

EARLY SOCIALIZATION: STABILITY AND CHANGE¹

by Betty B. Lanham

The study of child rearing in Japan has been influenced by scientific interests and historical events of the periods when undertaken. Early writings by John Embree (1939), Alice Marble Bacon (1891), and others are generally brief but accurate and objective descriptions. Ruth Benedict's chapter in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) on how the child learns suffers from a lack of supporting field work and from dependence on issei informants familiar with a considerably earlier period. Still, it portrays behavior more realistically than other sections of the book and deserves attention today. A number of other writings published during and immediately after World War II attempted to explain the Japanese personality. The period was not conducive to objectivity. Three varieties of errors appeared. First, Japanese practices which at the time were advocated by psychoanalysts, such as catering to the needs and wants of an infant and small child, were only mentioned without consideration of any favorable influence they might exert on adult behavior. Second, the existence of harsh practices was not adequately documented and appears to have been assumed. Statistical data collected since the war on such practices have contradicted the earlier accounts. Third, the psychoanalytic interpretations themselves were not legitimate, as has been shown by a considerable number of recent psychological studies. Thus the conclusion of these early studies, that severe toilet training adversely affects the adult personality, seems invalid. An assumption of these early studies, that children were weaned at the time the next sibling was born, which resulted in emotional disturbance, was not substantiated. My own data obtained in 1952 show that 79% of 190 children were weaned at least a year before the birth of the next child.

Much postwar research was directed toward substantiating or refuting these early psychoanalytic interpretations. Quantified data are now fairly extensive on toilet training, nursing and weaning, sleeping habits, food intake, family members administering care, methods of punishment, promise fulfillment, the relations of age and status of mother to care of children, affection and antagonisms within the family group, actions for which the child is scolded, forms of threat, male and female differences in rearing practices, and permissions and restrictions applied to specified

activities. Materials are largely corroborative except in reports on practices of rural and urban areas, and differences among social classes.

Descriptive English accounts of child rearing based on field work are provided on a fishing village by the Norbecks (1956), suburban salaried workers by Vogel (1963), a village in Nagano Prefecture by Sue (1960), a village in Okinawa by the Marezkis (1963), Tokyo by Pease (n.d.), and a town of 35,000 in Wakayama by Lanham (1956).

Before considering specific aspects of the socialization process, it is advisable to look at the approaches and aims of studies of this subject. It is possible to study childhood of and for itself, as a period in the life span accompanied by pleasantries, tensions, and enjoyable interpersonal relationships, a period also accompanied by distinctive roles which involve privileges and obligations. Little work of this kind has yet been done. A second approach is to determine continuities and discontinuities in the process of socialization. Most research on Japanese children has been of a third category, studies of the relationship of rearing practices to adult behavior. The anthropologist interested in this subject has in various cultures under study ready-made "laboratory" situations where assumed relationships can be checked cross-culturally. The remainder of this paper will be addressed mostly to this latter approach, which has been the one of greatest importance to the anthropologist.

Studies of early socialization in Japan have not concerned or been explicitly relevant to questions of universal theoretical import, probably because of the faults of early studies stated above and the imperfect state of knowledge of the adult personality. The time has arrived for a problem-oriented approach that gives consideration to cross-cultural comparisons.² The discussion that follows groups together studies under topics of theoretical import.

It is useful first to point out some problems of using terminology with misleading connotations. The term "dependency" is an excellent example. A legitimate substitute in some contexts is the term "security." In other contexts, the two words convey entirely different meanings to an American. In Japan the term "independence" is somewhat associated with "individualism" and with selfishness. A mother who follows a given practice may be described by different American researchers as permissive, indulgent, lenient, submissive, or as according her child freedom. In the opposite vein, she may be variously characterized as restrictive, rigid, possessive, domineering, or applying disciplined control. Particularly in the field of child rearing, objective evaluations are difficult since terms reflect the biases of the user and the culture at large.

