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# CULTURE, COGNITION, AND PARENTHOOD IN JAPANESE AND AMERICAN HOMES

by

SAORI YASUMOTO

Under the Direction of Ralph LaRossa

## ABSTRACT

Previous family researchers have found that parents who share different demographic backgrounds construct unique parenting styles and beliefs. Although such studies contribute to understanding how parenthood is socially constructed, the information about how parents internalize cultural information and everyday experiences to raise children is missing in the extant literature. To fully comprehend the social construction of parenthood, the linkage between the mind and the behavior of parents within specific social structures needed to be studied. I thus conducted conjoint interviews with 24 Japanese couples and 24 American couples who were raising four-to-six year old daughters and sons to examine how culture and cognition produce parental philosophies and family relationships. By using cognitive sociology as a theoretical framework and grounded theory methods as a mode of analysis, I found that the parents' construction of parenting beliefs and practices basically depended on how they thought about four analytically distinct relationships: (1) their relationship to their parents; (2) their relationship to their children; (3) their relationship to their marital partner; and (4) their relationship to other people in society. Although fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States talked in general about these four aspects, in the process of doing so they offered unique views on each aspect.

Japanese parents tended to view their parents as role models, believe that children and parents teach and learn from each other, consider gender ideology to be the foundation of parental partnership, and rank understanding others' feelings as the most important skill for children. Thus, their parenting philosophies were manufactured through reciprocal relationships with other people. In contrast, American parents tended to want to become better parents than their own parents, prefer to influence and control their children's lives, consider equality to be the foundation of their parental partnership, and encourage their children to become independent. Therefore, their parenting philosophies were manufactured through self motivation. Through the cross-national comparisons of parents' cognitive processes, I also discuss: the levels of parental expectations and pressures; the issues around the gender relations within a family; and the roles of international parenting books in a globalizing world.

**INDEX WORDS:** Culture, Cognition, Fatherhood, Motherhood, Parental Philosophies, Cross-National Comparison, Intergenerational Family Relationships

CULTURE, COGNITION, AND PARENTHOOD IN JAPANESE AND AMERICAN HOMES

by

SAORI YASUMOTO

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2010

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CULTURE, COGNITION, AND PARENTHOOD IN JAPANESE AND AMERICAN HOMES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	
Statement of the Problem	1
Significance of the Study	3
Research Goals	6
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
Socialization and Parenting	10
Culture and Cognition	15
Why Compare Japan and the United States	18
Studies of the Cognitive Processes of East Asians and Westerners	20
3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	24
Perceiving	27
Focusing	29
Classifying	30
Symbolizing	32
Remembering	33
Timing	36
4 RESEARCH DESIGN	38
Data Collection	43
Sample Characteristics	45
Data Analysis	48



5	“I DO THINGS SIMILARLY TO MY PARENTS” VS. “I DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY FROM MY PARENTS”	55
	Japanese Parents’ Evaluation of Their Parents	58
	Evaluations Based on Social Contexts of Parents	59
	My Parents are My Mentors	69
	American Parents’ Evaluation of Their Parents	76
	Evaluations Based on Parents’ Personality	76
	My Parents are Examples of Who I do not Want to Become as a Parent	83
6	“I GREW UP WITH MY CHILD” VS. “I WANT TO INFLUENCE MY CHILD”	92
	Japanese Parents’ View of Childrearing	94
	Children will Learn from Parents	95
	Parents and Children are Linked	104
	American Parents’ View of Childrearing	108
	Parents’ Influence over Children and Timing	108
	Parents and Child are Separate Entities	115
7	“WE ARE A TEAM BY ACCOMPLISHING GENDER ROLE EXPECTATIONS” VS. “WE ARE A TEAM BASED ON EQUALITY”	123
	Japanese Parents’ View of Their Partner	126
	Accomplishing “Gender Role Expectations” is Key for the Relationship	127
	Mothers Keep Working Fathers’ Existence Alive at Home	130
	American Parents’ View of Their Partner	134
	Being “Fair” is the Foundation of the Relationship	135
	We Work Together as a Unit to Raise Children	142

8	“INTERDEPENDENT CHILD” VS. “INDEPENDENT CHILD”	145
	Japanese Parents’ View of Important Skills in Society	148
	“Being Able to Understand Others’ Feelings” is Most Important	148
	Education is Not a Symbol for Success	155
	American Parents’ View of Important Skills in Society	158
	“Independence” is the Most Important Personal Characteristic	159
	Education is a Symbol for Success	164
9	CONCLUSIONS AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS	169
	Research Findings	172
	The Relationship with their Own Parents	174
	The Relationship with Children	175
	The Parental Partnership	176
	Relationships with Others in the Society	178
	Parental Philosophies and Practices: Manufactured through Reciprocal	
	Relationships vs. Manufactured through Self Motivation	179
	Theoretical Implications	181
	Intensive Mothering and Fathering	181
	Gender Equality/Inequality	184
	Globalization and Parenthood	185
	Limitations and Future Research	186
	REFERENCES	189
	APPENDICES	
	A INTERVIEW GUIDE	203

B	SAMPLES OF FLYER	219
C	INFORMED CONSENT FORMS	222
D	DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	227

### **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 9.1 Differences in Parental Cognition between Japanese and American Parents	173
Table 1. Demographics of the Characteristics of the Respondents	228

### **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 5.1. Japanese Parents' View of their Relationship with their Parents	57
Figure 5.2. American Parents' View of their Relationship with their Parents	58
Figure 6.1. Japanese Parents' View of their Relationship with their Children	93
Figure 6.2. American Parents' View of their Relationship with their Children	94
Figure 7.1. Japanese Parents' View of their Partnership	124
Figure 7.2. American Parents' View of the Partnership	124
Figure 8.1. Japanese Parents' View of Individuals in Society	147
Figure 8.2. American Parents' View of Individuals in Society	147

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Growing up in Japan, I heard about the cultural differences between my country and the United States. Even after living here for ten years, I am still in the process of negotiating between two cultural ideas. I spend many hours reading books, watching family television shows, working as a babysitter, and talking to friends to gain a fuller understanding of how Japanese and American families compare and contrast. As a result, I had pre-existing ideas about family life in the two countries before I started the interviewing process for this study. Regardless, interviewing Japanese and American parents turned out to be an eye-opening experience.

As I had read in other studies but not personally observed, the interview settings chosen by the Japanese and American parents were very different. Japanese parents did not try to create a private setting for the interview; instead the children drew pictures and played with toys in the same room with us. In contrast, most American mothers and fathers created a private setting for the interview. Usually, children were sent to their rooms or asked to play quietly in the room next to where we were conducting the interview. In both cases, the children were well mannered and never caused problems during the interviews. Why do Japanese and American parents interact with their children in such different ways? What are the rationales for their practices? How do they evaluate each others' way of interacting with their children? It can be concluded that Japanese parents and American parents interact with their children differently because they share unique cultural backgrounds and construct parenting styles according to their cultural expectations. Therefore, the practice of Japanese parents may not make sense to fathers and

mothers in the United States, and vice-versa. Based on my observation at the interviews, however, parents in both countries believed that the way they dealt in the interview setting with their children is logical or how it should be. To deconstruct their belief systems, it is essential to understand how parents view and interpret the culture and social structure they are in.

According to Zerubavel (1997: 9), “What goes inside our head is affected by the particular thought communities to which we happen to belong.” Thought communities can be divided by social class, race and ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, and age. Depending on their belonging to a particular group, people have certain views of the world so that they tend to react toward things differently, just like the participant Japanese and American parents did. Based on this idea, various groups of parents interpret similar situations differently because of their unique experiences. Researchers have found, for example, that parents who share different demographic backgrounds (e.g., social class, race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment) construct unique parental philosophies and practices appropriate for their backgrounds (see Lebra 1976, Sigel 1985, Suizzo 2002, and Lareau 2003). What is missing in the literature, however, is information about “what goes on inside” the heads of parents. In other words, how do parents learn, internalize, and use cultural information and everyday experiences during the course of raising their children? To fully understand how parents’ social environments influence parenthood, it is essential to acknowledge how culture and cognition are related. To examine this relationship, I conducted in-depth interviews with 24 parents in Japan and 24 parents in the United States who were raising four-to-six year old daughters and sons. Researchers generally study how people think by examining perceiving, focusing, classifying, symbolizing, remembering, and timing (Zerubavel 1997); therefore, my research questions were framed around these six cognitive acts.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Many family researchers, who have conducted cross-national research between Japan and the United States, have examined similarities and differences of the child-parent interactions on the basis of the idea that the two countries, while overlapping in some respects, represent two different cultures. The Japanese follow Eastern cultural practices that emphasize an *interdependent* self (Markus and Kitayama 1991, 1994), socio-centrism (Shweder and Bourne 1984), and collectivism (Triandis 1995). People who live in such societies tend to value harmony of the group over individual needs; as a result, they are more attentive to one's position and role to accomplish the goal of the group. Helping others and being helped are considered as inevitable processes to achieve a group goal. Thus, a person's dependency may not be seen negatively as long as one can also let others depend on her or him. As a result, someone who strongly emphasizes one's own happiness would be accused of being selfish or seen as lacking compassion. In contrast, Americans who operate in Westernized cultures encourage an *independent* self (Markus and Kitayama 1991, 1994), egocentrism (Shweder and Bourne 1984), and individualism (Triandis 1995). In this type of culture, individuals are expected to be financially and emotionally independent, and to seek their own happiness over group solidarity. Thus, being dependent represents a lack of power and control over one's life in the group. Knowing these cultural differences, one of the main questions that family scholars have tried to answer is, "How do these cultural differences influence interactions between fathers and mothers and between parents and children?"

Chao (1994) said that authoritarian parenting practices are more common among East Asian parents because the primary goal of socialization is to foster their children's ability to meet the group's needs. Children are first expected to listen to authority to become a good follower.

Therefore, East Asian parents tend to place less value on their children's self-efficiency and autonomy. Conversely, Chao (1994) found that Western parents often indicated that they wanted to develop their children's self-efficiency and autonomy because their children need to learn what makes them happy. Markus and Kitayama (1991) similarly explained that parents in East Asian countries and Western countries set different socialization goals for their children, depending on their social conditions and expectations. Japanese fathers and mothers, who generally adhere to collectivism, tend to value the interdependency with others; therefore, they use reasoning techniques that would teach their children to appreciate other people in a society. In American society, which is more individualistic, fathers and mothers are less likely to cherish interdependency. American parents thus encourage their children to express their needs to seek happiness.

To further strengthen the point, Keller, Lamm, Abels, Yovsi, Borke, Jensen, Papaligoura, Holub, Lo, Tomiyama, Su, Wanag, and Chaundhary (2006) looked at the relationship between a child's socialization goals and sociocultural background (e.g., social expectations of good parents, definition of family) in nine different countries. They discovered parents' national and cultural backgrounds strongly influence how they construct their definition of family and expectations of child development. As a result, they concluded that the emergence of different parent-child interactions is the consequence of diverse cultural traditions, social norms, and social expectations. However, extant literature does not explain how fathers and mothers organize all of the information in their minds (i.e., cultural traditions, social norms, and social expectations) during the course of childrearing. Without that knowledge, we are unsure why parents in diverse nations interact with their children differently.



One explanation for this missing information is the types of methodological approach that researchers typically have applied. According to Tomo (2007), many scholars rely on quantitative statistical methods to examine issues related to parenting in cross-national research. For example, the Fukutake Shoten Education Research Center (1994), the International Social Survey Program (1994), the Japan Association for Women's Education (1995), and the National Women's Education Center (2006) all used standardized questionnaires to investigate various family issues such as gender relations, the division of household labor, and parenting philosophy. Tomo and Tung (2000) did a quantitative content analysis of school textbooks to identify how gender roles are presented. Tuneyoshi and Boocock (1997) also statistically compared how gender roles are depicted in children's books in Japan, France, China, and the United States. Additionally, Yasumoto and LaRossa (2010) conducted a content analysis of Japanese comic strips published on Father's Day and Mother's Day to understand how the culture of fatherhood in Japan has changed since 1950s. Although these researchers discovered and presented important the finding that parents relate with children differently based on their sociocultural background, the processes by which parents mentally conceptualize parenting beliefs are largely missing. To fully understand the connection between sociocultural backgrounds and parenting beliefs, we need to uncover the ways parents see and interpret the worlds around them. Thus, I designed my research to fill this gap by demonstrating how parents' social and cultural backgrounds (i.e., living in Japan or the United States) influence parenting beliefs through the in-depth interviews with couples who are raising children in Japan and in the United States.

## RESEARCH GOALS

The main goal of my research is to investigate and theorize about the way culture and cognition are related and how, together, they *produce* family relationships. Stated differently, I sought to understand how fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States learn, internalize, and use everyday events, interactions, and past memories and incorporate these things into their parental philosophy. According to LaRossa, Simonds, and Reitzes (2005:435), “the most challenging theoretical work within a cognitive pluralistic perspective lies in explaining how culture and cognition construct social life.”

How should thinking be conceptualized? Zerubavel (1997) says that thinking is organized into six cognitive acts: perceiving, focusing, classifying, remembering, symbolizing, and timing. What is important to recognize, according to Zerubavel (1997), is that people perform these six cognitive acts not just as individuals and human beings but also as social beings. Using cognitive sociology as a framework of my study, I created interview schedules that were designed to tap the six cognitive acts. More specifically, I intended to find out:

1. What do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States perceive during the course of childrearing?
2. What do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States focus on (pay attention to or ignore) during the course of childrearing?
3. How do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States classify various aspects of everyday childhood experiences (i.e., good behavior, bad behavior, expectations for boys, and expectations for girls) and parental experiences (i.e., fatherhood vs. motherhood)?

4. How do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States use symbolism to describe childhood and parenting experiences?
5. How do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States remember past events? How do these memories influence their construction of parenting beliefs?
6. How do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States time their child's physical, emotional, and intellectual development as well as their own progress as parents?

Mine was an exploratory study that examined whether and how parents' cognition and their social and cultural contexts are related, based on parents' backgrounds and national identity. Its main purpose was to investigate the potential explanation as to why Japanese parents and American parents construct separate and unique parenting philosophies and practices by taking a look at their cognitive processes.

I fully acknowledge the importance of diversity within a group. Not all Japanese parents think similarly; nor do all American parents. Within the United States, Lareau (2003) found that middle-class parents and working-class parents share different expectations for their children. Middle-class parents are more likely to expect their children to learn negotiation skills; conversely, working-class parents tend to encourage their children to follow rules. Honda (2007) also discussed how Japanese parents' educational backgrounds impact their views on children's education. Parents who obtain a higher education, compared to ones with moderate educational backgrounds, tend to emphasize their children's intellectual achievement by spending more time, energy, and money even when children are young. Fathers and mothers may have unique ideas on what is good for children, regardless of their nationality. Parents' religious beliefs can also influence their construction of parenting practices and philosophies. Parents may socialize their

children differently based on their gender. Indeed, there are numerous ways to group types of parents if we consider the intersection of various backgrounds (i.e., social class, race and ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, residential location, and educational backgrounds). And a case could be made that each parent is unique. Still, I agree with Nisbett (2003) who, in conducting research on thought processes of East Asians and Westerners, said:

Every society has individuals who more nearly resemble those of other, quite different societies than they do those of their own society; and every individual within a given society moves quite a bit between the independent and interdependent poles over the course of a lifetime – over the course of a day, in fact. But the variations between and within societies, as well as within individuals, should not blind us to the fact that there are very real differences, substantial on the average, between East Asians and people of European culture. (P. 77)

I strongly felt and witnessed this very point by living in both Japan and the United States. It is easy to conclude that cultural differences between two countries create diverse thought processes of people; however, I believe this explanation is too simplistic. For example, I went to see a movie one day when I started to work on my dissertation. I was sitting toward the back of the movie theater, and a family of three (father, mother, and son) sat in front of me. Father sat in an aisle seat, mother was next to him, and the son was next to her. The way they sat made me feel somewhat strange because I would let my child sit in the middle between my partner and me. I looked around the theater to find other families. I saw four families in that particular movie theater. Three of them were sitting just like the family in front of me. One of the families was sitting similar to how I imagined I would sit, but they were an interracial couple, where the father was White and the mother was Asian. I did not conduct any sophisticated statistical analysis of the sitting order of families; therefore, I do not want to make too much of my observation on a single day. However if they are asked, parents will most likely offer a rationale for why they sat the way they did. Suppose that Japanese families and American families sit differently in the

movie theater, then how can we explain the differences? Culture probably would have something to do with it; however, it does not automatically clarify the reasons.

Parents make plenty of decisions for their children every day. Some decisions, such as selecting a school for children and balancing work and family time, may be more important than other decisions, such as where to sit in a movie theater or at a dinner table. I, however, believe that the way parents deal with small decisions is somewhat related to how they make big decisions. Only if we look at what is going on in the minds of parents, are we able to understand why fathers and mothers interact with their children in certain ways.

