

A STUDY IN ACCOUNTABILITY OF CLUBHOUSES IN JAPAN, UK, AND ITALY*

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ABSTRACT

Many International Clubhouses are dependent on the state financially; this can potentially undermine their accountability to International Clubhouse Standards, and ultimately to members. Dependence on government funding can compromise Clubhouse autonomy and staff can end up elevating financial and regulatory accountability over member accountability. In order to shed light on how dependence on government affects accountability to members, Clubhouse affiliates in Japan, the United Kingdom, and Italy were investigated in a 2-year project funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This study found out that reactions to accountability in Clubhouses vary according to the different kinds of staff. In the United Kingdom and Italy, where staff feel aligned with members (sympathetic staff), staff felt more of a conflict with government standards but also felt less of a need to institutionalize accountability to members. In contrast, it was found that in Japan—where staff had a professional orientation and were more concerned with the community or society at large—staff did not feel a conflict with government standards but they also elevated accountability to the community rather than accountability to members.

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INTRODUCTION

The “Clubhouse” model for supporting people with mental illness plays a significant role in modern self-help and advocacy movements. This model is said to have originated at Fountain House in New York City in 1948, but Fountain House was actually the product of a much earlier struggle by a group of former psychiatric patients who had formed WANA (We Are Not Alone). These ex-patients were determined to help others make the transition from hospitals and asylums back into the community. It was their efforts that led to the establishment of Fountain House, which went on to achieve recognition as a model for the psychosocial rehabilitation of people leaving state mental institutions. After almost 3 decades of ideological consolidation, Fountain House started a training program in 1977 designed to replicate the model around the world. This in turn led to the successful launch of the Clubhouse movement, which today accounts for over 300 Clubhouse programs operating in around 30 countries (ICCD).

For more than 15 years, Fountain House acted as both the umbrella organization and as an affiliate within the Clubhouse movement. However, in 1994 the International Center for Clubhouse Development (ICCD) was established and this eventually took on the role of umbrella organization, offering training programs and certification prevalently, in line with a set of well-defined international Clubhouse Standards. These Standards aim mainly at establishing an ethical climate among the actors of a Clubhouse (members, staff, and the board of management) by fostering peer-to-peer relationships. Above all, the Standards preclude the notion of members as clients or customers (and therefore in need of services) and consider them instead as ordinary people in need of friendship networks and social support. In accord with Clubhouse Standards, the staff are conceptualized as people who assist with rather than control the efforts of members toward mutual aid. Using an expression coined by Borkman (2006), one could say that Clubhouse staff are seen as “sympathetic professionals,” always allied with members as equal partners, not authority figures. In other words, the Standards establish the principle according to which, only peer members possess decision-making powers in relation to the group, and staff undertake the role of facilitators only. For example, Standard n.9 states: “Clubhouse staff are sufficient to engage the membership, yet small enough in number to make carrying out their responsibilities impossible without member involvement.” This Standard is in direct contrast with those of traditional organizations, where staff and management have “an exclusively professional point of view which rejects, or sees only a minimal role for, any alternative forms of helping or social support” (Farquharson, 1995, p. 82).

However, when applied to an international context, the Standards tend to ignore the fact that they are more strongly influenced by the external factors pertaining to a particular country than they are by the ICCD ethos. If we look at Clubhouse affiliates in European countries such as the United Kingdom and