Perhaps the one characteristic of the early socialization process in Japan which has been the focus of the most intensive scholarly attention is the dependency relationship. Haring (1946) first pointed to a close tie between

mother and child. The Vogels (1961) elaborated extensively on the means by which it is maintained. Caudill and Weinstein (1969: 30), in a statistical tabulation, have found physical contact between mother and infant greater in Japan than in the United States. Linguistic verification of dependency is presented by Doi (1962), who sees this relationship favored in many cases among adults as well as between parents and children. Ishino (1953) describes a kin-like relationship extended into the work situation. The results of a questionnaire circulated by Suzuki (1966: 29) show a continued preference for the paternalistic employer-employee relationship.

Although a strong dependency relationship has been well documented, its effect upon personality development deserves considerably more attention because of the light it sheds on other subjects. For example, suicide in Japan is high during periods of independence, not the reverse. The incidence of mental disturbance requiring or receiving medical care rises after the age of thirty in the United States, but declines in Japan at this time, when many men have become established in a position for life (Caudill, 1963). Getting along with one's boss requires some of the same acquiescence to authority experienced in childhood. In a sense, passing school examinations is given importance in Japan because, through assuring desirable and continuous employment, it provides a ticket to security and dependency.

Other data relevant to dependency deserve attention. Caudill and Weinstein's data (1969: 29, 30) show that American infants receive more stimulation but less tactile contact than do the Japanese. The former are more physically active than the latter. We are then at a point of asking whether this means: 1) Japanese infants are more contented, less agitated, and thus more placid, or 2) American babies are more healthy, mentally active, and earlier on their way toward intellectual development, or 3) American babies are nervous because mothers stimulate an appetite for affection, which is unrewarded.

Consideration of dependency should be differentiated by sex. Boys are accorded more freedom than girls. However, Iga (1961: 79-81) contends that boys are in greater need of ego support, a condition fostered by mothers in the childhood years. Thus the male youth when defeated or unsuccessful is more vulnerable than the female. Difficulties arise in explaining the high suicide rate which exists among females as well as among males, and the fluctuation in rates for both sexes. DeVos (1960: 298) refers to the wife as a surrogate mother but finds no comparable need for a surrogate father. Further studies of the rearing process may be useful to explain psychological relationships between spouses later in life. Attention should also be paid to alternations of permissiveness and rigidity and to alternations of security and stress in the life development of both males and females in Japan.

The findings of studies of dependency made by Japanese scholars studying Japanese children sometimes agree with those of similar studies made

by American scholars studying American children. Tsumori and Inage (1961) found that, for children of ages four and five, the more permissive the parent the less dependent the child. Kagan and Moss (1962:277), working in the United States, inform that maternal protectiveness of the boy during the first three years correlates with dependence at an older age. Harada (1962) and Sears (1957: 428, 154), working in Japan and the United States, respectively, see dependency as related both to familial social status and number of children in the family. A supposed greater dependency of girls than of boys was not found in either country (Sears: 154). Yoda and Takuma (1961) report for Japan a slight difference in the reverse direction.

Closely associated with questions of security and dependency is the extent to which the Japanese shun or are willing to accept responsibility, are self-reliant, and display initiative—matters that are related to the extent of national economic development and achievement motivation. Many writers have commented that the Japanese are hesitant to assume responsibility. Presumably this reticence could be attributed to a dependence created in childhood. Through the centuries, however, Japan has had many able leaders who were certainly not inhibited by such a dependence. Perhaps partial explanation lies in the attempt to recruit the small number of individuals needed to fill the top political positions. Pre- and postwar school texts on ethics have strongly emphasized the value of achievement.