In this chapter, I explained the overview of my research. In Chapter 2, I will summarize the extant literature on parenting, child socialization, culture and cognition, and the pros and cons of cross-national/cultural research. In Chapter 3, I will talk about cognitive sociology which I used as a theoretical framework for the study. In Chapter 4, I will discuss methodological processes including sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8 will introduce four themes that emerged from the data to explain the cognitive processes of fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States. In Chapter 9, I will provide the conclusions and theoretical implications of the research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **SOCIALIZATION AND PARENTING**

Through the process of socialization, we learn language, moral, values, and norms to become a member of society. Although socialization takes many places (e.g., family, school, peers, and media), parents are often considered as the most influential figure for children's socialization (Berger and Luckmann 1967, Kuszynski and Grusec 1997, Grusec 2002).

According to Kuszynski and Grusec (1997), there are four major reasons to explain the significance of parents for child socialization: (1) Parents, in many cases, share a biological connection with their children. Because of the biological tie between parents and children, a society favors parents to provide primary impact on their children. (2) A society also expects parents to be responsible for their children by creating legal positions such as a parental right. Generally speaking, a person who has a parental authority has the strongest power to determine what is good for their children. (3) Parents, especially when children are young, spend a significant amount of time developing a relationship with their children. By sharing time and experience, parents try to gain trust and faith from children; consequently, the things parents say and do greatly impact children. (4) Because of the above three reasons, parents have many chances to monitor and control the way children think and behave.

The direct interaction between parents and children is not the only influence that parents provide during the socialization process. The way parents construct their parenting beliefs and philosophies impact the everyday environment. For example, children will have more opportunities to be exposed to diverse knowledge if their parents value readings and place various books for children at home. The types of toys that parents provide for children also

shape the way children see the world. A girl who plays with a doll and an easy bake oven may develop ideas about the gender division of labor that are different from those of a girl who plays with her brother's GI Joe. Children whose parents love to travel the world have chances to see diverse culture. Consequently, children develop diverse levels of intellectual, social, and physical skills.

Based on the implication that parents play a significant role for child socialization, many cross-discipline scholars have studied various aspects of child-parent relationships over the last several decades. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, researchers observed parental styles and discipline techniques in experimental lab settings and employed behaviorist theory to explain how people act under different conditions. Although this research provided important information about human behavior, many critiqued its methodological and theoretical limitations. Some doubted the credibility of findings about child-parent interactions in artificial settings. Others suggested that a behaviorist approach pays little to no attention to how parents "think" in particular situations (Sigel 1985).

To overcome such challenges, researchers in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s focused on parents' feelings, beliefs, and discipline practices, and then examined how these related to their children's development. For example, Mead (1951) pointed out that previous researchers constructed special institutions and clinics to study child development and parenting techniques, and thus ended up regulating child-parent relationships. Approaches like this tended to focus on why child A excels compared to child B, C, or D; however, scholars were less inclined to discover the reasons for the emergence of diverse parenting styles. To uncover potential factors that may influence types of parenting, Mead conducted comparative research between Balinese and American families. According to the author, the ways that Balinese and American parents

communicate with their children are different; as a result, Balinese and American children develop unique motor skills (e.g., flexibility of posture and physical movements). Mead also pointed out that culture influences what parents think and behave, and it eventually affects the natural growth rhythms of children. Erikson (1950, 1968) also discussed how social contexts impact the creation of identity, illustrating how we construct identity within the limit of given situations. For example, a male child identifies himself as a boy, based on information from his parents, siblings, relatives, and the media about what a boy is and how to act like one. Because children spend many hours with their parents, especially when they are young, Erikson suggested the importance of studying parents to provide insight into children's behavior.

In the late 1960s, Freeberg and Payne (1967), reviewing previous studies of child-parent relationships, said the evidence indicated that parents interact with their children in different ways because they do not necessarily share beliefs and attitudes about parenting. The authors also noted, however, that the studies focused solely on how parenting styles affect the development of children and neglected to divulge why and how diverse parental views and behaviors appear. Freeberg and Payne encouraged future researchers to investigate what societal or cultural factors could impact parents' beliefs and practices. Around this time, many researchers started to shift their theoretical framework from Piaget's biology-oriented study of human behavior to social psychological explanations about human behavior in order to analyze child-parent relationships. For example, Whiting and Whiting (1975) and Whiting and Edward (1988) examined parental beliefs and values, suggesting that parents organize the daily schedules of children based on what they consider important for them in a social context.

Ninio (1979) studied the differences between middle- and lower-class Israeli mothers' expectations of their children's cognitive skills (e.g., speech, vision, and hearing). Ninio found



that middle-class mothers expect their children to develop cognitive skills at an earlier age than do working-class mothers, because of different cultural standards and socioeconomic experiences. In addition, Reid and Valsiner (1986) observed 60 families with various backgrounds (e.g., due to education, race, and religion) who lived in North Carolina to understand how parents deal with problematic situations involving their children. They found that parents evaluate situations based on their moral standards; thus, an event may be problematic for some parents, but not necessarily for others. In recent years, Lareau (2003) studied the relationship between parents' social class and parenting styles. From her ethnographic observations, the author concluded that middle-class parents were more likely to orchestrate their children's daily schedules (employing a "concerted cultivation" parenting style) while working-class parents were more likely let their children grow naturally (employing an "accomplishment of natural growth" parenting style).

The basic assumption of the studies above is what Quinn and Holland (1987) called "the cultural model." The cultural model says that people who share the same cultural values hold a similar understanding and framing of experiences; therefore, they also interpret events and act upon them similarly. Under the framework of the cultural model, culture influences not only how people behave but also how they think and rationalize their beliefs (Cole 1996, Shweder 1990, Strauss and Quinn 1997). Therefore, parents who live in similar social environments have certain types of parenting beliefs and interact with children in a specific manner.

Super and Harkness (1986) made a similar point that researchers who try to understand child development need to look at three aspects, which they called the "developmental niche." First, children's physical and social settings should be studied because their experiences differ depending on social contexts (e.g., historical time, country, and parents' social class). Second,

the cultural customs and traditions that regulate childrearing practices should be examined. For instance, every country has its own standards of effective parenting strategies based on beliefs and practices that have been passed down from generation to generation. Third, caregivers' thoughts about their children and parenthood need to be examined. According to the authors, researchers have paid more attention to how social and cultural contexts influence children's well-being than to how fathers and mothers experience parenthood. Because parents' emotional states and understanding of the world also affect their relationships with their children, the authors encouraged scholars to closely examine what parents are thinking.

In response to this suggestion, scholars have studied not only the easily observable physical/social settings and cultural customs of children, but have also endeavored to examine parents' minds — a relatively difficult thing to measure. For example, studies have emerged on how parents value the concept of individualism and encourage children to be independent. Harkness, Super, and Keefer (1992) and Richman, Miller, and Solomon (1988) looked at parents who live in individualistic countries like the United States. They reported that parents who value individualism put less importance on physical closeness with their children, instead expressing more concern about their children's ability to do things by themselves. In contrast, Lebra (1976), LeVine, Dixon, LeVine, Richman, Leiderman, Keefer, and Braselton (1994) and Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988) studied parents who reside in collectivistic countries like Japan. They found that parents in collectivist countries place more value on physical relationships with their children and teaching children about social norms that regulate social interactions, rather than focusing on independence skills. These studies also identify how cultural tradition, social norms, parents' feelings, and parental behaviors are related to each other.

In the twenty-first century people's daily experiences and understanding of the world are becoming increasingly more complicated. For example, many people (e.g., sojourners, international students) witness how parents in other countries raise children. The circulation of media (e.g., movies, parenting books translated into various languages) also impacts parents' thoughts and behaviors. Today many Japanese parents read childrearing books that were originally written for parents in the United States (e.g., *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*). Thus, parental beliefs and behaviors most likely are constructed from the negotiation of multiple aspects and dimensions of several cultures. As a result, it is appropriate to examine not just what fathers and mothers do but also how they learn and internalize all of this information and incorporate it into a parental philosophy. In addition, parents' interpretation and goals of parenthood are influenced by how they were raised, what they remember about it, and how effective they feel their parents' philosophies were. Thus, researchers need to thoroughly examine parents' interpretation of the past to fully understand how parental beliefs are shaped.

## **CULTURE AND COGNITION**

In the previous section, I introduced the extant literature that discussed the influence of parents' social backgrounds on the construction of parental beliefs and the parent-child interactions. By doing so, I emphasized how the examination of parent's cognitive worlds extends the current understanding of family relationships. In this section, I will talk about the studies of culture that have been conducted to strengthen my research goal.

The studies that examine the relationship between culture and cognition often use the symbolic interactionist perspective as a theoretical frame of their research. One of the core interests of symbolic interaction theory is to explain how social structure and the human mind

are connected. George Herbert Mead (1934), for example, discussed that what and how we think arises through the social process. We think and behave as social beings under certain social rules and expectations that are created through the human interactions. Therefore, Mead (1982:5) said that “the individual mind can exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings.” How can we observe the meanings emerged through the human interaction? According to Mead (1934), analyzing the conversation of gesture (e.g., hostile attitudes, facial expressions) and language allow researchers understand the way people interpret and define the situation. By using Mead’s idea, scholars discussed why people think differently.

In “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” Swidler (1986: 273) explained that “culture influence action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire or ‘tool kit’ of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct ‘strategies of action.’” Each society has unique cultural backgrounds. As social beings, we learn to acknowledge norms, values, and morals that are appropriate for the particular social contexts. These social expectations are created within the context of national backgrounds, such as a collectivistic society or individualistic society (e.g., the concept of an interdependent-self, and an independent-self), and social class (e.g., values of education, mannerism). According to Swidler (1986), our behaviors are not a simple reflection of our cultural knowledge; instead, we pick and choose “stocks” of information in a cultural basket, depending on the situation. With different types of and amount of information from which to choose, our negotiation processes ultimately differ, to a certain degree, from one country to the next. Thus, researchers who study the impact of culture should examine: (1) people’s behaviors and practices in the community; and (2) people’s thoughts and beliefs in the community (Cole 1996, Swidler 1986, Strauss and Quinn 1997, Valsiner and Litinovic 1996). D’Andrade (1987) and Quinn and Holland (1987) also

noted that the beliefs and ideas, which are shaped by culture, determine our behaviors and interpretation of events. These researchers called this a “cultural model,” and suggested that identifying different people's “cultural models” (how they organize cultural knowledge) helps us to understand the way people differently act.

How can we examine the way we organize cultural knowledge in our minds? According to Quinn and Holland (1987), and Schank and Abelson (1977), examining the language and/or scripts, that people use allows researchers to investigate how people strategically pick and choose pieces of cultural knowledge and assemble the pieces in our minds. For instance, Schank and Abelson (1977) interviewed restaurant workers to hear workers’ stories of various events in the restaurants. They found that waiters and waitresses see a boundary between the floor (the front stage) and the kitchen (the back stage), and they change behaviors when they walk onto the floor by being extra friendly and nice, thus playing the role of “server.” If they only observed the restaurant employee’s behaviors, but not their thoughts, they could not provide an explanation for why they interact with customers and colleagues in certain manners. Because the authors closely looked at the “scripts” that workers shared with them, Schank and Abelson (1997) were able to identify: (1) workers’ understanding of the various situations in the restaurant; and (2) the culture of the restaurant.

Strauss (1992) also said that researchers should examine people's language use, if they want to understand why people do what they do. The point is that scholars need to examine how people interpret events and things, which are shaped by the community to which they belong. For example, there are many individuals living in the United States. Yet not all individuals similarly view and evaluate social stratification systems, norms, deviant behaviors, and moral values exist in the United States; therefore, various conflicts (e.g., political and religious) occur.

People's differences in opinions emerge depending upon one's gender, age, race/ethnicity, social class, religion, and past experience. These variables influence how individuals construe events and things. Unless researchers analyze people's language, we do not know exactly what goes inside the minds of people. Thus, it is important to examine the link between culture and cognition to explain human behaviors. Based on this idea, many researchers studied the relationship between culture and cognition (see Kitayama 2000, Markus and Kitayama 1991, Nisbett, Peng, Choi, and Norenzayan 2001, and Nisbett 2003). These researchers especially looked at thought processes of East Asians and Westerners. I will discuss their research in a later section of this chapter.

## **WHY COMPARE JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES**

Why is it important to compare the cognitive process of parents in Japan and the United States; why these two particular countries? One of the main reasons is the similarities and differences between Japan and the United States. Due to the industrialization of Japan after the Second World War, family researchers became interested in comparing families in Japan and the United States. In general, the two countries currently are surprisingly similar in terms of their industrial development, educational levels, and living standards (Azuma 1986, Bornstein, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, and Ogino 1989). Bornstein (1989) also discussed that parents in Japan and the United States tend to construct child-centered lifestyles. It is a part of consequences of industrialization. Two people, as a couple, consider their economic condition to decide how many children they can afford to have if they want to provide their children enough education and support. Under the social expectations in Japan and the United States, many parents spend considerable time, energy, and money on their children. Although two countries have such

conditions and practices in common, researchers also recognized distinctive differences in parent-child relationships between Japan and the United States because Japan has kept certain traditional values and beliefs (Azuma 1986, Kojima 1986).

Japan is a far less heterogeneous country than the United States where people practice collectivism to value the harmony of the group identity (Bornstein 1989, Nisbett 2003). Fathers and mothers in Japan hope that their children can develop emotional maturity and self-control in early developmental stage. Teaching the importance of social interaction is one of the parents' main responsibilities; therefore, Japanese mothers tend to indulge their children to develop a sense of interdependency (see Benu 1986, Bornstein, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, and Ogino 1990, Bornstein, Tal, and Tamis-LeMonda 1991, Doi 1973). Patience, persistence, and accommodation are considered virtues, and Japanese parents encourage their children to embrace these characteristics (Bornstein 1989).

In contrast, the United States is often described as an ethnically heterogeneous country where people believe in individualism; one is expected to focus on individual achievement more so than group goals (Bornstein 1989, Nisbett 2003). Parents in the United States expect their children to master verbal competence, autonomy, and self-actualization (see Benu 1986, Bornstein, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, and Ogino 1990, Bornstein, Tal, and Tamis-LeMonda 1991, Doi 1973). Because originality, exploration, and assertiveness are seen as important, fathers and mothers in the United States encourage children to develop these traits (Bornstein 1989).

As I have described, there is evidence to indicate that parent-child interactions are different in Japan and the United States; however, close examinations of parental scripts to analyze parents' cognitive processes have not generally been conducted. Without this knowledge, we cannot fully understand the influence of culture on the parent-child relationship

and the way parents construct their parenting beliefs. Cross-national comparison of parents' minds in Japan and the United States, therefore, provide the information to further explain the differences of parenting practices.

## **STUDIES OF THE COGNITIVE PROCESSES OF EAST ASIANS AND WESTERNERS**

I discussed why comparing cases in Japan and the United States is important. In this section, I will introduce studies that pay attention to the cognitive processes of East Asians and Westerners. Some researchers conducted research on the specific aspect of East Asians' and Westerners' minds, and other studies emphasized more general understandings of different human cognitions. Reading their studies not only inspired me to fully explore what goes inside the minds of fathers and mothers, but it also helped me to deconstruct ethnocentric ideas about parental beliefs and practices that exist in Japan and the United States.

In *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently ... and Why*, Nisbett (2003) nicely illustrated the thought processes of East Asians (Chinese, Korean, Japanese) and Westerners (Americans). Although he pointed out the diversity within groups, acknowledging that all East Asians are not identical and that Americans are not either, he argued that clear distinctions exist between the way people in East Asian countries and Western countries think. Overall, East Asians tend to understand events and things in context (making for a high context environment). In contrast, Westerners are more likely to ignore social context and view events and things in an atomistic way (making for a low context environment). Suppose, for example, incident A, B, and C happened; then, D was the consequence. People in East Asian countries, who tend to think in terms of contexts, often interpret incident A, B, and C as all interrelated. As a result, they talk about the ways all the incidents happened to cause the



consequence D. Conversely, Westerners who are more likely to think in an atomistic way, would be more likely to look at each incident separately and posit a linear relationship among them, whereby A led to B, B led to C, and C led to D (Nisbett 2003).

East Asians who have high contextual social mindsets and Westerners who have low contextual social mindsets differently understand everyday events and human interactions. For instance, Nisbett (2003) discovered that what and how people pay attention to objects, such as pictures and photographs, are not the same between East Asians and Westerners. People in East Asia tend to pay more attention to what is in the background (e.g., the color and shape of a plate) whereas Westerners spotlight object in the foreground (i.e., the numbers, colors, and shapes of apples on a plate).

The sense of control over the situation is another example. Because East Asians tend to identify the multiple relationships of events and things, they are more likely to believe the world is complex. Therefore, East Asians are more likely to be tolerant of a lack of control over the situation. In contrast, Westerners, who tend to detect the linear progression of the events and things, believe that individuals should have control over their surroundings.

Nisbett (2003) also pointed out the different classification methods that East Asians and Westerners employ. People in East Asian countries tend to classify objects based on the relationships. If an East Asian individual is asked to group a cow, a chicken, and grass, he or she will tend to group the cow and grass together because of the fact that cows eat grass. Westerners, on the other hand, tend to focus on the characteristics of the objects. They are more likely to put the cow and the chicken together because both are animals.

