

Some comparative aspects of socialization in Japan and Germany

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SOME COMPARATIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIALIZATION IN JAPAN AND GERMANY

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Past research on socialization has primarily focussed on which kind of influences induce which kind of personality development. This assumption of unidirectional influence has guided psychoanalytic theories as well as behaviorism. Numerous studies of child rearing and patterns of reinforcement, for example, Lewinian studies on leadership styles, have not been entirely unsuccessful in developing a comprehensive theory of socialization and personality development. However, recent interaction-oriented approaches have broadened the perspective by regarding socialization as a process of mutual interactions between parents and children and the social and physical environment (cf. Bee, 1981). Here, the subjective interpretation of the self and the environment by all persons involved in the process of socialization becomes an important vehicle for explaining so-called "effects" of socialization. This perspective has broadened the scope of socialization research considerably.

However, this approach still fails to explain human development completely and to arrive at a universal theory. My assumption is that even if we study subjective views of socialization we cannot use such data for studies on socialization and development, unless we take into account the cultural values in which these subjective views are embedded. If we only use so-called "objective" measures (e.g. perceived parental discipline), the data from different cultural samples may look very similar. However, if we take into account that cultural values guide parents' and children's beliefs and perceptions of parental discipline, we may conclude that a certain theoretical

construct has not been measured adequately in different cultures.

As an example, one may hypothesize that parental practices such as strict control and discipline are not necessarily always functioning as negative reinforcement patterns and do not necessarily induce conflicting parent-child-relationships, or later disturbances in child development. Instead, the way that children and parents interpret and evaluate this specific behavior in the frame of culturally-accepted beliefs determines any further interaction pattern and child development. Accordingly, in cultures where obedience to parents and filial piety guide subjective cognitive schemata, strict parental discipline should be related to positive bonds between parent and child. On the other hand, in cultures predominantly supporting individuality and independence, one should expect that only low parental control is related to positive child-parent-relations.

This is the main question of the present study which is part of a broader investigation on cross-cultural aspects of personality development by H.-J. Kornadt and myself. The design of the study was to select two countries representing very different "ways of life", but which are very similar with respect to socio-economic conditions. Japan and Germany were selected to provide such a contrast.

Values and Socialization in Japan and Germany

Even though certain theories on modernization assume increasing similarities in industrial societies (Inglehart, 1977), Japan and Germany are still today characterized by quite different cultural values. For example, definite changes towards postmaterialist values cannot be detected in Japanese society today (Trommsdorff, 1983).

Elaborate surveys which have been conducted for more than two decades by the Japanese Government on the "National Japanese Character" clearly demonstrate that no change in basic values has occurred in Japan (Hayashi et al., 1977; Suzuki, 1984). The central Confucian and Samurai values such as seniority, loyalty, or priority of the group are still dominant and influence the socialization process (e.g. parental goals and practices). In the Federal Republic of Germany, however, a plurality of values is cherished, and these basically stress the importance of opportunities for self development.

One may well generalize the fundamental difference between the two cultures as presumably consisting in the different importance of individualism

and collectivism (cf. Triandis, 1984; Bond, 1984). Related values such as autonomy on the one hand and submission on the other hand should influence all aspects of socialization, including parental goals, parental practices, the way children perceive and interpret the behavior of their parents (and vice versa), and also the relation between parents and their children.

METHOD

Sample

Since the question of value change in a society with rapid economic and social change cannot be ignored, inter-cultural comparisons were carried out in addition to the intra-cultural comparisons of "modern" vs. "traditional" groups. For Japan, typically traditional socialization contexts can be seen in those institutions which serve to prepare females for their later traditional female role as housewife and mother. These colleges offer courses in traditional female activities such as home economics, flower arrangement, and also general education in languages and social science. For Germany, relatively comparable institutions are the schools for social work. However, these schools are usually attended by girls from the lower middle class, while the above-mentioned colleges in Japan are typically attended by girls from middle-class families with higher education. We accepted this bias in social status in order to facilitate comparability of the theoretically interesting variable: the traditionality of the female role as a goal of socialization in this group.

The "modern" group consisted of students from universities studying all kinds of disciplines. Social status of "modern" females in both societies did not differ from one another.

Since a comparable institution for selecting a subgroup of "traditional" boys could not be found in both countries, this variable was not included in the male sample. Instead, male students comparable to the "modern" female group from different universities studying various disciplines were selected. Again, no differences in the social status occurred for this group.