Throughout the literature on Japanese child rearing it has been contended that small children are both indulged and the product of permissive parents. It should be noted, however, that favoritism is accompanied by the early admonishment, "Don't give others trouble." Permissiveness must be differently interpreted for Japan and the United States. In Japan, a mother who spoils a young child may be expected to continue to spoil him later in life. An American is likely to judge any Japanese child of two or three as extremely spoiled, but let us note that he would rarely have the same opinion of a child of eight or nine, particularly a girl. In contrast with the Japanese parent, it might be said that the American mother unduly restrains her small child. In judging degree of restraint, it is possible to appraise on a continuum the extent to which the mother comes close to permitting all that is not specifically prohibited, or comes close to an automatic prohibition of all that is not specified as permissible. In the latter case, curiosity is thought to be suppressed. Many educators in the United States contend that children of nursery school age already have become unnecessarily inhibited. Further comparative study is needed to determine if and to what extent intellectual creativity is impaired through restraint.³

Research on child rearing has been held back by an inadequate knowledge of adult traits and behavior. This deficiency particularly pertains to the questions of inhibition and restraint. Studies characterizing the Japanese as compulsive have erred in selecting only those traits that support this

view and omitting those that indicate the reverse. Detailed knowledge of the social sanctions of the society would be revealing on this issue. The sanctioning effects of shame and guilt have been examined, but the issue seems vastly more complicated than present studies have indicated. Conformity may be brought about through fear of censorship, chastisement, loss of prestige, or loss of security. If control is through internalized inhibitions, then spontaneity is probably affected regardless of the situation in which the individual might be placed. If control is through censorship of onlookers, as often happens in the United States, the absence of other people can mean freedom from restraint. If, on the other hand, restraint is effected only by one's own sense of propriety rather than the expressed disapproval of others who are present, the deviant may conceivably be both offensive and uncontrolled. Working with Japanese data, DeVos (1960) has corrected the fallacy of assuming there is a dichotomy between shame and guilt. Both are present in Japan. Indeed, it is questionable whether any society can function adequately without guilt. For any individual the forms of control that are operative doubtless differ with the occasion. The assignment of only one or even of several mechanisms of restraint to a society is obviously a serious error of oversimplification.

Considerable research has been done on forms of punishment of children in Japan. Variations in some of the data can probably be regarded as regional or subcultural differences, particularly those between urban and remote rural areas. In general, American scholars whose observations are not supported by quantified data have tended to assume that less punishment exists than is documented in empirical studies using mothers as informants. Information on the use by Japanese mothers of threats and various forms of punishment is now fairly abundant. Japanese scholars have called attention to parents who punish on the basis of their irritability or emotional reactions of the moment rather than rational judgment. This is a subject that should be investigated in both Japan and the United States.

Little attention has been given to positive means used to gain the compliance of children. The most common answer given by Japanese parents when they are asked what method is used to get a child to obey is "*Wakaraseru* (Have him understand)." Various rewards of a material and non-material sort are used, and praise is frequent. It is assumed that a child is born neither good nor bad and therefore should not be punished for offenses until he is old enough to be informed. During a day's activities, a mother may engage in a continuous stream of instructive conversation appended with the word "Ne? (Isn't that true?)." Compliance is thus asked not to please the mother, but because a given behavior is proper; the child's voluntary assent is requested. A comparison of the extent to which mothers in Japan and the United States seek compliance through positive as opposed to negative means would be informative.

Information on differences in demands for compliance that are made of boys and of girls is difficult to obtain. When verbally questioned, mothers seem defensively to contend that they treat both sexes alike. My own data (on ages when certain behaviors are expected) for Japan, Guyana and the United States show that girls are expected to learn propriety earlier than boys, and that boys are punished more severely. Benedict (1946: 280) comments that in Japan a girl receives no less attention than a boy and is compensated for her humbler position by encouragement to take an interest in beauty and attire.