Italy, or in Asian countries such as Japan, two things become clear. First, the internal governance of Clubhouses (which is well defined in the international Clubhouse Standards) has to conform to the country's own legal framework for the establishment of Third Sector organizations. Consequently, they become subject to *internal* rules set by the ICCD and *external* regulations laid down by the national legal frameworks. In Japan, for example, Clubhouses are sponsored as *shakai fukushi hojin* (Social Welfare Corporations), a type of public interest corporation, which were, until recently, considered the traditional partners of the government in social services provision. In the United Kingdom, furthermore, Clubhouses are sponsored as "unincorporated associations," which are membership organizations such as charities, community associations, sports clubs, and social clubs and finally, Clubhouses in Italy are sponsored as B-type social organizations categorized between cooperatives and voluntary associations. This type of social cooperative specializes in the integration of disadvantaged people in the labor market (Laratta, 2011). The second, noticeable feature of Clubhouses in an international context is that they are organizations that have to rely heavily on their governments in order to be financially sustainable. For instance, despite the differences in the legal forms which impact on the operations of Clubhouse affiliates in Japan, the United Kingdom, and Italy, they all receive over 80% of their annual operating budget from their own governments (Laratta, 2011), underlining their near total dependency. In an effort to preserve Clubhouses as independent organizations, ICCD Standards 12-13 state that each one should have an independent board of directors, or an "advisory board" if it is affiliated to the sponsoring agency. Although sound in principle, this in fact demonstrates that the entire chain of command, along with the links between Clubhouse affiliates and local donors (in particular, the government) are often not fully understood by the ICCD.

This lack of understanding is attributable to the tendency of the ICCD to be too distant from its affiliates and to rely on local boards for information about their own performance. This situation obviously creates a conflict of interest as the boards are required to report both good and bad performance to people who may hold them accountable. Further pressure comes from the affiliate boards already being upwardly accountable to their local governments as their main funders. One fact completely ignored by the ICCD is the tension between Clubhouse boards (who have to struggle to secure government funding in order to maintain the peer-support process) and local administrations (who see the enhancement of monitoring systems as a way of meeting their obligations to reduce outsourcing costs). This situation is nicely depicted in a theory to be found in the literature on nonprofit organizations, namely that the lower the level of nonprofit independency, the higher is the level of statutory (i.e., governmental) accountability imposed on them by their governments (Tonkiss & Passey, 1999). Under pressure to demonstrate accountability and in desperate need of government financial support, Clubhouses are focusing their mission, not on

the peer-support process, but on maintaining their financial stability and related regulatory procedures. There is consequently a risk that, under financial pressure, neither the affiliate board nor its staff will be able to adhere to the self-help and mutual aid approach, will have no time to explain its value to members and to society at large, and will no longer be willing or able to assist and support their members. Put more bluntly, they are at risk of undermining the “peer support” processes within the Clubhouse as a direct consequence of constraints imposed on them in the name of financial sustainability.

It has therefore become a matter of urgency to identify a method of bolstering Clubhouse board and staff contributions to the peer-support process (i.e., their mission) without undermining the financial sustainability of the organization. Recent investigations into Clubhouses in Japan, the United Kingdom, and Italy shed light on the subject of financial sustainability in relation to financial pressures, represented by “accountability,” through an exploration of questions such as: a) To what extent can we say that Clubhouses operate “independently”? b) To whom exactly are Clubhouses accountable? c) What accountability mechanisms are currently in effect? d) How much time do these agencies spend on meeting the requirements of accountability measures? e) Do Clubhouse staff and management boards consider that accountability demands have a positive or negative impact on their organization’s ability to fulfill its mission? The ultimate aim of this article is to discuss the different kinds of staff and their reactions to accountability.

METHODOLOGY

The literature on nonprofits, although extensive, does not offer a clear definition of accountability and independence, and the absence of such, results in the lack of an adequate operationalization of these variables. The converse of the theory mentioned above, which is that the higher the level of independence in nonprofits the lower the level of statutory demands imposed on them, reflects this inadequacy. The idea of independence in nonprofits has mainly been in reference to their ability to manage the non-statutory resources—funds and/or volunteers—needed to pursue their mission (Kearns, 1996; Moore, 2000), in the same way that accountability has been referred to only in the context of “being held responsible by statutory organizations” (*general understanding*; McDonald, 1997, p. 53).

When these two concepts are examined in relation to the nonprofit sector, they assume wider meanings; the ability of nonprofits to build and maintain a network (here, the term “network” is used in the sense of a place where organizations can meet, dialogues or collaborate for the pursuing of defined projects) with other organizations or groups (non-statutory organizations), as well as their capacity to deliver policy programs within those networks, are also important variables in determining the level of independence in the nonprofit

sector. Similarly, following Ebrahim (2002), accountability in nonprofits also includes the “proactive response” of “taking responsibility for oneself in order to ensure that the public/beneficiary trust is served” (p. 3). Najam (1996) identifies this type of accountability as an internal or downward accountability as opposed to external accountability, which is upward to the funding source. This downward accountability refers to the responsibility of the nonprofit organization to “be accountable to the needs and aspirations” of those it intends to benefit (p. 345). Onyx and Dalton (2004) claim that when, in the nonprofit, there is a “strong culture of internal participation, then *downward* accountability will occur naturally, at least in theory,” but when there is a form of internal representational advocacy, downward accountability depends on those who are representing the constituency (p. 4). In the latter case, Fry (1995) noted that downward accountability is much more complicated than upward accountability because it has two dimensions: a feeling of responsibility and responsible behavior.

A Framework for the Operationalization and Measurement of the Variables

The absence in nonprofit literature of an exhaustive framework to operationalize and measure independence and accountability made it necessary to develop one for this research. This framework was discussed during the ISTR 9th International Conference, Istanbul, July 2010, and got a lot of consensus from many Third Sector scholars.

Level of Dependency

We began by questioning to what extent Clubhouses are independent from their statutory organizations. However, since “independence” itself could be considered a variable, it was initially necessary to test it. First, we considered independence in relation to the capacity of Clubhouses to manage non-statutory resources (funds and/or volunteers), their capacity to be in a network with other non-statutory organizations, and their capacity to deliver policy programs within those networks. We called these three sub-variables, respectively, management capacity, community capacity, and governance capacity, and operationalized them as follows.

Management capacity—We hypothesised that the level of independence of a Clubhouse was negatively related to the extent to which the organization was financially dependant on statutory funding. We further conjectured that there was a similar negative relationship to the level of desire in its staff to seek statutory funding. The third speculation we made was that it was also positively related to the number of volunteers in its staff, and to the benefits of having volunteers involved in the activities of the organization (i.e., better members-support, reduced costs, etc.). Conversely, we presumed that high costs or other drawbacks in recruiting volunteers would reduce the level of independence.

Community capacity—We worked on the theory that the level of independence of a nonprofit (and this specific case, of a Clubhouse) would be positively related to its ability to operate in a network with other non-statutory organizations or groups. We also presumed that there would be a positive relationship between Clubhouse independence and network formality. Conversely, we expected that the more informal the network, the less independent the Clubhouse would be in relation to statutory organizations. We also hypothesized that the level of independence was positively related to the capacity of a Clubhouse to identify organizations and groups with resources to sustain or implement network activity.

Governance capacity—We further conjectured that the level of independence would be positively related to the capacity of a Clubhouse to deliver policy programs and campaigns within its networks. Thus, we determined how many Clubhouses, among those we found to be part of a network, had actually delivered such programs in the previous 2 years. We also presumed that the level of independence would be positively related to a Clubhouse's capacity to maintain and resource those programs within the network and to take part in the decision-making process. Finally, we also surmised that the level of independence would be positively related to the ability of a nonprofit to evaluate successful and unsuccessful joint programs and campaigns with other organizations from the network. Conversely, we assumed that impediments to evaluation would reduce the level of independence.

Upward Accountability

In order to operationalize this sub-variable, we relied on the most fundamental definition of accountability as the means by which nonprofit staff were answerable to *others* and held responsible by their *operative* actions (Edwards & Hulme, 1997). At this point, the question arose as to who those “*others*” were. The literature on the subject identifies three kinds of nonprofits stakeholders: their donors, those who provide their funding, and their umbrella voluntary agencies (Edwards & Hulme, 1997; Kearns, 1996). However, it also recognizes that nonprofits are often responsible exclusively to authorities (such as their governments) (Edwards & Hulme, 1997; Kearns, 1996). Based on theoretical and empirical evidence, we decided to define the field of the “*others*” to whom Clubhouse staff are accountable as their government, and we analyzed upward accountability by exploring the relationship between nonprofit staff and government. Focusing the study on this relationship allowed us to investigate *how* the staff are accountable to government and whether they experienced such upward accountability demands as enabling or enforcing factors. In order to investigate the former, the staff we interviewed were asked to indicate how they met government accountability demands such as reports, audits, and/or monitoring visits; they were also asked about the frequency of the demands and the amount of time usually spent in order to respond effectively to them. As to the