To ensure intra-cultural comparability, private colleges were selected in Japan. In Germany, all students were enrolled in non-private institutions. Altogether, 148 German adolescents (58 "modern" and 49 "traditional" girls and 41 boys) and 156 Japanese adolescents (40 "modern" and 76 "traditional" girls and 40 boys) participated in this study.

Procedure

All adolescents responded to a questionnaire consisting of several subsets. The questions will be described in the following section.

RESULTS

Parental Goals

Instruments. On the basis of previous pilot studies, a questionnaire was

Table 1. Parental goals and practices (means)

	Fed. Rep. of Germany			Japan		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
<u>Goals</u> (5-point scale)						
I Conformity/obedience						
mother	2.70	2.69	2.69	2.32	-	2.29
father	3.21	3.10	3.15	2.91	-	2.89
II Occupational success						
mother	2.72	2.90	2.77	3.19	-	3.18
father	2.44	2.52	2.47	2.64	-	2.62
<u>Practices of Mother</u> (7-point scale)						
I Support						
	4.18	3.58	4.02	4.33	3.67	4.17
II Control						
	3.35	3.28	3.32	3.86	3.13	3.72
<u>Achievement demands of mother</u> (7-point scale)						
improved achievement						
	2.72	2.87	2.78	3.33	2.80	3.19
learning						
	4.42	2.92	4.00	5.57	4.53	5.30
achievement control						
	3.10	2.96	3.07	3.91	2.98	3.66

Note: FRG vs. Japan: p .05 for all comparisons

developed describing possible relevant parental goals. This questionnaire included items such as "It is important for my mother/father that I do not drink or smoke" and "... that they agree with my friend/s." These items were answered on 5-point scales (1 = agree ... 5 = disagree).

All items were factor analyzed. Two factors emerged. Not all of the items of the two factors -- "independence" as Factor I and "occupational success" as Factor II -- were the same in the two cultures. However, the majority of items were the same. These were considered as "core indicators" allowing for cross-cultural comparison of the two factors. This procedure can be conceived of as a first step for construing equivalent indicators in order to achieve construct validity.

Results. t-tests for independent samples showed that Japanese parents (mothers and fathers) pursued stricter goals with respect to conformity than German parents (t = 2.30, p < .05). The "traditional" Japanese girls, especially, experienced significantly stricter parental control than "modern" Japanese girls or "traditional" or "modern" German girls. Mothers were generally more controlling in Japan than in Germany -- independent from intra-cultural subgroups. Furthermore, the occupational success of their daughters was more important for German than for Japanese parents. In both cultures mothers were found generally to be stricter than fathers (p < .001).

Parental Practices

Support and control: instrument. All adolescents answered the questionnaire developed by Devereux (1970) designed to measure mother's socialization practices. The 22 items had to be answered on 7-point scales (1 = never ... 7 = always). A typical item was "She comforts me when I am sad or angry".

Again, all items were factor analyzed. The two independent factors in in both cultures were labelled "acceptance" and "control". Again, a sufficient number of "core items" resulted and were included in further analysis.

Results. t-tests for independent samples showed that Japanese adolescents experienced more control and conformity demands than German youth (t = 3.35, p < .001) (see Table 1). Furthermore, Japanese "modern" girls experienced more acceptance than German "modern" girls (t = 2.37, p < .05).

In Germany, negative correlations were found between control and acceptance (girls: r = -.33, df = 84, p < .002; boys: r = -.34, df = 35, p < .05). In

Japan, however, these correlations were not significant and clustered around $r = .00$. In both cultures, girls generally reported more acceptance than boys.

Achievement-oriented control. A comparison of mean values of selected items measuring achievement-oriented child-rearing showed that Japanese mothers were more concerned than German mothers to orient their children toward learning and improvement of their achievements. Significant effects occurred for all achievement related items (see Table 1). Interestingly, intra-cultural comparisons showed that Japanese girls felt more controlled with respect to achievement than Japanese boys, and traditional girls more than modern girls.

Parental Influence and its Acceptance by Adolescents

Instrument. In order to measure (a) the degree of parental influence on central aspects of adolescents' life and (b) the readiness of adolescents to accept such influence, three items were answered on 4-point scales (1 = low

Table 2. Interactions and relations between parents and adolescents (means)

	Fed. Rep. of Germany			Japan		
	Fem.	Males	Total	Fem.	Males	Total
Parental influence (4-point scale)	5.38	5.15	5.31	6.81	5.65	6.50
Opposition of children (4-point scale)	8.49	8.53	8.52	6.77	7.93	7.08
Relation to: (5-point scale)						
Mother	9.36	11.00	9.86	9.94	10.98	10.21
Father	10.86	11.95	11.21	11.91	11.82	11.89

Note: FRG vs. Japan: Comparisons are significant ($p < .01$), but not for relations to mother and father.

