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## INFANT DAY CARE IN JAPAN: POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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In most industrialized societies, increasing numbers of women, including mothers of young children, are becoming employed outside the home (Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976; Lebra, Paulson, & Powers, 1976). In Japan, the *Mainichi Daily News* (October 30, 1977) reported that, as of July 1977, 35.7% of mothers having preschool children were employed outside the home, creating a need for nursery care for about 2,260,000 children. This change in the employment of women has, necessarily, been associated with a shift in the manner in which young children are reared. "Day care centers" (or their equivalents) have become commonplace in most countries today (e. g. see Roby, 1973). Although many societies seem to have ignored the possible effects of this shift in socialization practices, American developmental psychologists have been very interested in the influence of day care upon the development of children (e. g. see Belsky & Steinberg, 1978 for a review of work in this area). The purpose of the present paper is to consider the possible impact of early day care experiences upon the development of Japanese children. The discussion herein is based, in part, upon the author's visits to a number of diverse kinds of day care settings in Japan during a six-month stay in 1977.

Before considering the effects of Japanese day care, it will be helpful to present a brief description of the nature of the programs and arrangements available for the care of children of working mothers in Japan. The author is presently preparing an extensive description of Japanese day care since none presently exists in English. Other brief accounts of day nurseries (as they are called in Japan) may be found in Roby (1973) and Bettelheim & Takanishi (1976). The National Association of Nursery Teachers in Japan has also published an English edition of its *Guide to Day Nursery Practice* (1978), which presents detailed recommendations concerning the content of nursery programs (e. g. curriculum, facilities, equipment, physical care, etc.). This excellent book does not, however, describe the various types of programs available nor does it deal directly with the kinds of experiences actually provided to children in day care.

In general, there is a very diverse range of services available to working mothers in Japan. In fact, especially in urban areas, day care facilities and programs appear to be as common as they are in the U. S. Most cities have at least some (and often many) centers which are "public day care centers" — i. e. these are operated directly by some governmental unit (usually wards in Tokyo). The National Association of Nursery Teachers (1978) reports that, as of December of 1977, there were 12,385 such public day nurseries in the country, and that these public programs cared for 1,129,441 children. There are also a number of private "recognized" day care centers, which are operated by individuals or

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groups either on a non-profit basis or as a profit-making business. The National Association of Nursery Teachers (1978) reports that there were 7,444 such private centers, enrolling 698,076 children in December of 1977. While these private centers are licensed and largely funded through the government, they are not standardized in the same manner as the public centers — curriculum, staffing, facilities, etc. are under the control of the director and management of each individual center.

There are also a variety of private “non-recognized” centers available. These are programs which are not licensed by the government and whose financing derives entirely from tuition or private contributions. Selection of children for these programs is controlled by each center itself and children so selected must pay the full fees with no contribution by the government. Some of these programs are non-recognized because of restrictions upon the children who may enroll (since all recognized centers must admit all children assigned to them). There is, for example, a small center located in a converted house in Tokyo which is sponsored by and serves the employees of a large hospital. There is also a center for the care of employees’ children in a large factory north of Tokyo. In both cases, admission to the center requires employment at the sponsoring business. Some private non-recognized centers also exist independently from any particular sponsoring organization. For example, there is one such center, a cooperative one organized and run by a small group of working parents, located in an old house in Tokyo, which is based upon a philosophy of “naturalness” and permissiveness. There are apparently no good statistics available concerning the number of such non-recognized programs in Japan. In the author’s interviews with day care center directors, such programs were frequently mentioned and one director of a center noted that there were about 20 such non-recognized programs in Tokyo’s Setagaya-ku alone and suggested that these programs were nearly as numerous as private recognized ones.

In addition to the above day care centers (collectively called *hoiku-en*), there are a large number of individual women who care for very young children in their own homes. This is the equivalent of what we in the U. S. call “family day care.” In Japan they are called *hoiku-mama* or, literally, “child-rearing mothers.” These women typically care for from one to three children who are usually under the age of two. The president of the Hoiku-Mama Association of Tokyo, Mrs. Kazue Ofuji, noted that there were (in 1977) 190 recognized *hoiku-mama* in Tokyo. She also explained that many more children are given care by privately arranged caregivers either in the child’s own home or in the home of the caregiver.

In terms of actual numbers of children, the National Association of Nursery Teachers (1978) reported that there are a total of 1.8 million preschool children in day care throughout the country. Of these, 25,659 (or 1.4%) were infants less than one year old, while 298,095 (or 16.5%) were between one and three years of age. These figures, of course, are based upon only recognized day care centers and do not, therefore, include infants and young children in non-recognized arrangements nor those cared for by *hoiku-mama*. Therefore, one may assume that the actual numbers are higher by some unknown factor.

One other institution which may serve the function of day care in Japan is the kindergarten or *yochi-en*. These kindergartens are roughly the equivalent of American nursery schools. They are generally quite educational in their curriculum orientation and

typically are restricted to children from three to five years old. According to the National Association of Nursery Teachers (1978), there were 13,854 kindergartens caring for 2,453,687 children in May 1977. These *yochi-en* differ from *hoiku-en* in a number of important ways. As mentioned, they do not provide care for children under three at all and, strictly speaking, their purpose is not to provide care, but to give a firm foundation for the later educational process. Therefore, many of the children enrolled have mothers who are not employed and the kindergartens are not generally suitable for the care of children of working parents. One major reason is that, unlike the *hoiku-en*, these schools are not full-day operations. Nevertheless, some mothers are able to hold part-time jobs while their children are in the kindergarten. Thus, *yochi-en* do contribute in a small way to the day care picture in Japan.

The above description has provided only the briefest overview of Japanese day care, but it has been sufficient to support the major point — day care for young children is a significant institution in Japan and is increasingly a part of the developmental experience of those children. In general, the Japanese government, at all its levels, has been supportive of the growth of day care services for its citizens. Its provision of public day care systems and its recognition (licensing) process which provides for the payment of fees in private centers represents a very forward-looking social policy (more so than the American government in some ways).

