Students' Perceptions of Socialisation and Gender Role in Japan and Germany

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The present study investigates differences in students' perceptions of social-isation and gender roles in Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany. N = 64 male and 111 female Japanese and N = 61 male and 59 female German students completed paper-and-pencil tests. Group comparisons showed significant differences with respect to perceptions of socialisation and gender-role orientation. Japanese adolescents reported more parental acceptance and control than German adolescents. Japanese mothers were seen as more and German mothers were seen as less controlling than respective fathers whereas at the same time mothers in both countries were seen as more supportive than fathers. Furthermore, Japanese students had more "traditional" gender-role orientations than German adolescents. These results are interpreted on the basis of culture-specific values underly-ing socialisation and the organisation of interpersonal relations.

INTRODUCTION

The present study deals with the question of possible differences in perceived socialisation and gender-role attitudes of students from two highly industrialised but culturally different countries—Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany. Socialisation and gender-role attitudes as a part of a general cultural value system may indicate some basic conditions for personality development in different cultural contexts. A comparison between Japanese and German students seems especially interesting: In spite of their similarities with respect to socio-economic factors, Japanese and German cultural values seem to structure the relation between person and social environment very differently.

Japanese children grow up under conditions of a harmonious, highly supportive, and conformity-demanding mother–child relationship (cf. Stevenson, Azuma, & Hakuta; 1986); in contrast, German children and adolescents experience more individuality, independence, and conflicts with their parents (Trommsdorff, 1983; 1989). Furthermore, Confucian values of gender-role differentiation still prevail in Japan (Prime Minister's Office, 1984; Sugiyama, 1984), whereas Germans are increasingly oriented toward equality of gender roles (Schmidtchen, 1984; Trommsdorff, 1982; Trommsdorff, Suzuki & Sasaki, 1987).

Though egalitarian values of gender role prevail, mothers and fathers affect socialisation processes differently (Block, 1984; Lamb, 1977).

Parental support and control or acceptance and rejection (cf. Devereux, Bronfenbrenner, & Rodgers, 1969; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1970; 1976) are of special interest for the cross-cultural study of parental socialisation. These variables seem to be related to cultural values of social conformity (and autonomy) and to social harmony (vs. conflict) in a complicated way if we take cross-cultural studies into account: Parental conformity demands are perceived as part of parental support and harmonious parent–child relations in a cultural context which values conformity; however, in a cultural context which values independence and autonomy, parental conformity demands are rather perceived as rejection or parent–child conflict (cf. Trommsdorff, 1984; Pettengill & Rohner, 1985).

Thus, cross-cultural studies on perceived socialisation may help to clarify conditions of personality development by taking into account the subjective meaning of parental behaviour as modified by the cultural context.

Accordingly, the present study attempts to specify possible differences in perceived parental socialisation and gender-role attitudes of Japanese and German students.

METHOD

Subjects

In each country, university students from the department of social science and education (Nagoya and Aachen) participated in the investigation ($N =$ 64 male and 111 female Japanese students, and $N = 61$ male and 59 female German students, all between 19 and 24 years old). All subjects were instructed to answer questionnaires individually and anonymously. The questionnaires were administered in small groups.

Instruments

In order to measure (a) socialisation and (b) gender-role orientation, several questionnaires were employed after translation and back-translation by native colleagues from English to German and to Japanese. As described below, these questionnaires were pilot tested for equivalence of meaning in both countries.

Parental socialisation. This was measured by the 30-item questionnaires of Devereux, Bronfenbrenner, & Rodgers (1969). Here, a variety of parental behaviour in different situations of parent–child interaction are included. These situations describe the behaviour of the mother/father in case of the child's positive or negative experience in several situations (e.g. achievement, problem solving, social interaction). An example of the Devereux et al. (1969) item is: "He/she comforts me when I have trouble." The 4-point scale ranged from 1 = never to 4 = always. According to previous cross-cultural studies, these items measure relevant aspects of parental socialisation as experienced by the child (Devereux et al., 1969; Trommsdorff, 1984). A further questionnaire measured parental responses to the child's misbehaviour. Children's misbehaviour entails potentially a conflict between parent and child. We were interested in how students perceived their parents handling such a situation—rather understanding their child or using negative sanctions. This questionnaire consisted of a set of seven items from Schludermann and Schludermann (1970). An example from the Schludermann and Schludermann (1970) instrument is: "He/she scolds me." "He/she understands." These responses were rated on 4-point scales from 1 = completely true to 4 = completely wrong. These items were tested in pilot studies and were meaningful for both German and Japanese students (Trommsdorff, 1984).

