

# A Study using "Cultural Anthropological - Clinical Psychological approach": Cultural identity formation in Japanese-Indonesian children

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# A study using "Cultural Anthropological – Clinical Psychological approach": Cultural identity formation in Japanese-Indonesian children

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss the research methods of cultural identity formation, namely "Why were the methods for the research topic chosen?", "How effective are the methods for such a topic?" and "What results can be expected?"

"Cultural identity formation in Japanese-Indonesian children" is a longitudinal study started in 1991 and the purpose is to clarify the process and factors of cultural identity formation. The subjects are Japanese-Indonesian families living in Bali (Indonesia). The employed methods for the research are an approach like a combination of methods used often in Cultural Anthropological researches and Clinical Psychological methods: On the one hand, a researcher herself (himself) stays in a field, grasps the whole situation of the field and the background of the subjects, on the other hand, she (he) makes a good relations with the subjects, follows them longitudinally and analyzes each cases qualitatively as time progresses. These comprehensive methods was regarded as very useful and efficient, to clarify the process and factors of cultural identity formation in children born to parents from differing cultural backgrounds.

Key words : qualitative methods, cultural identity formation, Japanese-Indonesian children

## I. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY ON "CULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN JAPANESE-INDONESIAN CHILDREN"

### **Purpose**

This is part of a longitudinal study started in 1991.

"Intercultural families" are families that consist of interculturally married couples and their children. They are always living in more than two cultural situations, namely the mother's culture, the father's culture, and the culture of their dwelling place. In such cultural circumstances, how will children of intercultural families form their cultural

identity? Here "cultural identity" means the culture one feels to be predominant, or which culture one feels attached to more. This is judged by self-estimation and the whole attitude towards their cultures.

The purpose of the research is to clarify the process and factors of cultural identity formation in children born to parents from differing cultural backgrounds. For this purpose a longitudinal study constructed in three parts was planned:

- 1) Adjustment states of parents (especially a parent who came to a new culture): attitudes of parents towards different cultures, partner relationships,

- cultural identity of parents, etc;
- 2) parental views on child rearing and education;
- 3) cultural identity of children (after adolescence).

At the beginning, the study is focused on understanding family backgrounds of children, cultural adjustment (or stress) of parents who came to a new culture, views of parents concerning their children's future as well as their education, etc., when such "intercultural" children are still small (especially before adolescence). Because those were considered to be important factors which have an affect on the cultural identity formation of "intercultural" children. After adolescence, cultural identity itself becomes the main point of research. Through this research framework I intended to grasp dynamically how cultural identity will be formed, as children grow older, and how various factors will influence cultural identity formation.

### **Subjects**

The subjects are first-born Japanese-Indonesian children (7-18 years old; most of them are 9-14 years old in 2000) living in Bali, Indonesia, and their parents. Most mothers are Japanese and fathers are Indonesian. A total of 35 families are participating.

### **Place of Research**

Bali is located at 115 degrees eastern longitude and 8-9 degrees southern latitude, and

is one of the islands in Indonesia. Bali has its own history, religion (Bali-Hindu), culture, etc. Since the late 1980's the Indonesian government has started developing tourism in Bali. At the same time the number of Japanese-Indonesian couples, respectively families, has been increasing remarkably.

The research area is mainly Kuta, Legian, Denpasar. They are the most modernized villages in Bali. A large number of domestic and foreign tourists, long-stay foreigners and intercultural families are living there, and tourism as well as business is widespread. Because of a lot of available jobs many Indonesians are coming from the other islands and working in this area. Generally speaking, the area has an unprejudiced and comfortable living atmosphere for foreigners. Many Japanese-Indonesian families also have their residences there.

### **Research methods**

This is a longitudinal study. The researcher goes to the research field regularly twice a year and stays there for three to eight weeks each time. Long-term/frequently repeated interviews and participant observation are mainly carried out. All information, including impressions, are written down as field notes and private diary. The characteristics of the research methods are: 1) fieldwork (to grasp the whole situation and the transition of the field), 2) longitudinal (developmental) study, 3) repeated interviews and participant observation, 4) case study,