Gaining knowledge of change in the socialization process in Japan is hindered by lack of information on circumstances before World War II. It is difficult to determine which of Benedict's statements might be simply inaccurate and which might represent practices that have disappeared with time. For example, I initially regarded as incorrect her statement (1946:264) that a mother responds to the abuses of a small son by consciously restraining herself from punishing him; rather, I thought the interpretation should be that the mother willingly does not punish or reprimand. A graduate student from Fukuoka working on my materials confirmed Benedict's position. Information on changes and contrasts in customs through time are probably available from many living informants, but research of this kind has not been conducted except incidentally to other concerns. Kitano (1964) used Attitude Research Inventory Tests to obtain information on generational differences in the care of children. Issei and nisei in the United States were compared with similar age groups in Japan. His results showed a similarity in rearing by generation rather than nationality. The failure to find differences in customs of child rearing between Japanese-Americans and Japanese nationals of the younger generation might be accounted for by the effect of lingering Japanese customs among the parents of the former and the adoption of modern rearing methods by parents of the latter.

Some changes in the rearing process in Japan are rather clear and confirmed by more than one researcher. Niwa and Yamauchi (1960) report that 74% of their rural informants breast fed their children whereas 25% of urban informants did so. In the general population, 62% of the children in the sample were weaned within a year after birth. My own data collected in a small city in 1952 show that approximately 85% of the children were breast fed. Yoda and Takuma (1962: 621) find both weaning and toilet training begin later in the rural area. In a study involving 1900 cases, Shiokawa (1960) compared parental reports on the rearing of elementary school children for the years 1950 and 1960. In 1960 he found that punishment more often involved hitting and lecturing rather than the earlier reprimand by shouting. He contends children are now less evasive, less apologetic, and more resistant to authority. My data obtained in 1952 show an increase in the use of punishment (threat, strike, deprivation, shame, embarrassment) by

parents, over that to which the parents themselves were subjected in their childhood. Greatest increases were in slaps on the buttocks and warnings or threats that others would disapprove. A decrease was reported only for isolation and the threat of a frightening ghost.

The semantic problem discussed earlier rises again in trying to understand what changes are occurring in the rearing of small children. Confusion appears in the meaning of "permissive." "Laxness in the enforcing of restraints" differs from "indulgence," which entails the granting of requests, the according of favors, and outright catering to the child's desires or needs. These and other terms need clarification. Another deficiency of research has been lack of useful or necessary information. It is unknown, for example, whether restraining sanctions are now more frequently used than formerly or whether new forms of punishment replace the former controls of scolding, positive instruction, and reward. Nothing is said about the extent of indulgence, which may vary independently of both frequency and form of punishment.

A distinction should be made between internal and external control. In Japan, the close relationship between mother and child, and the belief that parents should set an example for their children and tolerate just criticism, foster internal control. The American parent mostly leaves the child free to react and interpret as he sees fit; external controls are used when necessary. The question arises as to what would happen if within the same culture neither internal nor external controls were employed. The absence of control is illustrated by the "modern" American mother who feels that external controls will frustrate or inhibit her child, and by the "modern" Japanese mother who encourages independence to the extent of sacrificing internal controls. In both cultures the children of such mothers act similarly. Future trends are not clearly evident in either Japan or the United States at this point; however, the nature and extent of control have an important influence on personality development for present and future generations.

A major change in Japanese socialization has occurred in the extent of regimentation. In 1952, parents discussing changes in postwar public education commented as follows: Children now have greater affection for the teacher, more respect, and less awe and fear. Learning is no longer rote memory; instead, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. They now have a spirit of inquiry and a desire to learn. They have their own opinions and express them freely. More individualism is evident, less reserve. Complaints were that children had become less resolute, lacking in perseverance, and carefree. The postwar textbooks on ethics now in use encourage opposition to the group when the individual is in the right; and adjurations to be loyal are omitted from these writings. Although postwar society is less regimented, it imposes pressures of a different kind. Opportunities for upward economic and social movement are available to a much larger

number of people than formerly. As the key to such movement, education is increasingly emphasized even in the rural districts. An urban child in one of the new public housing developments of small apartments may be the victim of a *kyōiku mama*, a mother overly intent upon the educational achievements of her offspring from kindergarten onward.

