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THE ROLE OF PERSONAL FRAMEWORK OF  
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS  
IN SOCIALIZATION STUDIES

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Though it is a truism in the psychology of socialization that children are born in a society, and their social world is composed of multiple social figures, empirical studies on the effectiveness of socializing agents continue to use the traditional dyad paradigm. That is, to understand the degree and contents of nature of the influence of a given agent on the acquisition of socially valued competence, researchers usually examine dyadic relations between children and only one target socializing agent, mostly the mother or an experimental model, who is often described in terms of selected attributes or behavioral characteristics.

There have been three streams of studies on this issue of socialization. In the first one, with the assumption that the mother is the primary and the most important figure for all children, researchers have tried to show that the children who attach securely to, and have affective relations with her, will easily be socialized by the mother (e. g. Ainsworth & Bell, 1974 ; Yarrow et al., 1975 ; Sroufe, 1979). The second stream of study concerns the relations between mother's teaching skills and cognitive development of children (e.g. Hess & Shipman, 1965 ; Price et al., 1981). In this type of study, though implicitly, researchers have hypothesized that the mother is the primary figure, that she surely is the most influential in any aspect of development of children, and that the emotional relation between mother and child does not vary greatly from pair to pair. In the third stream of study, the laboratory studies, a model who is a stranger to the subjects is used to neutralize the prior social relations and to start the coming experimental interactions with what is posited as a 'tabula rasa', or clean state. Those conducting this type of study have implied that children more readily imitate the behavior of a nurtant model than that of an unnurturant or neutral model (e. g., Bandura & Huston, 1961 ; Bandura et al., 1963).

From my point of view, there are the following three difficulties in both the assumptions and research strategies of these traditional dyadic studies on the social relationships and their outcomes. All the difficulties have originated from a complete failure in theorizing about and managing the ecological reality of development : a person is not only a social being, that is a definite member of a social network from birth who is acted upon simultaneously by multiple members, but also, even in infancy, selects

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significant others and organizes her/his own social network in her/his own mind, erecting what we may call a personal framework of social relationships.

The first difficulty comes from an unrealistic assumption that the mother is the primary agent for all subjects without any doubt. It is plausible that there are children who attach primarily to someone other than the mother, like a grandmother's boy or a papa's girl. Though these different types of children are disregarded by researchers and mixed up with other subjects, the mother must be less powerful for them than mothers who play the most significant role in the personal framework, not necessarily because of any lack of sophistication in teaching, or other inadequacy, but of her being assigned a secondary role as a socializing agent by the child.

The second difficulty comes from an 'optimistic' assumption that the primary figure is the most important or effective agent in any domain of acquisition. In daily life, a child, even an infant, has several social relations with others including the primary figure. It deserves special emphasis that the primary figure is only one of significant others. For instance, it reported that a 14-month-old boy had several different and articulated relations with his family members; in other words, he assigned what he perceived as the most appropriate role to each of them. The observations of his home situation suggested that the mother was the primary figure and she was often asked to care for him when he was drowsy, the grandmother was regarded as the person who gave him special cakes, the grandfather was an important person who repaired his toys, his sister was the most important as a play-partner and so forth (Yamada, 1982). Thus, it is an essential characteristic of the personal framework that the role of each figure, including the primary one, is determined interdependently with those of others. In other words, the role of each figure complements each other figure. Therefore, even if the mother is assigned the role of the primary figure, this fact does not necessarily imply that she is an almighty person for her child. As a child is surrounded with many kinds of people, who have different areas of competence from one another, it is quite probable that a child finds the more effective person other than the mother as socializing agent in some developmental domain. It is not unlikely that the secondary figure, for instance the father, is more powerful in socialization in some kinds of cognitive development than the mother.

The results of laboratory studies using a stranger model seem to be sound. But the difficulty in this type of study is that the relationship between the model and any subject, even though they are strangers, must be influenced by the subject's preceding personal framework. It is therefore an unrealistic assumption that subjects can start new personal relations with a 'tabula rasa'. In fact our studies on the attachment towards different kinds of strangers suggested that only when the stranger had the same properties, like gender, age, and a friendly manner of interaction, as the prototype of attachment, that is the primary figure, could 2-year-olds have good contacts with the stranger (Takahashi, 1982; Takahashi & Hatano, 1982).

To get more accurate information on the reality of social influences from the studies in the transactions between socializing agents and children, we must first know each individual framework of social relationships, and then study the dyadic transactions among subjects whom are separated from others according to their personal

framework. This new research strategy should bring us clearer findings than the traditional one.