According to Nisbett (2003), the different thought systems between East Asians and Westerners originated from the philosophies of Confucius and Aristotle. Under Confucianism,

which was developed in China, harmony is considered as the most important aspect of the social function. Individuals exist only in a relationship to others in a society. In other words, we cannot define who we are without mentioning the context of others. In this belief system, a sense of collective agency is often emphasized. Each individual has multiple roles and is related to many other people, and he or she is expected to play all the roles well to keep the harmony. This is the basis of collectivism.

Nisbett (2003) discussed that a Western mindset is greatly influenced by Greek beliefs. Westerners stress the importance of personal agency, and advance the idea that individuals exist independently in a society. People are expected to choose what they want to control over their life. People are expected to be assertive and persist to obtain what they desire. Consequently, Greek philosophies emphasize the construction of individual identity. Such ideas and practices helped to create an individualistic society.

Based on the idea that East Asians live in collectivistic society and Westerners practice individualism, researchers analyzed the similarities and differences of people's cognitive processes during the course of human interactions. Markus and Kitayama (1991), for example, compared the way East Asians and Westerners view the relationship between self and others. They found that East Asians, who center on collective agency, valued the sense of collaboration and cooperation because it leads to the group goal. In addition, they discovered that East Asians tend to accentuate the acceptance of others to keep the harmony of the group. Therefore, East Asians are less likely to value uniqueness and becoming noticeable. In contrast, Markus and Kitayama (1991) found that Westerners, who support the notion of personal agency, believe that being unique and conspicuous are valuable characteristics. Westerners, for example, exhibit a "self-enhancement" manner and elevate one person's achievements and status over that of others.

Because self enhancement is related to people's sense of well-being, these invidious comparison practices are an important part of Western individualistic culture.

Ji, Peng, and Nisbett (2000) investigated how people in East Asian countries and the United States evaluate peoples' behavior. According to them, East Asians tended to assess people's behavior in situational contexts (see also Choi and Nisbett 1998, Kitayama and Markus 1997). If a child misbehaves, for example, East Asian parents tend to consider various social contexts that may cause the misbehavior (e.g., the child is hungry or bored, the room is too hot or too cold). On the other hand, Western parents are more likely to point out personal characteristics to explain people's behavior. Parents in an individualistic society tend to attribute the misbehavior to the child's lack of self-control, immaturity, and impatience.

In this chapter, I outlined the previous research on child socialization and parenting. I also discussed studies of culture and cognition in order to explain the importance of studying parents' cognitive processes in cross-national settings. In the next chapter, I will describe the theoretical framework that I used to analyze how parents think.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Human minds are complex because many factors influence how we think. In this section, I will discuss why human cognitions are complicated and how we can understand them using the knowledge of cognitive sociology. Before I start talking about details, I briefly want to talk about the usefulness of cognitive sociology to understand our thought process by using my personal experience.

Since my brother and I were children, my father and mother had a wish that we always have something in common to talk about. To accomplish the goal, my parents let us share many activities, such as taking swimming, piano, and painting lessons together. Our father played soccer and baseball with us on Sunday and our mother let us cook together. To this day, we can talk many hours about what we did together, regardless of our gender differences. One of the biggest changes between us happened when my brother decided to come to the United States to learn English soon after he graduated from high school. A year later, I visited him in the United States, and I saw how he was doing in a foreign country. As I said, we grew up together sharing many activities and life styles; therefore, it was shocking for me to see my brother's drastic life changes. For some reason, I felt that I had to experience life in the United States, too. Soon after I was back in Japan, I asked my parents if I could also come to the United States. My father and mother were very supportive of my decision because they believed that it would keep my brother and me close.

To begin with, I attended an ESL (English as a Second Language) program for a year. Mastering English was, however, harder than I expected. I could order food at the restaurant, but

I was not even close to being able to understand CNN news on television or have a conversation with more than two people at once in English. Because I was not happy with my English skills even at the end of the ESL program, I started taking regular college classes. The sociology undergraduate classes I took during that time stimulated my thinking and encouraged me to pursue a graduate degree in the field. When I think back, I was desperate to assimilate into American culture by being able to speak and think like Americans; otherwise, I would not survive the graduate program. I often felt that the ways I think were somewhat different from my American friends, and I used to believe that the language barrier was the major reason for my unique cognitive processes, that is until I took a Cognitive Sociology class in the second year of the graduate program. While I was taking the class, I learned to see how the social dimensions of cognition that I grew up with in Japan as a woman in a particular time period were influencing my thought processes. It was not only language but my social backgrounds that made me think a little differently from my American classmates. Moreover, I learned to appreciate the differences among human minds and how one method of thinking is not necessarily better than other methods of thinking. I remember feeling relief in discovering this. Although we have an ability to think as individuals, what and how we think are sometimes beyond our control. Ultimately, I understood the power of social factors on our cognitive processes.

According to Zerubavel (1997), we use six cognitive acts to organize our thoughts: perceiving, focusing, classifying, symbolizing, remembering, and timing. To fully understand human cognitive processes, he introduced three orientations toward thinking. First, we have a capability to think as human beings. For example, we cannot learn to speak when only a month old. We cannot memorize things beyond our biological limitations; therefore, we store some information in our short-term memory and other information in our long-term memory so that we

do not have to remember every single event and things. Zerubavel (1997) called this orientation *cognitive universalism*.

Second, the ways we think is also influenced by our own personal experiences and prior knowledge; as a result, each person's cognitive skills are unique to a certain extent. For example, a person who had faced a near death experience may have specific meanings of life and death, compared to a person without such experience. Individuals who have studied human psychology may have different interpretation or views to interpret people's happiness and struggles because of their knowledge. Zerubavel (1997) referred this orientation as *cognitive individualism*.

Third, social backgrounds influence what and how we think. For instance, upper-class individuals and working-class individuals may have a different degree of appreciation for opera and expensive wine. Upper-class people and working-class people tend to use different forms of entertainment. How we see racial and ethnic relationships also may vary depending on one's racial and ethnic background. When I was in Japan, I was less aware of race and ethnicity because I belonged to the dominant group (Japanese) who did not have to face racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination in every day. Now living in the United States, I am more sensitive to the negative experiences of different racial and ethnic group of people, because I personally encounter unpleasant incidents from time to time as a result of my racially subordinate status. Gender also influences how we think because of the gender stratification system in the United States. Since we were young, we often are socialized to follow gender scripts. If you are a girl, you probably wore pink dresses, played with dolls, and helped your mother. If you are a boy, you had more chances to wear blue clothes, played with GI Joe, and helped your father. By doing so, we learned to think as a man and woman. Recognizing that people living in different

settings and engaged in different relationships demonstrate a plurality of thought, Zerubavel called this orientation *cognitive pluralism*.

Cognitive pluralism is the foundational orientation of cognitive sociology. It pays great attention to the relationship between structure (social dimensions) and agency (individual's mind). In cognitive pluralistic terms, we are socialized to think certain ways (cognitive norms) by belonging to a certain group (e.g., social class, race and ethnicity, and gender) (Zerubavel 1997). Cognitive pluralism also explains how social environments have some control over our cognitive processes. Zerubavel (1997:17) called this *sociomental control* and suggested it is "one of the most insidious forms of social control."

In this study, I will examine how parents' cognition and their social/cultural contexts are related, focusing my research on the social mindscapes of parents. Although many areas of social science research can benefit from using a cognitive pluralistic approach, LaRossa, Simonds, and Reitzes (2005) discuss how family research, in particular, can benefit from such an approach. They also suggest that researchers would do well to consider all six cognitive acts together because this reveals a fuller picture of how people organize their thoughts. Following their suggestion, I set out to examine how perceiving, focusing, classifying, symbolizing, remembering, and timing come into play in the social organization of parental cognition. In the following section, I demonstrate how to apply the six cognitive acts to the experience of parenting.

## **PERCEIVING**

Our biological and physical functions allow us to perceive things in certain ways (cognitive universalism). When an individual experiences a major event (e.g., plane crash or

disease), it may alter his or her perception of things (e.g., life and death). Individual differences caused by such incidents are related to cognitive individualism. On the other hand, being a member of a community also can influence people's perceptions, demonstrating cognitive pluralism. For example, Amato (1989) discussed how socially constructed stereotypes influence our perception. He noted that many people can associate an image of young children and women being together because women are socially expected to be nurturers and care givers in the United States as well as many other countries. In contrast, people are less likely to associate young children and men being together because taking care of children is not a primary role expectation for men. As a result, people often underestimate how many men are with young children in public places, such as shopping malls or grocery stores. They, in effect, are less likely to perceive them.

Based on cognitive pluralism, one's social backgrounds influence his or her perceptions. Using the example above, single fathers may have a different mindset in observing the number of men who are with their children at shopping malls or grocery stores. In the United States, the numbers of single fathers are relatively small compared to single mothers because mothers are still considered the main and better care takers of children; as a result, more mothers get the custody of children after divorce. Single fathers, because of their own status and situation, may be more likely to notice men who are with children at shopping malls and grocery stores. Thus, single fathers may view things differently because they belong to a different thought community than, say, married fathers and employ different *sociomental lenses* in their observations of men with children (Zerubavel 1997).

According to Zerubavel (1997), the types of thought community we belong to influence not only our perception of the specific event and object but also our entire world views. For



instance, single mothers and single fathers may share diverse views on how many mothers and children they see at shopping malls and grocery stores; however, it is usually not the only thing they perceive differently. Most likely, single mothers and fathers share distinctive ways to see gender relationships, meanings of work, and definitions of good parents and so many more.

## **FOCUSING**

When we see things, we also decide what to pay attention to or ignore. For instance, we intentionally look at a framed drawing in an art museum rather than at a stain on the wall. Having been socialized, we know that the drawings are more important to look at than anything else in the room (Zerubavel 1997). As social beings, we learn what to focus on and what to ignore. While we are driving a car, we must pay attention to traffic lights because traffic lights let us know what we can and cannot do at intersections. But we do not gaze at every tree on the street because trees are often out of our frame while we are driving. Making a cup of coffee is the first thing I do every morning. I do not even think about whether I would brew coffee or how I can do it because it is my routine. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we are socialized to the norms of focusing in many situations. Therefore, we have regular everyday customs which help to make our lives smoother and easier. Imagine a situation where you would have to pay attention to everything around you all the time; your life would be exhausting.

Interestingly, focusing is used not only for objects but also for values and morals. The studies I discussed earlier, about how parents value the concept of collectivism and individualism, are good examples. Japanese parents who value collectivism are concerned that their children learn social norms that regulate social interactions but are less interested in independence skills.

Conversely, American parents who value individualism pay less attention to physical closeness with their children while emphasizing the importance of their children's independence skills.

Physical separation of their residential countries is not enough to explain what they pay attention to and ignore during the course of childrearing. How Japanese parents and American parents determine what the focal points and backgrounds are influenced by the thoughts communities (i.e., collectivism and individualism) to which they belong. Our biological capability to think does not encourage Japanese parents and American parents to focus on certain aspects of their children's life; instead, parents consider, as social beings, what the important skills are for their children to survive and be happy, including morals, values, manners, and specific life skills (i.e., cooking, cleaning, and communication). As a result, they determine what they want their children to acquire. Thus, parents learn *norms of focusing* by belonging to a specific thought community (Zerubabel 1997).

## CLASSIFYING

Zerubavel (1991) says classifying is the process of lumping and splitting: "On the one hand, it involves grouping 'similar' items together in a single mental cluster. At the same time, it also involves separating in our mind 'different' mental cluster from one another" (p. 21). In fact, classification is everywhere in our daily life. For instance, we classify spaces (i.e., work vs. home, public vs. private, and Japan vs. the United States). We classify time (i.e., morning vs. afternoon, personal time vs. family time, and week-days vs. week-end). We classify people (i.e., adults vs. children, family vs. non-family member, and East Asians vs. Westerners). We also classify objects (i.e., edible vs. non-edible, my car vs. my neighbor's car, educational book vs. non-educational books). To understand the ways we classify things is important because, in

doing so, we effectively construct *islands of meaning*. For example, we divide adults and children. This classification is not just a random division of human beings based on age. There are “rational” reasons (at least within the context of certain thought communities). One may say that adults and children are poles apart because of their differences in physical, cognitive, emotional, and intellectual development. In general, adults, compared to children, are more likely to be physically strong, emotionally mature, and intellectually advanced; as a result, we create the idea of how adults and children not only should relate to one another but also interact with each other.

The important thing to remember, according to Zerubavel (1997), is that there are many different ways to classify things based on the number of thought communities. For example, the age of 20 is the marker in Japan when people are allowed to drink alcohol. In most states in the United States, you need to be 21 years old to be able to legally drink alcohol. Because governments in Japan and the United States belong to different thought communities, they uniquely determine how old one has to be to think and act as a responsible adult individual.

Zerubavel (1991, 1997) also discussed three types of mind, based on classification styles. A person with a *rigid mind* has a “highly inflexible mind-set distinctively characterized by strict adherence to a purist, ‘either/or’ logic” (Zerubavel 1997: 56). Using the above example, a Japanese father who has a rigid mind would not allow his son to drink alcohol until the exact time of his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. An individual with a *fuzzy mind* has “a virtually structureless mind-set distinctively characterized by an aversion to any boundary that might prevent mental interpretation” (Zerubavel 1997: 57). A father with a flexible mind is much less likely to patrol how soon his son would start drinking alcohol. The third type of mind is a *flexible mind* is denoted by “a pronouncedly fluid mind-set distinctively characterized by a ‘both/and’ logic of

classification that strongly rejects pigeonholing” (Zerubavel 1997: 57). A father with a flexible mind may permit his son to drink a small amount of alcohol at home in the father's presence even before his son reaches the legal age, although he would not allow his son to drink in a public place.

## SYMBOLIZING

In the previous section, I discussed that we give meanings to the group we classified. This is the process of symbolizing. After classifying adults and children, we construct what adults and children mean to us. Zerubavel (1997) called this *rules of mental association* that we tend to behave in a certain manner based on the meanings attached to types of people, objects, beliefs, and so on. For example, Zelizer (1985) found that people react differently in terms of grief when they discovered the death of a young child because children are signified as precious; however, it was not always the case. Although children have been important members of family and society, the values attached to children have changed over time. In an agricultural society, having many children was important because they provided labor. In addition, many young children died because medicine was not advanced enough to cure many children's disease. Although people believed that children were important member of society, many incidents of children's death made people think it was a common event and less drastic. Industrialization, however, changed the value of children. In an industrial society, parents did not need to have many children; instead, they started to spend more time and money on an individual child. Advanced medical technology also helped to save many sick children's life. As a result, children were more likely to be viewed as sacred beings.

Although we can assume that the way we symbolize things varies across different thought communities (i.e., 20 years old symbolizes the transition to adulthood in Japan, 21 years old symbolizes the transition to adulthood in the United States), Zerubavel (1997: 76) said that the ways we symbolize things can be diverse even within the same thought community, as when the same act or object is “packaged” differently. Corporal punishment is a good example. When parents say “I hit you because I love you,” physical punishment is “packaged” with a positive connotation. Conversely, corporal punishment can be considered a parent’s emotional burst or loss of control without any explanation.

## **REMEMBERING**

Some memories are connected to our developmental or individual abilities; therefore, adults generally can remember more things than children. Other memories are socially constructed. Most people have childhood memories but how do we know if what we remember actually happened? For example, one of my earliest memories is when my younger brother was born. He was born when I was three years old. My mother had a complication with the birth of my brother, so she was staying in the hospital near my grandparents’ house for two weeks. Because my father had to go work, I was staying with my grandparents. I remember that my grandmother took me to the hospital to see my mother every other day. I also remember that I was very excited to see my mother every time because she bought me fireworks. As I said, it happened when I was three years old. Do I really remember what happened? The answer is “yes” and “no.” It is “yes” because I do remember how happy I was to see my mother, but “no” because I really do not think I can recall everything I believe I remember. Some memories are too specific for three years old to remember such as how often my grandmother and I visited the hospital and

why my mother bought me fireworks. This is one example of how memory is socially constructed. My memory of the event is greatly influenced by my family members. One of my grandmother's favorite stories was about our visitation to the hospital; she told me many times what happened on the way and at the hospital room. My mother also repeatedly told me details about what happened during those two weeks. I have seen pictures of us in the hospital room. Thus, my memory was shaped by my grandmother, mother, and pictures.

Zerubavel (1997) called people who influence our memory *mnemonic others*. I would imagine there were many things happened before, during, and soon after my brother's birth; however, I do not remember all because my grandmother, mother, and pictures did not teach me everything that happened. The point is that mnemonic others often determine *rules of remembrance* (what to remember and forget). My grandmother and mother consciously or unconsciously decided that I should remember that I visited the hospital with grandmother every other day and that I was happy to get presents from my mother, but not the details about the complications of the birth.

We also "remember" things that we never experienced. What happened to Japanese American families in the United States during the World War II is a good example. Although most people have not actually seen what happened to Japanese American families (many of us were not even alive at the time), a number of us have acquired in school a *selective* knowledge of the internment camps that Japanese Americans were sent to. The depth of knowledge, however, is different depending on our social, cultural, national, and historical backgrounds. For instance, authorities who create textbooks in Japan and the United States probably pay attention to different aspects of the internment camps. For Japanese, it was what happened in a foreign country even though people who were involved were their own people. In the United States, it

was not only Japanese Americans who were affected by the incident. Anyone who looked Japanese, including Chinese and Koreans, suffered during the war, though not all Asians were interned. Thus, the information we see in the school texts can be very different. To summarize, the *mnemonic community* we belong impact what we remember and forget.

