

SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN JAPAN: THE RESEARCH OF AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

by George A. DeVos

Introduction

American sociologists and anthropologists have done surprisingly few systematic studies comparing social problems in Japan and the United States. It is unfortunate that so few foreign scholars are bearing systematic witness to the dramatic pace of social and cultural change taking place in Japan, since Japan offers an excellent testing ground for theories developed within a solely Western context. In surveying research on social problems, I shall give emphasis to work by American scholars and I shall not consider problems that concern the political scientist and the economist, or the social problems of Japanese migrants to North and South America.

The problems I shall consider are those observable features of tension or deviant behavior occurring within a society that tend to become the concern of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Each of these disciplines is sensitive to different forms of social maladaptation or intrapsychic maladjustment. For example, the cultural anthropologist often approaches a society synchronically, viewing it as an ideal pattern rather than as a relatively ill-working social system that somehow manages to survive. The psychological anthropologist, however, sometimes makes a more "clinical" appraisal as he studies culturally determined patterns of socialization influencing the individual, and he is more apt to concern himself with forms and appearances of social deviancy.

The psychologist or the social psychologist has only in rare instances himself done comparative research, and he usually relies on anthropologists to bring back psycho-cultural data. American psychologists have collaborated with Japanese colleagues in research in Japan, but with few exceptions these studies have been replications not designed to treat culture as a systematic variable. In some instances (e.g., Lazarus, Opton, Edward, Tomita, Masatoshi, and Kodama 1966) discrepancies have resulted which demand further inquiries (see Frager, this volume).

Since its very inception sociology has had theorists concerned with specific types of social malfunctioning. They have considered forms of social

behavior, such as crime and juvenile delinquency, suicide, divorce, and prostitution, as indices of social dislocation. Sociologists have also concerned themselves with demographic effects of shifts in population from rural to urban areas, and changes in population density. The recent science of "urbanology" studies problems which arise in the city as a social habitat. The social psychologist concerns himself with intergroup attitudes, prejudices between minority and majority groups in a population, and such psycho-cultural problems as alienation and marginality. Unfortunately, sociology has not tested many of its findings in non-Western cultural contexts.

Japanese society shares with other industrial societies the attendant problems of modern social life. At present, close to eighty percent of the Japanese population can be considered urban in orientation. The modern anthropological specialist on Japan must follow the Japanese into the city as well as continue his observations of traditional rural life. Programs in Japanese studies at major American universities have not yet stimulated interest among graduate students in the social problems of urban Japan, and the publications in English on social problems in Japan are few. Mamoru Iga, with whom I share this task of assessment, is notable among American sociologists in dealing with social deviancy and minority problems in Japan.

Urban Ecological Problems

Writings on urban life by American scholars rarely assess the overall ecology of the urban environment. We need more ethnographic descriptions of particular social segments of urban populations, such as those of Ronald Dore (1958) describing a typical "downtown" or *shitamachi* ward, and Ezra Vogel (1963) on the upper-middle-class "salary man" and his family. The Japanese family is changing. The degree to which these changes per se produce tensions and dislocation is a debatable issue (cf. Yamamura and Nonomiya 1967; Nakano 1962). Robert Blood (1967) has compared the marital adjustments made by younger salaried office workers of middle class whose marriages were based upon mutual attraction (love-marriages) and those whose marriages, following tradition, had been arranged. Christie Kiefer (1968) has examined tensions related to living in the modern *danchi* complexes of apartment houses. With Hiroshi Wagatsuma, I am completing a monograph on the residents of a lower-class city ward peopled by petty merchants and artisans, groups that have been significant in the modernizing of Japan's economy. More effort should be placed by both Japanese and American social scientists on studies of the family at all social and economic levels in the modern city. Premodern patterns of parentalism still exist in economically marginal industries (Bennett and Ishino 1963). Some material on the "lower depths" of economic life in Japan have been recently presented in a study of Japanese flop houses (Caldarola 1968), and a ragpicking community in Tokyo (Taira 1969).

Research on Culture and Mental Health

Problems of mental health related to culture change in Japan also constitute a relatively underdeveloped area of research in social science. There are epidemiological similarities in the distribution of mental illness in Japan and the United States; Kato (1969) notes some specific differences. William Caudill has done a number of very careful investigations of culture and mental health in Japan. Takeo Doi, a Japanese psychiatrist, has written a number of articles on Japanese child-rearing.

These investigators have pointed out uniquely Japanese symptoms and treatments of mental illness (Caudill and Schooler 1969; Doi 1958 and 1955; Caudill and Doi 1963). Caudill (1959a, 1959b, 1961) has shown that the care and treatment of patients and the social role of mental hospitals in Japan differ from the circumstances in the United States. Caudill's most unusual finding was that mental illness is related to sib position in the family (1964).