The aforementioned interest in *providing* day care in Japan has, unfortunately, not been matched by a corresponding interest in *studying* day care. To be sure, the *Guide to Day Nursery Practice* published by the National Association of Nursery Teachers (1978) and other similar documents offer a good deal of practical advice concerning the best content for a day nursery program. There is even more research on early childhood education in kindergartens (e. g. see Bettelheim & Takanishi, 1976), including some studies of the effects of such programs upon children's later intellectual and social development. This research indicates that no negative effects and some positive ones (although these tended to attenuate as the child grew older) and it was used to justify an increasing support of kindergarten education by the government during the sixties. Day nurseries or day care centers, however, appear to have escaped this research attention. During his visit to Japan in 1977, the author interviewed numerous day care directors and inquired about possible effects of such experience. These directors admitted that this question was not often considered and were unable to point to any systematic studies on the topic. Since that visit, the author has corresponded with a number of scholars and researchers in Japan — specialists in the fields of psychology, education, and sociology — and their replies to the question of day care's effects seem to confirm this conclusion (e. g. Takao Sofue, personal communication; Miwako Yamada, personal communication). The only available studies appear to be rather "fragmentary" or to focus primarily upon physical development.

One interesting exception is a study by Prof. Makoto Tsumori of Ochanomizu Women's College, in which the development of 3-36 month-old children in day nursery care was compared with that of similar children cared for in their own homes. In general, few striking differences appear between home- and nursery-reared children although some aspects seem to develop slightly earlier in home-reared infants (e. g. resisting having the face washed) while others appear sooner in nursery children (e. g. taking a toy from another

child). The author concludes that “healthy development has been achieved through the nursery curriculum — in the development of daily habits, big muscle movement, and language skills.” Noting some differences, he also suggests that there is a “need for nursery teachers to take a fresh look at development of the emotions, ability to socialize, the senses and small hand movements as areas which reflect the overall personality development of the child.” He also cautions, “At an age level where the child demands great individual attention, special care must be exercised in the group care situation.” This study, while very informative, tends to give much more attention to behavioral habits and physical development than to “the emotions and socialization” (for which only very crude measures are utilized). The *Guide to Day Nursery Practice* offers a fuller account of this study.

In the U. S. also, there is a large body of research on nursery schools (i. e. kindergartens) — both on the content or curriculum and on the possible effects of such experiences on children (e.g. see Swift, 1964). It was not until the early seventies, however, that psychologists and educators began to direct their research efforts toward an understanding of the day care setting and its possible influence upon children. In the past ten years, though, such interest has surged ahead in the U. S. and there now exist a good number of studies on the effects of day care (e. g. see Bingham, 1978 ; Belsky & Steinberg, 1978).

In order to consider the effect which day care experiences might have upon *Japanese* children, it is first necessary to endeavor to portray the more typical social/psychological characteristics of the Japanese people. One must approach such a task with extreme caution and a good bit of humility. All cultures, and despite Western stereotypes, Japan is no exception, permit much diversity within the general parameters established by human nature and/or societal norms. Still, the business of science is the formulation (and continuous refinement) of generalizations. Therefore, we shall proceed, keeping in mind that any characterizations of “the Japanese people” will necessarily be rough approximations and that those approximations are really only useful when seen as relative to other equally rough approximations of the psychological traits of persons from other cultures.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) proposed one useful framework for cross-cultural comparison, a framework based upon the concept of ordered variation in certain value orientations. They assumed that there are a limited number of common human problems, that there is a limited range of solutions to those problems, and that all variations of those solutions are present, in varying degrees, in all societies at all times (although one variation is typically dominant). This model, thus, recognizes the diversity within cultures and the fact that comparisons between cultures are relative ones and not absolute. Five universal human issues are described : the conception of human nature, the relationship of persons to nature and supernature, the place of humans in the flow of time, the activity/passivity of humans, and the relationship of the individual to the group. Although it is the last dimension which is most salient in so much of the theorizing about the Japanese culture, and although that dimension is the focus of this paper, it is obvious that any full analysis of the Japanese culture would require consideration of the other four dimensions as well.

Many writers have emphasized the contrasts between Japan and the U. S. with respect to dominant psychological characteristics (e. g. see Moore, 1967 ; Reischauer, 1977 ; DeVos, 1973). Perhaps the most frequently noted characteristic of Japanese is the so-called

“group-orientation,” the de-emphasis upon the individual self and corresponding stress upon belongingness and interdependence. This, of course, contrasts sharply with the value placed upon the individual and upon independence and self-reliance in the U. S.. The use of the “group model” to describe Japanese society has been extremely widespread (e. g. see Benedict, 1946 ; Minami, 1971 ; Doi, 1973 ; Vogel, 1963 ; DeVos, 1973). A major proponent of this model was Nakane (1970), who utilized the vertical principles of rank and hierarchy to analyze Japanese society and the human relationships within it. Most recently, Lebra (1976) has provided what is perhaps the most elaborate and convincing rendition of this framework.

It is clear that the concept of the Japanese as a “group-oriented” people has been a very useful and powerful one in the attempts by social scientists to understand that culture. It is not, however, without its critics. Plath (personal communication) has, for example, noted his opposition to “the pink panthers of national character thinking” in general and has expressed particular skepticism about the ability of concepts such as “groupism” to explain the workings of a complex society. The Japanese sociologist, Tsuneo Yamane (personal communication) has also questioned the unbridled use of the group orientation concept, noting that, “The two apparently contradictory attitudes, egoism and group orientation, seem to be subtly combined with each other in the mind of the present Japanese people.” Yamane’s point is supported by a study conducted by Caudill and Scarr (1962), utilizing three of the Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck value orientation dimensions. With respect to the orientation of individual to group, Caudill and Scarr found that there were, among Japanese, strong tendencies toward *both* peer group interdependency *and* individualism (depending upon the specific issue). A cogent analysis and critique of the group model has been offered by Befu (1977) also. He proposes an alternative model (which appears to complement rather than totally negate the group model) to describe (though not necessarily *explain*) Japanese interpersonal behavior and relationships. This model includes group ideology, but also both the social exchange of valued resources (social/emotional as well as material) and *seishin* (inner character or self) are incorporated. This more differentiated and elaborated model of the way in which Japanese (or, indeed, any people) come to define the relationship of the individual person to the wider social group seems promising.

