What do the Political Parties mean ?
── Political Socialization of Party-identification in Japan* ──

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Introduction.

The purpose of this paper is to review the political socialization studies on political party identification (so called party-id) among Japanese pre-adults and young voters. Party-id has been accepted as a relatively stable and transmittable political attitude by political scientists since it was "discovered" by the Michigan Studies (Campbell et al. 1960). Considering the significance of its role, shown in the voting decision process, it is rather natural for students of political socialization to research the parent-child transmission process as one of the major subject matters of this field.

On the other hand, different views have been reported, such as decline of political parties and "volatility" of party-id, even in the United States, which has a relatively stable history of a political party system. What does "volatility" mean ? It shows clear that the original connotation of party-id contains strong sense of stable attitude, psychological attachment to the political party as its fundamental characteristics. If not, volatility would never occur. The author of *Myth of the Indepen-*

dent Voter pointed out in its conclusive chapter that party-id is still taking the important role in the voting decision process showing the high percentage of party-line voting at both of the Presidential and House elections in the United States (Keith et al.,1992). This explanation seems persuasive but it may need some more analysis on the persistence of party-id and constancy of the voting party of each individual by panel survey (LeDuc et al., 1984; Kabashima, 1998). The party-id of the Japanese voters in the multi-party and single-party majority party system must be considered differently from the case of the American voters. Ichiro Miyake, one of the leading scholars of voting behavior analysis in Japan, defined party support of the Japanese voter as follows.

> Conceptualization of the directionality of party support should include voters' attitudes not only toward their own party but toward each of the parties in the system, since these attitudes affect other partisan attitudes and electoral behavior.

Miyake introduced the concept of "support range" as an important frame of reference of Japanese party support attitudes (Flanagan et al, 1991). The support range consists of the maximum range of possibility of choice of the parties by each individual voter. If the voter has party or parties for which s/he does not want to vote, the support range is the remainder of the all parties. This framework is very effective in analyzing party-id in the multi-party system, but it has the presupposition that the society has a relatively stable political party system.

1. Japan's Political Party System in the 1990s

Although not as stable as the United States, Japan had a long-lived major two party system from 1995 as it is widely recognized as 1995 political system in Japan. A no-confidence motion against the Prime

Minister is one of the most powerful instruments for opposition parties in the House because of its time consuming procedure and it is given the highest priority on the agenda.   Opposition parties utilized this motion as their bargaining power.   It worked only as a threat when used in the dominant one party House, it was only possible to be approved if the majority party in power split.   On June 18, 1993, however, one of the factions of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) voted against the LDP and approved the no-confidence motion.   The Miyazawa cabinet dissolved the House.   The LDP sprit followed and it lost control in the house.   The LDP could not recover its loss at the general election and the Japan New Party (JNP) became an alternative center of coalitions to form a cabinet without the LDP.   The Japanese party system became very unstable and floating since this period.   Only two of the major parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Japan Communist Party (JCP), have kept their names and organizational consistency for these past six years. The LDP is still alive, but almost one third of the party members in 1992 have gone or gone and returned.   At the 1993 General Election, a new cabinet was formed by the coalitions of non-LDP parties and Morihiro Hosokawa of the JNP became Prime Minister in August 1993.   Eight months later, Hosokawa abruptly stepped down when his tax increase proposal was badly opposed by public opinion.   The Hosokawa cabinet was exceptionally popular at the beginning but it turned out to be a big disappointment for the mass public.   The JSP and the other party left from this coalition and the Japan Renewal Party (JRP) led by Tsutomu Hata and Ichiro Ozawa, both former LDP factional leaders, became a center of coalitions and formed Hata cabinet.   This cabinet lasted only for six weeks.   The JNP merged with the other non-LDP parties and formed the New Frontier Party (NFP) in December 1994.   The major

partners of the JNP were, the JRP and the Democratic Socialist Party, and Komeito (Clean Government Party＝CGP).　The CGP was backed by a large religious organization.　This means that all of these political parties disappeared but the Diet members elected with these party nametags are still holding office.　The NFP was broken at in the end of 1997 after its three year long activity, and along with the Liberal Party led by Ozawa, the five small political parties were reorganized.　A new alliance was formed along pro and anti-Ozawa lines.　The anti-Ozawa parties merged to the DPJ in April just before the Upper House Election in July 1998. (Please see Appendix.)