It seems reasonable to think that some knowledge of change in customs may be inferred from urban-rural contrasts. A rather thorough study of such contrasts (Takahashi, et al 1968a: Table 14, and 1968b: Table II) reveals only an approximate ten percent difference in the extent to which parents of rural and urban areas consult the mass media (magazines, books, newspapers, and television) as sources of information on child care and rearing. Grandmothers advise considerably less in urban than in rural areas. The father plays a more important role in the former. Other studies contrasting the two areas are numerous but inconclusive. Parents in rural districts are said by one researcher to be emotional and irrational in rearing practices and are reported by another as seldom lax in enforcing obedience, i.e., neither passive nor indulgent. Children's reports on the restrictiveness of their parents also vary. Rural children claim that they must endure excessive restrictions; however, a comparison of rural and urban customs shows a higher number of restrictions of behavior for urban children.

Differences in social status might also offer clues to trends of change but here again data are inconclusive or seemingly contradictory. Parents with high incomes are said to have children who are more independent than the offspring of families of lower income, but the parents of high income are also reported to control their children's behavior excessively. One author contends the new middle class is too rigid, another that they practice the appropriate degree of control.

Discrepancies such as the foregoing examples, which were drawn from statistical studies, may have a number of explanations. They may be the result of semantic difficulties discussed earlier in this paper. Some variations may be due to regional or subcultural differences. Also, different researchers may vary in their interpretation of the same data; for example, Tsuru (1963) looks unfavorably upon disunity within the immediate family group while Tanaka (1967: 154) sees the same behavior favorably as evidencing individualism as opposed to traditionalism.

In some aspects of Japanese life there has been little change. The modern schoolbooks on morality continue to emphasize as desirable traits modesty and humility and emphasize in various ways one's obligations to society. Although ascribed status is not so important as formerly, hierarchical ranking of siblings is well preserved in kin terms, and the mother emphasizes the order by such acts as awarding special privileges to the younger and showing esteem for and giving responsibility to the elder. Formalities of etiquette in relationships at work continue to reinforce differences in status.

In comparing American and Japanese university students, Kikuchi and Gordon (1966: 191-192) find considerably more conformity among the Japanese.

A few areas of potential research have yet to be discussed. Some segments of the Japanese population have been neglected. We know about delinquents (DeVos, 1962) and about pressures on students who struggle to achieve the esteemed university education, but little has been written about students who acknowledge defeat early and are more relaxed than the achievers in their educational pursuits. We need also to know about the many people of lower income who are occupationally mobile and lack the security of one job for a lifetime as is characteristic of the salaried man. Although studies have been made on child rearing in rural and urban areas, almost no research has compared the traits of personality of rural and urban adults and related these traits to childhood experiences. We need to know more about codes of propriety, particularly those having ethical import. A comparison of American cowboy and Japanese *chambara* films would be interesting. Also, it would be worthwhile to investigate the manner in which changes in adult behavior brought about by industrialization and modernization have affected rearing practices, a matter of significance if Kardiner's (1945) theories are to be accepted. Of major importance for the future is the study of the relative influence upon adult behavior of the psychological climate produced through the socialization process as distinguished from the influence exerted by social norms, rules, and expectations. A few studies cannot provide the answer to this question, but continuous research should be directed toward this accomplishment.

Work by anthropologists and other scholars on the subject of socialization is still in its infancy. Generalizations, theories, and precepts have so far been accepted and discarded without careful attention to existing supportive or contradictory data. Rather extensive data have been obtained on Japan. There is now a need for the organization of materials, and a clearer perspective as to the purposes that should be served by future research.

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NOTES

1. Appreciation is expressed to Akio Kikuchi, Takao Sofue, and to Akira Hoshino for assistance in locating Japanese sources. Obviously responsibility for selection and contents of paper resides with the author.
2. Across-the-board comparison of entire cultures is not recommended. For difficulties inherent in this approach, see: John W. M. Whiting, et al. *Field guide for a study of socialization*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), Chapters 5 and 6.
3. For a more extensive discussion of this subject see: Betty B. Lanham, *The psychological orientation of the mother-child relationship in Japan*, *Monumenta Nipponica* (1966) 21:322-333.

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