It appears reasonable to conclude that the concept of group orientation has much to offer to our understanding of the Japanese people and their culture. We must, however, be careful to avoid any simplistic application of this (or any other) single concept as “the key” to that culture. It *does* have validity, but that validity derives from its being interwoven into the fabric of the individual self-concept of Japanese and into the structure of Japan’s societal institutions and norms. More than one scholar (e. g. Plath, personal communication ; Yamane, personal communication) has made the point that over-emphasis upon the need for indulgence inherent in the pure group model makes it difficult to account for the vigor, assertiveness, and initiative of the Japanese in areas of technology, trade, etc. Clearly, any attempt to describe the Japanese as simply “group-oriented” is doomed. It is equally true, however, that any portrayal in which this group orientation does not have a prominent position will not do justice to the richness and complexity of the Japanese culture.

If one accepts that the definition of the relationship of individual to group is an

important issue for any culture (as Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck argue) and if one accepts that this issue may be especially salient for the Japanese culture (as the present author has argued above), then it is natural to direct one's attention to the processes by which individuals *develop* such a definition. Some understanding of those processes as they exist psychologically within developing children and as they are supported socially by institutions and norms is a prerequisite for considering the possible effects of early day care experiences upon later personality and social behavior of Japanese children. Therefore, we shall proceed now to examine some ideas about the origins of the particular conceptualization of the relation of self and group which is so common among Japanese.

Caudill and Weinstein (1969) present data which suggest that there are quite contrasting styles of maternal care of infants in Japan and the U. S. Despite some similarities in terms of mothers' basic care of their infants, Japanese and American mothers treat their babies very differently. Overall, these differences suggest a more distal mode of interaction by American mothers (primarily verbal) and a more proximal mode (emphasizing physical contact) for Japanese mothers. The authors note that it almost seems as if the Japanese mother wants to produce a quiet, contented baby who is closely bonded to its mother, while the American mother wants to produce an active, vocal baby who is more independent. Data concerning the actual behavior of infants in the two cultures confirms that Japanese babies tend to be more passive and quiet and to vocalize only in situations of distress, while American infants are more active and vocal and explore their environment more on their own. Later research by Caudill & Frost (1972), involving a study of Japanese-American mothers and infants, demonstrated that these differences seem to derive much more from culture than from genetics. The maternal care practices and infant behaviors of these dyads were much more similar to those of the American mother-child pairs than they were to the Japanese. A study by Caudill & Schooler (1973) suggests that many of these differences (or their descendents) may be found among 2½-year-old and 6-year-old Japanese and American children and their mothers. This empirical data, thus, suggests strongly that differences in children's basic personality and social behavior may stem from corresponding differences in the treatment which those children receive from their primary caregivers early in life.

In general, the picture which emerges from all reports of Japanese child rearing practices is a consistent one. Lebra (1976) describes this relationship as basically one of "interdependence." It is characterized by a good deal of close physical contact (e. g. breast feeding, co-bathing, sleeping together, communicating physically, transporting the child on the mother's back, toilet training the child by physically holding him/her above the toilet, etc.). Indeed, Vogel (1963) reports that Japanese children and their mothers are rarely apart and the American custom of "babysitting" is practically non-existent. Another feature of early socialization of Japanese children is that mothers tend to believe that preschool children should be relatively free from frustration and tension which leads these mothers to try to always be as close as possible to their child, to respond as quickly as possible to the child's crying (or even to meet the child's needs *before* such crying arises), and to attempt to gratify the child's needs as fully and completely as possible (e. g. see Lebra, 1976 ; Vogel, 1963 ; Benedict, 1946 ; DeVos, 1973). Lebra (1976) also states that Japanese mothers try to sensitize their children to feelings of loneliness and dependency, keeping the

child in close physical contact with the adult social world to the extent possible. Discipline is not absent, however, from the early socialization of Japanese children. It is true that mothers do tend to be quite permissive and indulgent with infants, but as children approach school age or the age at which they begin to have contacts outside the family, parental expectations do begin to make themselves evident. Lebra (1976) notes that even younger children are expected to master certain basic physical skills (e. g. feeding, toilet training, etc.). As these children grow a bit older, parents (especially mothers) emphasize the need for orderliness, interpersonal harmony, and role conformity in their child. Vogel (1963) describes the process of “getting the child to understand” which mothers utilize for such child-training, a process in which the mother develops such a relationship with the child that the child *wants* to follow her wishes and, thereafter, she need only make those wishes known to invoke obedience. Lebra (1976) describes the use of rewards by mothers, threats of abandonment, teasing, and appeals for empathy by the child (in which the mother presents herself as a victim of the child’s misbehavior).

While there is little disagreement concerning the description of the early socialization experiences of Japanese children, it is less clear how those early child training practices can serve to explain later social behaviors and personality development. One theory has been proposed by Doi (1973) in his book *The Anatomy of Dependence*. Doi argues that the peculiar quality of the Japanese mother-child relationship has profound implications for the later personality of Japanese individuals. He centers this theoretical analysis around the concept of *amae*, which is roughly translated as “dependency”, but in reality has no precise English equivalent. *Amae* refers to the tendency of one person to presume upon the indulgence of another individual and of one’s group in general. It is related to the notion of “sweetness” — that positive feeling of comfort and security which comes from knowing that some other person or persons will care for you and support you and satisfy your desires. The prototype of *amae*, according to Doi, is to be found in the early mother-child relationship. A young infant (younger than 6-8 months) experiences a sense of perfect oneness with his social environment (of which his mother is the most significant element). This sense of oneness is similar to that which was described by Freud (e. g. see Munroe, 1955) as an “oceanic feeling.” To the extent that the mother immediately and fully gratifies the infant’s wishes and needs, it is almost as if the mother is an extension of self (or rather that there is no “self” as distinct from the mother) and the feeling of oneness is enhanced. Doi argues that the feeling of *amae* is not yet present, however, since the infant is not yet even capable of conceptualizing the mother or any other person as an independent entity and hence there can be no tendency to presume upon another. It is as if the child’s wishes are simply gratified but no outside agent is conceived as being responsible. Freud refers to this feeling as “infantile omnipotence” (e. g. see Munroe, 1955). This state may best be termed “pre-*amae*.”

