treatments.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the aim of this paper was to summarize the reasons behind the collectivistic stereotype of Japan and prove how this stereotype may no longer apply to the modern Japanese society.

Until now, many approaches to studying culture have labeled Japan as a collectivistic society. Hofstede, as one of the most important figures of cross-cultural studies, developed a dominant approach in studying the intervariability of cultures. However, one main critique to Hofstede's study is the consideration of individualism-collectivism as polar opposites (Schwartz, 1990): in other words, a country that is not individualistic is not necessarily collectivistic. Ranking countries along the dimensions of individualism may not necessarily be an accurate methodology to opt for since these values only explained two thirds of the cases Schwartz (1990) studied. Moreover, it is hard for researchers to avoid confirmatory bias: this means that many differences found between the Western countries with Asian countries are erroneously attributed to individualism and collectivism. Furthermore, putting attention on different cultural variables of Japan, such as the Chinese origins and Japanese terms, this culture seems to hold many collectivistic factors. However, this categorization seems to be inappropriate in some aspects of cross-cultural psychology study, especially when we consider the effects of modernization.

Taking these limitations into consideration, in the second part of the paper, we have concluded that the collectivistic stereotype of Japan is in fact not sufficient when illustrating its modern society. Considering that the influence of the cultural surrounding of individuals in the early years of development is of great importance, for it creates the individual's mental schema and constructs interpsychological differences, we thought it was appropriate to look closely into family and school settings of Japan and the values that are transmitted to the next generations. In this country, a constant

modification of child socialization styles is observable in limited, yet descriptive, recent studies: although both collectivistic and individualistic values are enforced in these settings, there is a possibility that individualistic values are replacing the traditional, collectivistic values. Despite the limited research on Japanese society, adopting different approaches mentioned by Oyserman, Coon and Kemmelmeier (2002a) helped us better immerse ourselves in the culture. Hence, in this section, we come to the conclusion that while family settings may be fostering individuals with more individualistic orientations, school settings maintain both collectivistic (in younger children) and individualistic values (in older children). Viewing this specific culture from the inside, rather than with a foreign lens, facilitated the comprehension of interpsychological differences between the Japanese population: and with this, we can understand how the tendency to categorize cultures into individualism and collectivism may come with its limitations, as mentioned by Schwartz (1990). Thus, cross-cultural psychology studies are not enough when trying to understand a culture and therefore, in the second part of the paper, an emphasis is given to Japan´s intracultural differences.

With this in mind, it is essential to understand that the individual's socialization does not end with child development. As people, all over the world are coming together, more changes will be seen, not only in the Japanese society, but also in societies all over the world. Thus, both intracultural and cross-cultural psychology studies have to be updated. It is only when we truly understand the setting and culture of the population of a specific society that a clinical psychologist will be able to efficiently work with them.

Future directions:

As defined in the introduction, culture is a dynamic and multidimensional construct. Although culture itself may not be easily modifiable, the external dimensions, such as traditional practices and other habits, can change rapidly. People adapt with the ecological changes, starting from their behavior and working their ways to the values. In the 21st century, interactions between many cultures are happening on a daily basis and this is true for many countries and not only Japan. For this reason, future studies should focus on the effects of interactions between cultures and globalization.

Some of the variables that studies should consider are the effects of Internet use, and events such as the Olympics and football World Cup. To start with, widespread use of the Internet has allowed individuals to access other cultural values and norms. Realizing how other countries' cultures are may make one adjust in ways that are more efficient. Although Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) argue that «increases in the amount of information

accessible to its users […] does not increase their capacity to absorb this information, nor does it change their value system» (p. 391), intercultural encounters allow for awareness to occur and, from this awareness, people adapt their practices and other behaviors as seen in the case of Japanese parenting and schooling. Moreover, events such as the Olympics and the World Cup give an opportunity for many countries to come together: this heightens the possibilities that various cultures will come together and intermingle, inevitably creating a new culture that will not be comparable with the traditional cultures. For this reason, cross-cultural psychology studies should focus not only on comparing cultures, but also how different cultures are influencing each other in both positive and negative ways.

In this study, we mention that along with modernization, the Japanese culture has changed. Some authors such as Ohama think that «modernity and secular rationalization of the Western developed world threaten Japanese pure identity and a value system striving for peaceful coexistence» as if the «brutal completion and coldhearted individualism» (p. 12, as cited in Hein, 2009) were threatening the collectivistic values. Is this really the case? How did we get here? It is possible that individualistic and collectivistic values are being abated by modernization? We think that these are some of the questions that future research should try to answer, for this will help us understand in what direction cultures are moving towards.

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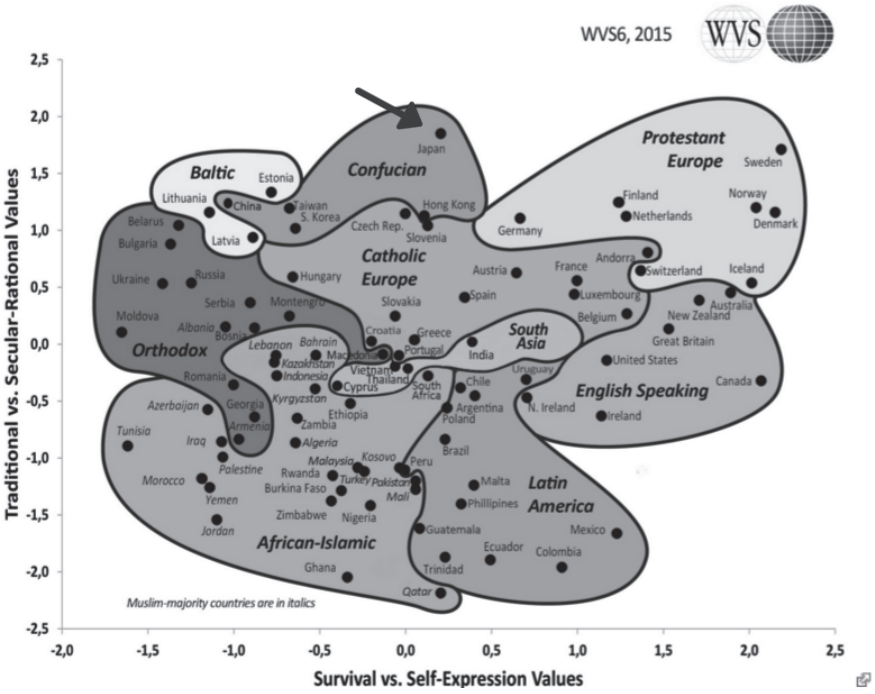
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Inglehart's World Value Survey (2015)[5]



[5] World Values Survey (2015). *Findings and Insight*. Retrieved November 10th, 2015 from http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp