Cultural Perspectives on Human Development

İnsan Gelişiminde Kültürel Perspektifler

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Abstract

In this study, the literature on the concepts of culture is reviewed. The relationship between culture and personality, culture and socialization and their effects on individuals are also investigated. Two models of living (i.e. agrarian and urban-industrial models) are analyzed, compared, and contrasted. As part of the agrarian and urban-industrial model analysis, child labor, fertility, and concept of virtue in agrarian cultures, not to mention benefits provided by agrarian societies are discussed. A cross cultural comparison is also included in the study. The effects of early socialization and schooling on the developments of individuals in various cultures as well as language socialization as part of acculturation process are discussed.

Keywords: Culture, Agrarian Culture, Language Socialization.

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Özet

Bu çalışmada kültür kavramları literatürü incelenmiştir. Bu kavramlar bağlamında, kültür ve kişilik arasındaki ilişki, kültüre ve sosyalleşme, bunların kişiler üzerindeki etkileri irdelenmiştir. İki yaşam modeli olan tarım ve şehir-endüstri yaşama tarzları analiz edilip, karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu analiz çerçevesinde, tarım kültüründe çocuk işgücü, doğurganlık, fazilet kavramlarıyla, tarım toplumunun sağladığı faydalar tartışılmıştır. Bu tartışmalara ilaveten, kültürlerarası karşılaştırma yapılmış, çeşitli kültürlerde erken sosyalleşmenin ve okullaşmanın kişilerin gelişimi üzerindeki etkileriyle dil sosyalleşmesinin kültürleşme sürecindeki etkileri araştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kültür, Tarım Kültürü, Dil Sosyalleşmesi.*

Introduction

The predominant perspectives that have usually been used to define the "other" have been Western ones. In order for us to better understand cultures and peoples that are "different" than us or than the "norm", we also need different lenses to look through. We need to keep that in mind it is not possible to have a better understanding of other cultures if we look through the same lenses. We are in dire need of better understanding of each other as the globalization has not only got us, the peoples of the world, closer economically, but also culturally. Living so close and at the same time so remote from each other is leading to social problems that we face today. The purpose of this paper is to provide explanation for concepts of culture and how children and adolescents (and adults) socialize through their environments, parental investment strategies, culturally mediated social norms and schooling.

Concepts of Culture

The relationship between cultural practices and the cognitive skills and behaviors of the people of a society has been long studied (Avci, 2012). In this sense, all children in all communities are "cultural participants" (Rogoff, 2003: 10). The question here is to figure out what is meant by culture and how people acquire culture. LeVine (1973) provides a definition of culture from anthropological perspective and says that culture designates human behavior and human adjustment to his/her environments and thus organize a collective life. He further elaborates on the definition of culture and states that it is "an organized body of rules concerning the ways in which individuals in a population should communicate with one another, think about themselves and their environments, and behave toward one another and toward objects in their environments." (p.4). Each culture has its own set of rules that the members of that particular population has to follow. These rules are both implicit and explicit. When a rule is recognized and justified by the members of a particular society it becomes institutionalized. In other words, sociocultural environments are institutions that regulate norms. Individuals are forced to follow the institutionalized rules (cultural norms) in order to fit in the community (LeVine, 1973).

Culture and Personality Relations

LeVine (1973) examines the major theoretical orientations of culture-personality relations in five categories: anti-culture-personality positions, reductionist positions, the personality-is-culture view, the personality mediation view, and the "two systems" view. The first view, which is anti-culture-personality view, is shared by many institutional social scientists. According to this view, psychological differences between human populations are not significant. Earlier social scientist also thought that there is a relation between the individual behavior and the cultural norms, however, cultural norms are considered to be part of environmental system. However, despite the fact that individual develops a form of adaptation to this environmental system, according to this view, he/she cannot change it. To sum up this position, culture and personality do not mutually influence each other, rather, it is culture that has an effect on personality, not the other way around. The second view, reductionist position, is considered to be reductionist because individual psychological factors are considered to be the mere, independent causes of cultural behavior of human beings. The motives behind the social behaviors of individuals are only examined through psychology (psychological reductionism or psychological determinism). It is the individual psychologies of people that create culture. The third position is personality-is-culture view, which advocates that culture and personality cannot exist without one another. According to the proponents of this view, personality is the reflection of culture and personality development is nothing but the transmission of culture through generations. The personality mediation view considers culture as a system that has several parts (such as economy, social structure, and religion) that depend on one another. Personality plays a mediating role among these interdependent parts of culture. The final position is the two systems view, which suggests that "personality and sociocultural institutions as two systems interacting with each other" (p. 58).