**Table 1.** Concrete research methods (extracts)

- 1) This method uses long-term/frequently repeated interviews and participant observation in a research field.
  - 2) To establish good relations with a subject is regarded as most important, so that the researcher can be visited frequently in order to obtain a gradually deeper understanding of the subject in daily life (she or he doesn't try to get to know everything through an interview only, but asks the subjects about unclear points during other opportunities).
  - 3) To keep the interview situation as natural as possible, the following points are always considered as the most important:
    - a) a relaxed and comfortable place,
    - b) a moderate length of interview time (interview time is flexible),
    - c) the language used in the interview (the easiest language for the subject),
    - d) topics and contents of interviews (they are flexible: a guideline for interviews exists, but it is only for reference), and
    - e) the use of a tape recorder, etc. (it depends on the situation. If impossible, she (or he) writes down or memorizes the points of the interview.)
  - 4) The subject's personal feelings and interests are always esteemed so highly that inner attitudes and value systems are allowed to be expressed easily and spontaneously.
  - 5) Psychological and educational advice may be given to the subject according to her (or his) needs.
  - 6) New subjects are introduced to the researcher by the interviewed subjects,
  - 7) After the interview, the interviewer writes down the essential points, impressions, unclear matters, etc, for the next interview.
  - 8) The researcher writes down all information including his feelings and impressions in field notes (or a diary) every day.
- (Suzuki & Fujiwara, 1992, etc)

and 5) personal aid. Table 1 shows extracts from the concrete research methods. However, the research methods are rather flexible. For example, questionnaires can be employed, if necessary.

#### ***Position of the researcher in the research field***

- 1) Many foreign sojourners (e.g. business people) come and stay repeatedly in the research area. The existence of the researcher who comes regularly twice a year, is not seen as being unusual.
- 2) The researcher introduced herself to the families (subjects) as a psychologist who is

interested in "intercultural" children. The research purpose and study period were explained. She tried to make friend with them and to be a positive existence for the subjects.

#### ***Analyses***

Basically, a qualitative analysis was employed. A "Card" (like a medical card) was made per case. Each individual case is qualitatively and elaborately analyzed, according to the passage of time (stressing the important occurrences). In analyzing this, the whole situation of the research area and its transition were considered.

**Development of the research project**

The development of the research project can be explained in three periods:

[1. Period: 1991-1994]

Most of the Japanese-Indonesian children were still small (2-3 years old). As table 2 shows, there were five main research contents: 1) The whole situation surrounding Japanese-Indonesian families, 2) the home environment of the Japanese-Indonesian children, 3) the cultural adjustment of the foreign partners (mostly mothers), 4) attitudes of parents towards children and parental views on child rearing and education, and 5) personal information about Japanese-Indonesian children, like demographic factors and language acquisition. To evaluate the children in their sociocultural contexts was emphasized.

The information (data) was obtained mostly through interviews of the parents and par-

ticipant observations in their homes. Some bits of information were also gathered from already existing sources and through interviews with diverse persons living in the research field (e.g. a teacher of Japanese part-time school).

[2. Period: 1995-1998]

Most of the Japanese-Indonesian children started going to play groups, kindergartens, or schools on the one hand and to the Japanese part-time schools on the other hand. The children were gradually becoming the main subjects instead of their parents. The research focused on their language and culture acquisition. Interviews and participant observation were mainly carried out at the Japanese part-time school. In cooperation with the teachers, information about the children was gathered.

**Table 2.** Main research contents during the 1. period (1991-1994)

<p>1) The whole situation surrounding Japanese-Indonesian families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Situation (variables) of Indonesia: National policies for foreigners, economics, school and educational system, etc.,</li> <li>- Situation of Bali: History, culture, religion, tradition, customs, etc.,</li> <li>- Situation of the research field: General situation, number of intercultural families, Indonesian attitudes towards Japanese-Indonesian families, schools, etc.,</li> <li>- Situation of the Japanese community: Size and cohesion of the Japanese community and development of the Japanese part-time school,</li> </ul> <p>2) Home environment: Family composition: socioeconomic situation, living situation, parents' decision (identification with) the dwelling country (place), psychological stress of parents, contact with Indonesian community and relatives, contact with Japanese community, partner relationship, relationships with parental home in Japan, language capacity of parents. linguistic and cultural situation, etc.</p> <p>3) Cultural adjustment of foreign partners (mostly mothers),</p> <p>4) Attitudes of parents towards children and parental views on child rearing and education,</p> <p>5) Personal information of Japanese-Indonesian children: demographic, language and culture acquisition, etc.</p>
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[3. Period: 1999-2000]

Most of the children became older than 10 years and entered to transfer to the adolescence. The research gradually focused on their cultural identity formation. Interviews and participant observation had been carried out continuously at the Japanese part-time school. On the other hand, interviews of their parents was planned at their homes. Besides, the research preparations for the next ten years went ahead.