Things we remember and the ways we remember are diverse. Sometimes we may argue over what is the correct way to remember past events. Zerubavel (1997) called this a *mnemonic battle*. You may have heard that your father and mother disagree about who did how much childcare duties when you were a child. Mother might say to her husband “You never changed your son’s diaper.” Then father may talk back saying “That is not true. I did change it when I could.” Goffman (1974) also called this *frame disputes*.

*Mnemonic decapitation* is another term that Zerubavel (1997) discussed. Mnemonic decapitation occurs when people mark a specific date and historical time period as the official beginning of the event, phenomenon, and relationship; as a result, they forget to mention prior facts. For example, I have a friend who adopted a child from China. According to her, her husband, their adopted child, and she celebrate the day they finalized the adoption every year. They called the day “Gatcha-Day” (got you day). In fact, they “got” their adoptive child about a year before their adoption was legally finalized. She still talks about what it was like when she first held her adoptive child, yet she described how “Gatcha-Day” is significant because it made the relationship to her child for “real.” In this case, she was not ignoring what happened between her adoptive child and her prior to the finalization of adoption; however, she talked as if her relationship with her adoptive child started from that day.

## TIMING

Zerubavel (1981) says that timing is “one of the most central dimensions of the social world” (ix). We use years, months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes to create our daily schedules and to share how we conceptualize time as social beings. We organize our daily, weekly, monthly, and annual plans by using calendars and clocks. Zerubavel (1997) called this *standard time-reckoning*. Other than using calendars and clocks to mark our time, we sometimes point out if the event happened before/after the specific wars, natural disasters, or revolutions. For instance, a couple may say “we married the year the hurricane Catalina hit New Orleans,” and “our first daughter was born right before the previous presidential Election Day.” Such ways of referring to timing are called the *socio-temporal landmarks* (Zeubavel 1997). A couple sometimes points out personal events to mark timing such as “the year we had our first son,” “the month we went to Disneyland,” and “the day we moved out from our old apartment.” The way a group of people use their private event to reckon time is called *socio dating frame works* (Zerubavel 1997).

LaRossa and Reitzes (2001) noted how timing is an important key in child-parent relationships in contemporary society. According to them, the life course of children has become more “chronometrical” in response to psychological, social, clinical, and educational studies of child development. “Chronometrical” childhood means that children’s developments in contemporary society are more precisely measured and expected by scientists and experts than it used to be. Many childrearing books, for example, indicate the pre-conceived detailed schedules on when children should start walking (e.g., expected timing of crawling, first step, and toddling) and speaking (e.g., expected timing for learning specific numbers of words). Due to these social perceptions, today’s parents are expected to monitor their children’s development more closely.



In this chapter, I discussed how cognitive sociology allows us to explore the minds of parents. Then, I talked about Zerubavel's (1997) six cognitive acts which I used as conceptual tool to investigate how parents think. In Chapter 4, I will explain the methodological steps in the research.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN

I interviewed 48 couples (a total of 96 individuals) that are currently raising a son or daughter between the ages of four and six years. My sample was divided into 4 groups:

- 11 Japanese fathers and mothers raising daughters
- 13 Japanese fathers and mothers raising sons
- 13 American fathers and mothers raising daughters
- 11 American fathers and mothers raising sons.

The respondents could be placed into 8 categories, shown as A through H:

	Japanese Parents				American Parents			
	Fathers		Mothers		Fathers		Mothers	
	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons
Classification	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

One of the challenges of qualitative research is determining a sufficient sample size. Lofland and Lofland (1984) discussed that a sample size of 20 to 50 interviews is the typical number needed for in-depth interview research. Sandelowski (1995) said that there is no mathematical formula that adequately determines how many interviews are enough. For my research purposes, I sought to understand the cognitive processes of the larger population of people (i.e., Japanese parents and American parents raising four- to six-year-old children). When my research began, I was not sure when to conclude the interviews. As described earlier, my research goal was to discover a theoretical explanation as to how parenting philosophies are created; therefore, I applied the notion of theoretical saturation discussed by Strauss and Corbin

(1998). The sample size can be determined, based on the way coding progresses in grounded theory method. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998), I followed the practice to stop adding interviewees to the sample when no new or relevant data were emerging from the interviews. While analyzing my 45<sup>th</sup> interview transcript (after 24 interviews with Japanese couples and 21 interviews with American couples), I felt confident that the story was emerging from the data; however, I added three more interviews of American couples so that each nation was equally presented. I also wanted to make sure that there were no additional variables emerging from the interviews.

I debated whether I should have individual interviews or conjoint interviews, as there are arguments for and against each interview method. I finally decided to conduct conjoint interviews. I employed conjoint interviews for the following reasons: (1) I can simultaneously get two accounts (i.e., one from mother and the other from father); (2) More information often can be gained from a conjoint interview, especially when a couple collaborates well during the interview; and (3) I had a chance to observe how the husband and wife related to and communicated with one other. However, I also anticipated the downside of conjoint interviews. For example, one person may modify her or his comments because of the other person's presence (Allan 1980), or one spouse may speak less (Bennett and McAvity 1985). Although there were times that one spouse spoke more than the other, I found that I could obtain more information from a conjoint interview method rather than individual interviews. As stated by LaRossa (1989:231), I was able to discover "mutually understood meanings in a family and on family relations." For instance, I witnessed how mothers and fathers shared the meaning of "division of labor" as parents. In addition, it was interesting to observe gendered interactions between husbands and wives, although they might have modified their behavior in my presence.

I was also able to observe facial expression of participants, especially mothers, in response to what their partner might have said. I felt that some mothers told me their stories without using words (i.e., “he is not usually like that” “he is not telling you a truth”). These were the types of things that I could not get from individual interviews.

Because interviewing Japanese parents may have given me insight into interviewing American parents and vice versa, I deliberately alternated the timing of the interviews. Interviews were conducted in the United States first (from January to April 2008), then in Japan (in May 2008), then again in the United States (from June 2008 to December 2009). I searched for respondents who had at least one four- to six-year-old daughter or son. When a couple had more than one child, the focal child was the one between the ages of four and six years, as most of the questions asked were about this child. I decided to study this age group because researchers who study child development found that by this age many children have established their gender identities and notions of stereotypes (i.e., mother is nurturing and father is strong) (Emmerich 1959; Hetherington 1965; Kagan and Lemkin 1960). I surmised that parents with four- to six-year-old daughters and sons would be more likely to talk about who they want their children to be (e.g., personal characteristics and job aspirations) based on socially constructed gender norms and expectations. These parents are also likely to try to teach their four- to six-year-olds aspects of life so the children will be successful once they go to elementary school. Arguably, parents of four- to six-year-old children are *intensively* thinking about parenting.

With acknowledgment that there are many types of parents (i.e., single fathers and mothers, gay and lesbian parents), I intentionally focused my research on heterosexual couples living together to raise children. The homogeneous characteristics of the sample allowed me to compare individuals within each of the eight groups. However, various forms of family exist in

Japan and the United States, including gay and lesbian couples, single father, and single mother households. The composition of family members can be vital to explain how parents view the world and construct their parenting philosophy. For example, heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian couples, single father, and single mother may have distinctive views on gender relations and relate with their children differently. Thus, my study is limited in the degree to which it offers on the understanding of diverse parenting views *within* Japan or the United States.

I used a nonprobability snowball sampling technique to locate participants. According to Henry (1990), this method is appropriate when researchers are conducting an exploratory study to examine whether or not they can find a pattern. I created two types of flyers (see Appendix): one was written in English for American parents, and another was written in Japanese for Japanese parents. In the United States, I distributed flyers in university classes and among my friends who I thought might know potential participants. Several parents contacted me via electronic mail, asking for more details about both myself and the study. From that point, I relied on their referrals to find more participants.

Because I could only go to Japan for a limited time period, I sent the Japanese flyers to my friends and family members and asked for referrals about two months prior to my visit. I had interviews scheduled with 12 couples before I went to Japan. These 12 couples also introduced me to their friends who could support my research. Interestingly enough, I had a more difficult time in Japan finding couples to participate who were raising four- to six-year-old daughters. Although I tried my best to recruit couples with various backgrounds (i.e., education and class), one of the limitations of snowball sampling is the connection that participant couples possibly have to each other. In fact, three Japanese couples and two American couples were introduced by the same persons. One of the struggles with the American couples was setting up the

interviews with those who were raising four- to six-year-old boys. After the 16<sup>th</sup> interview, I searched for couples from this group.

Weiss (1994:15) said that a “good reason for doing pilot interviews is to clarify the aims and frame of the study before interviewing its primary respondents.” He added that pilot interviews help researchers to narrow down who are the most appropriate samples to talk to. Following this suggestion, I conducted a pilot interview. The purpose of pilot interview was to make sure the questions were clear and to ascertain whether the number of questions were appropriate for a 90-minute interview. For the pilot interview, I interviewed a Japanese couple that had lived in the United States for approximately 10 years and has been married for six years. At the time of the interview, their daughter was three years and 10 months old. The interview was held in the dining room of their house. The husband had a graduate degree (M.A.) and worked full time. The wife completed four years of college; she had not worked since they married. Based on their home environment, I judged that they were middle-class family.

After the interview, I modified my interview schedule. I reduced the number of questions to give my respondents more time to answer each question in-depth (LaRossa 1989). I also reordered the questions to facilitate the flow of the interview. The information I gathered from the pilot interview was helpful to examine how parents use the six cognitive acts (perceiving, classifying, focusing, symbolizing, timing, and memorizing). For instance, the couple demonstrated how they “classify” gender, national identity, generation, and characteristics of their child during the conversation. They discussed what kind of personal traits they encouraged their daughter to have and why they valued those particular traits (symbolizing). When I asked what a “father” and “mother” was to them, the husband’s and wife’s “perceptions” and “focusing” were different. After the interview, I felt more confident that examining discourse

would help to reveal how parents construct their parenting beliefs. Discourse, or language analysis, is central to both cognitive sociology and grounded theory methods (LaRossa 2005).

## **DATA COLLECTION**

All the interviews with Japanese couples were done in Japanese, and all the interviews with American couples were done in English. The interviews lasted about 100 minutes, on average. The longest interview lasted about three hours and the shortest interview lasted about one hour. I recorded all the interviews with the agreement of the respondents. In order to protect interviewees' confidentiality, all the taped interviews are labeled with numbers (i.e., Japanese interview 1), rather than names. Forty-two interviews were done at the participants' home, three interviews were carried out at coffee shops, and three interviews were conducted at the homes of friends of the participating couples. I met with 11 of the couples over the weekend, but I usually met them during the week in the evening after fathers came home from work. For the most part, I was able to visit their homes so that I could also observe how they lived as well as how they behaved at home (i.e., who served tea/coffee for a visitor, who disciplined children). I wrote fieldnotes soon after each interview, which was very helpful in recalling what happened during the interview.

Before I started each interview, I briefly explained who I was and what the research was about, and I asked respondents if they had any concerns or questions about the interview. I also asked respondents to complete a survey (see Appendix), which included biographical questions (i.e., age, type of job, educational background, length of marriage), and to sign a consent form (see Appendix). Interview questions also covered: (1) participating parents' family backgrounds, (2) participating parents' childhood experiences, (3) participating parents' ideas on parenthood,

and (4) participating parents' experience as a parent. Although I had concrete interview questions, I used a semistandardized interview method for several reasons. According to Berg (1989), interviewers normally ask interviewees the same questions systematically, but semistandardized interview techniques allow interviewers the flexibility to go beyond the prepared questions when necessary. Soon after I started to interview in Japan, after having done some interviews in the United States, I realized that the interviews did not flow in the same manner in the two nations. These differences could be due to differences in the parents' way of thinking or the participants' approach to the interview; therefore, I modified the order of the questions depending on the situation. Because my research goal was to explore how parents in Japan and the United States used the six cognitive acts, it was important for me to ask further questions when interviewees gave any hint of talking about cognitions. For instance, if interviewees said "I used to think ...," I asked questions such as when this thinking occurred, what made him or her change, how things changed, and why he or she thinks they changed.

I took notes during the interviews as well as soon after I left the interview sites. My fieldnotes included the living environment of the family (neighborhood and home conditions), the couple's interaction with their children, the couple's interactions among themselves, and overall impression of the interviews, as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggested. These notes were very helpful during data analysis and while composing the "Results" chapters. What people say is not always the same as what they do, and I occasionally witnessed contradictions. For example, one Japanese mother said, "Well, what I can do is just to raise her. Ah ... it really ... children grow up themselves. It's not like I 'raise' her ... I let her know good and bad things, but she grows up regardless." Although it sounded as if she neglected her daughter, during the interview itself she explained to her daughter what the interview was about and



patiently listened to her daughter's story. Because I had fieldnotes on parent-child interactions, I paid extra attention to the correspondence between the parents' statements and their actions. Thus, my fieldnotes were not just helpful to remember details of the interviews, they also encouraged me to question the relationship between what saying and doing.

## **SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

In total, I interviewed 48 couples (24 Japanese couples and 24 American couples) raising at least one child who was between the ages of four and six years. The average number of children per couple was 2.2 (in the range of one to four) among Japanese participants and 1.8 children per couple (in the range of one to three) among American couples. The average number of children per participant couple in Japan was higher than the national average. I assume that participant couples had more children because they lived in a smaller city where the cost of living is less than a big city; therefore, it might have encouraged them to have more children. In addition, five couples lived in a three generation household where a couple received some financial, physical, emotional support from their parents or in-laws. Such reasons might have contributed the fact that Japanese participant couples had more children than the national average. In Japan, I interviewed 11 couples whose daughter was the focal child and 13 couples whose son was the focal child. In the United States, I interviewed 13 couples whose daughter was the focal child and 11 couples whose son was the focal child. The average age of parents was 34 years for Japanese fathers and mothers, 38 years for American fathers, and 36 years for American mothers. All couples were legally married and raising children while living in the same household. The average length of marriage was seven years for Japanese couples and nine years for American couples. Fifteen of the 24 Japanese mothers were homemakers, and 13 of the 24 American

mothers were homemakers. The occupations of the fathers varied, but all of them had a full-time job at the time of the interview.

	Japanese Parents (N = 48)				American Parents (N = 48)			
	Fathers		Mothers		Fathers		Mothers	
	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons	Daughters	Sons
N = 96 (numbers of parents)	11	13	11	13	13	11	13	11

Among 24 Japanese fathers, nine had a high school diploma, three had a degree from a junior college, 10 had a college degree, and two had a graduate degree. For Japanese mothers, nine had a high school diploma, 10 had a degree from a junior college, four had a college degree, and one had a graduate degree. Compared to Japanese parents, American participants had relatively higher educational attainment. Among American fathers, one had a high school diploma, one father took some college courses, 17 fathers had a college degree, and five fathers had a graduate degree. Among 24 American mothers, five took some college courses, 15 had a college degree, and five had a graduate degree.

In summary, most participant families were middle-class. Five Japanese families lived in three generation households (i.e., grandparents, parents, children), and 19 Japanese couples lived in two generation households (i.e., parents and children). One American couple lived in a three generation household, and 23 American families lived in two generation households. Some of the Japanese couples had low household incomes, but they lived with their parents so that they received a considerable amount of support from them physically (i.e., childcare, household chores) and financially (i.e., they do not have to pay mortgage, rent, or childcare).

All participating parents in Japan were Japanese. In the United States, 20 couples were white, one couple was black, and three couples were interracial (one Asian American and White couple and two Black and White couples). Cities that Japanese participant couples lived were relatively small compared to Tokyo and Osaka, but I intentionally selected these two smaller cities. Many researchers who study Japanese families conduct their research in the larger cities such as Tokyo and Yokohama. A family's everyday experiences can be very diverse because of the size of household (i.e., more families practice traditional three generation households in smaller cities), transportation availability (i.e., how long fathers spend commuting impacts the time they spend with their children), and expectation of child's education (i.e., more private schools are available in larger cities), which are different and dependent on whether the families live in a large or small city. In fact, the number of larger cities is limited; stated differently, many families in Japan live in smaller cities. Therefore, I decided to find participants who live in these two cities.

American participant couples lived in a large Southeastern U.S. city (18 couples) or a small Midwestern U.S. city (six couples). I selected two different sites to invite diverse backgrounds of parents (i.e., religion, political views). As stated earlier, the aim of my study is to compare and contrast cognitive processes of Japanese parents and American parents; thus, I wanted to find participant couples from the different cities which, to a certain extent, provided diverse cultural and political view points. To keep the confidentiality of participant couples, I used pseudonyms to discuss the findings.

The characteristics of my samples are homogeneous in terms of their social class, country of origin, and education. Also, I only interviewed heterosexual couples who are living together to raise children. Thus, I did not look at how gays and lesbian couples or single parents would

use their cognitive processes to construct their parental philosophies. I do not mean to generalize the findings to the entire population of Japanese parents and American parents. Yet I believe what I discovered provides important knowledge to understand how parents think.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

I transcribed each interview, and transcriptions were between 25 and 60 pages long. At first, I transcribed all Japanese interviews in Japanese and all American interviews in English. I was concerned with whether or not I should translate Japanese transcripts into English before I started analyzing the data. In fact, I translated the first two Japanese interviews into English to see how data analysis would go.

