

foreign students studying in Japan. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's annual report for 1995, about 1.33 million students are interested in studying abroad every year. The U. S. admits about 35% of them, while Japan hosts only 3%. Little wonder that few non-Japanese understand or feel close to Japan (*The Nikkei Weekly*, August 25, 1997).

Current trends

Basically when a society changes, we suppose that the values and norms, which so far successfully guided the individual and organizational behaviors, have changed. This change of values and norms may occur in two ways. It may be caused unconsciously, that is, people change their values and norms simply by adapting to the changing surroundings so that they can survive better, like the managers of Japanese companies who change the traditional way of recruiting and training employees to adapt better to a more competitive market situation. They may not think that their traditional way is wrong according to some 'new' principle. But they find that it is not functional any more. The second may be a result of the more conscious efforts of people who realize that the existing values and norms are wrong or dysfunctional and thus they should be rectified. The 1985 Equal Employment Opportunity Act is such an example. It is the result of the feminist movement which protested against the exclusion of women from some labor markets (or some jobs). This, in turn, as unanticipated consequence, paved the way for the participation of male workers in the hitherto female occupations like nursing and child caring. Often the first change may be justified and consolidated by the second change at a later time.

The change is also a process. When the old values and norms begin to change, it results in confusion in social life. As far as social structure is concerned, it blurs the status-role of the members of society, and this makes them unable to perform their roles properly as they lose the definite image of their own roles on the one hand and cannot read others' role expectations of them on the other. Neither can they predict how others will respond to them, and trust will be lost. People begin to see one another as strangers, and in the worst case, as enemies.

The underlying environmental changes are usually the givens in this analytical framework. Or maybe they are the unavoidable results of people's conscious efforts (unanticipated consequences). These changes may be controllable, but it is very difficult.

To analyze the recent changes in Japanese society, I would like 1) to mention some important trends of environmental changes and 2) to explain the resultant behavioral changes. It is necessary at this point to distinguish behavioral changes from value changes. For example, elderly people may want to live with their adult children, but they live alone because the former is not possible for 'some' reason, although it cannot be denied that sooner or later the reality will mold their consciousness (passive justification).

Underlying changes

There are four underlying changes in contemporary Japanese society that will be considered in this section; the changing capitalism, internationalization, the information revolution, and aging. These four changes are necessarily interrelated to each other. They are mutually the cause and effect. Dealing with them separately is only for the convenience of explanation.

1) The changing capitalism

One of the peculiar characteristics of Japanese capitalism is the strong protection and guidance of the government. As the nation began its modernization under the leadership of a 'paternalistic' government, it was taken-for-granted that the government made important decisions and set the rules for economic and financial dealings. It is well known that the MITI (the Ministry of International Trade and Industry) performed a tremendously important role in leading Japan's economic growth after the World War II period. And when there was a goal to achieve clearly (in this case, to attain the economic level of the United States, for example)