## II. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE METHODS

Here the methods of the above-mentioned research should be discussed. There are three points, namely "Why were the methods for the research topic chosen?" "How effective are the methods for such a topic?" and "What results can be expected?"

### 1. "Why were the methods for the research topic chosen?"

The adopted methods will be summarized as follows: A researcher stays in the research field personally, grasps the whole situation of the field and tries to understand the real feelings of the subjects through deepening the relationships with them with time, in daily life. If necessary, psychological and educational advice may be given to the subject. All information is written down as field notes (or diary). And then each case is qualitatively and elaborately analyzed, with consideration of the surroundings of each subject, according to the passage of time.

The methods are a combination of methods used often in Cultural Anthropological research (namely: fieldwork, fieldnotes, etc.) and Clinical Psychological methods (namely: clinical interview, single case study, personal aid, etc.). Therefore, this method could be called "Cultural Anthropological – Clinical Psychological approach" (Suzuki & Fujiwara, 1992).

In traditional Psychology, we hypothesize before starting some research through relevant literature, and examine it. If we form some hypotheses, make experiments or investigate, and then treat the data statistically, we are sure to get some results. But, it is not always sure if the research purpose was accomplished with such methods.

Researchers have to choose the most suitable methods for their research topic and purpose carefully. The research topic is "Cultural identity formation of Japanese-Indonesian children living in Bali". "Cultural identity" is one's subjective feelings and a complex component. To make the process and factors of cultural identity formation in children of mixed parentage clear, the longitudinal and comprehensive research approach is very suitable.

### 2. "How effective are the methods for such a topic?"

Here the case of "K" will be introduced. "K" is one of the Japanese-Indonesian children in which I am trying to clarify the process and factors of cultural identity forma-

tion by using these methods. Table 3 shows the attributes of the case. In order to keep the case anonymous, in this paper some attributes of the subject or the family members are changed, but the essence of the contents is not influenced.

"K" is a 10-year old girl (in 1999) and has a Japanese mother and an Indonesian (Balinese) father. Because of her age, the research focused on her language and culture acquisition, namely the dominant language and culture, and the interviews of her parents (especially mother) were emphasized.

Figure 1 shows briefly the transition of the dominant language and culture of "K" with relation to a part of her surroundings. The horizontal line is the age of the child. As it goes to the right she grows older. On the vertical line, from above her dominant language and culture, schools, etc. are put. Indonesian is the common language of Indonesia and also the school language. Balinese is a dialect of Bali, but quite dif-

ferent from Indonesian. Balinese is mainly spoken among the community members.

"K" was born in Japan and came to Bali at the age of three. At the beginning, she spoke only Japanese and Japanese culture was dominant. She sometimes went to the Japanese part-time kindergarten. Her parents also spoke only Japanese, and Japanese culture was strongly emphasized. They had no intention of settling down in Bali and no interest in the local community or the religion (Bali-Hindu). Since about the age of five and a half years her Indonesian language and culture have become gradually predominant. The main family language also became Indonesian. At the age of ten she often speaks Balinese besides Indonesian as her main language, and Balinese culture becomes dominant. Both Indonesian and Balinese also became the main family languages.

In the transition of her dominant language and culture from Japanese to Indonesian and from Indonesian to Balinese two important

**Table 3.** CASE K (Sept. 1999)

<p>Japanese-Indonesian girl (10 years old). Primary school (Grade 5).                  Place of Birth: Japan (Japanese nationality)                  Language: 1. Indonesian, 2. Balinese, 3. Japanese, 4. English.                  Family members:                  Mother: Japanese nationality (30's), high school graduate.                            Speaking Japanese, Indonesian (average) and Balinese (some).                  Father: Indonesian nationality (30's), elementary school graduate.                            Speaking Indonesian, Balinese, Japanese (good) and English (average).                  Sister: Indonesian nationality (7), primary school (Grad 2) and the                            Japanese part-time school. Speaking Indonesian, Balinese and Japanese.                  Maid: Indonesian nationality. Speaking Indonesian and Balinese.                  Religion: Bali-Hindu (all the family members)</p>
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age	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
dominant culture	Japan					Indonesia					Bali	
dominant language	Japanese					Indonesian (+ Balinese)						
school			English play group	local private kindergarten		local private school		local public school				
			Japanese kindergarten			Japanese kindergarten	Japanese school					
important occurrences	born in Japan		- to Indonesia	- birth of the 2nd child		- Balinese wedding & Joining "Banjar"		- decision of settling down		- built a new house	- start domestic industry	- temporal return to J
mother's feelings & views	Japanese only		more Japanese			more Indonesian						
	- want to give Indonesian education - expectation of English for the child - peaking Balinese gradually											
father	- becoming interested in the local community →											
main language of family	Japanese		Japanese (partly Indonesian)			Indonesian (Japanese mixed)		Indonesian + Balinese (a little Japanese)				
age	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