Instruments to measure gender-role orientations. These included a 7-item questionnaire on division of labour between men and women (Brothun, 1977) and the 24-item questionnaire of Scanzoni and Szinovacz (1981) on typical roles of mothers/wives and fathers/husbands. Both questionnaires include items used in other studies on gender role in Western societies and in Japan (Sugiyama, 1984). An example from the Brothun questionnaire is: "In the family, women should care for the household, and men should care for the living." An example from the Scanzoni and Szinovacz items is: "The husband should be the head of the family." Each instrument's items were rated on 4-point scales: 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree.

The English versions of the Devereux et al. (1969) and the Scanzoni and

Szinovacz (1981) instruments were translated and back-translated both into German (by a German native) and into Japanese (by a Japanese native); the German items on gender role (Brothun, 1977) were first translated into English by a German native and then into Japanese by a Japanese native. The Japanese translations were back-translated into English by Japanese natives and then checked again by German natives. The final version of the questionnaires was handed out to the Japanese or German subjects in their respective mother language.

Subjects answered all items individually by marking their answers on the respective rating scales.

RESULTS

Data analysis

First, a principal-component analysis followed by a varimax rotation was performed for each culture with respect to (a) perceived socialisation and (b) gender-role orientation. For (a) and (b) three factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.0. In order to achieve equivalence of factor structures, all items with loading <0.50 were analysed with respect to comparability of meaning. Some culture-specific items and a larger number of identical items occurred for each factor. These identical items were used as "core items" to describe the respective factor (Miller, Slomczynski, & Schoenberg, 1981). Besides these core items, culture-specific items (with minimum loadings of <0.50) were included for further analysis. In both cultures, the following structurally equivalent factors (comprising the same core items) were extracted: (a) general socialisation of mother/father: I = support (e.g. "understands my personal problems"), II = negative sanctions (e.g. "makes me feel guilty"), III = control/conformity demands (e.g. "wants to know what I do"); (b) parent's reactions to child's misbehaviour: I = punishment (e.g. "scolds me"), II = understanding (e.g. "understands my fault"); (c) gender roles: I = working mother (e.g. "mother should work"), II = patriarchal father (e.g. "father has last word"), III = career woman (e.g. "a working woman should not try to get ahead in the same way as a man does").

The range of the explained variances (of the cumulated factors for each variable) was between 36% and 49% for each country. Since no linear causal analyses were intended, group comparisons were carried out for each factor. These were based on the sum of all items—core items plus culture-specific items—with a minimum loading of <0.50 for each factor. Group comparisons (between culture and gender) of these total scores were computed by Student t-tests.

Group Comparisons

Perceived parental socialisation. Comparisons of means for each of the factors of perceived socialisation clearly showed significantly higher support and higher conformity demands for Japanese as compared to German parents (mothers, $t(293) = 4.10$ and 6.71, $P < 0.05$, respectively; fathers, $t(293) = 2.42$ and 12.10, $P < 0.05$, respectively).

No significant differences occurred for negative sanctions. In case of misbehaviour, Japanese adolescents reported less parental punishment and less understanding on the part of their parents than German adolescents ($t(293) = 5.22$ and 2.67, $P < 0.05$ respectively). Japanese boys received more negative sanctions (from mother) than girls ($t(173) = 2.16$, $P < 0.05$). Such differences did not occur for German adolescents (see Tables 1 and 2).

Socialisation experiences according to gender of parents and adolescents showed that males and females perceived mother's and father's socialisation practices in different ways. Japanese (especially females) felt more support from their mothers than from their fathers ($t(173) = 5.25$, $P < 0.05$); there were no significant differences for German students. In contrast, German students reported significantly more conformity demands from their fathers than their mothers ($t(118) = 12.50$, $P < 0.05$) (see Tables 1 and 2).

TABLE 1
Perceived Parental Socialisation of Females

Perceived parental socialisation	Japan			Germany			t $P < 0.05$
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	
Mother's behaviour[a]							
Support	2.86	0.55	111	2.58	0.74	55	2.39
Negative sanctions	1.30	0.38	111	1.44	0.35	57	2.30
Conformity	2.45	0.55	111	2.00	0.58	54	4.81
Father's behaviour[a]							
Support	2.54	0.58	107	2.31	0.74	50	2.09
Negative sanctions	1.50	0.45	107	1.50	0.58	57	n.s.
Conformity	1.81	0.52	107	2.52	0.62	54	7.60
Parent's behaviour in case of child's misbehaviour[b]							
Punishment	3.40	0.43	111	3.07	0.57	59	4.21
Understanding	2.42	0.45	111	2.19	0.64	57	2.68

[a] $1 = $ low to $4 = $ high; [b] $1 = $ high to $4 = $ low.