Somewhere around the age of 6-8 months, however, the infant begins to become aware that his mother exists as an entity separate from himself. At this point, he is painfully aware of his own distinctness from his mother. Doi argues that, given this sense of aloneness and perhaps discomfort, it is only natural for the infant to long for a return to that state of perfect oneness and to attempt (psychologically) to re-establish or at least approximate that state. Doi states that the term *amaeru* (the verb form of *amae*) actually

refers to that attempt to re-establish that state of “perfect dependency.” In other words, the child is strongly motivated to attempt psychologically to deny the fact of separation from his mother. Doi asserts, in fact, that this motive serves as a basis for and colors *all* later human relationships. In the psychoanalytic model, this extrapolation occurs through a process of generalization from the relationship with the mother.

Obviously, in this process, it is important to achieve some sort of balance of perspective. One cannot simply ignore the very real physical separation of mother and child (or of any two individuals), but one must also avoid the ultimate despair of total isolation from others. Different cultures and different individuals within cultures seek different balances in this respect. Some mothers will act so as to minimize this feeling of separation, while others (for psychological reasons of their own) will wish to facilitate their child’s adjustment to an “independent” existence. The response of the environment and especially the parents is crucial here.

Doi is not, in fact, the only theorist to discuss the process by which a young infant comes to construct a sense of self as distinct from others. Another psychoanalytic account of this process has been presented by Mahler, Pine, & Bergman (1975), who claim that the psychological birth of the human infant is not coincident in time with the biological birth. They describe this process of psychological “birth” as one of “separation-individuation,” one in which occurs “the establishment of a sense of separateness from and relation to a world of reality, particularly with regard to the experiences of one’s own body and to the principle representative of the world as the infant experiences it, the primary love object.” The first few months of life are characterized by these authors as a period of “symbiotic fusion with the mother.” This typically begins to change around four or five months of age, but the process of separation-individuation is not generally well-established until three years of age or so. Mahler, Pine, & Bergman explain this process :

Separation and individuation are conceived of as two complementary developments: separation consists of the child’s emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother (Mahler, 1952), and individuation consists of those achievements marking the child’s assumption of his own individual characteristics. These are intertwined, but not identical, developmental processes; they may proceed divergently, with a developmental lag or precocity in one or the other. Thus, premature locomotor development, enabling a child to separate physically from the mother, may lead to premature awareness of separateness before internal regulatory mechanisms (cf. Schur, 1966), a component of individuation, provide the means to cope with this awareness. Contrariwise, an omnipresent infantilizing mother who interferes with the child’s innate striving for individuation, usually with the autonomous locomotor function of his ego, may retard the development of the child’s full awareness of self-other differentiation, despite the progressive or even precocious development of his cognitive, perceptual, and affective functions.

(Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975, p. 4)

It is interesting to note that, although the general theoretical model here is very similar to that of Doi (1973), the emphasis is much more upon development as a process of individuation than upon the maintenance of oneness and belongingness. This is, perhaps, not surprising in light of the cultural differences of the two writers. Mahler et al. do, however, refer to the anxiety which occurs upon the infant’s growing awareness of his separateness, but argue this tends to derive from an asynchrony of capabilities in the infant so that the awareness is attained before the child is ready (affectively or cognitively) to

deal with it. They see this anxiety, then, as basically maladaptive and as a hindrance to further development. They do not seem to allow for the possibility (so central to Doi's theory) that this anxiety could actually become a major motivating force for later development. In their theory, Mahler et al. speak of a "sense of identity", but they emphasize that this is "not a sense of *who* I am but *that* I am —" This is, then, a very primitive (certainly non-verbal and non-logical) recognition by the child of his/her distinctness — a basic conception of the world into self vs. non-self. Finally, these authors postulate a "catalyzing function" for "normal mothering" in which the mother facilitates this process of separation-individuation through her specific interactions with the child. The work of Mahler, Pine & Bergman is particularly helpful because it, unlike Doi's work, is not based solely upon clinical impressions, but rather grew out of an extensive body of empirical evidence gathered in a systematic research project which compared normal mother-infant pairs with those showing symbiotic child psychosis. The systematic behavioral observations of the social-emotional interaction of mothers and children in homes and standardized playroom situations, coupled with interviews, analysis of films of the interactions, and standardized personality and developmental testing, provide much support for the ideas put forth above.