latter, we asked whether such accountability measures enhanced or impaired their ability to fulfill their peer-support process. We also asked them to indicate on a three-level scale whether they thought government should have “more/less/about the same” involvement in holding their Clubhouse’s activities accountable (by requirement of reports and/or monitoring of their performance). At this stage we were able to distinguish those staff who experienced government accountability demands as enabling from those who viewed them as enforcing.

We were also able to investigate a further claim found in the literature, according to which a positive relationship exists between the way that staff perceive their governments, and their positive or negative experiences of government accountability demands. If the staff perceived state requests as related to the “greater good,” then the accountability demands were viewed as enabling rather than enforcing (Fry, 1995). To this end, the staff’s perceptions of their governments were investigated from different angles. We asked whether they saw themselves as being dependent on, in competition with, or in equal partnership and having open communication with governments. We also attempted to determine whether a “mutual attitude of trust and respect” or a “mutual attitude of indifference and distrust” prevailed between staff and their governments. With this information we were able to ascertain the relationship between the way in which staff perceive their governments and their positive or negative experiences regarding their government accountability demands.

Downward Accountability

While the Upward Accountability variable referred to the responsibility of nonprofit staff to be accountable to the demands of their statutory organizations in order to be operationalized, the Downward Accountability variable refers to their responsibility to “be accountable to the needs and aspirations” of those they intend to benefit (*members dimension*; see Najam, 1996, p. 345) and to “ensure that the public trust is served” (*community dimension*; see Ebrahim, 2002, p. 3). Our main concern in this regard was to investigate whether or not the staff adopted clearly established forms of members and/or community downward accountability. The “members downward accountability variable” was operationalized and measured by demonstrating whether the staff were: open to accepting complaints from their members (*informal measure*); willing to bypass the upward accountability structure to their members (*informal measure*); and assessing the members’ needs indirectly by means of surveys and/or directly through focus groups, or even more directly by providing specialist help when the member faced situations that could not be dealt with at staff or management levels (*formal measure*). Furthermore, the “community downward accountability variable” was assessed by investigating whether or not there had been, during the previous 12 months, organized focus groups with experts, debates, or public demonstrations, or interactions with local and/or national media (included news media), and whether these interactions were based on transparency, all of which are *formal measures*.

Data Collection Methods

We focused our investigation on Clubhouses in Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan. The information on the number and location of Italian, United Kingdom, and Japanese Clubhouses were collected through the International Centre for Clubhouse Development (ICCD). The variables identified for this study were then tested empirically in the context of the three groups of Clubhouses by means of a survey and interviews with their staff. We investigated five Clubhouses in Japan, five in the United Kingdom, and five in Italy, for a total of 15 Clubhouses; 25 staff were surveyed and subsequently interviewed in each country, for a total of 75. This 2-year research project was supported by a grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

FINDINGS

Level of Dependence

Our research findings revealed a relatively low level of management, community, and governance capacities in the clubhouses surveyed in the three countries, as well as a heavy dependence on government funding. There were few volunteers among their staff, mainly because the board and staff viewed the drawbacks to recruitment as outweighing the benefits. The only significant difference in the three localities was found in the attitude of respondents toward the funding of their activities. Respondents in the United Kingdom and Italy were seeking increased government funding for their activities, whereas in Japan the vast majority were content with the level of their government funding. Few of them were part of a formal network of non-statutory organizations, although over half saw themselves as part of a network which was not at all formalized. Furthermore, almost all of the Clubhouses who did view themselves as being part of a network found it impossible to identify other organizations or groups within the same network who had the resources to sustain or implement the network activity.