**Figure 1.** Transition of the dominant language and culture of "K" with relation to a part of her surroundings

turning points could be found out:

- 1) *The decision of her parents on permanently dwelling in Bali:* In the background of the decision there was the birth of the second child. The birth made her parents realize the responsibility for their children and

prompted them to have a Balinese wedding as an initiation to the local community, called "Banjar" where members always take care of the children, even if something should happen to their parents. The Mother also accepted Indonesian



(Balinese) language and culture more.

2) *Transfer from the local private school to a local public one near the house and stopping to go to the Japanese part-time school.* The local private school was located far from her house, but the local public school is in the community. After school "K" has a lot of contacts with local children, and speaks Balinese. On the other hand she lost the opportunity to have contacts with the Japanese language and culture. Concerning child rearing or education, Japanese mothers are generally more dominant than Indonesian fathers. The mother's views on child rearing turned towards Indonesian when "K" was five years old, one year before school age.

By means of the method (Cultural Anthropological – Clinical Psychological methods), not only the state or transition of the dominant language and culture in "K" herself can be understood in detail, but also various related matters (e.g. turning points, interaction between various factors, etc.) are becoming visible. This is to say that the parental views or feelings are changing because of the change in family composition, due to the child's growth. Therefore, the parental views on the decision of the dwelling place or the mother's feelings about a new culture are also changing, and those changes have an influence on child rearing and education (e.g. school selection) and are then reflected in the language and culture acquisition of the child. Furthermore, it is expected that all the phe-

nomena (matters) are going to influence the cultural identity formation of the child. Here the cause and effect relationships between the interaction among a child, mother and father and culture and language acquisition are also becoming clear.

Therefore, these methods are very useful and efficient for this kind of research on such a complicated topic. By deepening the understanding of the whole situation in a research field or the background of the subjects more, and probing into unclear points about each of them through repeated interviews over an extended period of time carefully, we can gradually grasp what we really want to clarify.

### 3. "What results can be expected?"

The methods are multidimensional, idiographic, developmental and comprehensive approaches. The research using the methods is still in progress. Here, only a few points will be briefly mentioned.

- 1) It can be clarified how Japanese-Indonesian children will integrate two cultures (or more than two cultures) and what cultural identity they will form. (Here, what part of Japanese culture or Indonesian (Balinese) culture they acquire, will also become clear.)
- 2) Not only the factors which influence cultural identity formation in Japanese-Indonesian children, but also the cause-and effect relationship among the factors can be understood in detail, as they grow older, like in the case of "K", already

shown (including influences from the transition of the local community, the development of the Japanese community, etc.).

3) While comparing the cases carefully, it can be found, if there are any common processes and factors for cultural identity formation in Japanese-Indonesian children.

### CONCLUSION

The employed methods are an approach like a combination of methods used often in Cultural Anthropological research and Clinical Psychological methods (Cultural Anthropological — Clinical Psychological approach). Namely: on one hand, a researcher himself (herself) stays in a research field, grasps the whole situation of the research field and the background of the subjects; on the other hand, he makes good relations with the subjects, follows them longitudinally and analyzes each case qualitatively as time progresses. Those methods have some problems: e.g. the problem of privacy protection and adequacy of research (adequacy of research has two aspects: If we can grasp what we really want to clarify and if the research is really meaningful for subjects). But, a researcher should take the methods that fit research topics and purpose, and it is also very important for a researcher to stay in a research field, collect data and analyze them through his own experiences, in order to understand complicated psychological phenomena like "cultural identity formation".

Therefore, these comprehensive methods are very useful and efficient to clarify the process and factors of cultural identity formation in children born to parents from differing cultural background.

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### 〈NOTE〉

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