The previous discussion of the development of self-other relations has centered almost entirely on the affective realm. This is not only unnecessary, but, in fact, untenable. The developments described in the affective sphere are interlinked with parallel developments in the cognitive sphere of psychological functioning. The most useful model of those cognitive developments is to be found in the theory of Jean Piaget (e. g. see Piaget, 1952 ; 1954 ; 1967). A key aspect of Piaget's theory is that the newborn infant is very limited in cognitive ability. Basically, the neonate possesses only certain reflexive behavior patterns with which to interact with the environment (e. g. looking, sucking, grasping). These reflexes are gradually modified through experience into more complex behavioral structures and eventually the child develops the ability to represent objects and events symbolically (mentally). From that point on, much of the child's cognitive development occurs in the mental realm rather than in the behavioral (though, to be sure, behavioral development does not cease). When Piaget (1954) describes this process as one of "construction of reality", he literally means that the infant is actively *constructing* an understanding of the world (including self, other people, inanimate objects, etc.) which proceeds from a state of almost total lack of differentiation quite similar to that "oceanic feeling" described by Freud, but not restricted to the social-emotional sphere. Only slowly does the child's model of reality come to include an appreciation of the differentiation of self from the rest of the world. This "appreciation" is, of course, still very primitive and expressed only in the form of specific behavioral interactions *with* the environment. In his book, *Six Psychological Studies* (1967), Piaget describes the development of this appreciation :

At the outset of mental evolution there is no definite differentiation between the self and the external world, i.e. impressions that are experienced and perceived are not attached to a personal consciousness sensed as a "self," nor to objects conceived as external to the self. They simply exist in a dissociated block or are spread out on the same plane, which is neither internal nor external but midway between these two poles. These opposing poles will only gradually become differentiated. It follows that, because of this primitive lack of dissociation, everything that is perceived is centered on the subject's own activity. The self is at the center of reality to begin with for the very reason that it is not aware of itself,

while the external world will become objectified to the degree that the self builds itself as a function of subjective or internal activity. In other words, consciousness starts with an unconscious and integral egocentricity, whereas the progress of sensorimotor intelligence leads to the construction of an objective universe in which the subject's own body is an element among others subject's own body, is contrasted.

(Piaget, 1967, pp. 12-13)

Piaget himself is quite well aware of the interrelationship between the cognitive developments he is describing and the affective changes dealt with by the psychoanalytic school of thought. Regarding this connection, he comments

To the extent that these affective states depend on action per se and not as yet on awareness of relationships with other people, this level of affectivity attests to a kind of general egocentricity and gives the impression, if one mistakenly attributes a sense of self to the baby, of a kind of love of self and of one's own activity. It is true that the infant begins by being mainly interested in his own body, in its movements, and in the results of his actions. Psychoanalysis has called this elementary stage of affectivity "narcissism", but it is important to understand that it is a narcissism without Narcissus, i. e. without any sense of personal awareness as such.

With the development of intelligence, however, and with the ensuing elaboration of an external universe and especially with the construction of the schema of the "object", a third level of affectivity appears. It is epitomized, in the language of psychoanalysis, by the "object choice", i.e. by the objectivation of the emotions and by their projection onto activities other than those of the self alone...These affective states, like those associated with perception, stay linked for a long time to the isolated actions of the subject without precise delimitation between what is specific to him and what is attributable to the external world, i.e. to other sources of possible activity and causality. By contrast, when "objects" become detached more and more distinctly from the global and undifferentiated configuration of primitive actions and percepts and become objects conceived as external to the self and independent of it, the situation becomes completely transformed. On the one hand, in close correlation with the construction of the object, awareness of "self" begins to be affirmed by means of the internal pole of reality, as opposed to the external or objective pole. On the other hand, objects are conceived by analogy with this self as active, alive, and conscious. This is particularly so with those exceptionally unpredictable and interesting objects — people...The affective "object choice" which psychoanalysis contrasts with narcissism is thus correlated with the intellectual construction of the object, just as narcissism is correlated with lack of differentiation between the external world and the self. This "object choice" is first of all vested in the person of the mother, then (both negatively and positively) of the father and other relatives.

(Piaget, 1967, pp 16-17)

Thus, it can be seen that it is possible to view the development of a concept of self and its relationship with others in cognitive as well as affective terms. Indeed, it is *only* through the development of a rudimentary intellectual appreciation of the self that all of later cognitive development as described by Piaget can proceed. Specifically, Piaget speaks of the acquisition of "object permanence" (1952) — the awareness that physical and social objects in the world exist independent of the infant's own perception of those objects — as growing directly out of a primary differentiation of self from environment. The lack of this basic differentiation constitutes the most extreme and maladaptive form of what Piaget terms "egocentrism."

Piaget himself does not deal directly with the possible influence of variations in infant social experience upon the cognitive developments noted above (though he does

certainly allow for this possibility). In an interesting study, Bell (1970) studied the emergence of "person permanence" (i. e. the concept of other people as permanent objects in the world existing independently of the child's perception), the most prominent representative of which is, of course, the mother. Bell hypothesized that the child's concept of "person permanence" would develop prior to any understanding of an independent existence of other objects (people being, as Piaget noted, the most unpredictable and interesting objects in the child's environment). She argued that the quality of the child's attachment relationship with his mother would be an important factor in determining the age at which that child would acquire this person permanence. This prediction was confirmed — those children with "harmonious" attachment relationships with their mothers tended to develop person permanence significantly earlier than those with less than optimal attachment relationships (who developed the concept of the permanence of inanimate objects *before* the concept of person permanence). This study, then, suggests that the young infant's cognitive conception of others may be influenced by his social experiences with those others. While it does not speak directly to the issue of the child's development of his conception of the self, it is not unreasonable to assume that, like all other cognitive achievements, this conception of self is attained through the child's interactions with his/her environment. Since the child's adult caregivers are among the most significant aspects of his environment, one might expect that the conception of self would be affected by differences in experiences with those adults. Specifically, an environment in which caregivers were very physically close, indulgent, and responsive might be expected to facilitate a conceptualization of the self which was qualitatively different from that which would emerge in a situation where caregivers were more distal in their interaction, allowed greater frustration to occur, and encouraged greater autonomy. Thus, the cognitive developmental theory of Piaget would appear to offer support for an explanation of the differences between Japanese and American children which was basically similar to that explanation offered by the psychoanalytic theorists.