Upward Accountability

We looked at the formal or more institutionalized means and their frequency through which Clubhouses provide upward accountability to their governments. The most significant government accountability requirements which respondents selected from a list of requirements and their respective frequency (yearly, quarterly or monthly) are shown in Table 1.

The countries varied in the number and frequency of requirements—Japan had the most and Italy the least (see Table 1). We also asked survey respondents how much time their Clubhouses usually spent in order to satisfy each of the government accountability requirements listed in the questionnaire and estimated the impact of government accountability activities on their organizations' mission.

Table 1. Government Accountability Requirements

Government accountability requirements and frequency	Japan	United Kingdom	Italy
Activity reports	Yes Quarterly	Yes Yearly	Yes Yearly
Audits	Yes Quarterly	Yes Yearly	Yes Yearly
Monitoring visits	Yes Yearly	Yes Yearly	NO
Submission of balance sheets	Yes Yearly	Yes Yearly	NO
Submission of a list of staff who receive remuneration	Yes Yearly		
Submission of a list of 10 or more members' names	Yes Yearly		

Source: Analysis of Survey Data.

A recurrent complaint in the literature on the nonprofit sector was that nonprofits were repeatedly put under pressure by statutory accountability demands and, consequently, their mission-based activities were being jeopardized (Evers, 2004; Hodgson, 2004). Our findings to some extent confirm that claim by showing that, overall, Clubhouse staff in Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan did feel that they spent “a lot” or “quite a lot” of time meeting those demands. However, despite the fact that Clubhouses in Japan were subject to a more frequent and wider range of government accountability requirements than those surveyed in Italy and the United Kingdom, Figure 1 shows that a high percentage of the Japanese staff perceived government accountability activities as providing a positive impact on their Clubhouse’s mission. In the United Kingdom and Italy, by contrast, staff surveyed perceived time spent on government accountability demands as a hindrance.

This finding was also corroborated by the staff’s views concerning the adequacy of accountability to the government. Indeed, the majority of respondents in the United Kingdom, and Italy “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that there was adequate accountability to government, while the opposite was true of the staff surveyed in Japan. As for the respondents’ perceived role of government in

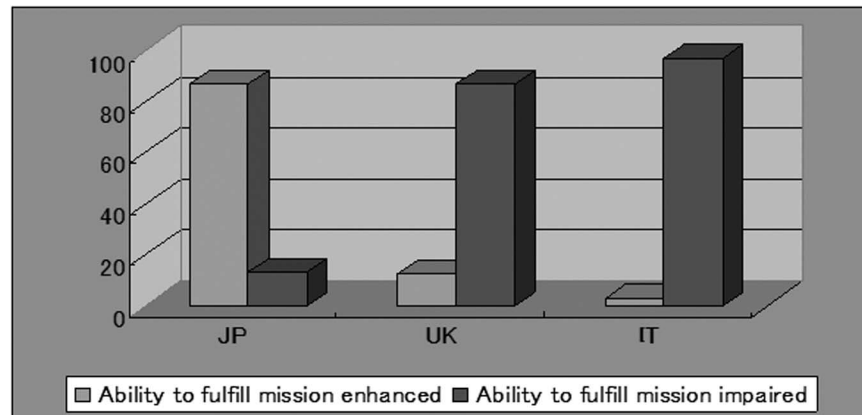


Figure 1. Staff's perception of the impact of government accountability activities on their clubhouses' mission. **Source:** Analysis of Survey Data.

accountability, we noted that, in the United Kingdom and Italy, over 50% of staff were in favor of a reduction in the accountability functions required by government. In Japan, on the other hand, the majority of respondents were content with the existing level of government accountability. The results obtained through subsequent re-interviews reconfirmed this finding.

A further claim in NPO accountability literature was that the principal factor in determining whether accountability interactions were experienced as enabling or enforcing (and accordingly how the agent would react to attempts to hold him/her accountable) was the agent's perception of the government's requests (Fry, 1995). Clubhouse staff in all three countries felt dependent on governments either financially or administratively (see Table 2).