Hallowell (1955), who is also one of the researchers who suggests the two systems view that is explained above, states that culture helps individuals in human populations to psychologically adjust to their environments. In this sense culture provides five basic orientations to the individuals: self-orientation, object orientation, spatiotemporal-orientation, motivational orientation, and normative orientation.

What he means by self-orientation is that culture has the function to help individual function appropriately in his/her society through providing him/her a sense of self. Language has a very important role in self orientation. The second function of culture is to provide the individual the orientation of so many different objects that are around him/her. Here again language is so important in object-orientation. The third orientation is the spatiotemporal orientation, which is primarily all cultures help individual identify him/herself and with reference to his/her society. The individual acquires the sense of existence in space other than the immediate environment, which enables him/her move freely and purposefully. "Motivational orientation is orientation of the self towards the objects of its behavioral environment with reference to the satisfaction of its needs." (p.100). It is the fifth major function of culture to provide values, norms, ideals, and standards to its members.

Spiro (1987) explains how religious doctrines norms are internalized by individuals. Even though he talks about the internalization of religious beliefs, his explanation very much pertains to internalization of cultural values (not only religious values). According to Spiro (1987) there is a hierarchy of five levels though which individuals of human populations internalize cultural values and ideas: the first step is the individual's getting to know about the culture. In other words, he/she is acquainted with the cultural norms. At the second level, the individual understands the meaning of those institutionalized rules. However, they do not necessarily accept them. Accepting or believing in the rules is the third stage in which the individual not only understands the cultural rules, but also believes that they are correct and true. It is in this stage that the cultural norms, rules, and values are internalized by the individual. The forth stage acts as a map with which the individual gets to know about his/her environment. At this stage, cultural norms are the guidance for the actions of the individual. At the fifth stage, the cultural norms which served as a map for the individual are the motivators for the individual.

Culture, Socialization and their Effects on Individuals: Agrarian Model vs. Urban-Industrial Model

Before looking at the effects of early socialization and schooling on individuals, it will provide a better understanding if we look at the historical developments in family, community, and parenthood.

LeVine and White (1986) state that the majority of the world population depended on agrarian way of life, which included living in small communities, producing food domestically, agriculture, and animal husbandry. They also state that the agrarian cultural traditions, which are still the guiding principles of life, prevails the lives of the majority of the world population today.

Child Labor and Natural Fertility in Agrarian Cultures

Children (as young as six) were considered to be contributors of economy for their communities (LeVine and White). The more children a family had means, the more labor contributors they had. Natural fertility is a concept used by demographers to indicate that women in agrarian societies continue to have children until menopause. There are lengthy birth intervals as it enables for the parents to take care of their young ones. High mortality rates should also be kept in mind as a major cause for the lengthy birth intervals. As soon as the children reach the age (usually adolescence) that they are expected to contribute to the welfare of the family, older members of the family or community take the responsibility of training the young ones.

Concept of Virtue in Agrarian Cultures

Fertility and filial loyalty are the two main values that agrarian cultures prescribe to their members. Since children work with and under the supervision of their elders (especially parents) throughout their lives, they have a sense of loyalty for their parents. Reciprocity is another virtue of agrarian cultures, which is basically children are expected to take care of their parents when they age. They are expected to give back (support) to their parents. Kinship support is a very important part of agrarian cultures.

Unlike in western cultures, solidarity and unity are the underlying notion in agrarian cultures. Members of an agrarian community are expected to help each other, rather than competing against. There is a hierarchy in the structure of communities in which age and gender play significant roles.

Benefits provided by Agrarian Societies

Members of agrarian societies are ensured of security, respect, and continuity as a result of their participation in the agrarian culture.

As long as the individual contributes to the welfare of his/her family and community, he/she is sure that there is reciprocity, which means that he/she will receive any help when he/she needs from the family, kin, or the community.

