

URBAN/RURAL UPBRINGING AS A CORRELATE OF YORUBA CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF FAMILY POWER STRUCTURE

Dr. Michael Olaseboya Olasehinde^x

Considerable research evidence abounds to show that the way a child perceives his family's power structure correlated very highly with his personal characteristics. Among such correlates are age, sex, religious affiliation (Hess and Torney, 1962; Kagan, 1956; King, 1969; Goldin, 1969), social class (Bronfenbrenner, 1961; Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Strodbeck, 1958; Bowerman and Elder, 1964) and birth order (Cushna, 1966; Hilton, 1967, Kandel and Lesser, 1966; Lasko, 1954, Clausen, 1966 and Sutton-Smith, 1968). However, in a review of studies on the correlates of children's perceptions of family power structure, Olasehinde (1973) found that the effect of locale of upbringing on such perceptions was never studied. Since research shows that certain idiosyncratic elements make for marked differences in children's perceptions, it was hypothesized, for the purposes of this study, that Yoruba children's locale of upbringing would be a function of their perceptions of familial power structure.

The import of this study's problem derives from a number of socio-psychological propositions. First, since rural settings are repository of traditionalism, rural children would report preponderant instances of traditional patriarchal family power structure. As against rural/urban children would report more instances of emergent family power structures because of greater exposure to forces of social change. Secondly, on a psychological level, a child's report of his family's power structure on this basis of his locale of upbringing will have implications for the kinds of parental identification he makes, the kind of personality he develops, the type of attitude

^xLecturer in Psychology and Education, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

He has towards authority figures outside his family, the kinds of cultural values that are transmitted to him and the role status he will play in later life.

It would seem necessary to clarify the phrase, family power, in the context of this study. It is equated with each family member's decision-making power in four areas of family activities as used by Herbst (1952) in his Melbourne study and by King (1969) in his Florida study. Family power, according to Safilios-Rothschild (1970), is regarded as a multidimensional concept which remains multifaceted even when equated with decision-making. Thus, the four areas of family activities covered by this study's instrument were child-bearing, household, economic and social.

Method

Subjects

By a random sampling procedure an sixth graders of Yoruba parentage in the Western State of Nigeria, 504 urban and 495 rural children in the State's school system were selected as subjects of this study. All told, there were 998 sixth graders who had to have lived in either an urban or rural locale since their birth up until the time of this study. The urban and rural delimitations were based on the Nigerian national census of 1963.

Instrument

The method of data gathering was a self-report questionnaire comprising eight items, two of which covered each of childrearing, household, economic and social family activities. Where applicable to the Yoruba social and cultural backgrounds, the ideas in Herbst's and King's questionnaire items were drawn upon; otherwise relevant items were constructed by the author. However, the resulting instrument was different from any other that had been used in any previous power studies. The major point of difference was that

instead of asking who decides and expecting responses such as father, mother or both together, the instrument's items asked how much power a particular family member has in decision-making process. The responses were of the Likert-type thus: quite a lot, small, little or none weighted 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. A sample item covering a household activity was: How much power does each of the following, father, mother, father and mother together, or yourself have in deciding what work you should do around the house? A Yoruba version of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .84 when tested for reliability by a split-half odd-even technique.

Procedure

Data for this study were obtained by administering the questionnaire on the sample by the author, himself a Yoruba, who was involved in the back translation of the instrument. The Administration of the questionnaire was done during one lesson period in each of the participating schools. The total power score for each family member or for father and mother together was the summation of the highest scores assigned by each respondent over the eight power items.

Results

An analysis of the results revealed a typology of power patterns thus: father-dominance, mother dominance, equalitarianism and child dominance. These power patterns served as dependent variables while urban and rural locales were the independent variables. A chi-square test of correlation between the two sets of variables was computed as reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Chi-square between urban/rural upbringing
and family power patterns

Power Patterns	Number responding	Urban children	Rural children
Father-dominance	602	268	336
Mother-dominance	202	131	71
Equalitarianism	118	69	49
Child-dominance	72	38	33

$$\chi^2 = 29.56$$

$$df = 3$$

$$P < .001$$

Discussion

Contrary to the traditional belief that the Yoruba family is typified by patriarchy, the results of this study show that there are at least four possible power patterns, to wit: father-dominance, mother-dominance, equalitarianism and child-dominance. For the entire sample and for each sub-sample, father-dominance was reported most often. However, the hypothesis that more rural children would report father-dominance than urban children did was supported. Conversely, more urban children reported mother-dominance, equalitarianism and child-dominance than the rural children did. Thus, the results show that urban/rural upbringing is a strong correlate of children's perceived family power patterns.

The differences in the children's reports may be explained by the differential exposure of their respective locales of upbringing to the forces of social change. It would seem justifiable to say that the functional forces of social change explained by Lloyd (1969) may have led to the collapse of hierarchical ranking, patriarchal dominance and the correlation of power with age, seniority and masculinity. More families are exposed to industrialization, Westernization, foreign contacts and mass media than rural families are. Educated parents, more of whom are located in urban areas, seem anxious to reverse the authoritarian role so common in the traditional rural society. It is however clear from the results that both locales were affected by these factors, as both urban and rural children reported identical power patterns. What is involved is the question of extent. One may however not expect a complete switch-over from the traditional to the emergent structure because of the Yoruba acculturative process. This process seems "selective and adaptive rather than substitutive" (Herskovits and Bascom, 1959).

Again, it would seem reasonable to say that women and children in both locales enjoy considerable emancipation as evidenced by instances of mother-dominance, equalitarianism and child-dominance. Mothers are now bread-winners and have unrestrained access to education. It would seem interesting to find out whether Yoruba women's power base can be interpreted in terms of Blood and Wolfe's (1960) resource theory. In the same vein, children in both locales can now be heard as well as being seen. Whether this is due to parental permissiveness is a moot question. It is however clear that, in both locales, paternal authority has declined (cf. Megey, 1957) and that women are succeeding in their struggle for marital power (cf. Gillespie, 1971). As to the power patterns themselves, their possible effects on the sample's social and personality development would seem to call for urgent investigation as Bronfenbrenner (1961), Dager (1964) and Strauss (1962) have done with American children.

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