The composition of the Japanese language and the English language is very different. Where English is often very direct (i.e., subject + verb + object), Japanese language is understood in the context that listeners are expected to acknowledge what speakers are trying to say. To avoid misunderstanding, I paid special attention to answers and asked Japanese participants to articulate what they meant when I felt that I was guessing their response. Although I was confident that I carefully probed Japanese respondents' answers, analyzing entire interviews in the translated language (English) did not provide me with the same level of comfort. This was partially due to the fact that, as Straus (1969:23) said the "use of the identical procedures in different societies for eliciting and quantifying data (phenomenal identity) does not necessarily result in the measurement of the same variable (conceptual equivalence) since the stimuli (questions, tasks, items) used to elicit data may have different meanings in different societies." LaRossa (1989) also called researchers' attention to maintain conceptual equivalence when doing interviews.

To a certain extent, qualitative data (i.e., in-depth interview transcriptions) has a benefit of being able to keep the nuance of what was said in cross-national settings as compared to quantitative data, which often requires giving the same labels of measuring things (i.e., feelings and behaviors). However, losing original meaning is also inevitable in qualitative data when the language is translated into a new language because some phrases rely on cultural and traditional backgrounds to appreciate; therefore, an exact translation of entire interviews will be difficult. In addition, an explanation of the term “A” may take one sentence in English, but it may take two paragraphs in Japanese. Luckily, I am able to understand the language and culture of both Japan and the United States. I decided to keep the original languages as long as possible during data analysis. Although my knowledge about language and culture of Japan and the United States helped during the processes of collecting data and analyzing data, it was still challenging, especially, when I was writing up the results. There were several Japanese terms that do not have a direct English translation. For example, Japanese say “*itadakimasu*” before they start eating. The timing to say the term is similar to American’s prayer at the meal. However, the term “*itadakimasu*” does not contain religious connotation. Therefore, I specifically used the word “greeting” to describe Japanese practice.

I used two main stages of grounded theory methods (GTM) as my mode of analysis. These methods were developed in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss to generate theory from textual materials (e.g., interview transcripts) (LaRossa 2005). Since then, Glaser and Strauss went in separate directions, and other scholars also have offered alternative versions of GTM. Although there are many versions of GTM, LaRossa (2005:838) summarized five principles that he believed were important in using the methods:

- (1) Language is central to social life. Thus, the microanalysis of written texts, the heart of a grounded theoretical analysis, is a worthwhile enterprise.

- (2) Words are the indicators upon which GTM-derived theories are formed. The connection between the words on a page and the theories in one's mind, however, is more reciprocal than is sometimes realized.
- (3) Coding and explanation are built upon a series of empirical and conceptual comparisons.
- (4) From a grounded theoretical perspective, theories are sets of interrelated propositions, whereas propositions state how variables are related.
- (5) There is value in choosing one variable from among the many variables that a grounded theoretical analysis may generate and making that variable central when engaged in theoretical writing.

As for the analysis process, I followed the suggestions of LaRossa (2005) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). According to these researchers, GTM have three coding phases: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. These three phases are not mutually exclusive; instead, phases are fluid in that there is no clear boundary to determine when one phase is completed. Researchers are expected to be flexible and go back and forth between the three phases to analyze the textual data and engage in theorizing.

Open coding is the first stage. The following is the summary of open coding (LaRossa 2005):

The rudiments of open coding are captured in what Glaser (1978, pp. 62-62) called the *concept-indicator model* (see also Strauss, 1987, pp. 25-26). The concept-indicator model is predicated on the constant comparison of indicators, that is, on regularly identifying similarities and variations in texts. The "basic, defining rule" of constant comparison is that, while coding an indicator for a concept, one compares that indicator with previous indicators that have been coded in the same way. An *indicator* refers to a word, phrase, or sentence, or a series of words, phrases, or sentences, in the materials being analyzed. A *concept* is a label or name associated with an indicator or indicators; stated another way, a concept is a symbol or conventional sign attached to a referent. (P. 841)

During open coding, researchers read transcripts line-by-line to mark indicators. Indicators are compared and contrasted, based on similarities and differences, and grouped under concepts. Concepts then are arranged to create variables. For example, "...they (my parents) were self-observed," "they (my parents) are kind of selfish people," and "my mother was so structured" are

the indicators under the variable, “types of parents’ personality.” Whereas Strauss and Corbin (1998) called grouped concepts “categories,” LaRossa (2005) referred them as “variables” because variables or dimensions are the basis of generating hypothesis.

The second phase of GTM is axial coding, which is “a process of relating categories [variables] to their subcategories [subvariables]” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:123). To find the connection between and among variables, Strauss and Corbin (1998) - - following Glaser (1978) - - suggested focusing on five elements: causal conditions, intervening conditions, contextual conditions, actions and strategies, and consequences. This is the part where researchers examine how questions such as what, where, when, why, and how are talked about in the narratives selected as indicators.

The third and final phase is selective coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) discussed that the main goal of selective coding is to create a theoretical story by identifying a core variable. To identify the core variable, researchers look for the variable that relates to all of the other variables. LaRossa (2005) effectively demonstrates this by using a Tinkertoy. Imagine researchers labeling wooden dowels with the name of each variable. If there is relationship between two or more variables, the researchers connect those dowels with sticks. The core variable would be the dowel that has most sticks connected to other dowels. After identifying the core variable, researchers craft a story with the core variable as the key.

As I stated earlier, I used two phases of GTM. At the beginning of open coding, I paid attention to how the six cognitive acts were interwoven in the narratives because I was using cognitive sociological perspective as a framework of my study. I also reviewed the transcripts over and over again to identify as many variations of indicators and concepts as possible, even if they were not directly related to cognitive acts.

One of the interesting discoveries was that indicators in English transcripts tended to be relatively short (i.e., a word, a sentence, two sentences); conversely, indicators in Japanese transcripts tended to be long (i.e., several sentences, a paragraph). Discovering such differences assured me the importance of sensitivity to the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive differences in cross-national and cross-cultural research. Each indicator was cut and pasted on a white index card (6 x 9 inch card). On the right top corner of the card, I attached stickers to identify the narrative's nationality and gender (e.g., the indicator was retrieved from Japanese mother's narrative if the card had a pink sticker). I created the piles of similar indicators and labeled each card. There were occasions in which one indicator went into different piles; in these cases, I created two identical index cards and placed one index card on each pile. Although the procedure of cutting and pasting indicators from transcripts was a lot of work, it tremendously helped me visualize the narratives, especially during the later coding phases.

During the axial coding, for example, I picked one pile of variables (i.e., types of parents' personality) which contained many index cards of indicators (i.e., "...they were self-observed," and "they are kind of selfish people"). I examined each indicator to sort out what was really discussed (i.e., why they are self-observed, what makes them selfish, how she is structured). Having index cards again was helpful during the process because I could easily switch around the indicator cards and compare popular narratives by just looking at the numbers of index cards. In this way, I began to understand the relationships between and among different variables that influence the creation of parenting philosophies. Although at first I was a little overwhelmed with the amount of the data I needed to sort out in axial coding stage, this ended up being one of the most interesting stages of the research. As I started to see the variable relationships, I was able to imagine a story that the data tell. During the processes, four themes, that influenced



construction of parenting beliefs and philosophies among fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States, emerged: parents' views on (1) their relationship with their own parents, (2) their relationship with their children, (3) their relationship with their partner, and (4) their relationship with others in a society. Japanese parents and American parents viewed the four relationships differently; as a result, they uniquely constructed their parental beliefs.

In the 1960s when Glaser and Strauss first began their research, quantitative research methods were often preferred among scholars in social science. Therefore, many researchers were trained to verify prior theories by testing hypotheses and theories created through prediction and observation rather than discovering new theories. In addition, qualitative research was less appreciated at that time because of its unique methodological steps. Charmaz (2006) said that qualitative methods were criticized because many scholars perceived it as unsystematic and unable to generate theory. To challenge such beliefs, Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed GTM, which are a systematic and theory-generating set of methods. Thus, GTM were originally based on the epistemology of induction, in which researchers take an active role to discover a new theory or hypothesis.

Although some researchers still recognize induction only, many other researchers disagree with using an induction-only approach of GTM. They believe that a combination of induction and deduction would be a more appropriate approach. Strauss (1987) and LaRossa (2005) suggest that researchers rarely discern completely new theories in social science because scholars use prior knowledge, through literature review, and personal experience, during data collection and analysis. Strauss (1987) has argued that the complexity of grounded theory involved induction, deduction, and verification. Induction leads to an idea (hypothesis) that is conditional and propositional. Deduction would involve implications of the hypothesis for the

purpose of verification. Verification involves constantly checking the hypothesis with new data and new coding. Therefore, GTM researchers still rely on prior theory/hypothesis to explore an innovative theory/hypothesis/story, and my study was no exception.

In my research, I relied primarily on a deductive approach because I was strongly influenced by the existing literature (i.e., cognitive sociology, East vs. West dichotomy). I used Zerubavel's six cognitive acts to frame my research questions as well as the data analysis. I also applied Nisbett's study about the different cognitive processes between East Asians and Westerners. The story I found from this study emerged from the application of their ideas to understand parenthood. Yet other researchers have not examined the minds of parents as much as I have done. At the same time, cross-national comparison of parents' cognitive processes allowed me to explain the diversity of parental thinking and how cognitive pluralism is applicable when understating parenthood.

Finally, Strauss (1987:8) said about grounded theory methods: "study them, use them, but modify them in accordance with the requirement of your own research." Also, I followed the advice of Strauss and Corbin (1998:295), who suggested that "students should stay within the general guidelines outlined [in *Basics of Qualitative Research*] and use the procedures and techniques flexibly according to their abilities and realities of their studies." Although I closely followed the guidelines of GTM, analyzing two sets of data (Japanese transcripts and English transcripts) was somewhat complicated. I repeatedly checked translations of the words (i.e., naming of variables) so that I could preserve the important cultural nuances.

In this chapter, I explained the various methodological steps that I took for the study. In the following chapters, I will illustrate the four themes that emerged from my analysis of the transcripts and that were instrumental to the construction of parenting beliefs and philosophies.

## CHAPTER 5

### **“I DO THINGS SIMILARLY TO MY PARENTS” VS. “I DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY FROM MY PARENTS”**

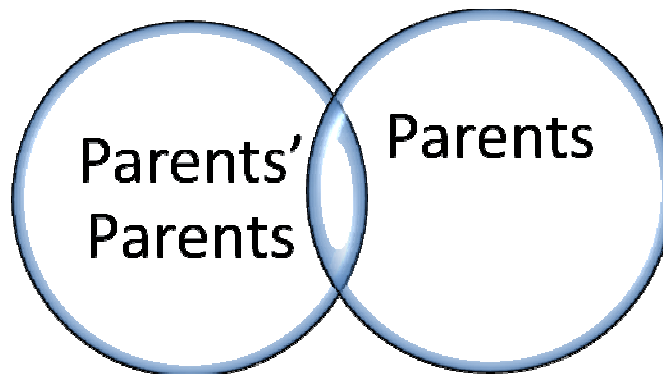
We learn how to become a parent from various sources. We may find preferred parenting styles in movies, television shows, or at friends' houses. We also gain parenting knowledge from interaction with our own parents, whether consciously or unconsciously. Because most of us spend the majority of a day with our parents as children, especially before attending school, our parents are one of the major sources from which we learn about parenting. In fact, during the interviews Japanese parents and American parents talked about numerous memories of their parents that influenced their parenting beliefs and practices. Some were wonderful memories such as going to Disneyland or shared activities with their parents. Other recollections were heartbreaking, such as going through a divorce or being physically or verbally abused by their parents. Without a doubt, both positive and negative experiences with parents influenced Japanese and American parents' interaction with their children. What their parents did affects the construction of parenting styles; however, I found that the impact of these experiences varied depending on how they were interpreted by the individual. For example, some participant fathers in both Japan and the United States told me how their fathers were abusive to them when they were children. Although each fathers had own understanding of past events and personal relationships to their fathers, I found the patterns of interpretation of their abusive fathers' behavior based on participant parents' national backgrounds. In this chapter, I demonstrate that Japanese parents and American parents recognize how their childhood experiences with their parents positively and negatively influence their current parenting beliefs and styles, contrasting how they interpret the influence differently.

Based on the interviews, I discovered that Japanese parents and American parents tended to focus on different aspects when evaluating their parents. In addition, parents in the two countries expressed how they symbolize their parents differently. For example, Japanese parents had a tendency to remember and evaluate past events with their parents in context (e.g., “My father had a short temper and used to yell at me, but his work schedule was crazy and he was tired.”). Because Japanese parents were more likely rationalize experiences with their parents based on the context, many fathers and mothers in Japan gave their parents credit for their perceptions and respected those influences. Thus, Japanese parents were inclined to use their parents to symbolize mentors to follow. In contrast, American parents were more likely to focus on their parents’ personalities to judge their parenting behaviors (e.g., “My parents did not spend much time with me because they are selfish.”). Because American parents relied on personalities as a problem, they tended to be optimistic and hoped to be better parents than theirs were by developing positive personal traits which were required for a good parent. Consequently, American fathers and mothers used their parents as to symbolize who they do not want to be as a parent.

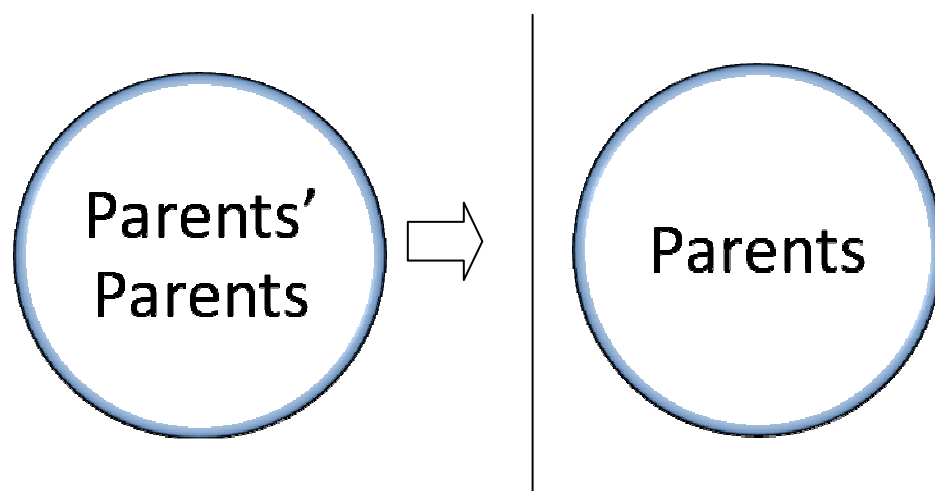
Figure 5.1 is the illustration of Japanese parent’ view on their own parents. Overall, participant Japanese fathers and mothers said that their identity as a parent was positively influenced by their parents. Even though their parents were not the perfect parents, Japanese fathers and mothers tended to give their parents quite a bit of credit. Fathers and mothers in Japan also claimed that they wanted to accomplish as a parent themselves at least what their parents did for them. Thus, participant Japanese fathers and mothers tended to view that they were duplications of their parents to a certain extent, as Figure 5.1 shows.

Figure 5.2 demonstrates American parents' view on their own parents. Participant fathers and mothers in the United States tended to draw a sharp line between their parents and themselves. Stated differently, American parents were more likely to stress the differences between their parents and themselves as a parent. American parents focused on their parents' personalities to evaluate their parenting styles and practices, and participant fathers and mothers tended to claim that their personalities were unlike their parents' personalities so that they were different types of parents as Figure 5.2 shows. In the following sections, I will detail Japanese and American parents' perspectives by using examples from the interviews.

**Figure 5.1: Japanese Parents' View of their Relationship with their Parents**



**Figure 5.2: American Parents' View of their Relationship with their Parents**



### **JAPANESE PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THEIR PARENTS**

Soon after I started to conduct the interviews in two countries, I noticed that Japanese parents and American parents responded to my questions very differently. Of course, people's experiences in the two nations are different, especially when one lives in an Eastern country and the other lives in a Western country. However, from the data analysis, I found that Japanese parents and American parents used different cognitive processes to recall and talk about their childhood memories of their parents. To a certain extent, parents in Japan and the United States shared similar childhood experiences with their parents (i.e., playing sports with father, going to family trip); the ways fathers and mothers in two countries interpreted these events, however, tended to be dissimilar. When participant Japanese parents evaluated their parents' parenting styles, mothers and fathers paid greater attention to social contexts (e.g., historical time, parents' work situation). Japanese mothers and fathers more likely emphasized that their evaluations of their parents positively changed after they became parents; as a result, Japanese parents tended to model parenting beliefs based on what their parents used to do rather than doing the opposite of

their parents. In the following section, I describe two themes that emerged from my analysis of the interviews.