For instance, the majority of respondents in the three groups of Clubhouse staff surveyed who considered themselves as being in competition also either "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" that there was adequate accountability to government; conversely, the vast majority of staff who viewed their relationships with government as equal partnerships were also in agreement or strong agreement that there was adequate accountability to them. A similar finding can be observed in their common perception of the relationship between their organization and government and their view of the adequacy of government accountability demands. Indeed, staff in Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan who were of the opinion that a "mutual attitude of trust and respect" prevailed between their Clubhouses and government were also those who, in the main, agreed that there was an adequate level of government accountability demands. The opposite was found to be true of those respondents who felt that a "mutual attitude of

Table 2. How Clubhouses Perceive Their Governments

How clubhouses perceive their governments	Japan	United Kingdom	Italy
Feel dependent on governments either financially or administratively	High	High	High
Feel in competition with governments either for the kind of services they both provide or for the level of efficiency in the provision of these services	Low	High	Low
Feel in equal partnership with governments either in terms of activities they both perform or in terms of values they both share	High	Low	Low

Source: Analysis of Survey Data.

Note: "High" indicates a percentage of 0.05% or above; "Low" indicates a percentage below 0.05%.

indifference and distrust" prevailed between their Clubhouses and government, who viewed the level of government accountability requirements as inadequate.

The literature on the relationships between government and nonprofit organizations in Japan is filled with the claims of scholars such as Schwartz (1998) and Hirata (2002) who identify Japan as an important case for its close state-civil society partnerships in the realm of social welfare services compared with countries such as Italy and the United Kingdom; in the latter countries any attempt at co-operation with government to improve welfare services usually meets with determined opposition. Our study found significant differences between the two EU countries and Japan in the ways in which Clubhouse staff perceive their capacity to partner with the government (see Table 2). In contexts such as the United Kingdom, where nonprofit staff see themselves in a "conflicting relationship" toward their government, partnerships are difficult.

Downward Accountability

Another important question we attempted to answer in this study was whether or not Clubhouse staff adopted clearly established forms of members and/or community downward accountability. A number of mechanisms that focus on upward accountability have been identified but few apply to downward accountability. The findings of our study showed that it was impossible for researchers to identify what did not exist; the majority of staff in Italy and the

United Kingdom were unable themselves to identify either formal members or community downward mechanisms. However, staff in Japan, for instance, were able to identify both formal members and community downward accountability mechanisms.

Members' and Community Downward Accountability

We investigated both informal and formal methods used by the Clubhouses to assess their members' needs. The former included "receptivity to complaints from the members" and "willingness to bypass upward accountability structure for the members." The latter included "focus groups with experts," "debates or public demonstrations," and "interactions with local and/or national media (including news media)."

One of our main findings was that, despite the staff's readiness to use such informal mechanisms of assessing members' needs as "accepting complaints from the members" or "their willingness to bypass upward accountability structures," the majority of the surveyed Clubhouse staff in the United Kingdom and Italy did not use any formal mechanisms to assess their members' needs such as surveys or focus groups. However, in Japan over 70% of staff used "focus groups" for assessment, with a further 39.5% "providing specialist help to constituents when they face difficult situations," and another 31.6% assessing their members' needs by means of surveys. Yet, despite this wide variety of assessment methods, there was no substantial difference among the three countries in the extent to which Clubhouse staff felt that there was adequate accountability to members.

SYMPATHETIC STAFF vs. PROFESSIONAL STAFF

An interesting finding of this study was that staff members' orientation can affect how they perceive and implement accountability standards to the government. In the United Kingdom and Italy, where staff feel aligned with members, staff felt more of a conflict with government standards but also felt less of a need to institutionalize accountability to members. In contrast, in Japan—where staff had a professional orientation and were more concerned with the community or society at large—staff did not feel a conflict with government standards but they also elevated accountability to the community rather than accountability to members. We defined these two categories of staff as "sympathetic" and "professional" respectively. Sympathetic staff can be defined as those who are allied with the members as partners, not authority figures, and assist, not control, efforts toward self-help and mutual aid. By contrast, professional staff are those who often attempt to control, lead, or otherwise interfere in the natural operations of the group in their own interests (Laratta & Borkman, 2012).