　　　The counterpart of the LDP in the 1955 political system, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), has already changed its name twice and its party platform.　In July 1994, the JSP formed a coalition government with the LDP and others.　Prime Minister Tomiich Murayama of the JSP led the cabinet and changed the traditional party platforms of the JSP in order to harmonize with the outnumbering LDP.　The JSP changed its name to the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP) in January 1996 and continued to be included in the coalitions with the LDP.　Although not as much as the JCP, the JSP was an ideological party and was recognized as strongly socialistic until the end of 80s.　Some of the "true believers" of the former JSP Marxist platform organized the New Socialist Party. The JSP was forced to change itself more in September of the same year. Just before the General Election in October, the Democratic Party was formed as a counter power of the NFP, and the vast majority of the SDP Diet Members was absorbed into this new party.　The excluded members were leftists of the SDP including the former President of the party Tako Doi and the former PM Murayama who represented the JSP and SDP as its top leaders.　They are still using the name of the SDP even though

the substance has gone to the DP. The Democratic Party also excluded Masayoshi Takemura, the active leader of the New Party Sakigake and had been Chief Cabinet Secretary of the Hosokawa Cabinet.

From the voters' point of view it was a kind of deception, because the candidates whom voters believed as their own party's candidates changed the party affiliation after they were elected for office. At the 1996 general election, the LDP only got 239 seats. It was far from the majority of the House, 251 seats. The LDP dragged in Diet members who were affiliated with other parties or party independent, mainly those who were former LDP members, and finally won the majority of the House. Actually, there is an argument on constitutionality of the case where a Diet member who was listed up by the party at a proportional representation election withdraws or changes its party affiliation after the election when his or her original party still exists.

As we have seen above, the political parties changed their names, party platform, coalition partners, and more than that, new ones were born and some disappeared in these six years. As for the Diet members, some of them are with the brand new banners, some are with the same old party nametags, and some are changing their party nametags frequently. It became difficult even for the political scientists to count up all the existing political parties, and became impossible to identify the Diet members of their party affiliation in January 1998. Without doubt, most of the average Japanese voters can hardly recognize the present political system.

As was mentioned above, there were only two political parties that did not change names or policies during the 90s', the LDP and the JCP. As the JCP could gain less than 10 per cent of the votes at the general election, the major constant criterion of political party support was the

LDP. The voters could be classified into three categories. Pro LDP, non-LDP and anti-LDP groups. Those with strong party identification to the LDP became the core supporters of this party, but other votes were liquified because of the lack of constant targets to direct their support. There are some voters who deeply believe the traditional social cleavages and support the JCP or SDP as members of trade unions. There are some other members who support the CGP after it changed its nametag because of their religious faith. The Majority of liquified or floating voters could focus their political interests to the DP or DPJ. The DP had an unfortunate start. The liberal leaders, Yukio Hatoyama and Naoto Kan, shut out the leftist leaders for ideological reasons, and the leader of the NP Sakigake for personal reasons. This process of organization of the party was accepted as quite partisan and partial, instead of an integration of power counter to the LDP.

The DPJ organized in 1998 could not get the image of integration of power counter to the LDP. It was literally a hodgepodge of different political groups led by the three politicians, Yukio Hatoyama, Naoto Kan and Takahiro Yokomichi. Voters who support the DPJ are mere supporters of one of these three different leaders representing different political ideologies. The voters know that the DPJ is a three-headed-dragon, and the supporters do not recognize its real figure and the non-supporters do not trust its integration and stability as a political party. The party identification of the DPJ seems strongly personalized and divided.

2. Voters' evaluation and expectation toward the political parties

Jack Dennis pointed out in the middle 1960s that the majority of

voters agreed with the opinion that "our system of government would work a lot more efficiently if we could get rid of conflicts between the parties altogether" (Dennis 1966).   This finding, however, does not show the voters' negation of party system but their rejection to the inter-party conflict.   The Japanese Election Survey (JES) conducted in 1983 asked this criticism in a different way.

(Table 1)   Do you think that Japanese politicians and Parties are neglecting people's interests because of factional competition and corruption problems?
(%)(n＝775)

Completely agree	19.4
Somewhat agree	43.8
Disagree	24.1
Don't know	12.3
N. A.	0.4

Matsumoto conducted the survey in August 1996, and found a similar criticism among the Japanese youth (Matsumoto 1997).   Seventy-three per cent of the respondents agreed with the opinion "conflicts between the political parties are making the people's interests unclear".

In the Japanese political system, the substance of the parties, except the JCP and the Komeito, is not the registered party members, but the members of the Diet.   In most cases, ordinary party members, who are the ordinary voters, do not have direct say in the decision making process of their party.   Are the the Diet members accepted as active contributors to their parties?