### *Evaluations Based on Social Contexts of Parents*

Because becoming a parent is a big event for many people, researchers have examined how the transition to parenthood impacts individual's experience. Among these studies, some observed how couples' views of the world, marital partnership, and sense of time change after the arrival of their first child (Cowan and Cowan 2000, LaRossa and LaRossa 1981). Japanese respondents also suggested that a becoming a parent changed their views on the world. Japanese parents often described that they started to look at events and evaluate their parents' parenting styles from the position of a parent by paying attention to the environments of parents (i.e., father's work condition, financial situation of family). The responses were consistent across all groups of parents (mother of a son, mother of a daughter, father of a son, father of a daughter). For example, Tamotsu was the father of a son and daughter. Although he spent a limited amount of time with his children during the week due to his work schedule, he told me that he put in extra effort to spend time with them on Sunday. He was not very talkative during the interview, but he did reveal how he used to feel about his father, and reevaluated his assessment of his father after he became a father himself.

Interviewer: Is there anything that your parents did for you, but you don't want to do for your child?

Tamotsu: Yes. I think that I did, but that changed after I became parent.

Interviewer: Can I ask how you changed?

Tamotsu: I think that I used to think "I won't do it" [I won't do things like my father does] when I was young, but I started to think, once I became parent, it was not a big deal. Although my parents were like that . . . .

Interviewer: What do you mean “like that”?

Tamotsu: Especially my father . . . I could respect him more if he was active at work. He owned his business and worked, but he was at home all the time. Other parents were working hard outside the home. I mean . . . I don’t know what the best is, but I wanted to have a father like that. At least I used to think that way. But I started to think it is not a big deal once I became parent. He was just working at home.

In the narrative, Tamotsu used many cognitive acts to describe his experiences. For example, he classified types of jobs (traditional businessman vs. entrepreneur), and discussed the symbolism of each job. When he was a child, many of his friends’ fathers were businessmen who wore suits and went to work and, for Tamotsu, that symbolized a respectable, hard-working father. He was not proud of his father because he worked at home, which symbolized an inactive father from his childhood perspective. Tamotsu also presented two categories of his perceptions about his father: before he had children and after he had children. He further explained how his perceptions were influenced by the situational context. For example, he was optically socialized to see corporate fathers as representative of hard-working, breadwinner fathers; however, his perception changed after he had a child because he could relate better to his father. Through becoming a father, Tamotsu started to understand social roles and obligations associated with an adult male, that whether father was taking care of family finance was important rather than whether he worked at home. Mead (1934) called this a process of role taking. According to him, role taking takes two stages: (1) play; and (2) game. At the stage of “play,” the child observes different roles (e.g., father, mother, and child) in a society and plays them out to understand the different social roles. Because Tamotsu, as a child, witnessed many businessman fathers, he understood that it is a socially expected role of a father. During the “game” stage, the child learns to know the full sense the role. In other words, the child needs to acknowledge how the particular role is related to others in the situation. Through the transition to fatherhood, Tamotsu



recognized various expectations and relationships associated with the role of father.

Consequently, he learned how to evaluate his father's behavior in the situational contexts.

Hidetoshi, a father, similarly used his cognitive process, saying:

Hidetoshi: We did not share many things. Work was the center of his life. I think it was the reason. But I don't know for sure. I think that my parents did their best to raise me. Also, we have a strong bond deep inside. Maybe it is just my memory.

Interviewer: When did you think about it?

Hidetoshi: Well, now. After I had a child and became a parent myself.

The way Hidetoshi focused on his parents' accomplishments was one of the interesting points in this narrative. For instance, he admitted that he and his father did not share much time or activities because his father's main focus was his job; however, he gave credit to his parents and said, "I think that my parents did their best to raise me." In Hidetoshi's mind, there were two categories of parenting: focusing on consequences (the fact that parents did actually spend time and do things with him) and focusing on processes (the fact that parents tried their best to spend time and do things with him even if it was not enough). Because he believed that his parents tried hard to raise him, it was not important to him that they did not share many things as a consequence. Stated differently, Hidetoshi focused on processes to evaluate his parents' parenting practices. He also made sure that there were multiple ways to remember the past by saying, "Maybe it is just my memory." Just like Tamotsu, Hidetoshi classified his perceptions based on his position as a child versus a parent; as a result, he ended up appreciating his parents.

Frankly speaking, Tamotsu and Hidetoshi did not need to give their parents credit because they were not satisfied as a child. They could complain about their lack of satisfaction and criticize their parents. Why did the Japanese fathers shift their focus of attention to the contexts to evaluate their parents?

In a way, Japanese parents seemed to let their parents have excuses for not being their ideal parents; however, many researchers (see Choi and Nisbett 1998; Hong, Chui, and Kung 1997; Lee, Hallahan, and Herzog 1996; Miller 1984; Morris and Peng 1994) discovered from their examinations that Japanese are more likely to pay attention to the situational contexts to evaluate other people's behavior which shift the focus of blame. One explanation is that fathers and mothers in Japan were more likely taught to focus on social contexts to evaluate people's behavior. For example, Nisbett (2004) asked North Americans and East Asians to describe themselves. He found that North Americans often talked about their: (1) personalities (e.g., "I am friendly." "I have a strong will."), (2) role categories (e.g., "I volunteer at the hospital." "I am a son of a single mother."), and (3) activities (e.g., "I like fishing." "I run every day."). Again, these answers seemed a natural response if you have not been exposed to diverse culture. But East Asians provided different kinds of answers to the same question. For East Asians, "who I am" changed depending on various contexts (e.g., at work place, at home). It was difficult for them to describe themselves without talking about the situations in which they were interesting.

Morris and Peng (1994) also conducted a content analysis of articles on mass murders published in the *New York Times* (in English) and *World Journal* (in Chinese). Both sets of articles originated in New York and circulated all over the world. Morris and Peng (1994) analyzed how the authors of the articles in the two newspapers described the mass murders' intention to kill so many people. For example, the *New York Times*'s authors (Westerners) stressed criminals' personal dispositions (e.g., "he had a bad temper," "he has a psychological problem") to clarify their behavior as mass murders. In this case, criminals' lack of self control induced a horrible crime rather than contextual situations that led a person to kill. Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura, and Larsen (2003) explained the process of focusing on the object can be

called an *absolute* task. According to the authors, North Americans were more likely good at pointing out characteristics of things because they tended to be socialized to look at the object (i.e., personal characteristics) rather than social contexts of the object (i.e., neighborhood, friends). On the other hand, *World Journal's* authors (East Asians) talked about the situational factors as a cause of criminals' action (e.g., "he was having a difficult time getting along with coworkers," "he was isolated from the Chinese community"). In this case, mass murderers may not be the only persons to be blamed; instead, the authors/readers may infer that coworkers and the community could have helped criminals by providing proper support. When people judge other's behavior in the situational contexts, the process is called *relative* tasks. Because East Asians, in general, are socialized to pay greater attention to social contexts rather than the object itself, East Asians are more likely good at relative tasks (Kitayama, Duffy, Kawamura, and Larsen 2003). In this study, I found a similar pattern. Japanese parents tended to use relative tasks to evaluate their parents' parenting practices.

Another father, Tatsuhiko, also engaged in role taking to understand why his father did what he did. During the interview, he repeatedly emphasized that he was afraid of his father because he was a very authoritative figure who was not shy about using physical punishment for bad behavior. Although the story Tatsuhiko told me was a somewhat hurtful event for a child, he was smiling and talked as if it were a great childhood memory with his father:

Tatsuhiko: My father was really strict.

Interviewer: Can you tell me how?

Tatsuhiko: The level is ... when I lied or did something wrong ... he was more than scary when I lied. I can only say now, but he used to hit and slap me.

Kasumi: It's like Ittetsu Hoshi. [the animation character who is often referred to as a representative of a traditional authoritative father].

Tatsuhiko: Exactly. He physically taught. He scolded me when I lost a fight, he yelled at me if I came home crying after losing a fight, but also he would get upset if I made a girl cry. “Don’t make girls cry.” He was really the representative of the fathers of the “Showa” era [traditional father]. My mother will tell you how he was like when he got angry. I was in pain and afraid . . . He physically taught me what bad things to do are. He already died. Anyway, it is hard to discipline my daughter because he taught me not to make girls cry. He said, “It does not matter if girls are 100 percent wrong; it is your fault if you created the situation that girls cry.” So, I don’t know what to do sometimes. The only thing that I can do is . . . my father praised me, not when I received good grades, but when I reported to him good things about my friends. I knew that he would buy me toys and stuff so I tried to look for my friends’ good sides, but I now think that it may be a very important thing. For example, there was this disabled child in my swimming school. One day, I told my father that the boy tried very hard and ended up swimming 25 meters today just like I did. Then his mood changed quickly and he said, “Let’s go to the toy store. You can buy anything you want.” He never bought me a toy on a usual occasion.

Interviewer: Do you remember how old you were?

Tatsuhiko: Maybe five years old?

Interviewer: Wow. It must be very memorable.

Tatsuhiko: Yes, I didn’t know what was happening but I pointed out different toys. Then he talked about it to relatives with a smile. I knew that I did something good.... I can do what my father did. I mean ... I personally think the way my father raised me was not wrong. I hated him back then, but now I know he did not do it out of emotional bursts.

This conversation included many interesting points. Tatsuhiko first focused on his father’s strict personality and discussed types of his father’s behaviors. His partner, Kasumi, used the symbol “Ittetsu Hoshi” (the animation character who is often referred to as a representative of a traditional authoritative father) to help me imagine Tatsuhiko’s father. At first glance, his father was abusive, but this observation could be problematic depending on the participant’s definition of “abuse.” According to Tatsuhiko, his father’s approach was not abusive because “he did not do it out of emotional bursts,” meaning that true abuse to Tatsuhiko was based on a lack of emotional control. Tatsuhiko also said that his father decided to

“physically teach” values instead of verbally teaching them. Based on Tatsuhiko’s interpretation, his father tried to educate him on how to distinguish good things and bad things by hitting and slapping. Tatsuhiko also described the context of the event in great detail. For example, when he talked about what his father did when Tatsuhiko made him happy, Tatsuhiko explained who was involved in the situation, what happened, how it happened, and why he and his father reacted. The point Tatsuhiko made was that he understood he made his father happy, not because his father said so, but because of the context of his father’s actions. Timing was another interesting idea in the conversation. For Tatsuhiko, there was a good time and a bad time to talk about his father’s physical discipline without getting in trouble. He also said that he loathed his father’s parenting style as a child, but his perception changed once he became a father. In a way, how Tatsuhiko perceived, classified, focused, symbolized, and remembered things all depended on the time in his life. Finally, Tatsuhiko claimed that he wanted to do what his father did for him. Tatsuhiko could not use physical punishment on his daughter because it was against what his father taught (i.e., Tamotsu should not make girls cry); thus, the way Tatsuhiko related to his children was based on his father’s beliefs and practices.

Japanese mothers also expressed the point that they saw their parents differently now that they were adult parents. Shizuka was raising a daughter who just started school. She had a full-time job in customer service. She told me that every morning was like a battle for her because she had to do many household chores (i.e., wake her husband and daughter up, prepare breakfast, make lunch for her husband and herself, and prepare dinner) before she went to work which was soon after her daughter went to school. In the interview, she shared her classification of parenting work. The first type was something children could see, such as cleaning, cooking, and consulting. The second was something invisible to children’s eyes, such as saving money for

school and weddings. According to Shizuka, her father took on the latter type of parenting work, and she wanted to do the same for her daughter.

Shizuka: My parents . . . my father . . . what my father did for me was something that I could not see. I first realized when I became adult . . . I don't know what to say, but like saving money for me and things like that. That is why I also want to do the same for my daughter.

Interviewer: Do you have examples?

Shizuka: For example, my wedding is one thing. I don't know what to say.

Shizuka did not know parenting works that was invisible in her childhood eyes. By becoming a parent, she became more aware of various aspects of parenting tasks.

Sachiko was another mother who suggested that she had different views on her parents before and after becoming a parent herself.

Sachiko: I didn't know when I was young, but . . . after I became parent, I think I am here because of my parents. One thing is that my father worked and fed me, but also it was my parents who raised me as a decent person who did not go the wrong way.

Interviewer: What do you mean by "the wrong way"?

Toshihiko: Do you mean becoming a "gang"?

Sachiko: Right. I mean someone who does bad things or doesn't have a job. I have a normal life and have my family because my parents were normal parents. I think that children will grow up like their parents.

There are several points that I want to discuss in Sachiko's narrative. I asked her the question, "What are parents for you?" Her first sentence was, "I didn't know when I was young, but . . .after becoming a parent, I think I am here because of my parents." Sachiko classified her views on her parents, based on pre- and post-parenthood. Also, she repeatedly expressed great appreciation because she believed that that her parents created whom she became. It is worthy of note that she did not focus on specific memorable events to describe and appreciate her parents;

instead, she widely framed her answer, saying she had a job and family because her parents raised her the way they did. Sachiko also mentioned during the interview that she struggled with infertility issues for a long time. I wondered if that experience encouraged her to see parenting in a larger frame.

Japanese mothers were not the only ones who evaluated their parents' behavior in the context; Japanese fathers also talked about their parents in a similar manner. For example, Kengo grew up as an only child and told me that he felt somewhat lonely coming back to an empty home from school because both parents were working. He worked full-time as an engineer at the time of the interview. When he came home, he loved to clean and played with his son. He said:

Kengo: I used to think that my family was not so close. Certainly we went out together, but my parents were not at home [because both were working] and I was alone. I thought that our family bond was weak, but I realized it was not weak.

Interviewer: What made you realize that?

Kengo: Well, they didn't say it. My parents did not put it in words. For example, they didn't say that family should help each other and things like that. But if I recall their attitude, I wonder if that is what they wanted to say.

Just like other parents I discussed earlier, Kengo pointed out that there were two ways to look at his childhood experience with his parents by saying, "I used to think . . ." One is based on how he felt when he was a child, and the other was based on his adult analysis of what happened. According to Kengo, when he was a child he only understood the face value of family life (e.g., whether parents verbalize certain beliefs about how family works); however, once he became a parent he started to focus on the context affecting his parents. Therefore, he took a position of his parents and explained that his parents showed him values rather than verbalizing.

Daisuke worked at a car dealer. Because his company specialized in used cars, his work

schedule depended on customers' schedules which meant he had to go to work in the evening or on the weekend if sellers wanted him to pick up their cars. Although he and his father worked for different car companies, Daisuke took a job which was very similar to what his father used to do. Daisuke, who admired his father, also told me his recollection of a past event with his father. The point I want to emphasize here is the way he focused on the context to talk about the occurrence.

Daisuke: Well, in my case my father often . . . my father took me to his work. He worked like a salesman, but he took me to work when my presence did not bother his work. Like when he had to bring something to his customers. When it did not bother his work, he drove with me. Because of that memory, I try take him [my son] when it does not cause trouble . . . and the kid seemed bored.

Interviewer: How come do you remember that so well?

Daisuke: Probably . . . he was busy and not really . . . ah . . . we did not go many places as a family. My father could not take us anywhere during summer break or spring break, so we stayed at home all the time. When you are a kid, it is fun to go anywhere. It is refreshing. I assume that my father felt bad for not being able to take me to places, so he took me with him when he could.

Interviewer: So you remember that you were happy.

Daisuke: Exactly. I remember a lot about it even now.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you went and what you did with him?

Daisuke: I only remember a fragment. Well, it was nothing special but I remember that we bought lunch and ate together. We went to an ordinary restaurant and I thought, "He is eating like this when he is at work." Something like that is what I remember.

Daisuke did not know exactly what happened and why his father took him to work, but he tried to look at the situation from his father's point of view; consequently, he gave his father credit for spending time with him. Thus, many participant Japanese parents explained that they reevaluated their parents' parenting skills after they became parents based on the idea that adult



member of society had multiple obligations; therefore, Japanese fathers and mothers were pleased to see their parents' effort to take care of children even if they were not even close to their ideal parent. To summarize, Japanese fathers and mothers tended to pay attention to how much effort their parents put into raising them in the given contexts. Therefore, they were less likely to complain about their parents at least during the interviews.

### ***My Parents are My Mentors***

In the above section, I demonstrated how Japanese fathers and mothers evaluated their parents' parenting skills. Because Japanese parents tried to understand how social situations made their parents behave in certain ways, they were more likely to forgive their parents' mistakes. In addition, Japanese parents' evaluations of their parents tended to be understanding because they believed they now knew how hard it was to be a parent. The next issue is how such ways of evaluation influenced the way Japanese fathers and mothers constructed their own parenting beliefs and practices. Did Japanese fathers and mothers try to enhance their parenting skills to be better than their parents? Because many Japanese participants seemed satisfied with their parents, I wondered if they tried to improve upon their parenting, and if so, how did they go about it? My analysis showed that Japanese parents did not compete with their parents to determine who the better parent was; instead, they tended to look up to their parents. Japanese mothers and fathers first thought about doing things for their children as much as their parents did for them. For example, Daisuke said:

Daisuke:       What are parents for me? Well, they are my basis.

Interviewer:   Can you explain?

Daisuke:       So, when I think about my future, say 20 years or 30 years from now, my father is the goal.

Interviewer: Do you have specific examples?