In this paper, I would first like to propose a model describing the individual framework of interpersonal relationships. Then I would present the instruments to assess the personal framework based on the model. I have tried to construct the instruments with care, because previous researchers have suffered from a lack of appropriate tools for testing their theory/model. Finally, I would like to refer to two empirical studies in which subjects were broken down according to their personal framework.

#### THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND ITS ASSESSING INSTRUMENTS

As a social animal, a person has a variety of human relations ranging from the purely affectional to the wholly instrumental. Here, I would like to examine the individual framework consisting of the most significant and important agents in socialization, that is the core of interpersonal relations, which we may term attachment relations. For constructing the model of attachment relations, I have started by examining the nature of attachment in mature adults rather than in young children, because in infancy and young childhood the primary caregivers take such prominent roles in socialization that they obstruct other people relegating them to distinctly secondary or minor roles. In addition to this, we have a methodological difficulty in studying the inner system, that is, what I call the framework "in mind", among young children.

In the previous research, attachment was described in terms of the following four properties :

1. The attachment figures, to whom the attachment motive is directed ; a person has many kinds of these figures.
2. The psychic function of each attachment figure ; there is a variety of function from the central one of deep psychic support to the purely instrumental.
3. The mode of attachment behaviors, by which the attachment motives are expressed ; attachment behaviors may be symbolic (that is to say, indirect), direct but distal, and both direct and proximal.
4. The strength of the attachment motive ; the intensity or frequency of attachment behaviors to each attachment figure. As it is now a basic assumption that all human beings naturally have the attachment motive (Bowlby, 1969 ; Takahashi, 1974 ; Ainsworth, 1982 ; Weiss, 1982), it is unnecessary and also impossible to measure the total strength of the attachment motive, much less to make comparisons.

To assess the conceptual model among college students and mature adults, I constructed two instruments, an Attachment Questionnaire (Att-Q) and an Attachment Sentence Completion Test (Att-SCT) (Takahashi, 1974).

The Att-Q consists of 24 statements describing concrete attachment behaviors, whose function is fulfilled by using which mode of behavior, and requires separate ratings on each item for each of six figures (mother, father, one sibling, the closest friend, love object and respected person) on a 5-point-scale. The strength of the attachment motive toward each figure is the total over 24 items. According to the attachment score, one or more primary and important figure, called focus (foci), as

shown in Table 1, are designated. The Att-SCT consists of 16 items concerning attachment figures supporting each subject, and the function of each possible figure in her/his psychic life. The Att-SCT was designed to check whether the primary figure of the Att-Q is a truly important one or not.

The studies with college students (Takahashi, 1974 ; 1980) indicated that 1) they had several attachment figures, including parents, sibling (s), closest friend (s) of the same sex, the love object of the opposite sex, and respected person (s), sometimes God, 2) they varied modes of attachment behaviors according to the figures and/or occasions, and 3) they clearly articulated the psychic functions between figures ; they had a primary attachment figure who supported the most important part of their self, and also had a few figures for the next most important part, and many other figures for less important parts. I would like to give the term 'attachment structure' to the above differentiated attachment figure-function pairs "in mind".

As Table 1 shows, I found several types of attachment structure concerning which some figure (s) were assigned a relatively more important role as focus (foci) than other figures, though all types had the common structural properties mentioned above.

TABLE 1

Number and type of attachment structure among college students

Type of attachment structure	Female	Male
One-focus type	57	120
Mother type	15	2
Love object type	28	99
Closest friend type	4	9
Respected person type	8	9
Father type	1	1
Sibling type	1	0
Multi-focus type	106	152
Two-focus type	40	74
Three-focus type	40	54
Four or more foci type	26	24
Undifferentiated-focus type	5	5
Total	168	277

Thus, having the mature attachment structure as the model of the final state of development, we would be able to describe the inner framework of social relations for each period as less mature or less structured. In other words, we realize each stage of interpersonal development as a transformation of the attachment structure. More concretely, in empirical studies we would use the model as a map of investigation.

Though we had a methodological difficulty in studying the inner framework among young children, using the conceptual model, I also constructed a Picture Attach-

ment Test (PAT), for young children, who would find it difficult to respond to the Att-Q and Att-SCT (Takahashi, 1978).

The PAT consists of two parallel sets of 8 to 13 cards, one set for girls and one set for boys. As shown in Fig. 1, each card illustrates a daily-life situation in which attachment behaviors to another person will be induced in young children.

