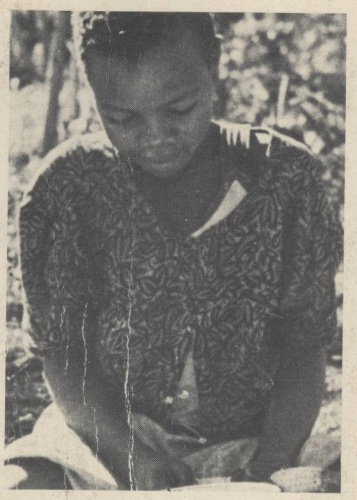
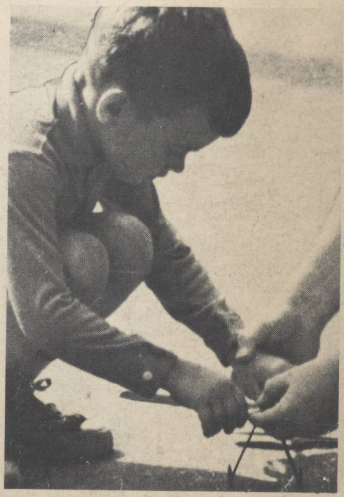
Children of Six Cultures

A Psycho-Cultural Analysis

Beatrice B. Whiting and John W. M. Whiting





Children of Six Cultures
A Psycho-Cultural Analysis

Beatrice B. Whiting and John W. M. Whiting
in Collaboration with Richard Longabaugh

Based on Data Collected by
John and Ann Fischer
Robert LeVine and Barbara Lloyd
Thomas and Hatsumi Maretzki
Leigh Minturn
William and Corinne Nydegger
A. Kimball and Romaine Romney

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Children of Six Cultures

To Our Junior Colleagues
in Palfrey House, 1955–1962,
and William James Hall, 1962–1972

Preface

This book, the most recent report of the Six Culture Study, aims to add to our knowledge of the varieties of social behavior of children brought up in different parts of the world. Earlier research on comparative child development (Whiting and Child, 1953) indicated that such an approach was promising but that more standardized procedures for collecting data were required. The diversity of the practices reported in ethnographic literature showed how restricted and parochial were the descriptions of methods of child care and training characteristic of the cultures of modern Western societies. Although available reports written by anthropologists, missionaries, and colonial administrators were usually scant when it came to children, there was enough material to indicate wide variations in the nature of the social and physical environment that individuals of different cultures experienced from birth to adulthood.

The hypotheses the Whiting and Child study set out to test were derived from the Freudian assumption that experiences during in-

fancy and childhood had an effect on adult personality. Some of these hypotheses were confirmed but many were not. This made the inadequate and unsystematic reporting of the early ethnographies especially frustrating. We did not know whether to attribute our failures to false assumptions or inadequate data. We therefore decided that an attempt should be made to collect systematic data on child life in a variety of cultures.

To accomplish this aim the Committee on Social Behavior of the Social Science Research Council, of which Robert Sears was Chairman, was persuaded to sponsor a seminar and a conference on the cross-cultural study of socialization. This resulted in the development of a plan (Whiting et al., 1953) which eventuated in the Six Culture Study.* Irvin L. Child, William W. Lambert and John W. M. Whiting were principal investigators and Beatrice B. Whiting the coordinator of the study. The field research was carried out by six teams: John and Ann Fischer; Robert LeVine and Barbara LeVine [Lloyd]; Thomas and Hatsumi Maretzki; Leigh Minturn; William and Corinne Nydegger; and A. Kimball and Romaine Romney. The field teams were assisted by graduates of local universities and schools: Nariyuki Agarie, Gurdeep Jaspal, Simeon Nyashai, John Okiamba, Felix Ombasa, Laurence Sagini, Sri Shyam Narain Singh, Taurino Singson, Muriel Eva Verbitsky and Kiyoshi Yogi.

The research plan was developed collaboratively by the field teams and the principal investigators during a six-week session just prior to the beginning of the fieldwork. The plan produced during this

*Robert Sears, Pauline Sears, Eleanor Maccoby, and Barbara Ayres were especially helpful in developing the plan. A generous grant from the Behavioral Science Division of the Ford Foundation made it possible to carry it out. The fieldwork and part of the analysis and writing of five of the six reports were financed by this grant. Later analysis and editing were supported by a grant from the United States Public Health Service.

session, together with comments and criticisms written during and after the fieldwork, constitutes one of the publications resulting from the project (Whiting et al., 1965).

