Family Therapy in Japan and East Asia

East meets West

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- International membership, American Family Therapy Academy (AFTA)
- Chief of International Committee, Asian Academy of Family Therapy (AAFT)
Content

• Family Therapy in Asia
• Family Therapy in Japan
• Cultural difference and family therapy practice
• Hikikomori (Social Withdrawal) among Japanese Youth
• Solution from multi-cultural perspective
Asian Academy of Family Therapy

• Hong Kong
• China
• Japan
• Korea
• Taiwan
• Singapore
• Malaysia
Wai Yung Lee, Ph.D., Clinical Director of AAFT

Dr. Lee is AAMFT Approved Supervisor, Associate Professor and Founding Director of the HKU Family Institute, and Faculty Member of the Minuchin Center for the Family in New York, USA.

Much of Dr. Lee’s research concentration had been on dispersing the many myths about Asian Chinese families, while developing a framework for a culturally relevant approach in working with not just Chinese families, but also families of the world. Her expertise in research and practice has influenced family workers all over Asia, particularly in Mainland China and Taiwan. Her research on *Children’s response to parental conflict* has been considered ground-breaking in the international family therapy arena.

In addition to her numerous publications on working with Asian families, Dr. Lee has co-authored three books with Salvador Minuchin, including “Mastering family therapy – Journeys of growth and transformation,” with the first edition translated into eight languages, and the most recent, “Assessing families and couples – From symptom to system,” together with Michael Nichols.
Asian Academy of Family Therapy

3rd Annual Conference

• October 14-16
• Shanghai, China
Japan Association of Family Therapy

• Memberships approx. 1,000.
  • Multi-disciplinary; Psychiatrist, Clinical Psychologist, Social Workers, Hospital/School/Public Health Nurses, Leg Officers (Probation, Family Court)
• Annual Meetings (32nd this year)
• Journals (4 vols/year), e-Newsletters
• Training, Workshop, Supervision
• Accreditation
Are we same or different?

• Same
  • Cultural Universalist Position

• Different
  • Cultural Relativist Position
  • Western theories/models
  • Asian families
    • value
    • structure
    • relationship
East meets West

Complementary Relationship

• My journeys to the West
  • High school exchange student in the USA
  • Family Therapy training in London

• Academic Imperialism
  • Euro-American Culture as dominant
  • Asia and Africa as subordinate
East meets West

Symmetrical Relationship

• Multi-culturalism
  • Respect and tolerate the difference
  • Synthesize new knowledge by multi-cultural encounter
    • e.g. Open Dialogue, Jaakko Seikkula, Western Lapland, Finland

• Cultural Sensitive Practice

• Cultural Competency of the therapist
Independence oriented
Self-Reliance, Assertiveness

Group oriented
Harmony, Sensitivity
Connectedness vs. Separateness

• **Eastern Collectivism**
  • Human Growth as a process of **Integration**
  • Individual as a part of wholeness
  • Dependency, Enmeshment, Participation
  • Sensitivity, Self-Sacrifice, Intuition, Implicit communication
  • Commitment, responsibility, maintain harmony

• **Western Individualism**
  • Human Growth as a process of **Individuation**
  • Leaving home, Divorce
  • Self-Reliance, Autonomy, Self-Actualization, Differentiation
  • Assertiveness, clear/explicit communication
Enmeshed Parent/Child relationship

• Emotional bonding between Mother/Child
  • Child rearing practice
    • Skin ship, no separation
    • Eye contact, sharing, breast feeding
  • Education Mom, Tiger mother, Helicopter Mother
  • Emotionally never Leave Home

• Instrumental bonding between Father/Son
  • Inheriting property, family name, ancestors (grave).
  • Emotionally disengaged
My Genogram (10 years ago)
My Genogram (family size)

Now & Then

40 years ago

80 years ago

40 years ago
Family Structure

• Extended family system before W.W.II
• Nuclear family system after W.W.II
• Pseudo-Nuclear family
  • Separated but connected
Elderly

• Filial Piety (Respecting seniority)
  • “at home hospice”
    • Father’s terminal stage
  • Japanese pianist in Europe
    • Inheriting grandfather’s talent of music
    • Success in Berlin
    • Father’s death, Mother’s Crisis
    • Daughter’s guilt
    • Frequent homecoming for her Alzheimer mother.