With the foregoing theories in mind, we may now proceed to examine the Japanese mother-infant relationship and attempt to construct a possible explanation for the distinctive qualities of the typical conception of self and of the relationship of self to the group which we find in the Japanese culture. As we have already pointed out, Japanese mothers *indulge* their children (especially infants) a great deal. Japanese infants are in frequent close contact with their mothers and their mothers respond frequently, quickly, and fully to their infants' demands. It appears that Japanese infants' needs are gratified more completely and promptly than infants in other societies. This high degree of indulgence would logically result in a high degree of *dependency* upon the mother for those gratifications (a. g. see Vogel, 1963 ; Doi, 1973,) but one should not over-emphasize this result. Terming the outcome "dependency" connotes one distinct individual relying (inappropriately perhaps) upon another such distinct individual. The outcome of this particular set of experiences, however, may be somewhat different. To the extent that the infant's impulses are satisfied as they arise, the mother may become, in effect, an extension of the infant's ego. This blurring of the distinction of mother and child (psychologically speaking) means that the more the mother indulges the child, the more closely the state of oneness with the mother is approximated. From the psychoanalytic standpoint, which

assumes that the child is capable of appreciating the fact of his separation from his mother and that the child, therefore, is actively motivated to reduce that feeling of separation, this indulgence makes it easier to psychologically deny the existential fact of his distinctness from the mother. Not only are Japanese mothers highly responsive to their children's wishes, but they also tend to avoid making strong demands themselves upon very young children. Some writers (e. g. Vogel, 1963 ; Kiefer, 1970 ; Benedict, 1946) have suggested that such high levels of gratification and indulgence, coupled with the relative absence of strong socialization demands may make it less likely that a clearly defined sense of self will emerge in the child. In Western psychology, such a sense of self (or ego) is defined as an understanding or conceptualization of oneself as an independent object and agent in the world, capable of initiating actions and responding selectively to one's environment. This is precisely the state of affairs which the Japanese infant, according to Doi, is motivated to deny. This view of ego development asserts that the sense of self and of self-will are achieved only by *individual* striving and initiative in the face of resistance or opposition by a less cooperative external environment. In other words, to the extent that the environment (of which the mother is the most important component for most young infants in traditional situations) indulges the child, there is less need for the child to conceptualize himself as an individual distinct from that environment. On the other hand, to the extent that the environment resists the impulses of the infant, he is led to conceive of himself as an independent force and awareness of self is heightened as he asserts *his* will against the external resistance.

The outcome of these early socialization conditions in Japan, then, is seen as creating a *need* for dependency (i. e. a need to be able to presume upon the indulgence of another in order to facilitate denial of one's psychological separateness from that other). Doi (1973) then argues that this need generalizes to others as the child begins to relate to other family members and eventually moves into non-family circles. One's social relationships with other people are influenced by one's psychological need to *belong*. This need to maintain such a close indulgent relationship with one's group then serves to motivate a variety of "group-oriented" behaviors, even to the extent of what Westerners would call "self-sacrifice." This notion of sacrificing one's *self* (conceived as an independent individual) involves a distinction which the Japanese may not see as clearly as Westerners do and, indeed which they have been socialized *not* to see and which they, therefore, do not *want* to see. Once such a strong "need to belong" has been inculcated, the individual's socialization can become more strict (and personal observation in Japan indicates that it does so between the ages of 4 and 7) and demanding as long as this need continues to be met by one's social group (be it family, teachers, peers, etc.). The individual has, in other words, become "bonded" to the group in such a way that the distinction between group and individual is not so sharply drawn as it is in the United States.

The above view of the way in which dependency upon the group derives from the socialization process in Japan is not without its critics (e. g. Befu, 1977 ; Plath, personal communication ; Yamane, personal communication). One such criticism is that Doi's model tends to portray Japanese as generally passive and dependent. Who, then, provides all of the indulgence for a society of such individuals? Moreover, the model speaks of the need for *self-control* and *self-discipline*, but it is most inadequate in its treatment of the development of the strong sense of self necessary to balance the strong need for depen-

dency. Furthermore, as Yamane (personal communication) has argued, this theory may, in fact, be describing not a true *group*-orientation at all, but rather an extreme (almost pathological) form of egoism — a “parental fixation which is likely to disturb children in their developing proper social relationships in adult life.” Yamane has also raised the question of *how* the intense dependency upon the mother is later generalized to other individuals and groups — i.e. by what mechanism does such a shift occur?

It is possible that some of the above criticisms might be answered by employing a cognitive theory such as that of Piaget. The psychoanalytic theory of Doi and others seems to assume that young infants (in Japan and elsewhere) naturally develop a sense of self as an independent entity quite distinct from the mother. This sense of self is basically similar in all cultures and the corresponding sense of separation is uncomfortable to all human children. Once such a conception of a separate self exists, some sort of motivational structure is necessary to explain why that self becomes subordinated (to whatever degree) to the group. Doi offers one such motivational structure. This all assumes, however, that the infant does, in fact, become cognizant of such a distinct self and is therefore consciously *driven* to attempt to *re-establish* that ideal state of oneness. One could, perhaps, make a case for this position on cognitive grounds — i.e. that the child’s growing intellectual competence inevitably leads him/her to a view of the self as so distinct.

Since cognitive development, according to Piaget, is presumed to stem from interactions with the environment, it seems equally likely that the development of the sense of self in young infants follows another course. If the infant’s understanding of reality is initially quite undifferentiated (as Piaget argues), then the sequence of social experiences of that infant will determine the ways in which various aspects of that reality *become* differentiated into separate units or categories. As argued earlier, one of the most fundamental differentiations must be that of self vs. environment, but the nature and extent of that differentiation will depend upon the particular experiences of that child. The point here is that the Japanese child’s socialization experiences may be such that the complex motivational structure proposed by Doi is less necessary — i.e. it may not be necessary to explain why Japanese children with their sharp sense of self actively seek to return to that ideal state of oneness because (cognitively speaking) their conception of self/other may be such that they simply *do not see* such a sharp distinction! The cognitive developmental position would, therefore, argue that a qualitatively different notion of self emerges from the Japanese socialization process, a self which is inherently more embedded in a social context and less clearly differentiated.