Takeo Doi (1956, 1962, 1963) has related problems of delinquency to difficulties in self-realization common to many Japanese. Both Doi and Caudill attest to problems of social and psychological maturation connected with characteristics of Japanese mothers (Caudill 1962; Caudill and Weinstein 1966; Caudill and Plath 1969). Doi especially discusses the difficulty of achieving full psychological maturation despite modern ideals of autonomy and individuation held by Japanese as members of a democratic society (1969).

A review of the work of clinical psychologists in Japan (DeVos, Murakami, and Murase 1964) notes a considerable interest in developing new techniques of psychotherapy and psychological research. Japanese have successfully adapted for use in Japan such therapeutic techniques and clinical diagnostic instruments as the Rorschach, Thematic Apperception Test, and Minnesota Multiphasic Psychological Inventory (cf. DeVos, Taniguchi, Mayumi, and Murakami 1958). Mizushima and DeVos used the California Psychological Inventory in Japan and found that the "socialization" subscale differentiated delinquent youth in Japan to the same degree as in the United States (DeVos and Mizushima 1967; Gough, DeVos, and Mizushima 1968).

With members of the Department of Psychiatry and the Department of Education at Nagoya University, DeVos participated in a large-scale study of Japanese personality modalities by means of attitude tests and projective techniques (Muramatsu, et al 1962). In Chicago from 1947 to 1951 Caudill and DeVos studied the *issei* or immigrant generation of Japanese-Americans and found rigidity and maladjustment in Rorschach responses (DeVos 1955). Caudill reported a strong incidence of need achievement in the TAT protocols (Caudill 1952; Caudill and DeVos 1956). Fumio Marui and DeVos administered over 800 TAT and Rorschach tests in Japan and found striking similarities to the TAT findings reported by Caudill on

immigrant Japanese in the United States. Murakami and DeVos found that maladjustment, as measured by the Rorschach, was less in the Japanese samples than among Japanese-Americans, but evidence of psychological rigidity found in the *issei* was comparable with that of rural Japanese in Japan (Muramatsu, et al 1962). Principal conclusions of this study point up the relationship between guilt and achievement for many Japanese (DeVos 1960) and underlying tensions in role relationships (DeVos and Wagatsuma 1959, 1964; Wagatsuma and DeVos 1962). High scores on the "F" or authoritarian personality scale were correlated with high rigidity scores. Subsequently, Niyekawa reported generally high scores in authoritarianism in Japan (Niyekawa 1966).

Problems of Youth-Alienation and Suicide

Feelings of alienation have become a serious problem of modern Japanese youth. Robert J. Lifton (1962) discusses the nature of alienation as experienced by students. Experiences of dislocation and crisis in young adulthood may result in suicide, which is the major cause of death in Japan today of young people under thirty years of age. The suicide rate among the young is at least three times as high as that of any other country for which statistics are available (DeVos 1962). Problems of individuation and commitment of the Japanese come to a crisis at this time, brought on by the experiences of socialization (DeVos 1964, 1967b; Iga 1961 and 1968). Certain forms of suicide of the Japanese, such as parent-child suicide (Burg 1961), are rarely found outside Japan.

A perceptive study concerning the alienation experienced by Japanese students studying in the United States gives insight into the nature of social identity in Japanese culture (Bennett, Passin, and McKnight 1958). Studies of Japanese novelists present an interpretation of alienation among modern Japanese (Wagatsuma and DeVos 1965) and include a psycho-analytic analysis of the writings of Ishiwara Shintaro, a Japanese writer whose description of alienation in youth has captured a large audience among the young (Wagatsuma 1969).

Many aspects of the educational process in Japan related to social problems merit investigation (cf. DeVos and Mizushima 1962b). Vogel (1962), for example, discusses the "examination hell" that is the fate of middle-class children, who are expected to achieve. In his analysis of apartment house dwellers, Kiefer (1968) points out how the *kyoiku mama* ("education mama") has become a caricature of the concerned parent worrying about the educational achievement of her child. These and other social problems attendant upon the attempts of Japanese education to meet the changing needs of modern Japan have had little study by social scientists. The bureaucratically organized academic world of Japan seems in many respects ill-equipped to give adequate training. A comparative

study of higher education from a social standpoint is greatly needed (see Nagai 1968).

Crime, Juvenile Delinquency, and Prostitution

Another index of social problems among the young in Japan is the rising incidence of juvenile delinquency since the end of World War II, which includes a notable increase in crimes of assault by juveniles (cf. Mizushima and DeVos 1962a; DeVos 1963). Japanese scholars have conducted many psychological and sociological studies of juvenile delinquency of a quality ranging from excellent to poor. As is true of most Japanese research on social problems, these studies are presently unknown to American scholars. A volume is now in preparation that reviews these studies and includes empirical studies of the family and juvenile delinquency in Japan (DeVos, Mizushima, and Hunn).