... 4 = high): 1) choice of career, 2) having a family and 3) moving out of the house. Each of these items referred to the case if the parents would disagree

with the child's preference.

Results. Since for (a) "parental influence" and (b) "opposition of adolescents" respectively, the three items were positively intercorrelated, further analyses were computed on the basis of the sum of the three items. For each question, t-tests for independent samples showed that Japanese as compared to German adolescents reported significantly more parental influence; most parental influence was reported by Japanese females. Furthermore, Japanese were less inclined than German adolescents to disapprove of such influence (see Table 2). In both cultures, boys were significantly more ready to react against parental influence; and traditional girls were least ready to react.

Parent-Child-Relationship

Instrument. In order to measure parent-child-relationships, a questionnaire was constructed on the basis of pre-tests, including several questions regarding adolescents' relation to their parents. Sample items were: "How well does your mother/father understand your problems?" "How well do you get along with your mother/father lately?" "How frequently do you talk about personal affairs with your mother/father?" "How comfortable do you feel with your parents?" The questions were answered on 5-point scales (1 = very good/much ... 5 = very bad/little).

Results. Since all items intercorrelated significantly, further analyses were computed on the basis of the sum of all items.

In both cultures, the relationship between adolescents and their mothers was closer than to their fathers (Germany: $t = 6.07$; Japan $t = 8.66$). Furthermore, German girls felt closer to their mother than boys; and Japanese girls felt closer to their mother than to their father as compared to Japanese boys. Differences between the two cultures were not significant.

DISCUSSION

On the one hand, Japanese adolescents feel more controlled by their parents than German youth in many aspects of life -- everyday behavior, achievement, and important decisions; however, they accept such influence and parental control more readily. On the other hand, adolescents in both cultures do not differ with respect to their interpersonal relations with their parents.

Only when taking into account the cultural context can these results

be interpreted with respect to their function in the whole process of socialization.

In Japan, the central values of the traditional Confucian and Samurai principles demand acceptance of parental authority as well as striving for harmony in the group. In the West, however, values of autonomy and individuality range highest in priority; individual independence is an important goal in socialization. These different cultural values obviously determine the way parents actually behave towards their children, and the way children interpret their parents' goals and behavior (cf. Sigel & Cocking, 1977; Kornadt & Trommsdorff, 1984).

Adolescents perceive their parents' behavior on the basis of such cultural beliefs, and organize their own behavior accordingly. In both cultures, these different goals and practices of socialization have a common denominator in that parents in the respective cultures believe these to be the most adequate and desirable strategies for their children's personality development. As long as these different cultural beliefs are accepted by parents and children, parent-child-relations should be positive under both controlling or non-controlling parental practices.

The general cultural value system thus defines legitimate and desirable ways of socialization. Under the condition of general acceptance and positive evaluation of parental authority -- embedded in a widely respected Confucian value system of obedience and loyalty towards parents or senior members of one's group (Hsu, 1975) -- adolescents enjoy positive relations with their parents and feel their warmth and acceptance. This is the case for the Japanese adolescents. However, under conditions of highly valued individuality and independence, adolescents who experience high parental control feel rejected; they experience parental claims for obedience as an illegitimate and threatening attack on their autonomy.

Indeed, our results for Germany support this hypothesis. The study by Conroy et al. (1980) also demonstrates the culture-specific effects of close mother-child relations and authority demands in Japan as equivalent to the effects of independence training on child development in the USA.

This line of reasoning is also supported by results from interviews (cf. Kornadt, 1983): Japanese adolescents even feel rejected by their parents when they experience only little parental control and a broader range of autonomy. In the same line, Pettengill and Rohner (cf. the next Chapter) found

significant positive correlations between perceived mother's control and warmth for Korean adolescents, and negative correlations for American-Korean adolescents.

These findings clearly support the view that socialization can only be interpreted in the frame of generally effective cultural conditions, according to the prevalent cultural values. Parents and adolescents interpret their own and each other's behavior on the basis of cognitive-motivational schemata transmitted by those prevalent cultural values (Trommsdorff, 1984a). That is why seemingly different parental goals and practices may have the same functional meaning for further personality development in different cultures.

Therefore, cross-cultural comparisons can serve as an important methodology which allows the detection and specification of theoretical constructs, and the achievement of more knowledge about the universals of human development.

NOTES

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