The above cognitive view may answer some of the objections to the psychoanalytic model. It addresses Plath’s (personal communication) concern that Doi ignores the active tension between *amae* and *jibun* (after initially noting it). In the cognitive model, there would be no such tension since there is no sharply defined idea of self opposed to the group tendency. The person need not be motivated to subordinate any sense of an independent self because that person only conceives of self as being in the context of the group.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. It is interesting to note that the dualistic tension Doi postulates between *amae* and *jibun* is quite consistent with the conflict model inherent in Freudian psychology and, indeed, in much of Western thought. The cognitive position is more focussed upon complementarity and harmony.

This approach also offers an answer to Yamane's (personal communication) question about the mechanism to account for the eventual generalization of the child's dependency upon the mother to other persons and groups. This question (and the psychoanalytic perspective of Doi) assumes that there is something qualitatively special about the *mother-child* relationship and that some special mechanism is therefore necessary to explain why behaviors or feelings acquired in relation to the mother should be generalized to others. From the cognitive point of view, however, the relationship with the mother is not so qualitatively unique — rather it is simply quantitatively more intense — and the mother is simply the first and most salient representative of the larger social environment. It is, thus, with the mother that the infant first learns to differentiate self from other and to construct a relationship with that other. As the child's social experience widens, he/she comes to further differentiate the category of "other" into "mother, father, siblings, other children, other adults, etc." No special mechanism is required to explain this because there is no real shift to explain. In fact, there is a significant continuity for the child — he is simply relating to "others" and, while his mother may be, by far, the most *significant* "other", she remains but one member of that larger category of "others." Hence, it would seem natural for the child to apply what he has learned in relating to her to his relationships with those others. Indeed, the most relevant question may not be, "Why does the child relate to others as he does to his mother?" It may be more appropriate to ask, "Why would the child relate to others any *differently* than he does to his mother?" Put another way, what sorts of experiences would lead the child to differentiate the category of "mother" from the larger category of "other"? Obviously such differentiation does occur, but rather than assume that it is "natural" for the child to treat others differently from the mother, this offers a theoretical rationale for assuming that it is "natural" for the child to treat *all* other persons alike (including the mother) and that differential treatment or relationships only emerge as a result of the child's socialization experiences.

Two theoretical models have been presented which address the important question of how the developing child comes to conceptualize a sense of self and the relationship of that self to the larger social group. The psychoanalytic model emphasizes the Western dualistic tension between individual and society and postulates a mechanism by which the individual might be socialized to subordinate personal desires to the needs of the group. The cognitive developmental model stresses the fact that the individual is an active constructor of his/her own reality and suggests that that reality might (with appropriate social experience) be so constructed that a sharp differentiation of self and group might never occur. In the latter case, the person might not even conceive of such a tension or distinction of self and group, but rather might only see the self as meaningful in its social context. It is also possible that some combination of these models could best account for the phenomena of interest. One thing about which both models agree, however, is that the early socialization experiences of the infant and child should have a large impact upon the way in which that child comes to think about self and the relation of self to group. It may not be so obvious, but it is equally true that both models view the close physical relationship and indulgence characteristic of Japanese mother-infant relationships similarly in terms of behavioral outcomes in the children. Specifically, both theories would predict that such relationships would influence the children to manifest behaviors indicative of a "group

orientation.” To be sure, the explanation of this result would be different — a need for belongingness on the one hand and a lack of differentiation of self vs. other on the other hand. The behavioral predictions of both theoretical models, though, would be quite similar. They would not, probably, make the *same* predictions, but much more theoretical elaboration will be required to specify the differences.

Given the theoretical importance accorded to the early socialization process in the preceding discussion, it would seem appropriate to examine the social experiences of young children in day care and to compare those experiences with those of the more traditional home environment. If differences exist, one may then speculate as to the implications of those differences.

Probably the major difference is that there appears to be significantly *less indulgence* of children and less physical closeness in general in day care settings. This was observed by the present author during visits to some two dozen day care programs in 1977. This is not surprising for a variety of reasons. First of all, the teachers in day care are generally professionals. They are well-trained and tend to be more objective in their handling of the children in their care than a mother may be. In other words, their behavior derives more from their professional training than from their individual psychological needs. This is not to argue that the caregivers in day care are totally objective—obviously *some* of their identity is tied up in their role in the care of children and they do develop close emotional relationships with those children (and, indeed, one would desire this quality in a good caregiver). But relatively speaking, there is greater objectivity than in the mother-child relationship. Moreover, there is less *time* for indulgence in day care situations since the single adult is generally responsible for the simultaneous care of several children. The author’s observations in Japanese day care centers tend to confirm this—there is considerable time spent in separation from the caregivers, children are allowed to cry for longer periods of time and there appears to be a deliberate attempt at some independence training of children in such areas as feeding, dressing, etc. (which would have great advantages if one adult is to care for several children). Still another source of “non-indulgence” for children in day care is the group of other children with whom the child must interact. One must remember that a young baby in a traditional home does not typically have to deal with other children of the same age (with many of the same impulses, needs, interests, etc.). Even if the teachers in Japanese day care are somewhat inclined to indulge their children, the other children, with their fragile egos and egocentric outlooks, are clearly *not* so inclined. One can observe and one would expect considerable resistance as one child attempts to fulfill his desires (e. g. in playing with a particular toy) at the expense of another peer. Thus, if Vogel (1963) is correct that a sense of self and of self-will develops out of confrontations with a relatively unyielding external environment (cognitive theory would make a similar prediction), then day care experiences may facilitate the development of independence and individuality more than rearing in traditional Japanese homes.

As a matter of fact, it would be well to note that the children who are in day care may not be experiencing such a traditional home environment even during the time when they *are* with their mothers. Traditional mothers may indulge their children in an attempt (conscious or unconscious) to create dependency in the child. Since the identity of these traditional women is very much tied up in their role as a mother, one would expect that

they would have a need for their child to depend upon them in order to confirm that they were playing a vital role. The mothers of day care children, however, are mostly employed in full-time jobs, which might influence their own self-identity, leading them to have less *need* to encourage dependency in their children. These women who choose to work outside the home in Japan may also have a whole host of attitudes which differ from those of more traditional women and those attitudes may influence their child-rearing practices. Moreover, as Lebra, Paulson, & Powers (1976) have pointed out, women who are employed in Japan are usually what might be called “dual-career women” — continuing to be responsible for and committed to the management of their household while simultaneously attempting to pursue careers outside the home. This pattern means that such women probably have less time to indulge their children even if they desire to do so. They probably must also encourage greater independence in the self-care and play of the child.