In agrarian cultures, age determines the statuses of both men and women. When the individuals get old, they are respected and considered to have a higher role in the society, and thus respected by all members of the community. The third benefit that agrarian societies offer to their members is continuity. Through their membership of an agrarian society and ties with generations, individuals are provided with a sense of continuity and history. LeVine and White (1986) also indicate that the sense of continuity is also present in western societies where people establish continuity through having children.

Revolution in Parenthood: Urban-Industrial Model

LeVine and White (1986) state that the concept of child rearing has changed dramatically during the past 200 years. There has been a radical digression from the agrarian cultural norms and values, especially child rearing views, due to industrialization and urbanization. The need for wage labor and employment in urban areas started the flux of people from rural locations. Before industrialization, majority of the human populations used to live in the country side and there was almost no distinction between home and the workplace (agrarian way of life). However, according to Levine and White (1986), the new position about child rearing can be considered revolutionary as it was the first time in history that child-parent relations were not based on reciprocity. Another revolutionary notion that was introduced after industrialization and urbanization is that welfare of all children in the world has become a central concern in Western ideology.

LeVine and White (1986) posit that the west acquired all the contemporary child cultural ideals about child rearing through five major processes: previously agrarian institutions changed to urban-industrial institutions, there had been a transition in demographics, mass schooling, and public became more interested in the welfare of children.

Hareven (1989) examines the effects of industrialization and urbanization on children's position in the families and communities.

According to her, unlike in agrarian societies, children have simpler and age standardized networks in their families and communities. Contemporary institutions, such as schools, and peers started to have greater influence on children's networks. The decline in mortality and fertility rates had caused a transition from large families to smaller, nuclear ones. Due to industrialization, home and workplace were separated and this led to fathers' spending less time with their children (as they were the primary bread-winners), which also made the mothers as the primary care givers of their children. As a result of the print materials containing child-rearing advice being introduced to families who were the immediate care giver of their children, people started to rely on print materials. Because schooling required age standardization, adults and children have been separated from each other. Another effect of industrialization was that children who attended schools started to educate their parents. In agrarian cultures, children relied on their apprenticeship with their families and kin to secure a job. However, after industrialization, the wage labor need required skills that the families themselves could not provide their children. Educating children for the workforce became the main function of schooling.

Effects of Early Socialization and Schooling on Developments of Individuals: A cross-Cultural Comparison

As it can be inferred from the title above, in this section, I am going to discuss the effects of early socialization and schooling on later individual and educational developments of children and adolescents. I am going to compare effects of early socialization on individuals in different cultures, especially Japanese and American cultures.

Socialization and Language Acquisition

Ochs (1986) provides a summary of the different definitions of socialization according to different schools of thought. A very general definition provided is that socialization is the process of internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of a society. Ochs (1986) elaborates on their (with Schieffelin) definition of the concept of socialization. According to her, individuals show their understanding of the norms, values, and beliefs of their societies, which they acquired through interactions. These interactions are the sociocultural environments of individuals, who gain the expected

ways of the society by actively participating in it.

Language is a vital tool for human beings (especially in early childhood) in acquiring a world view (Ochs (1986). Children in gain the norms, beliefs, and values of their societies "through exposure to and participation in language-mediated interactions." (Ochs, 1986: 2). Language socialization is not simply being exposed to a social event, rather it is the social event itself. These events (or social activities) play a very important role in developing the cognitive skills of children. By actively participating in social events, children learn different dimensions of the human interactions, such as the seriousness or playfulness of a situation through both linguistic and nonverbal cues. Young children learn about crucial aspects of their societies, such as (gender) roles and status.

Cultural concepts of status and roles are embedded in discourses through which children acquire the social order. Through their participation in social events, children learn sociolinguistic patterns in their environments. These patterns indicate the gender differences (that women use more indirect requests), verbal indicators of different statuses and roles (as in higher status using more "well") (Ochs, 1986). Rogoff (2003) posits that children seek salient categories and behavior patterns. Gender is definitely a very salient category in every child's immediate environment. In every society, gender appropriate behaviors are encouraged, while gender inappropriate ones are discouraged. Both encouragement and discouragement are done linguistically and nonverbally. In U.S. for example, girls are encouraged to stay clean and keep their toys clean. According to Rogoff (2003), girls receive more training on appropriate behaviors than boys in many cultures. There can be difference in language socialization among different socioeconomic classes. For example, among African American children in Louisiana, older kids were also responsible for education younger ones. They taught certain intellectual skills, such as alphabets, numbers through rhymes and word games. Rogoff (2003) further elaborates on this issue that the very same thing (teaching alphabet and numbers etc.) is done by the adults in middle-class European American communities.

Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) compare Anglo American white middle class, Kaluli (Papua New Guinea), and Samoan societies and how the children in these societies acquire language and language socialization.

In their study they summarize two major speech patterns that occur between caregivers and children: adapting the situation to the child and adapting child to the situation. In the first case (adapting the situation to the child), adults use simplified language, which can be called 'baby-talk' while talking to their babies. Meaning is negotiated through explanations and paraphrases in adapting situation to the child. Caregivers help the child (infant) express him/herself through explanation and clarification. There is a two-party communication in this orientation. In the other orientation, adults (or caregivers) do not use simplified language while they are talking to the babies. There is not necessarily one-on-one, two way of communication. Babies usually participate with multiple caregivers. Children are socialized to notice others and use a language that is appropriate (not necessarily polite) for the situation and other party of the communication. The authors offer implications of their study, which provides a generalization of language acquisition and its role in socialization. The above mentioned two major orientations are not universal and not necessarily better than the other. Even though children of different societies are linguistically socialized differently, they all learn the language within the expected range of development. The second implication of the study is that the language used by the caregivers are indications of the belief systems and values of that particular society. The third implication is the cultural expectations and requirements shape and influence child's language. The last implication is that while some cultures help situations adapt to the child, other cultures expect the child to adapt to the situation, which may be indication of part of a more general orientation.

American and Japanese Language Socialization

Anglo American white middle class families have a dyadic communication with their infants. Mothers (the primary caregiver) prefer face-to-face interaction with their babies. Infants/babies are considered to be a part of the society just like every other adult (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). On the other hand, in Japanese culture, communication is indirect, intuitive, context dependent, "rich in connotation and evasive in denotation" (Clancy, 1986: 213). There is an emphasis on 'omoiyari' (empathy) instead of explicit communication, which puts a lot of the responsibility of understanding on the listener. In this sense, Japanese people talk less than American people. American students are more talkative than

their Japanese counterparts. The grammatical structure of Japanese allows ambiguous communication style (omitting overt references) through which is assumed that the listener would understand. Listener is given the responsibility of understanding the speaker, even though it may not be as clear for American (language) standards. Children socialize the indirectedness and intuitive nature of Japanese communication style in early ages. Mother-child interaction indicates that the nonverbal communication is preferred to verbal one, as Japanese mothers do not talk as much as the American mothers. However, Japanese mothers spend more time with their children than American mothers and they respond more quickly to the needs of their children. Children in these two societies (American and Japanese) are socialized into different orientations at very early ages (as early as four months old). Japanese children are socialized to respond to questions and requests. On the other hand, American children tend to ignore the questions or requests that are directed to them even though they are able to understand what is being asked or requested. If a Japanese child does not respond, a mother usually insists on asking the same question (wording might be different) until she elicits a respond from her child. Japanese mothers socialize their children to be sensitive to the needs, feelings, and wishes of others. This has a great impact on the moral development of Japanese teenagers/adolescents, which will be discussed below.

Caudill and Weinstein (1969) compare American and Japanese valued behaviors in terms of child rearing practices. According to their study, American babies are more active and they are more willing to explore their bodies and environments. While American mothers talk more with their babies, Japanese mother tend to be present more for their children.

Azuma (1986) and Doi (1986) indicate that the two concepts in Japanese culture shed lights on the Japanese personality structure and culture. These concepts are "amae" (or "tatemae") and "honne". "Amae (tatamae) means "to depend and presume upon other's benevolence" (Doi, 1986: 121). It indicates how one should behave in the society according to the societal norms, regulations, and rules. In other words it is ritualistic and stand for principles. On the other hand, "honne" is what the individual actually wants, which can be contradicting to "tatamae". As for the implications of these concepts, Azuma (1986) states that because mothers are so devoted

to their children, this socializes their children to be dependent on them, which help children to behave according to what pleases their mothers. In this sense they children are socialized into amae relationship, which emphasizes the others' feelings, emotions, and wishes.