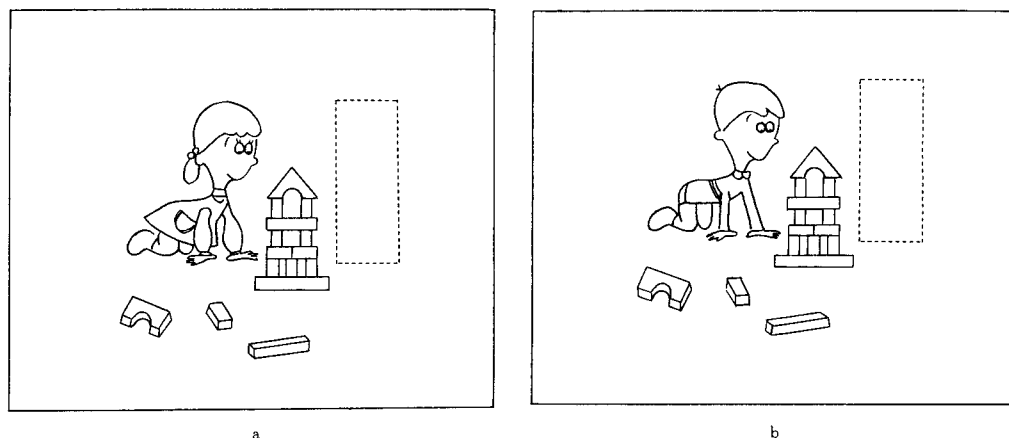


FIGURE 1 PAT card (a : for girls, b : for boys)  
When you play in your home,  
"Whom would you want to play with you ? "

Each child is asked individually using a set of cards. During a test session, a child is asked to suppose the major figure in the picture is herself/himself. Shown each card, a child is asked to tell the name of a person to whom s/he wants to relate (in the space of the dotted line). The relative strength of the motive towards each significant figure is the total frequency over all the cards. The function of each figure is inferred from the situations in which the given figure is selected. In the case of the PAT, the modes of attachment behaviors are not asked, because of the limited ability to report among young children. Children 4 to 6 years of age are interviewed individually, and elementary schoolers are asked to answer the reduced-size edition of the PAT in groups. In the case of 1 to 3 year-old children, primary caregivers are asked how the child would respond to the PAT based on what they have already observed in the children's daily life.

Studies with children from 1 to 12 years of age (Takahashi, 1983) indicated that, as shown in Fig. 2, 1) they all, even one-year-olds, had individual differences of personal framework, 2) before the second birthday at the latest, children began to extend their attachment figures from the first primary one to others. For instance, though 4-year-olds attached primarily to the mother, about half of them selected the father as a co-bathing partner and 70% of them chose peers as play partners, probably because in those tasks they were more competent than the mother, 3) the mother-attached type subjects decreased from almost 100% at 1 year of age as they grew up,

and 4) correspondingly, the agemate-attached type subjects increased. Even among kindergarten children, 10% of them were classified into the agemate-attached type.

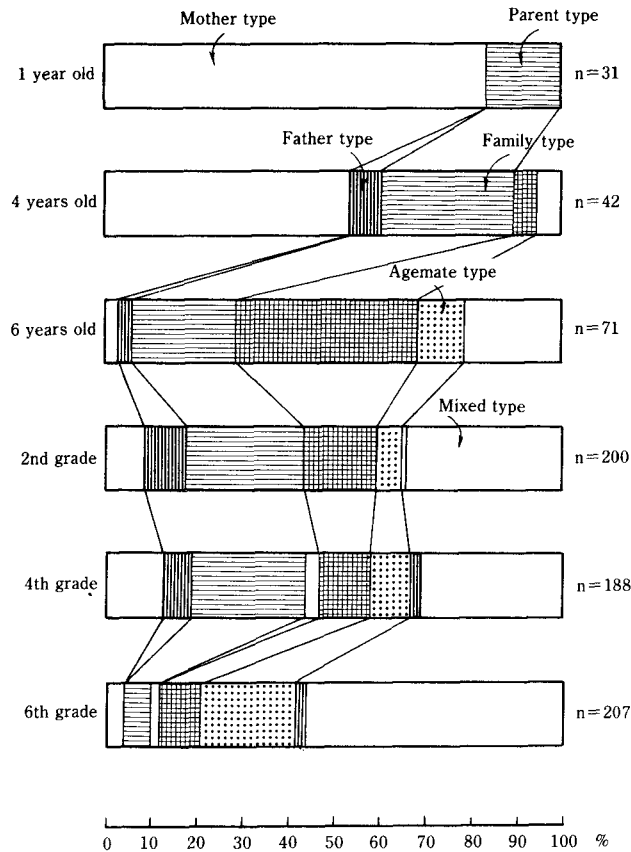


FIGURE 2 Number and type of attachment structure among young children

## EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Next, I would like to present two empirical findings to illustrate the importance of personal framework in understanding social influences.