We are, thus, seeing a picture of socialization of the very young children of working mothers in Japan which differs markedly from the socialization of children in more traditional homes. It seems clear that these modern children receive less indulgence in their day care experiences from the adult caregivers there and that, additionally, they must learn to deal with the greater frustration caused by other like-aged peers. Even in the home, these children may be receiving less frequent, less prompt, and less complete gratification of their desires, both because of the different attitudes and identity needs of their mothers and because of sheer lack of time and energy on those mothers' part. Finally, in both settings, necessity would seem to dictate that these children would receive greater socialization for independence — learning early to do some things for themselves.

We have arrived at a most interesting hypothesis about the effects which maternal employment and day care experiences may have on very young children in Japan. In the U. S., it has been anticipated that one of the effects of day care may be to influence children in the direction of being more group-oriented. Belsky & Steinberg (1978) reviewed the research on the effects of day care and reported that day care children tend to be more “peer-oriented.” There is a certain logic to this — group-rearing of children from an early age probably demands the development of stronger relationships in the group as the children are thrust into a relatively interdependent situation. Some people are inclined to view this increased group-orientation as good and indeed necessary in the world of the future, while others tend to suspect that such interdependent relationships portend a shift in the direction of socialism (which is seen as bad). It is possible, on the basis of present data, to argue that day care in the U. S. may have little or no effect upon children's relation to the group (although one must note that this issue has not really been extensively investigated). No one, however, has suggested that day care could influence American children in the direction of *greater* independence of the group.

In Japan, the possible effects of day care on the development of children has apparently received little attention by researchers. Clearly, the Japanese government is strongly committed to supporting day care. If decision-makers have given any thought at all to its possible effects, they probably assumed that group child rearing must inevitably result in group-oriented children. The theories described in this paper, however, suggest a provocative and somewhat paradoxical hypothesis — group-rearing experiences in Japan may foster the development of a conception of self and its relation to others which

manifests itself in the form of behaviors that appear *less* group-oriented! The point has been made that the peculiarly strong group-oriented behaviors of Japanese may be based upon the especially close and indulgent mother-child relationship in that culture. Changes in the role of women and concomitant use of day care as a socializing agent may be changing these early foundations of the Japanese "group tendencies."

Some very tentative support for this prediction was obtained from the author's interviews of directors of Japanese day care centers. When asked whether children who had been in day care were different when they entered public school than children who had been reared entirely by their mothers at home, several directors responded that some differences had been reported to them by parents and teachers. Specifically, children who had been in day care were reported to be more mischievous, more independent, to do more things on their own, to rely more upon their own resources, and to cause more difficulty with the teacher. This "evidence" is obviously of the roughest sort; much more systematic study will be required to assess the validity of the prediction which has been made here. Nevertheless, these comments are consistent with the aforementioned hypothesis and do, thus, provide a glimmer of hope that it may prove valid.

Is this line of thinking fruitful? Only further and more effective research can answer this question. Obviously direct comparison of the social behavior and personality characteristics of children with previous day care experience as opposed to children reared at home is required. Moreover, the present hypothesis is especially salient for very young children and, while the numbers of such children in day care in Japan are not terribly large (approximately 325,000 in 1978), they are growing. If effects *are* demonstrated, it will be necessary to attempt to determine the etiology of those differences. To what extent is it the day care experience *per se* as opposed to differences between the home treatment and/or maternal attitudes of working mothers? Are such differences confounded with the effects of social class (more working class children are in day care)? Does day care experience differ in its impact from that of the *yochi-en*? If so, is this because of differences in the children's experiences in the school setting or because of parental differences? Does it make a difference at what age day care is begun (e. g. would you find stronger effects with children in day care since infancy)? Does the type of day care matter (e. g. *hoiku-mama* vs. group day care centers)? Does the specific region of the country make a difference on the effects of day care? Does day care's effect derive more from experiences with adult caregivers or with peers? What effect might day care experiences have upon the child's relationships within the family (e. g. with the mother, father, siblings, etc.)?

The first task is clearly to search for such differences. If such effects *are* detected, more intensive study of the *processes* of social interaction at home and in day care would be justified to attempt to be more precise about how such effects come about. It would also be helpful then to investigate the implications of such differences. If Japanese children are conceptualizing the self and the group in such a way that their behaviors appear more individualistic and less group-oriented as a result of day care, how does such a change in basic character affect their family life, their school performance, their later career choices, political attitudes, life styles, etc. etc.?

This paper has suggested that day care experiences in Japan are becoming increasingly common and that there is a need to consider the possible impact of these experiences

upon the development of the children involved. As a first step in such a consideration, some theoretical ideas have been presented concerning the development of a child's conception of self and self's relationship to the social group. In the context of the particular characteristics of the Japanese people and of Japanese mother-child relationships especially, this theorizing led to an hypothesis that day care experiences might be fostering a different conception of self, with the result that day care children in Japan may appear less group-oriented and more individualistic. This hypothesis demands further research. Such research will not only be important because this issue is an important human and social policy question in Japan, but also because the research itself will raise a number of critical methodological and conceptual issues. How, for example, should this issue of conceptualization of self be approached theoretically? How can it be measured behaviorally? This research also holds the promise of stimulating some productive cross-fertilization between Japanese and American developmental psychologists, with the ultimate hope of attaining a better understanding of the universals and the specifics of the process of human development. Finally, such research offers a good opportunity to synthesize the theoretical and the applied issues in the discipline of psychology.

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