• Cf. Granny Dumping in America
Disengaged Marriage

• Low divorce late
  • Social Stigma to divorce, low re-marriage rate
• Legally married, but emotionally divorced
  • Child’s problem
• Implicit communication in partnership
• Hardworking ethics, workaholic men
• High expectation for education
  • “Education Mama”, “helicopter parents”, Tiger Mother”
• Emotionally enmeshed with child, delay of adolescent development
Divorce Rate (%)
Golden Triangle

Mom

Distant Marriage

Enmeshed

Kid

Absent Fatherhood

Dad
## COMMUNICATION PATTERN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENSITIVE (Non-assertive)</th>
<th>ASSERTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others-Centered (Others &gt; Self)</td>
<td>Self-Centered (Self &gt; Others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self in a GROUP</td>
<td>Self as Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group-reliant</td>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmony (Group oriented)</td>
<td>Outstanding (individual oriented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit message</td>
<td>Explicit message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency, enmeshed</td>
<td>Independence, differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain connectedness</td>
<td>Maintain Separateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay together and DO NOTHING</td>
<td>DO SOMETHING and leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalize the pain</td>
<td>Externalize the pain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enryo 遠慮

• Culturally valued pattern of communication in Japan.
• Passivity or non-assertiveness in culturally positive sense.
• Putting other needs first and suppress his own needs in service for others.
Who comes first?

Self

Others
Self-Centered

Self

Assertiveness, speak out!

Others
Others-Centered

- Putting others first
- Sensitivity to others
- Self-sacrifice
- Maintain harmony

Enryo 遠慮

Self

Others
Social Withdrawal (Hikikomori)

• Avoid social participation
  • e.g. school, training, employment

• Avoid social contacts
  • E.g. friends, colleagues

• Stay home for long time
  • more than half year

• Exclude mental disorders
  • e.g. schizophrenia, depression
Hikikomori (Social Withdrawal)

- **Age**
  - Adolescents: teenager
  - Pre-adolescents: 6-12 years old
  - Post-Adolescents: 20s, 30s, 40s
- **Male > Female**
- **1-2% of the (18-25) age population**
Social Withdrawal from Cultural Perspective

• life long parent/child relationship
• enmeshed mother, disengaged father
• non-assertive parenting
• High expectation of academic performance
• Computer and Internet addiction
Dysfunctional Youths

• Homeless in the Society
  • Western culture
• Homeless in the Family
  • Asian culture
Intimacy, Attachment, Love, Relationship as...

• Happiness, security, fulfilment, purpose of life, identity, self-worth
• Burden, tension, stress, trauma, anxiety, sadness
Solution to the fear of Intimacy

• Extroverts: Run away
  • Disconnect, Separation, Divorce, Leave home,
  • Assertiveness, Aggression, Violence
  • “I am a free man!!”
    • Alcoholic Frenchman escaped from therapy

• Introverts: Withdraw
  • Depression, self-harm, suicide,
  • Silence, Non-assertive, Sensitivity to others
  • Hikikomori, Taijin-Kyofu 対人恐怖
Asian Model of the Therapist

• Create safe enough space to explore
  • Family conflict
  • Family taboo, secret

• Facilitate communication
  • safe confrontation of the different opinions

• Explore positive inter-dependence (amae)
  • Sense of Security
  • Purposeful Triangulation
## Goal of Therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>West</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Oriented</td>
<td>Individual Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration in Group</td>
<td>Differentiation of Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Dependence, Enmeshed</td>
<td>Independence, Disengaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>Separateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay Together and Calm</td>
<td>Act Out and Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalize the pain</td>
<td>Externalize the pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to Others</td>
<td>Assertiveness, Articulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Sacrifice</td>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Solution for both cultures

• East and West are both stuck in different ways.

• Separateness and Connectedness
  • Overdoing cultural norms create problem
  • Balancing the two norms
  • Safely Create separateness for Japanese family
  • Safely Create connectedness for Western family
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