Sympathetic Staff

Some of the “sympathetic staff” we re-interviewed, mainly those in the two EU countries, clearly manifested a strong sense of “member caring,” in which the primary concern was what they thought best for the Clubhouse members, rather than for community or society at large/general public. They therefore approached downward accountability exclusively from its *members* dimension (i.e., the Clubhouse members) and had great difficulty identifying *community* downward accountability mechanisms. As clearly emerged from the interviews, they reasoned that facilitating members in their day-to-day activities was based solely on a strong sense of perceived responsibility toward them as an instrument of social justice. In other words, they considered that adopting formal measures to achieve accountability to their members would have been just another inappropriate attempt to incorporate into the system those who had been excluded from it simply because of their inability to engage with any more formal or institutionalized measures. Staff in the “sympathetic” category perceived their governments as institutions who ignored their responsibilities altogether by not having any policies at all concerning the care of people diagnosed with mental illness. However, they recognized their own dependency on the government, either financially or administratively, while at the same time believing their Clubhouses capable of offering better support for their members. Government accountability demands were deemed to be no more than an inadequate means of underscoring their financial dependency, inadequate because it failed to take into account the innumerable day-to-day activities which constituted the central focus of the peer-support process.

Professional Staff

In Japan, on the other hand, the majority of staff we interviewed in Clubhouse affiliates were “professional staff.” Most of them were highly skilled psychiatric social workers (Laratta, 2011) who were much more law-oriented and approached downward accountability from its *external* dimension. They had as their primary concern the well-being of the community or society at large, and the tendency among them was to do what was right for the community/public as a whole, independent of whether this would also be in the interests of their organization’s members. In affirmation of this, these “professional staff” were able to provide specific examples of their work to show how the design and implementation of their “pedagogical programs” were linked to neighborhood needs (people living near their organization, owners of nearby shops, commuters to school or work close to the Clubhouse, and the like). Furthermore, the *members* dimension (i.e., accountability to their members) was not as central to their discussions as it appeared to be for many “sympathetic staff.” The importance “professional staff” placed on communicating and maintaining a relationship with the community may be interpreted as a way of legitimizing their organization in the eyes of the

government which constituted a critical strategy for achieving negotiated accountability. Indeed, on the one hand, they were able to use the input to better inform decisions and counter the pull of downward accountability while, on the other, they could justify their decisions (and organizational needs) as deriving from community input when responding to government accountability demands. They therefore perceived the government as an institution who, by entrusting them with welfare activities (indeed they are sponsored as social welfare corporations) and by providing substantial financial support, joined with them in a welfare partnership not only for the benefit of their Clubhouse's members but, more broadly, for that of the whole community. For this reason, although the "professional staff" felt as dependent on government as did the "sympathetic staff," they considered themselves to be in equal partnership with them, especially in terms of caring for the community. In the same way that ties to the community were used to legitimize their organizations to government, so government accountability was used to legitimize their organizations to the community. As one "professional staff" member observed, awareness by the community that the money which they paid as taxes to government (and which was in turn passed on to their Clubhouse) was being well spent, was fundamental to their mission. In this respect, the "professional staff" believed that government accountability was adequate and they also perceived government accountability demands as enhancing their ability to fulfill their organization's mission.

CONCLUSION

In the United Kingdom and Italy, government-nonprofit sector relationships are recognized as difficult (Taylor, 2001; Young, 2000). On the contrary, Japan is often celebrated as a place where such relationships are close and long-lasting (Hirata, 2002). The findings of this study show that reactions to accountability in Clubhouses vary according to the different kinds of staff. In the United Kingdom and Italy, where staff feel aligned with members (sympathetic staff), staff felt more of a conflict with government standards but also felt less of a need to institutionalize accountability to members. In contrast, it was found that in Japan—where staff had a professional orientation and were more concerned with the community or society at large—staff did not feel a conflict with government standards but they also elevated accountability to the community rather than accountability to members.