In the series of political socialization surveys in 1968 (Okamura et al), 1989 (Aiuchi and Okamura), 1994 and 1996(Okamura and Matsumoto), the question "whom do you think the Diet members are working for?" has

been asked.　Okamura reported that the answer of "for his or her own sake" increased from 26% (1968) to 44% (1989) and to 63% (1994), and the answer of "for his or her own party" has been constantly low.　If so, who is working for the party, and how much do voters expect of the political parties.

　　　　A 1998 survey to high school students (Aiuchi) shows a very low evaluation of the respondents to the political parties.

(Table 2)　Average Points of the Political Institutions (0 to 100 thermome-
ter scale)
How well do you think the following institutions are working for the people's interests.　Please grade each of them.　If it is not working for the people at all, you may give it 0 point.　If you think it is doing its best, give it full 100.　If it reaches the minimum satisfactory level, please give them 50.
(listed from the lowest score)　　　　　　　　　　　(n＝970)

Political Party	28.1
Cabinet	30.2
House of Representative	31.3
House of Councilors	32.7
Prime Minister	34.7
Prefectural Government	41.3
Prefectural Assembly	41.6
City Assembly	44.1
Ward Office	56.5
Public Prosecutors Office	59.7
Self Defense Force	62.6
Police Office	63.3
Court	64.3

　　　　First of all, it is clear that the parties are not evaluated highly by the high school students.　Political Parties, Cabinet, House of Representatives, House of Councilors and the Prime Minister are all national political institutions and consisted of the Diet members.　The low reputa-

tion of the Diet members might affect this result, but as we will see later, the respondents mentioned lack of accountability of the political parties and the majority party's cabinet and the Prime Minister quite often in the open-ended questions.   Compared to the national political institutions, closer local politics are accepted in a more positive way but they are still under the satisfiable minimum except the Ward Office which is not a policy making institution.   High school students do not perceive the Japanese political system to be desperate as a whole, as they respect the legal system relatively highly.   This shows the reliability of their answers and also the existence of developing measurement among them.

Two open-ended questions were asked; "Is there anything you feel proud of or good about Japanese politics?   If any, please write here", and "Is there anything you feel is wrong or bad about Japanese politics?   If any, please write here".   Some of the representative answers as to the negative side of politics are as follows:

 -politicians never take responsibility for political results
 -they use our taxs for themselves and their supporters
 -often do not keep their campaign promises
 -not sensitive enough to the people's voices
 -slow decision making
 -increased the sales tax
 -raised medical expenditure and caused suffering to the socio-
  economic minorities

These answers are of course much influenced by media stereotypes, but they are also very diverse.   The respondents described politics with their own styles and grammar.   They are at an anticipators and anxious age, struggling to figure out world at large.   To hear their voices correct-

ly, we have to prepare some appropriate qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

3. Meaning of Party-id: Political Socialization in Japan

Okamura and Matsumoto pointed out the low correlation between livelihood satisfaction and politics. Only 3% responded that their living would be better if politics goes well, 9% responded that their living would be worse if politics goes wrong (Okamura and Matsumoto, 1996). It is based on a survey conducted in 1994. The economic crisis since 1997 may have changed the relationship between politics and daily living. Bankruptcies of major banks, the long "recession", and increased lay-offs and unemployment are criticized by the media as the result of misgovernment. As shown in the answers to the open-ended questions, taxation, medical expenditure and low job opportunities are strictly connected to the responsibility of politics by high school students. They now understand their situations a bit more realistically.

One of the findings from Okamura and Matsumoto's recent studies is a "cognitive screen" of the youth to select the parties they vote for. Using factor analysis, they found two attitude orientations that are called "realistic" and "anti-realistic". Realistic attitudes contains such as "important thing for politicians is not a personality but skill" and "politics can not avoid secrets by nature". According to their explanation, those who are strongly "realistic" tend to vote to the LDP or the NFP, and the "anti-realistic" tend to vote the JCP or the SDP.

This dichotomy reminds us of a classical explanation on political socialization. In the early works, David Easton and Jack Dennis pointed out the changing quality of political authority developed by the children. Children grasp the authority connected to its personality at an early

stage, but they gradually understand authority in the context of political role and institutions. In the early stage of development, not only political authority but politics itself can be idealized and personalized if it is given in some personalized tangible figures. If learning the reality is a process of socialization, the "realistic" "anti-realistic" dichotomy shows nothing but the process of development. If not, the JCP and the SDP are not parties with realistic policies.