### *Life histories among college students*

Eighty-four female sophomores were tested as to attachment, two or three times during 6 months, by the Att-Q and Att-SCT, and also asked to write their own life histories, spending at least two hours covering 113 items which concerned relations with parents, siblings, grandparents, peers or friends, and teachers in five periods from early childhood to the present. The length of the personal histories was about 2,100 words on the average (Note 1).

1 Takahashi, K. (in preparation) Personal history differences between family-attached and agemate-attached female college students.

TABLE 2

Differences between family-attached type and agemate-attached type in life histories

Items in Each Period	Family-attached type <sup>a</sup>		Agemate-attached type <sup>b</sup>		$\chi^2$
	Positive Description	Negative, Neutral Description	Positive Description	Negative, Neutral Description	
In early childhood,					
I was an active child.	1	9	5	0	7.81**
I had many friends.	0	10	3	2	4.22**
In elementary school,					
I was an active girl and took leadership in school.	1	9	5	0	7.81**
I had many friends.	4	6	5	0	1.90
I liked at least one of my teachers.	4	6	1	4	1.84
In junior high school,					
I was an active girl and took leadership in school.	1	9	3	2	2.59
I had many friends.	1	9	3	2	2.59
I loved my family members.	7	3	1	4	1.64
In high school,					
I was an active girl and took leadership in school.	6	4	5	0	1.07
I had close friends.	0	10	5	0	10.84**
I had friends of the opposite sex.	0	10	4	1	7.20**
I loved my family members.	4	6	0	5	1.07
I liked at least one of my teachers.	4	6	0	5	1.07
At the present,					
I have close friends.	0	10	4	1	7.20**
I have a lover.	0	10	4	1	7.20**
I like my family members.	8	2	0	5	5.66*

a  $n=10$ \*\*  $p < .01$ b  $n=5$ \*  $p < .05$ 

Fifteen cases, who were judged to have one or two primary attachment figure (s), focus (foci), stably through two or three measurements, were selected for analysis. Ten of them, whom we shall call the family-attached type, selected the primary figures only from the family (5 cases selected the mother, 3 selected both the mother and the father, and 2 selected the mother and sibling), and the remaining five, referred to as the agemate-attached type, chose only from agemates (3 cases selected the love object, 1 selected the closest friend and, 1 selected both the love object and closest friend). The personal histories of the two types were checked against the list of important items as to whether they had referred to each item positively or negatively, or neglected it. As Table 2 shows, there were clear differences in descriptions be-

tween the types of attachment structure. Family-attached type students, who assigned the most important psychic role to family members, and did not have close relations with agemates, referred positively and vividly to relations with family members throughout all developmental periods; they reported that they were called 'mama's girl' in young childhood, and had many difficulties in adapting to kindergarten and schools up to the present, and in making friends. They felt strong influences from family members even in selection of the college and also their plans for future life. One of them wrote that she would marry in order to give a grandchild to the mother. On the other hand, agemate-attached type students consistently wrote their life histories mostly relating with peers and friends including those of the opposite sex. Even in kindergarten, they reported that they had enjoyed their life with peers rather than with their mother. They recalled they had had pleasant scenes in kindergarten, and very easily adapted to schools. They had boy friends including fiancés, and planned their future life on their own, that is, independently of the parental assistance. Though we have to be careful in the interpretation of the findings because the life histories were apt to be colored by students' present emotions toward these same important persons, as suggested by Bower(1981), we are sure that the personal framework of relationships must mediate new encounters, and play an important role in establishing successive personal frameworks which will mediate coming encounters. Though I do not subscribe to the so-called childhood determinism, I do feel that as an early-established personal framework performs an important part in the transactional modifications of the later framework, it is necessary to assume the continuity of stable individual characteristics in the developmental process of social relationships.

#### *Block tasks among five-year-old children*

Using the PAT, 64 five-year-old children were measured as to their attachment structure two or three times during the seven months after kindergarten entrance. Two types of children were selected; the first five children, herein called the agemate-attached type, selected peers dominantly and stably, and the other five children, called the mother-attached type, had closer contacts with the mother than with peers consistently through two or three measurements (Note 2).

Each child was asked to build one house using 40 pieces of colored blocks in cooperation with another child, who had been selected as a moderate type, i. e., one who had relatively good relations with both peers and the mother, and also who had belonged to another class and had not had close contacts with the target child in daily play sessions.