According to Kearns, there is a link between ethics and accountability because "ethics is primarily concerned with responsibility—personal and organizational—for making decisions according to an accepted (or defensible) moral code for distinguishing right from wrong. Accountability, on the other hand, involves the responsibility to answer to a higher authority" (Kearns, 1996, p. 10). The concept of ethics is promoted among the staff and management in international Clubhouses by means of the ICCD Standards. However, our study's investigation

of accountability clearly demonstrates that the ethical code of international Clubhouses is not shaped by the ICCD Standards to the extent that is often assumed, rather it is determined by whether the staff fall into a category of “professional staff,” as do the majority of Japanese Clubhouse staff, or into that of “sympathetic staff,” as represented by the majority of Italian and UK Clubhouse staff. Moreover, the same research discovered that there is a clear link between these two categories and the way they approach accountability toward Clubhouse members and community. The sympathetic staff displayed an underlying *individuality* (caring for the members) which was in striking contrast to the professional staff’s tendency to *subjugate him/herself to the needs of the community*. However, we should not underestimate the importance of the socio-cultural differences between the European and the Japanese. Indeed, *Confucianism*—imported to Japan from China—soon became “a conscious way of life” (Yokoyama, 1899) which, through the samurai, began to determine the formation of distinctive characteristics—which are still evident today—centered on a strict, morally hierarchical system within which every man is a basic unit in the pursuit of perfect virtue for the good of family, society, and ultimately the nation (Storry, 1978). A crucial aspect of this philosophy is that it is directed exactly toward discouraging people from developing their own *individuality*; rather, whatever relates to the benefit of the group is deemed as the priority, beyond any individual interests. As Yamaoka (1998) rightly points out, the philosophy of Confucianism has made Japanese society value *collectivism* highly where people of all ages are encouraged not to celebrate their uniqueness; moreover, when conflict occurs, people are encouraged to abandon their personal concerns and emotions for the sake of the harmony and benefit of the group. Our speculation is that the sense of closeness to/caring for the community, which we found determined the way in which the majority of Clubhouse staff in Japan approached downward accountability, may have derived from this social-cultural tradition. However, we should acknowledge that Japan is strongly influenced by the West, especially in recent years, and members of society are now encouraged both to cultivate and to show their individuality. The Japanese, who for centuries have been discouraged by social institutions from developing individuality and encouraged to pass on collectivist values to the next generation, are now being encouraged to cultivate individuality in contradiction of those traditional values. This may lead to future enquiries concerning Japanese Clubhouse staff changing their attitude to downward accountability and consequently to their partnership relationships with statutory organizations.

In all three countries investigated, government accountability mechanisms remain the only, although “incomplete,” way (Edwards & Hulme, 1997) of trying to ensure that the staff and management of Clubhouses are as supportive as ethically possible toward their members. Even so, this is found to work well only in the presence of “professional staff,” whose sympathies lie more with society at large than with the peer-support process. The same accountability

mechanisms also seem ineffective in Clubhouses with “sympathetic staff” who perceive government accountability demands as a hindrance to their peer-support efforts. Accordingly, our recommendations to the ICCD are:

1. They should acknowledge the fact that their ethical Standards do not necessarily produce an ethical code for international Clubhouses unless they are operated by “sympathetic staff.” The Standards must first ensure that staff and management have fully understood their role of facilitators within their Clubhouses.
2. They must take accountability into serious consideration as an important factor in the achievement of an ethos appropriate to international Clubhouse Standards. In other words, as ethics and accountability are linked, so the internal rules of the ICCD need to be linked to the external regulations to which international Clubhouses are inevitably subjected.
3. They should establish a branch in the country of each affiliate to intercede as necessary with local donors (especially the government). The ICCD branch could also facilitate their affiliates in a number of ways, such as by helping with funding applications and administrative procedures and responding to the accountability demands imposed on local Clubhouses by donors.

These reforms would help to ensure the continued success of an important organization in the field of modern self-help and advocacy.

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