Each field team was responsible for writing a general ethnography of the community under study, as well as a detailed description of child-rearing and child life at the cultural level. These were published in a single volume (B. Whiting, 1963), and separately, in paperback form.*

The plan also called for the field teams to draw a sample of children and give standard interviews to their mothers. These interviews were analyzed and the results written up by Minturn and Lambert (1964). Finally, each field team, together with its research assistants, was expected to collect a large number of standard observations of the behavior of the children of the sample in natural settings. The analysis of these data is the subject of this monograph.

Many individuals have worked on the coding and analysis of the data over the past years. The roster includes the staff and students of the Laboratory of Human Development, Harvard University, from 1954 to 1962, particularly Richard Longabaugh, Thomas Landauer, A. Kimball Romney, Roy D'Andrade, Sadako Imamura, Mark Weisman, and Jean Altman. From 1962 to 1972 the staff and students of the Social Relations department contributed their time and energy, particularly Mary Lou Lionells and Michael Burton, who worked as postdoctoral fellows; Charles Harrington, Gary Granz-

*Published by John Wiley and Sons, New York, in 1964, the individual monographs are: Fischer and Fischer, *The New Englanders of Orchard Town;* LeVine and LeVine [Lloyd], *Nyansongo: A Guisii Community in Nyansongo;* Maretzki and Maretzki, *Taira: An Okinawan Village;* Minturn and Hitchcock, *The Rajputs of Khalapur;* Nydegger and Nydegger, *Tarong: An Ilocos Barrio in the Philippines;* Romney and Romney, *The Mixtecans of Juxtlahuaca, Mexico.*

berg, and Lawrence Baldwin, graduate students; and Mary MacCrea, Bonnie Grey, and Wendy Jackson, research assistants.

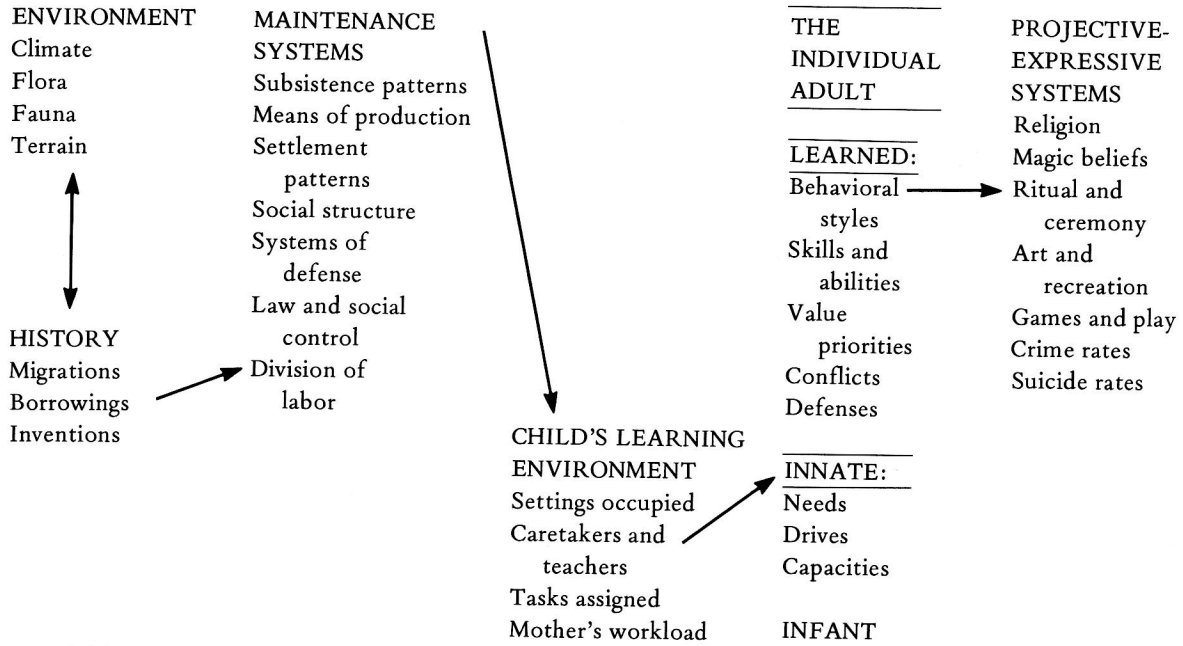
Throughout the years the person who has contributed most consistently is Richard Longabaugh. His analysis of the interrelation of the behaviors selected for study has appeared in two publications, *A Category System for Coding Interpersonal Behavior as Social Exchange* (1963), and *The Structure of Interpersonal Behavior* (1966).