Each five minutes of play session was videotaped. The video data revealed that there were big differences between the two types of children. Agemate-attached type children were excellent in cooperation with an agemate, even though the partner was more or less a stranger to them. More concretely, agemate-attached type children often offered to cooperate verbally, took the initiative in building blocks or accepted the

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2 Nagata, C. & Suzuki, M. Development of interpersonal relationships among kindergarten children. Unpublished graduation thesis of Kunitachi College of Music 1983. (in Japanese)

ideas of the partner. These children played actively and seemed to enjoy the tasks of joint problem solving. In five minutes' interaction, 4 out of the 5 pairs could build one house. In contrast to this, their mother-attached type counterparts were weak in interactions with agemates. Sometimes, they played so egocentrically that their play partners hesitated to touch the blocks. We were impressed by one mother-attached girl who gathered all the blue blocks, even though her partner had been using some of them, and built her own house very far from the partner. In fact, all pairs with mother-attached type children built two houses, disregarding the instructions.

The results suggest that, though children of this age were expected to interact with peers actively and to gain influence from agemates in daily life situations, the nature of relationship with the peer-partner in task situations, more specifically, the interactive behavior toward the peer-stranger was certainly affected by the prior framework of each child. As I described earlier, children could not begin the interactions with a 'tabula rasa'. And consequently, the products of the interactions were definitely influenced by the social network "in mind".

## DISCUSSION

In this article, I proposed the social network "in mind", the personal framework as an integrated structure, and its measuring instruments. Let it be emphatically said that I refer to the importance of the personal framework, that is, the social network "in mind", not to the external social network which surrounds a person as environment, like the one Lewis and Feiring (1979) have concerned themselves with. Though the social network "in mind" naturally reflects the external one, the two are not the same. The former is constructed by each person her/his own framework even though its contents are usually selected from the components of the latter. Sometimes, especially in the case of adolescents and adults, a personal framework includes figures beyond our possible coverage of external social network; for example, it often includes symbolic figures, like God, the departed people, authors of books, foreigners, and others whom the person has never met and talked with.

I assume that this personal framework actually mediates both input and output in social interactions. The two empirical studies supported this assumption. That is, the family/mother-attached type subjects showed different social behaviors from those of the agemate-attached type counterparts. We got clear differences when the subjects were broken down depending on their personal framework. Therefore, researchers on the susceptibility to social influences should pay attention to prior of personal framework of social relationships among their subjects.

Once we get the knowledge of a given child's personal framework, we can understand and predict more precisely both the degree and contents of social influences on her/him from a target agent. From this point of view, it is an unrealistic assumption that the mother is assigned the primary figure role by all children, and it is also not always true that the mother as the primary figure is the most influential socializing agent. Therefore, the effectiveness of the mother in socialization can be examined more clearly among children who have a personal framework in which the mother is assigned the primary figure role and is most influential in the target domain.

In like manner, even if agemates are expected as the important socializing agents in the classroom, it is a simplistic assumption that all children readily interact with and affect each other, because each of them must assign different status to peers or friends in her/his framework. Therefore, we will get a better grasp of the reality of influences by agemates, when we study socialization by classifying subjects according to whether agemates play relatively important roles or not in their framework.

Even in the case of a stranger, who has no place in a child's current personal framework, a child does not start the new interaction with a 'tabula rasa'. We can also predict the coming social interactions with the stranger using our knowledge of the framework, because a subject usually infers the stranger's characteristics from those figures who have belonged to the personal framework, and have had similar salient properties to those of the unfamiliar person. In fact, we could understand exceptional behaviors among 2-year-olds who interacted positively with a male adult stranger, to whom other children showed fear, by using knowledge of their personal framework in which male adults, like the father, an uncle, or cousin played important roles (Note 3).

While researchers agree that a child lives as a member of her/his social group, it is no exaggeration to say that no empirical study has successfully explored its reality. Some researchers tried to go beyond dyads and observed triads and larger interpersonal interactions among family members (e. g., Lewis & Feiring, 1982). However, both observations and analyses of the interactions beyond dyads were too complicated to be managed by the techniques at hand. Bronfenbrenner (1983) proposed a conceptual framework to describe the ecological environment by four different systems, all of which form 'a set of nested structure', from the immediate and face-to-face interactions, like home and classrooms (called microsystem), to indirect but inevitable settings, like economical trends of the society (called chronosystem). Though his framework is interesting and suggests to us the importance of other systems than the face-to-face, dyad ones, for empirical researchers it is unrealistic to study all four systems at a time.

The new alternative research strategy, which I have proposed, that is to measure the personal framework of each subject and to break down or classify subjects by the contents of the framework, is manageable, and will surely advance the understanding of the relations between a target agent and social acquisitions in children.

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