Daisuke: Well, ah . . . I think that I probably will be like my father, because my father and I are similar. For example, we share jobs and share career paths, and even now when I face challenging situations I ask him, “What did you do when you faced this?” for consultation. In my father’s case, I know the consequences . . . both good and bad. When I hear about his negative experiences, I especially think about what made him to decide to do what he did.

It was very clear that Daisuke saw his father as a mentor because he repeatedly said things like, “They are my basis,” “My father is the goal,” and “I will be like my father.” As I demonstrated in Figure 5.1, he did not set a clear boundary between himself and his father. Rather, he stated, “I will be like my father because we are similar.” He did not try to compete with his father to be a better father because, in Daisuke’s mind, he and his father were lumped together. Both of them played the role of father, rather than being classified into two groups (i.e., fathers in 1970s vs. fathers in 2000s). Parental gender also influenced his views. Daisuke later added:

Daisuke: When I was a child, I used to see my father as the basis for my future. My mother was my mother. For me, Father is my mentor. So, I see him as my big brother or mentor rather than someone who has stateliness and is not easy to get close to. I think that I relate to him in that way.

Daisuke clearly classified the roles of father and mother. For Daisuke, his mother symbolized a parent who took care of daily needs and his father was a symbol for a mentor, teacher, and friend.

Daisuke’s view may not be a typical view among Japanese fathers. According to Yamato, Oride, Kiwaki (2008), the expectations on Japanese fathers have changed over history due to various social changes. Prior to World War II, Japanese fathers were expected, according to the legal system, to be the head of the household as a breadwinner and authoritative figure for the entire family. After the war, the system that supported the old family system was abolished;

consequently, women started to gain rights to property, divorce, and custody of children (Bankart and Banlart 1985). In the 1980s when the Japanese economy was growing, Japanese fathers were expected to work not only to support their families but also to boost the Japanese economy. Japanese fathers worked a long hours; as a result, they were often absent at home (Yamato, Orida, Kiwaki 2008). In the late 1990s, Japan faced new social problems such as low fertility rate and a growing aging population. For example, Japanese government created the slogan in 1999 saying “Fathers who do not take care of children cannot be called father,” assuming that having more father’s support at home could encourage women to have more children (Ishii-Kuntz, Makino, Kato, and Tsuchiya 2004, Ishii-Kunz 2003, and Kagayama 1999). Thus, today’s fathers are expected to be the breadwinner as well as mother’s helper. To conclude, the images and expectations of Japanese fathers have changed over time; as a result, Yamagihara (2007) reported that 48 percent of fathers said that they do not have a role model when she asked fathers to describe their role model as father. However, among 52 percent of fathers who answered that they did have a role model, 20.1 percent of them claimed the role model was their father followed by 10 percent who said they looked up their friends. Daisuke is among those who looked up their father.

Shun was another father who saw the positive influence of his parents on himself. In his mind, there was almost no boundary between Shun and his parents.

Interviewer: What are parents for you?

Shun: They are the closest people for me. I mean I don’t exist without them. You know ... they are the closest, but I don’t treat them right. They are so close and I take advantage of it. But if I really think about it, I wouldn’t be here without them.

Interviewer: They are the closest.

Shun: I have to appreciate them the most.

Interviewer: Both mother and father?

Shun: Exactly.

Shun repeated that he did not exist without his parents. He was not referring to his physical existence, but that he would not be who he was without his father and mother. Again, there was no competition, in Shun's mind, to analyze who were the better parents.

This was not to say that the interviewed Japanese fathers and mothers were not critical at times of their parents; however, they generally approved of their parents in total because they related the mistakes their parents had made to the difficulties they had as parents themselves. Yuki was a perfect example of a parent who approached it this way. Yuki was a stay-at-home mother at the time of the interview. She and her husband were raising one son who just turned four-years-old. Yuki described herself as a disorganized person. According to her, Yuki often failed to accomplish many activities, including household chores before her husband came home at night, because she was not good at making efficient schedules. In contrast, her husband was very punctual and organized. She explained to me that differences of personality sometimes created conflict between Yuki and her husband so that she wanted to improve her time organization skills. She said:

Yuki: I am not sure what to say, but I learned a lot from my parents. Sometimes I observe my parents and find new good things about them. There are many things I have to improve myself, so I need to understand and acknowledge the negative sides of my parents. But ... whatever it is, I need to understand that my parents did their best to raise me. I want to be like that. I want my son to think that way when he grows up.

Although Yuki started to say that her parents have many positive aspects, she claimed that her parents were not perfect. At the same time, she admitted that was how she was as well. What was important, for Yuki, was not whether she became a perfect parent; instead, she wanted to do

her best to be a good parent just like her parents. She also desired her son to be like that when he became a parent in the future.

The other fascinating point from the Japanese interviews was that many Japanese participants were modest when speaking about their parenting skills. One of the examples was Kanako who was a stay-at-home mother of a four-year-old son:

Interviewer: Is there anything that your parents didn't do for you, but you want to do for your son?

Kanako: Well, I have some things that my mother did for me, but I can't do them.

Interviewer: What are they?

Kanako: For example, I was never told, "Do your homework" by my parents. People ask me if that is true, but it really is true. It was more like, "You are the one in trouble by not doing your homework." But, as a parent, I do say it to my child. Well, maybe I was doing homework before they told me. (laugh) Probably, my parents were more laid back. You know, you can't help worrying about it as a parent. What is she doing? Or will she get scolded by teachers and all that. I think that my parents also thought the same way, but their approach was, "You take responsibility for your own actions." I can't be like that. I tell my kids as soon as possible. That is the thing my parents did for me, but I am not able to do at this point.

I asked Kanako if there was anything she wished her parents did for her. Instead of listing what she wanted her parents to do, she immediately modified the question and discussed how she was trying to be like her mother. Kanako mentioned that her mother had a laid-back personality, but Kanako's focus was more on how she was trying her best to be like her mother even if she was not the easygoing type.

It was not only Japanese mothers who were modest about their parenting skills. For example, Hiroshi's response was very similar to Kanako's.

Interviewer: Is there anything that your parents didn't do for you, but you want to do for your son?

Hiroshi: I can think of things my parents did for me but I can't do for my son.

Interviewer: What are they?

Hiroshi: My parents made everything for me. They made toys for me. Like using wood and building a slide and a jungle gym and stuff like that. But I can't do the same for my son.

Interviewer: How come?

Hiroshi: Ah . . . I am not good at it. I have clumsy hands.

Not many parents built handmade playgrounds for their children because of the limited availability of resources and time in Japan; yet Hiroshi thought about it and shared what happened with me. However, the point was that he elevated his parents by giving me an example of what he could not do just like Kanako. Again, parenting was not a competition for Hiroshi.

Thus, the intergenerational relationship between participant Japanese fathers and mothers appeared to be based on primarily on modeling (see Snarey 1993) in which they endeavor to replicate the positive side of what their parents did for them. I also noticed that Japanese fathers and mothers were likely to be critical of their parenting skills and try to be better parents by modeling their own parent. Their self-criticize manner can be positively associated with one's self-esteem in the different culture. For example, Kitayama, Markus, and Kurokawa (1994) found that having a feeling of pride and sense of achievement are optimistically related to American individual's well-being; however, Japanese sense of well-being is most positively associated with the feeling of acceptance from other people. In addition, the authors discovered that their Japanese respondents' sense of well-being decreased when they identified that they were different from others even if they were better than others. Kitayama, Markus, Mastsumoto, and Norasakkunkit (1997) also discussed that American individual's self-esteem increase under continuous successful situations rather than failure situations; on the other

hand, Japanese develop their self-esteem by going through failure situations by critically analyzing themselves for improvement. These results may be reflected in the narratives of the intergenerational relationship between participant parents and their parents.

Another example of the last point is Satoshi, the father of four children who loved to take them on drives in his car. He critically observed what was going on when his father was abusive, stating:

Satoshi: I guess that we also were done [hit by father], but I have a strong image that it was my mother... I think that my father hit my mother more than us. Because I saw it, it makes me think that I can't hit my wife. Also, my mother never took it out on us. My mother was very patient. So, I try to be like her . . . try not to take things out on our children if something bad happens to me . . . but it's hard.

Interviewer: I understand.

Satoshi: But it makes me think about my mother as an even greater person.

He was critical about his father's short temper, but he also analyzed how his mother dealt with the situation. At the end, the focus of the conversation shifted from what he did not want to do to or for his family to what he was working on — to be like his mother. The following narrative was from the same interview with Satoshi:

Satoshi: What are parents? I think I am glad my father and mother were my father and mother. For example, I hear my friends saying their parents bought them this and that and I haven't . . . but I still think I am glad to have my father and my mother.

Interviewer: What do you like about your father and mother?

Satoshi: You know . . . I only have a vague idea. For some reason . . . I don't know how to explain. I just have an image in my mind.

Interviewer: It's nice to be able to feel that way, though.

Satoshi: I agree. I am glad that I was born between my father and mother. That's how I feel.

Although Satoshi could not provide specific examples to explain why he was glad to be born as a child of his father and mother, he discussed that his life would not be the same without them.

In Japan, many parents expressed feelings similar to Satoshi's. Because Japanese mothers and fathers evaluated their parents' behavior in context, they were less likely to find fault with their parents.

From my data, I found two variables to describe how Japanese parents view their relationship with their parents. When fathers and mothers in Japan evaluated their parents' parenting beliefs and practices, it was very common for them to consider what happened in situational contexts. In addition, Japanese mothers and fathers mentally viewed their parents as very close to them and tried to construct their parenting beliefs and practices by modifying their ways to their parents' ways.

## **AMERICAN PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THEIR PARENTS**

In the American parents' mind, there was a clear boundary between them and their parents. In other words, the American parents tended to see themselves and their parents as starkly different individuals who shared unique personal characteristics, making their respective approaches to parenting different. Additionally, they tended to believe the relationship they had with their parents during childhood directly influenced their current parenting beliefs and practices, whether the relationship was positive or negative. Two variations emerged from the data that explain these points.

### ***Evaluations Based on Parents' Personality***

The main message American fathers and mothers tried to convey during the interviews was, "Being a good parent is extremely hard because you have to be committed to the role."



Although each participant parent I interviewed in the United States seemed to have a slightly different definition of “good parent,” I found that many American fathers and mothers focused on personalities to evaluate whether/how individuals were good or bad parents. American parents classified good parents’ personalities and bad parents’ personalities. For example, William was a father of one son. He had a bachelor’s degree and worked 50 hours a week as a consultant. He said:

William: It’s kind of individual but my parents ... both are highly educated and both are highly ... I don’t know ... self-absorbed. They were trying to do with their own life like everybody else, better careers. My mom went to different organizations and things like that. They were so ... they didn’t include us doing that. It was things that they are doing and it’s again good things and bad things.

Interviewer: Can you explain that to me?

William: Sure. My mom was a part of organizations. She was running thrift stores and she was taking classes and we were in the car to go with her. It was good and everything, but you can’t do other things. They should spend more time giving skills to be successful in school [for us]. So, they could help us to study or spend time for sports. He never picked up a ball. My father liked bike riding. So, we went bike riding. But my interest was ... I like wrestling and play soccer, but they didn’t go to matches because they weren’t interested in it. So, I’m conscious about it. I don’t know about soccer, but I am being a coach because it is important for him.

There are a few interesting points in William’s narrative. First, he pointed out his parents’ personality, saying, “Both are highly educated and both are highly self-absorbed.” Then he clarified why he thought his parents were self-absorbed. He categorized his parents as either (1) doing things for themselves, or (2) doing things for their children. From William’s perspective, his parents were self-absorbed because they focused on their careers over the educational and emotional support of their children. William also presented a classification of (1) things his parents liked to do, and (2) things he liked to do. While William and his father did go bike riding together, his father did not receive credit for the parenting activity because it was

something his father liked to do, not what William wanted to do. At the end, William explained that he participated in his son's soccer team as a coach even though he knew little about soccer. By stating so, William was trying to say that he was not self-absorbed like his parents.

Justin, the father of two adopted children, angrily talked about his parents much like William did. Justin recently went back to school to earn a graduate degree while he was working as a teacher. Before Justin entered the conversation, his partner Celina was recounting her memories growing up as an only child, sitting in front of the television every Saturday night watching Disney movies with her parents.

Justin: Yeah. I didn't get that kind of support from them. They were much more concerned with discipline.

Interviewer: Can you explain a bit more?

Justin: Having to do what I was told to do and stuff.

Interviewer: Is it your mother or father?

Justin: Well, they are similar people.

Celina: Yes.

Justin: Well, they are kind of selfish people.

Interviewer: You thought about it when you were young?

Justin: No, I didn't know nothing better.

Interviewer: So, now you think back and think ...

Justin: Right.

Interviewer: Is it O.K. if I ask what you mean by selfish?

Justin: Well, they were more concerned about their life more than their children. Being good parents was not their priority. They didn't do much with us.

Justin believed his mother and father were selfish because they did not support him and focused on obedience so their lives could be easier. Thus, Justin focused on his parents' personality to explain their lack of interest in his life, just like William did. First, there were (1) parents' lives and (2) children's lives. Second, Justin believed parents could commit to (1) being a good parent or (2) not being a good parent. In Justin's perspective, his parents did not care about being good parents, instead caring more about their own lives because they were selfish.

Kelly, a mother whose parents divorced when she was young, also discussed her childhood experience by focusing on her father's behavior and how his reaction to her weight problem affected her self-esteem. She had a bachelor's degree and worked full-time as an office manager. I visited Kelly's home in the early evening of weeknight. When I arrived at the home, her daughter was wearing a cute pajama and almost ready to go to bed. Kelly introduced her husband and daughter to me, and she served tea for all of us.

Kelly:       The most negative things for him would have been not being there for me at school events. His work and wife [her step-mother] were more important than kids. Again, also there was a lot of negativity around my weight problem and calling me names, "heavy" and things like that. Certainly, I don't want to do that. I think it is about self-esteem, then self-esteem can back fire. Everyone talks about self-esteem, but at some point she has to be humble, too. (laugh) You know. Inner confidence, I guess. (laugh)

In Kelly's mind, work, wife, and children were three different categories of her father's life. She believed a good father should focus on his children before concerning himself with his career and spouse. She also described her father's perception of her weight as a problem because he picked on her, resulting in a struggle she had with low self-esteem. Kelly remembered what happened, but not in context. In other words, her focus was on the consequences (e.g., *He was not there for me* because he cared more about his work and wife) instead of the situations (e.g., physical distance between them, work conditions). Kelly's father's comments about her weight

problem were used to lead into what she did not want to do as a parent, “Certainly, I don’t want to do that,” she said “I think it is about self-esteem . . . .”

At first glance the way American parents focused on their parents’ personalities to assess their parenting skills seemed common practice; however, I discovered that there were different methods to evaluate parents’ parenting skills. When describing the relationship with their fathers and mothers, Japanese parents were less likely to focus on their parents’ personal attributes; instead, they paid greater attention to social contexts. Because the Japanese and American parents lived in different thought communities (i.e., collectivistic culture vs. individualistic culture), their *norms of focusing* seemed diverse. The American parents were more likely socialized that focusing on their own parents’ personalities was the norm when they evaluate their parents’ parenting skills by living in American society; therefore, social contexts of events became the background to ignore. For Japanese parents, personalities were less of a focus because they had more likely learned to pay attention to social contexts when parents did something to assess their own parents’ parenting practices. American parents were more likely to focus their attention on people’s personality to evaluate behavior, but the same rule did not apply in Japan because Japanese parents tended to focus on how social contexts influenced people’s actions.

Andrea was a stay-at-home mother raising two children (son and daughter). I visited their home at nine o’clock in the morning after they had sent their children off to school. Because they were renovating their house, I entered the house from the back door by the kitchen. Soon after I walked in, Andrea explained to me that she had not had a chance to wash last night’s dirty dishes yet. She was also apologetic about piles of children’s toys sitting by the corner of

the living room where we had the interview. During the interview, Andrea pointed out that her mother did everything for her so that she could not learn the traditional skills of a mother.

Andrea:       Structure. My mother was so structured, and still is, with the cleaning and she never sits down. She is going and going because ... Well, we always joke with her and blame her about my ability to clean and cook or any motherly things. Ah ... because she did everything. She cooked, cleaned the house. We were sort of responsible for own rooms, but for the most part she did everything. So, I am not that way at all. I do the dishes when it's time to do the dishes, but I can go to bed with dirty dishes. Of course, he [husband] has more of my mother.

Here again, Andrea focused on her mother's personality such as her being neat, instead of talking about possible contexts that might make her mother tidy. Andrea explained that she did not have a chance to learn any "motherly" skills such as cooking and cleaning because her mother did them all for her. It was also interesting that she classified household chores by gender. She might have classified them differently if she had grown up perceiving her father cooking and cleaning. Another interesting point was that Andrea used many hyperbolic expressions to talk about her mother's personality. Andrea said, for example, "she is *so* structured," "she *never* sits down," "she is *going and going*," and she repeatedly said "she did *everything*."

Katherine was another mother who often used hyperbolic expressions to talk about her mother's personality. Katherine and Josh were my fourth interview. During the interview, Katherine surprisingly said that she had never seen Josh being talkative until now. Josh responded that he could talk a lot if he was asked specific questions instead of an open question like, "What do you think?" Katherine laughed and told him that she would try to ask specific questions to get his response. Although Josh did not say much in the following conversation, he strongly agreed with Katherine through his facial expressions.