TABLE 2
Perceived Parental Socialisation of Males

Perceived parental socialisation	Japan			Germany			t P < 0.05
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	
Mother's behaviour[a]							
Support	2.75	0.62	64	2.47	0.53	59	2.65
Negative sanctions	1.47	0.55	64	1.42	0.38	59	n.s.
Conformity	2.39	0.52	64	1.98	0.57	58	4.12
Father's behaviour[a]							
Support	2.62	0.56	62	2.44	0.68	55	n.s.
Negative sanctions	1.60	0.58	62	1.53	0.39	60	n.s.
Conformity	1.79	0.53	62	2.63	0.44	58	9.33
Parent's behaviour in case of child's misbehaviour[b]							
Punishment	3.39	0.42	64	3.13	0.55	59	2.43
Understanding	2.40	0.47	64	2.29	0.62	59	n.s.

[a]1 = low to 4 = high; [b]1 = high to 4 = low.

Gender-role attitudes. Highly significant differences for all three factors of gender-role orientation occurred for the Japanese as compared to the German sample ($t(293) = 4.55$, $P < 0.05$). Separate analyses for subgroups of females and males clearly showed the same pattern: Japanese adolescents hold more traditional gender-role attitudes than German adolescents with respect to all three factors. Furthermore, in both countries, females

TABLE 3
Gender-Role Attitudes of Female and Male Students

	Japan			Germany			t P < 0.05
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	
Female students							
Working mother[a]	2.42	0.46	111	2.80	0.60	58	4.55
Traditional father[b]	2.30	0.39	111	3.63	0.45	59	19.90
Working wife[c]	2.37	0.44	111	1.32	0.47	57	14.20
Male students							
Working mother[a]	2.35	0.45	63	2.56	0.55	58	2.28
Traditional father[b]	2.14	0.41	63	3.32	0.56	60	13.20
Working wife[c]	2.50	0.39	63	1.60	0.49	60	11.20

[a]1 = reject to 4 = accept; [b]1 = accept to 4 = reject; [c]1 = accept to 4 = reject.

were significantly less traditional in their gender-role orientation than males (see Table 3).

In order to study the relationship between perceived socialisation and gender-role orientation, Pearson product moment correlations were computed. Most correlations did not reach significance except the correlation between socialisation and "patriarchal father role". For females, the experience of low support from mother (in Japan) or low support from father (in Germany) correlated significantly with rejection of the "patriarchal father" (Japan: $r = -0.29$ and -0.35, respectively, $P = <0.01$, $df = 62$; FRG: $r = -0.16$ and -0.25, n.s.).

DISCUSSION

The significantly greater supportive socialisation experiences reported by Japanese as compared to German students can be discussed against the background of cultural values prevailing in both countries: In Japan, high importance is placed on group orientation and on harmonious social relations; in contrast, in the Federal Republic of Germany, individuality and independence are highly valued. In line with this general value orientation, Japanese adolescents experience more social support and conformity demands than German youth. This is in accordance with data from other cross-cultural studies on socialisation differences between Japan and the West (Trommsdorff, 1982, 1984; Stevenson et al., 1986).

In line with this reasoning, gender-role attitudes of Japanese as compared to German students are more tied to "traditional" beliefs of the "natural" social inequality of men and women (Sugiyama, 1984; Trommsdorff, 1982, 1983; Trommsdorff et al., 1987). The rather conformity-oriented socialisation in Japan may provide the basis for more "traditional" gender-role attitudes—that is a greater preference for a differentiated family structure and related division of labour for males and females.

In the same vein, mother's and father's behaviour is experienced differently by male and female adolescents in each country. Mothers in both countries are perceived as providing affective support and fathers as carrying out negative sanctions; however, with repect to control, Japanese mothers and German fathers are perceived as controlling agents. This would be interpreted in accordance with cultural values underlying socialisation processes in both countries. In Japan, social control and conformity demands serve to support values of group harmony; social control is experienced as parental support in a close mother–child relationship. For German adolescents, however, conformity demands contrast with values of independence; accordingly, conformity demands are experienced in a context of negative sanctions (Trommsdorff, 1984).

Though our data can only illustrate the expected differences in perceived socialisation and gender-role beliefs, the question arises whether these perceptions are part of culture-specific value systems and related socialisation conditions.

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