A more important point that is guided by their suggestive dichotomy is that the Japanese children do not have a primary stage of socialization. They lack the foundation to develop idealized or personalized figures of political authority and partisanship. Without psychological attachment, Japanese children have to develop an understanding of the real world. Deeply rooted psychological attachment is one of the essentials to the diffuse support. On the contrary, diffuse support that lacks psychological stability may tend to require two possible compensations. First, voters evaluate political parties by their performance and issue position, and are intolerant of failure. Second, voters devalue their expectation to the parties and have attitudes that all the parties are equally useless.

Aside from lack of psychological foundation, Japanese children are not given enough cognitive background of the political parties. In Japanese school textbooks, no specific names of the political parties are shown. There are explanations about political parties in general, such as candidates are often affiliated to some specific parties. We can not find descriptions of the reasons why the parties are important, or what are the major functions of the political parties are in the textbooks for the junior high school students. Political parties fight for seats with each nominee campaigning on their policies as election promises. In the high school

textbook this is almost all of the explanation about parties. With such poor information, textbook is implicitly requiring to the students to support the party. Most textbooks pick up low political participation as a serious social problem, and sometimes they introduce the increase of independent voters as a sign of political apathy. Voting is taught as a civic duty from the elementary school, and so is party support. This master narrative of civic duty may turn to be an obsession for the young voters, but they are not taught how to evaluate, or what to expect, and finally, they start blaming themselves. Discussing domestic violence, Virginia Sapiro once described "Victims of spouse, child abuse and incest, tend to define their situation as normal and if they recognize their pain, blame themselves" (Sapiro, 1990).

Ichiro Miyake carefully and thoroughly investigated the effect of political socialization on partisanship (Flanagan,1991). He reviewed the preceding works by Kubota and Ward (1970), Massey (1976), and Iwase (1977) and pointed out their common findings that the degree of successful transmission of partisanship from parents to children was not much less than that in Western nations. Now we can estimate the age range of the parents of the high school children to be around forty to fifty years old. This age group already has 37% (1993) to 53 % (1997) of independent voters among them. So, the parent-child transmission of partisanship may not be stable significant thing any more.

Miyake also analyzed the effect of media exposure, although higher exposure levels did not show apparent effect on strengthen or increasing levels of partisanship of those aged 20 to 29 who did not perceive clear partisan preferences within their primary social networks. He explained it thus "political reporting (in Japan) often portrays party politics in a critical, negative light by reporting factional in-fighting or

(Table 3) Recent Independent Voters by the Age Group (from Matsumoto, 1997)
(%)

| | age groups | | | | | |
	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70+
May 1993	47	45	37	26	24	24
May 1994	54	48	40	37	32	31
May 1995	70	70	59	49	46	43
Jan 1996	66	56	47	36	36	25
Mar 1997	67	58	53	42	37	31

corrupt practices associated with the parties". (Flanagan, 1991, p. 223).

Instead of the media effect, Miyake pointed out the politically relevant formal organizations and informal groups as effective agents of political socialization of partisanship. It means that social network is taking some important roles in adult socialization.

(Table 4) Where do you think you have learned knowledge and values from ? (1983)
(% of mentioning out of 2,327 respo ndents)

Family	20.3
Workplace	15.8
Friends	15.5
Mass Media	60.1
Business Org.	6.4
Schools	3.8
Political Parties	11.1
None of the others	7.1

Big changes in the life-long employment system, trade union organizations, seniority based salary system, and the restructuring of corporations are now in progress, creating economic anxiety. Even future pension plans are not surely promised for the present forties and fifties. Kaisha (company) is no longer a pseudo-family and has no power to call

on the loyalty of its employees.   Human power is much more fluid than
before.   So that the political influence related to the work place or
colleague workers will shift from a collective to an individual one.
Agents of political socialization which could be effective till ten years ago
are losing their infrastructures quite rapidly.

4. Conclusion and Future Research Ideas

After reviewing the political socialization process of partisanship
in Japan, it may be fair to say that Japanese children do not have effective
socialization agents at least until they become eligible to vote.   This does
not mean that they have no obvious agents of partisan socialization after
they reach the age to vote.

There are some signs that young voters are learning partisanship
through their voting experiences.   Hayakawa examined the data col-
lected at his university using the HAYASHI II, and found that the voting
participation is one of the most effective factors in discriminating those
who have partisanship and those who identify themselves independently
(Hayakawa, 1996).   Also the election surveys in 1990 and 1993, both

(Table 5)   1993 election
Which situation do you want in the Diet ? (given choices are LDP-single, LDP+
X, and Coalition except LDP)

age group	20-24	25-29	40-49
% of Don't Know	26.8	14.8	16.3
n	(118)	(115)	(569)

Did you vote considering coalition ?

age group	20-24	25-29	40-49
% of "Yes"	44.9	47.8	62.7
n	(118)	(115)	(569)

conducted at the general election of the House of Representatives, show an increase of knowledge and vision by experience.