William Lambert of Cornell has worked on the analysis of aggressive behavior. His results will be published in a separate volume.

At times, the data seemed insurmountable. Certainly the present volume would be very different had it not been for the development of computer programs suitable for the analysis of social science data. We have grown up with these programs and have benefited by them. The staff and students involved in the analysis profited in countless ways which cannot be measured by this volume. Stimulated by working on the project, they have increased their knowledge of the problems of cross-cultural research and have developed new methods and techniques for recording, coding, and comparing behavior observed in diverse natural settings. Some former staff and students have—perhaps because of the many years consumed in the analysis—been permanently discouraged from using behavior measures based on naturalistic observations. We hope that this volume will not only hearten those who are committed to such research but convince others that the problems of analysis are not insurmountable.

April 1974

Beatrice Whiting
John W. M. Whiting



A Model for Psycho-Cultural Research.

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1 Introduction

Are children brought up in societies with different customs, beliefs, and values radically different from each other? Do differences attributable to sex, age, and birth order override these cultural differences? Does the situation and setting influence a child's behavior or are his actions similar across environments? Or, to ask these questions in a summary form, if you want to predict the behavior of a preadolescent child, which would it be most important to know: his or her sex, age, birth order, the culture into which he was born, or the situation he was in at the moment you made your prediction. Our study attempts to answer these questions by analyzing in natural settings and in the normal course of living the social behavior of a sample of boys and girls, three to eleven years of age, growing up in six different parts of the world.

Until recently, most research in child development has been concerned with differences among samples of individual children from the same culture. The effects of sex, age, birth order, and the child-rearing practices of the mother usually have been selected as the

variables presumed to affect the abilities, personality, and behavior of the child. Except for some early cross-cultural research and more recent studies of cognitive development in other societies, culture as a variable has been used implicitly rather than explicitly. Many studies have shown differences between social classes or between ethnic groups,* but the meaning of the differences in terms of cultural values was rarely explored systematically. Studies reporting, for example, that lower-class parents are more likely to use physical rather than psychological techniques of punishment generally left it at that and did not question why this should be so, or whether the same difference would be expected in other cultures with social class systems.

When culture has been taken as a variable to be studied, the beliefs, values, and techniques of a whole society, or at least of the members of a band or hamlet or village, have been given unitary values as though everyone in the group accepted them. Variations of individuals within the society have been wiped out on the assumption that custom compels consensus.

In our Six Culture Project we tried to combine cross-cultural and intracultural approaches. The same children were compared with other children within their culture as well as those of different cultures. It must be admitted that with but six cultures and sixteen to twenty-four boys and girls varying from three to eleven years in age

*Early cross-cultural studies are those of Kardiner, 1939, 1945; Erikson, 1939, 1950; Whiting and Child, 1953; Barry, Bacon, and Child, 1957, 1959. Examples of recent cross-cultural studies in cognitive development are Bruner et al., 1966; Dawson, 1967; Goodnow, 1967; Price-Williams, 1969; Cole, 1971; and Dasen, 1973. For reviews see LeVine, 1970; Dasen, 1972. Studies of differences between social classes or ethnic groups are reviewed by Hess, 1970.

for our intracultural tests, we had the barest minimum of cases to test our hypotheses. To obtain significant differences, relations between variables had to be both strong and consistent. On the other hand, with such small sample sizes little confidence can be placed on the failure of the data to support a hypothesized relation. In other words, the study is particularly vulnerable to what statisticians refer to as "type-two error." Despite this defect, the opportunity of a six-fold replication of intracultural hypotheses and the opportunity of testing the same hypothesis both within and across cultures is a powerful feature of the design and makes up to some degree for the inadequacy resulting from small sample size.

Another important purpose of our study is the investigation of the transcultural validity of findings of studies on children in Europe and the United States. Most child psychologists have implicitly assumed that the effects of sibling order or the differences between boys and girls are universally true, although, when challenged, they will admit that their sample by no means represents the universe of all children from all cultures. The assumption made by some anthropologists that the children of each culture develop in a unique manner is equally fallacious. Again, assumptions of universality or uniqueness must be investigated, and an attempt will be made to test the generality of a limited set of hypotheses for six different cultures. Although the cultures of our study by no means represent the universe, such replication is a small step toward a test of universality.

The formulation of hypotheses for this project was guided by a set of underlying assumptions about the direction of causation in social change. This can be expressed in a heuristic model that begins with the environment and history and ends with religion and ideology;