One striking feature of social change in Japan is the more youthful age at which delinquency appears. DeVos (1969) reports experimentations with stimulant and narcotic drugs by adolescents 13 and 14 years of age. The modern problems of youth throughout the world need comparative analysis. Certain features of modern society cut across the individual traditions of particular countries (DeVos and Mizushima 1962b). The disaffection of college students in Japan is related to similar processes in Europe and the United States.

Social problems related to organized crime are difficult to study anywhere, and few studies of this kind have been attempted (Berigan 1955). Mizushima and DeVos (1967c) have reported on the Japanese underworld organization and its functions in Japanese society. Social forms of the Japanese underworld are derivatives of organizational structures that characterize other parts of the Japanese society (Bennett and Ishino 1963). For example, *oyabun-kobun* (fictive parent-child relationship) has been a strong organizational force in the underworld until very recently. However, like everything else in Japan, organized crime is changing. Prostitution, which had its peculiarly Japanese tradition of being the business of particular families, has shifted into becoming the business of modern criminal organizations very similar to those in the United States (Iga 1968). Traditional, organized groups of criminals in Japan have supported some rightist political figures (DeVos 1964; DeVos and Mizushima 1962b). The Japanese criminal scene, like that of the United States, is complicated by the presence of minority group problems. The Korean minority in Japan is very much involved in criminal activities in some of the major Japanese cities.

Minority Status in Japan

The largest minority group in Japan is the *Burakumin*, formerly called *Eta*, who are descendants of ritually impure outcastes and today number

about two million persons. Passin (1955), Donoghue (1957), Cornell (1961, 1967), Iga (1967), DeVos (1965), DeVos and Wagatsuma (1967a), and Wagatsuma (1967) have published on the subject in English. *Japan's Invisible Race* (DeVos and Wagatsuma 1966) summarizes most of the material produced by both the Japanese and American authors, and relates this phenomenon to a general theory of caste (Norbeck 1952; DeVos 1968).

It is noteworthy how few Japanese social scientists other than those who are themselves outcastes have sought to study the serious social problems of the Korean ethnic minority in Japan. Only one author (Mitchell 1967) has treated this subject in any detail in English. An empirical work on juvenile delinquency in Japan (DeVos and Wagatsuma 1966) notes that the family court records of the city of Kobe demonstrated a rate of delinquency seven times as high for the Korean minority as for the members of the majority Japanese population. The Korean problem of social self-identity is very serious. The fact that many Koreans in Japan gain their livelihood from illegal activities is related to their low social status and the scarcity of legitimate employment available to them.

The problems of the *Burakumin* and the Korean minority are similar to those faced by the Negro, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and other racial ethnic minorities in the United States.

Social problems of three other minority or special groups of Japan, all of which are very small, have had very little study. No foreign scholar has written on the special problems of the few remaining Ainu living in Hokkaido. Two other Japanese groups are part of the aftermath of World War II. One is composed of so-called "mixed blood" children sired by the American occupation forces who have an anomalous social position and suffer various forms of severe social discrimination. The second group is composed of injured survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Robert Lifton has described their situation in great detail in his recent volume *Death in Life* (1967).

Conclusion

In making a retrospective as well as prospective assessment of American scholarly work on Japanese social problems, one should seek how to light more candles rather than curse the darkness. As a psychologist and anthropologist, I think most about how the motivation of a younger generation of American social scientists can better be directed toward taking on the challenge of understanding Japanese culture. The need in education is to inspire and encourage more graduate students within the social sciences to take on the formidable task of acquiring even partial competence in Japanese. Direct exposure to Japan itself is perhaps necessary to create an interest that can be satisfied only by more contact and more experience and eventually professional commitment. A year of study in Japan should

be made available to more students, both undergraduate and graduate. Such training should precede doctoral dissertation research. Early stimulation is more apt to produce an appetite for things Japanese.

To produce scholars of Japanese culture, interest in this subject must be created by the faculties of all departments of the social sciences. The field of history has had the most success to date. Anthropology each year interests a few. Sociology and psychology, however, do not often engender an interest in cross-cultural work among their students. The orientation toward social problems is more traditional in these two fields than in anthropology, and the study of social problems outside the United States may fall to the anthropologists by default.

Learning the Japanese language is a formidable task, but those who specialize in Japan have one exciting advantage in comparative work that is not available to the same degree to scholars of other foreign cultures. They may collaborate with trained native colleagues who welcome the opportunity for gaining a greater understanding of the malfunctioning as well as the ideal functioning of their changing society. Perhaps one way to stimulate interest in social problems is for American specialists to seek closer ties with Japanese social scientists and make greater effort to bring these colleagues to the United States as visitors.

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