As we have seen above, the Japanese political parties are too much complicated and unstable to give children party-identifications. Parents' generations have already been involved in volatile partisanship. Japanese children are being sent to the voting place in an unskilled, uninformed condition but only with obsessed sense of civic duty. Okamura and Matsumoto give us a hint to understand the political context of the children. They reported that when they asked the respondents which party they liked, vast majority responded "none". But most of the respondents chose a party when they asked which party they vote for.

The following is a hypothesis to explain this behavioral pattern. The partisanship of the Japanese children may not be the party-id. We have seen the high school students develop logical and causal criticisms of the present political system. They have reasonable political interests, but they are not well enough informed. They are growing a "utilitarian partisanship" which will become a "buffer voting", and/or "critical voting" in future. As we discussed before, political socialization in the

(Table 6) 1990 election
Which situation do you want in the Diet ? (given choices are: Stable, Close, Upset, D. K.)

age group	20-24	25-29	40-49
% of Don't Know	38.9	20.5	13.0
n	(90)	(146)	(500)

Did you vote considering buffer ?

age group	20-24	25-29	40-49
% of "Yes"	34.4	52.1	62.4
n	(90)	(146)	(500)

early stage requires more psychological attachment to the political fig-
ures.　In this sense, the Japanese youth will take a different path from
other Western countries when they achieve political maturity.　To prove
this hypothesis, longitudinal observation of the persons in the pre-adult
stage, like high school student will be necessary.　How they perceive the
idea of utilitarian partisan voting in their early adult age will be the key
to understanding present changing Japanese voting behavior.　Develop-
ment of qualitative analysis of their writing will also help us understand
the structure of the political world of pre-adult citizens.

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Appendix Fission-Fusion Process of Political Parties in Japan after 1992
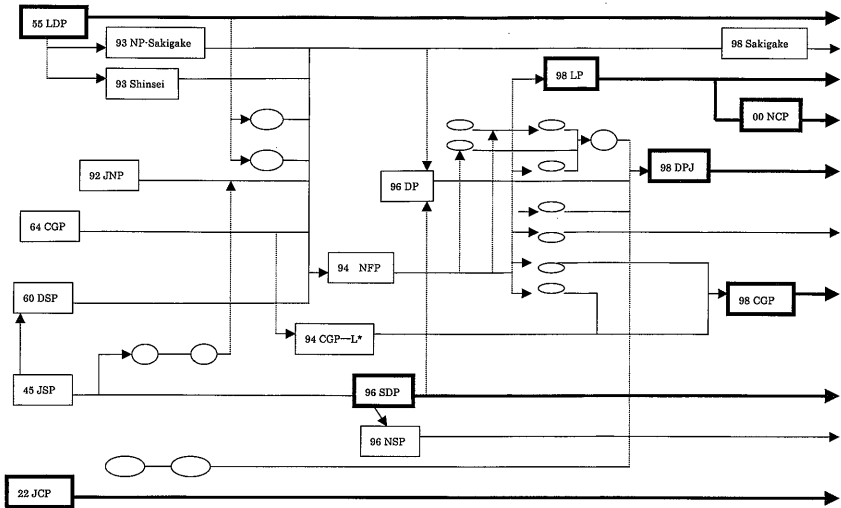
Explanatory Note

1. Numbers at the head of the party names are the years of foundation.
2. Arrows mean formation of new parties by fusion of plural parties and/or groups.
3. Boxes linked with ordinary lines show different names of the same parties or groups.
4. Bold arrows to the right end mean that these political parties are still active in December 2000.
5. Narrow arrows to the right end mean that these small political groups are still active in December 2000.
6. Small political groups and parties are shown as circles without names.
7. Abbreviations of the party names are:
    CGP=Clean Government Party, Komeitou
    CGPL*=Clean Government Party organized only by the members of local assemblies.
    DP=Democratic Party, 1996
    DPJ=Democratic Party of Japan, 1998
    JCP=Japan Communist Party
    JNP=Japan New Party
    JSP=Japan Socialist Party
    LDP=Liberal Democratic Party
    LP=Liberal Party
    NCP=New Conservative Party
    NFP=New Fronteer Party, Shin-Shin-tou
    NP-Sakigake=New Party Sakigake
    NSP=New Socialist Party
    SDP=Social Democratic Party