The Effects of Socialization on Schooling

The early dyadic communication style of American mothers have an impact on the communication style used by teachers. Rogoff (2003) state that in traditional U.S. (elementary school) classrooms, interactions are dyadic rather than multiparty. The term "switchboard model" is used to indicate that teachers take a speaking turn between each child turn. Children do not seem to consider their peers' opinions and ideas that often.

On the other hand, in Japanese elementary school classrooms, children are more attentive to their peers' comments, ideas, and opinions as well as teachers' (Rogoff, 2003). While many American elementary school classrooms have lesser number of kids and the teachers prefer it this way, because this enables them to provide enough individual attention to their students, Japanese teachers prefer to have larger number of students in their elementary school classrooms, because that enables the children to collaborate and learn from each other better. The collaborative learning style preferred in Japanese elementary school classrooms can be seen in Chinese and Korean elementary school classrooms (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1991, Park & Kim, 1999). In Japanese and Chinese cultures groupism is favored to individualism, which is strongly supported in American culture and this is reflected in elementary school educational practices. Hess and Azuma (1991) draw attention to the parental goals of Japanese and American parents and state that Japanese children acquire groupism through their mothers' favoring cooperation with others, thus children at the elementary school age are already prepared for cooperative learning. On the other hand, American mothers help their children be assertive, which promotes independence and individualism.

Hess and Azuma (1991) discuss how parental practices also prepare their children to be students. According to them, parents "instill beliefs about causes of failure and success in school and the degree to which the child is responsible for performance" (Hess & Azuma,

1991: 3). Japanese mothers think that performance lies in the child, which means it is internal. American mothers, however, tend to think that outside (of the child) sources also affect child's performance. This kind of orientation shapes children's conception of schooling and their school success in later years.

Problem-solving strategies are acquired as early as preschool years. Japanese preschoolers take more time to figure out a solution rather than getting the correct answer, whereas, American preschoolers seem to get the correct answer quickly (Hess & Azuma, 1991).

Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, and Weisz (2000) emphasize on the two distinct paths of development in American and Japanese cultures. Symbiotic harmony is the prevailing path in Japanese culture that has effects on the individual developments. In infancy, union is emphasized, in childhood, the expectations of others that surround the child are emphasized. Stable relationships with parents and peers are the focus in adolescence, and in adulthood, assurance is the goal in mate relationship in Japanese culture. The effects of the symbiotic harmony in educational lives of the individuals are so salient that Rothbaum et al. state that it helps Japanese students succeed in early school years. The symbiotic relationship can also be found in Korean and Chinese (Hong Kong) culture, which emphasizes filial piety (Park & Kim, 1999, Shimizu, Tsang, & Ho, 2007). According to Park and Kim (1999), children strive to succeed at school mostly to please their parents.

While Japanese culture emphasizes the symbiotic harmony throughout the life span, generative tension seems to prevail in American relationship development (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). In this type of path of development, the infant experiences the tension between separation and union. In childhood, children are given great freedom and directed to grow personal preferences. Unlike in Japanese and Korean cultures, the close relationships shifts from parents to the peers in adolescence. Trust is the focus in relationships in adulthood.

The normative values of American, Japanese, and Chinese students reveal that American adolescents follow a path of generative tension, while Japanese and Chinese students tend to be on symbiotic harmony (Shimizu, Tsang, & Ho, 2007). Shimizu, Tsang, and Ho (2007) report that Japanese children expressed that their responsibility for

the enhancement of the welfare of others. Similar statements were made by Chinese students, who emphasized filial piety. On the other hand, American students focused more on their individual talents and successes, which can be traced to the generative tension path of development. Similar findings are reported by White (1993), who focuses mixed contradictory messages sent to individuals in Japanese and American cultures. The belief that learning should be individual and group work is not favored in American culture is another sign of generative tension. While Americans believe that adolescents should leave their parents as a sign of maturity and part of the growing process, for the Japanese family is the center of support for the individual, no matter how old he/she is.

Conclusion

It is impossible to have a better understanding of other cultures if we look through the same lenses. The dominant lenses that are used in defining the "other" have predominantly been Western lenses. Many times these lenses helped us understand differences, but there again, it forced us to force other to fit into Western definitions and categorizations, which failed to reflect the true "other", which also has not help establish a better world order. Considering cultural differences and the many ways of doing things help establish better lives for everyone and keep the world a safer and more peaceful place.

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