- Katherine: Well, so I don't want to be permissive. That is from my father. From my mother, I don't want to be ... all business and all harsh. I want to have a soft side. I want to have a fun side that they can enjoy. I just want to be pleasant.
- Interviewer: Can you say a little bit more?
- Katherine: Well, with my mother I don't feel comfortable to just relax and have fun with her because everything is a psychological study. Honestly everything is ... what did you say? (looking at husband)
- Josh: Psychological ...
- Katherine: Yeah, psychological study. Mental and psychological exercises. Every single thing.
- Interviewer: Can you give me an example?
- Katherine: I called her yesterday.
- Interviewer: Oh, O.K.
- Katherine: Oh yes. Always been this way. There are pros on this. There are good sides of it, but it is overwhelming. It's been overwhelming in my entire life. Nothing just can be relaxed and jokes. For instance, when we were newly married, I think we didn't have children ... maybe my son was a baby. She had come over and we were watching *America's Funniest Video* just to have nothing serious. Just watch it so that our brains do nothing and laugh. She said "It is insulting. This is an insult to my intellect. How can you sit here and watch it?" Isn't that funny?

At the beginning, Katherine described her mother's personality as "*all* business and *all* harsh." She elaborated the point and said that for her mother, "*everything* is psychological," "*honestly everything* is psychological," "*every single thing* is psychological," and "it's been overwhelming in my *entire* life." Katherine also used her mother's reaction to the television show *America's Funniest Home Videos* to clarify this pervasive characteristic. For *America's Funniest Home Videos* was a symbol of fun to Katherine, while it symbolized an intellectual "insult" to her mother. Katherine admitted that there was a good side, but she disagreed with the timing and degree of her mother's psychological analysis.

Here again, Katherine focused on her mothers' personality such as her businesslike approach, instead of talking about possible contexts that might make her mother harsh. In addition, Katherine, similar to Andrea, made sure to clearly describe her mothers' personalities by using hyperbolic expressions. In the cognitive process of the lumping and splitting, using hyperbolic expression is an example of the application of the "law of the excluded middle" (Zerubavel 1991) because to say "my mother was 'never' and 'always' this way" is to place "my mother" in the binary category rather than explaining mother's characteristic as continuous line (i.e., "She is 'sometimes' business like" or "She is 'occasionally' tidy"). By using hyperbole, Andrea and Katherine cognitively pointed out that their mothers were dissimilar from them (LaRossa 2009). Although Andrea, Katherine, and their mothers are all mothers, Andrea and Katherine suggested that their mothers were totally different types of mothers.

***My Parents are Examples of Who I do not Want to Become as a Parent***

In the above section, I discussed how American mothers and fathers described their parents' personalities to evaluate their parenting skills. What I also discovered was that participant American parents used their parents as a reference group of people whom they did not want to be like as parents. Stated differently, American parents tended to critically analyze their parents' personalities and parenting styles; consequently, they tried to become better parents than their parents.

Peter and Nadia showed this behavior well. Peter had a full-time job and was writing a novel on his spare time. Nadia used to be a school teacher, but decided to become a stay-at-home parent when their daughter turned three years old. We met on Sunday morning. They told me that they were going to their daughter's friend's birthday party together. The following were their response to my question on their childhood experiences with their parents.

Peter: I grew up like Nadia did in the American South. So their conservative attitude about ... my parents are about race and gender and the way society works and I don't agree with them. So there are basic things when we started the household, we approached differently.

Nadia: I agree with that. My father was an unusual character but my mom is very conservative and very religious and I don't think that my parents did different from what Peter's parents did, that I didn't feel like peers with my parents. I would agree with him that I would like to have a relationship that my daughter can talk to me. They didn't do that for me, but I would like to.

There are two points I want to mention in this conversation. First, Peter said his parents hold conservative views because they lived in the American South. While he might have a point, Peter and Nadia also grew up there also and they still lived there. To a certain extent, Peter found explanations for his parents' conservative background; however, he emphasized his parents' conservative personalities rather than considering historical time or specific geographical conditions (e.g., racial/ethnic compositions, religious affiliations) to illustrate why he had different views from his parents. In any case, Peter argued that he disagreed with his parents' perspectives and tried to create a different family environment. The second point I want to make is based on Nadia's comment, "I didn't feel like peers with my parents." Nadia was saying that she didn't feel close to her parents; instead, she saw clear parent-child boundaries (see figure 5.2). Additionally, how she felt about her father and mother during her childhood directly influenced the way she interacted with her daughter.

Katherine made a similar point. She responded to my question "Is there anything that your parents' did for you and you don't want to do for your child?"

Katherine: I watched my parents quit on each other and quit on us as kids. I am not going to quit. I am not a quitter and I've never been a quitter. It doesn't matter ... that's one thing that I haven't figured out to incorporate in my career. I am not a quitter. I didn't quit college no matter how hard the college was. No matter how hard my marriage can be. How hard to raise these dogs. I know. (laugh) I know I can't give her away and I can't give



my kids away. [Dogs came to her] Do you want me to give you away?  
(laugh) So, I am not gonna quit on my kids or family.

Obviously Katherine was hurt because of her parents' divorce. In her mind, family was no longer family after a divorce, and divorced individuals symbolized "quitters." At the same time, Katherine classified "quitters" as bad parents and "non-quitters" as good parents. She acknowledged that marriage could be very hard, and then she emphasized how committed she was to overcoming future struggles. Again, Katherine's focus was her parents' divorce, and she believed it happened because her father and mother were not committed enough. The contextual conditions of divorce were not a concern. To conclude her point, she stressed that she was going to be different from her parents.

Roger's case was a little different, but he was also one of many American participant parents who tried to be different from his father. He said:

Roger: Really, the reason I went to college is that my mom and dad encouraged me to go to school, but I didn't have to. What really changed my mind was that my dad's factory closed down. When it closed, he had a very hard time finding a job because he was just a general laborer. He wasn't skilled or anything that is what really changed my mind. So, I said I don't wanna do the same ...

As a child, Roger witnessed his father's layoff. Instead of blaming the factory owner or social system for his family's difficult situation, Roger pointed out his father's lack of education.

Consequently, Roger decided to pursue higher education.

Peter, Nadia, Katherine, and Roger used their parents as a reference group to decide what kind of parents they did *not* want to be; however, a reference group also can be fathers of an entire generation. For example, Christopher was very much involved in his daughter's life. He and his wife worked full-time, but Christopher's work schedule was more flexible than his wife's that allowed him to work at home except when he was on business trips. He was taking his

daughter to school, playing with her, bathing her, and putting her to bed every day. I asked him “Is there anything that your parents did not do for you and you want to do for your child?”

Christopher said:

Christopher: They are the generation of fathers who had no clue.

Interviewer: You said “they.” How do you know?

Christopher: Yeah, because I talk to my friends who are raising children. Our fathers never changed diapers for us. Well, I don’t remember if he did, but I don’t think he did. So, we have to be conscious about what we do.

Sarah: Maybe he did.

Interviewer: Do you talk about it with your friends?

Christopher: Oh yeah. It’s a different generation.

Two groups of fathers existed in Christopher’s mind: (1) fathers of his father’s generation, and (2) fathers of his generation. Christopher was born in the mid 1970s, so he was comparing fathers in the 1970s and the 2000s. Although he did not remember whether his father changed his diaper, he was pretty sure that fathers in the 1970s did not do much to take care of babies. According to Christopher, his friends all agreed. In reality, we don’t personally remember who changed our diaper. Our early childhood memories are often shaped by family members and family photos. By listening how our family talks about the past, we learn what to remember and forget (Zerubavel 1997). For example, Christopher could not recall if his father changed his diaper; however, he could learn to remember it was always his mother who took care of his diaper because his mother told him such a story. It is great that we can remember things through mnemonic socialization that we could not remember otherwise. At the same time, what we “remember,” especially about when we were very young, can be distorted because it is hard to imagine that all fathers in 1970s never changed diapers, as Christopher and his friends claimed.

It is not only today's fathers who use their father's generation as a reference group to talk about fatherhood. LaRossa (2009) said that the pattern is repeated over history. For example, fathers in 1950s are often stereotyped as uninvolved and incompetent fathers who did minimum childcare tasks. In this case, fathers who complained were probably fathers in 1970s who were now fathers of their own children. But fathers in 1970s who promised to do better than their father's generations were condemned by their children who are now fathers of their children in 2000s. LaRossa said that at least two concerns emerge when people overgeneralize about an entire generation of fathers and create myths by using hyperbolic expressions (i.e., "they [all fathers] are the generation of fathers who had no clue"). First, this myth ignores the diversity of fathers. Some fathers can be very involved in their children's life regardless of their generation. A group of fathers may be more supportive than other groups of fathers. Influences of race/ethnicity and class on fatherhood are also underestimated when people talk about fathers of each generation as one group. Certain cultural and ethnic background of fathers may be encouraged to take care of children more than other categories of fathers. Working-class fathers whose partners also work to support family finance may participate more in childcare activities, compared to middle-class fathers whose partners are stay-at-home mothers. Second, LaRossa noted, suggesting that an entire generation of fathers is incapable of taking care of children over time "reinforce[s] and reproduce[s] institutional sexism" (F6) because it implies that all men are incompetent parents.

The interaction between Christopher and Sarah was also interesting to look at. Responding to Christopher's memory that his father never changed a diaper, Sarah said "Maybe he did [You probably do not remember it]." This is an example of a *mnemonic battle* (Zerubavel 1997) in that Christopher and Sara argued over how and what they remembered.

William's approach was very similar to Christopher's. He said:

William: I have a very emotional mother and an emotionally distant father, but one of the biggest things is that I don't think my father followed his father. I think we are capable emotionally on [doing] certain things. Things change. Parenting changed and things change. Women's rights and everything changed. My dad was just incapable of showing emotion. I hear from all my friends like that. Wow! You know. I think one of the things with my daughter is it's okay that guys cry and it's okay to show emotion. I want her to understand that men are idiots (laugh). I want my son to know that too. You can't be carrying stereotypes ... There is a horrible person out there, but that's because ... they are horrible people because that's where they come from. It's the same thing for gender. I try every day; try not to be like my father emotionally. It's something you have to remind yourself always, you know.

I have three remarks on William's narrative. First, he explained that all his friends agreed that fathers of his father's generation refused to show their emotions, just like Christopher suggested. Like Christopher, William was born in the mid 1970s and he compared fathers in the 1970s and 2000s. Second, William also focused on his father's personality and explained that his father "was incapable to showing emotions." He valued emotional expressions and tried to imprint the perception on his daughter that it was okay if you saw boys crying and showing emotions. Finally, William said, "I try every day, try not to be like my father emotionally. It's something you have to remind yourself always, you know." This was ironic because he commented earlier that he believed his father did not follow his father. It was possible that William's father did not like to see his father's emotions; therefore, William's father was not expressive. Now William was trying to show emotions because he did not enjoy his unemotional father. Then, my question is, what will happen to his child? How do they evaluate the father who expresses emotions when they become parents? Is he going to grow up thinking showing emotion is positive or negative?

Finally, Jane suggested:

Jane: We do probably ... do more than we think, just we ... just supposed to do it. So, we don't really relate to our childhood which is just ... we think that's how we are supposed to do. You know.

Jane, her husband, and two children lived in a small town. She was a stay-at-home mother, but she participated in many community services to meet other mothers to exchange information about childrearing. Jane made this statement after we discussed how her childhood experiences with her parents influenced her present parenting practices. For Jane, it was important to do what parents were expected to do, rather than imitating what her parents did for her. In her mind, she and her parents were in different circles (like figure 5.2). Jane did not go through dramatic childhood experiences such as divorce or abuse; at least she did not describe it during the interview.

Fathers like Christopher and William who were eager to become more involved in childcare than their fathers did may be called the “generative fathers” (Snarey 1993). According to Snarey (1993), many American fathers tend to be the “generative fathers” who believe that they can't learn much from fathers of the previous generation because they do not share the same problems due to historical changes. Today's fathers, for example, need to monitor their children's access to internet. Gender role expectations changed now and then. Parenting experts discovered “new” and “better” parenting styles for contemporary fathers. Based on such backgrounds, Snarey (1993) discovered that there are two patterns to describe intergenerational relationships: modeling and reworking. Modeling fathers would try to replicate what their father's did for them. Reworking fathers would be critical about their father's parenting skills; thus, they would try to modify their fathering approach. Based on my interviews, reworking fathers/mothers were more common among American fathers and mothers; in addition, I found that American fathers and mothers were not only critical about their parents' parenting skills but

also tried to express they were better parents than their parents were for them. For instance, Peter said “ ... I don’t agree with them [his parents]. So, there are basic things when we started the household, we approached differently.” Christopher expressed “They are the generation of fathers who had no clue...Our fathers never changed diapers for us. Well, I don’t remember if he did, but I don’t think he did. So, we have to be conscious about what we do.” William believed “...My dad was just incapable of showing emotion...I try every day; try not to be like my father emotionally. It’s something you have to remind yourself always, you know.” What was the purpose for them to say that? Heine and Lehman (1995) discussed that such self-enhancing manner is especially important for Americans because it correlates with their sense of well being and self esteem (also see Alloy and Ahrens 1987; Lewinsohn, Mischel, Chaplin, and Barton 1980). This is another example of how culture and cognition produce family relationships.

We can see from the examples I discussed that participant American parents focused on their parents’ personalities to assess parenting skills. For American mothers and fathers, how determined they were to become good parents was the key. In other words, American parents were less likely to construct parenting styles and beliefs related to their parents’; instead, they created parenthood different from their parents to become better parent. Although this was one way to look at the impact of parents on the parenting of the next generation, it was not universal. From the interviews with Japanese parents, I found that Japanese mothers and fathers used very different cognitive processes to view the influence of their parents on their parenting experiences.

The differences between Japanese parents and American parents can be explained by employing Stokes and Hewitt’s concept of *aligning actions*. Aligning actions, according to Stokes and Hewitt (1976:838) are the narratives and accounts people use “to restore or assure

meaningful interaction in the face of problematic situations of one kind or another.” Japanese parents tended to see and talk about the relationship between themselves and their own parents as favorable-to-favorable. Thus, Japanese parents cognitively aligned themselves and their parents. On the other hand, American parents tended to view their parents’ parenting styles as problematic (unfavorable); therefore, they tried to restore what parents should be as a parent. In American parents’ mind, the relationship between themselves and their parents are unaligned.

In this chapter, I described how Japanese parents and American parents interpreted their childhood memories with their parents and how participant parents explained the influence of their parents on the construction of their parenting beliefs and practices. Ultimately, I clarified how fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States had similar or different views of their relationships with their parents. We now have an idea of parents’ views on their parents between the two countries. Knowing this, how do parents talk about their relationship with their children? What kinds of parents do they want to become? How do their childhood experiences influence their parenting styles? These are the questions I will to discuss in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### **“I GREW UP WITH MY CHILD” VS. “I WANT TO INFLUENCE MY CHILD”**

In the previous chapter, I explained that Japanese parents and American parents had unique ways of evaluating their parents' parenting beliefs and practices; as a result, each group of parents tended to view the relationship with their own parents in a specific manner. Did the way these parents see their own parents influence how American and Japanese fathers and mothers related to their children? How were they similar or different? What kinds of parents did participants' parents want to be? These are the questions that I will answer in this chapter.

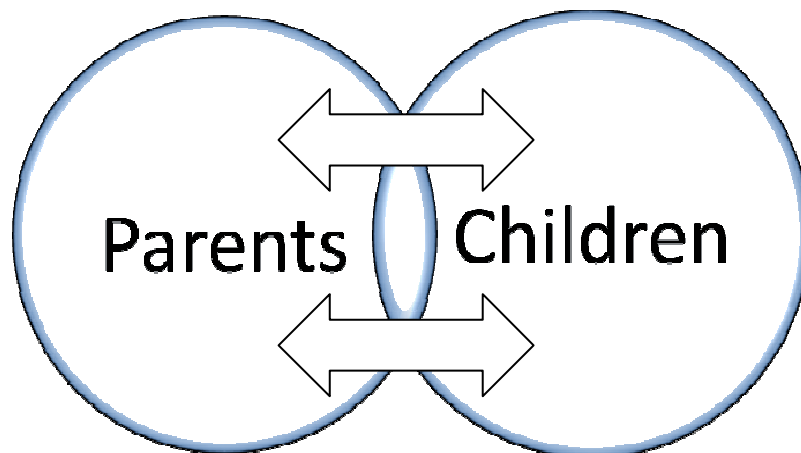
While I was conducting interviews, I saw that fathers and mothers in the two countries tended to relate with their children differently. In Japan, parents let their children stay in the same room, and they seemed comfortable talking about various parenting issues in front of their children. In the United States, parents created a private environment where the parents and I could focus on the interview. Through observation of the physical interview settings, I noticed that Japanese parents treated their children as part of the group; conversely, American parents set clear boundaries between the adults and the children. One of my research goals was to understand the thought processes of parents when they were interacting with their children in such ways. How did fathers and mothers in the two nations view the relationship to their children? How did parents cognitively organize this information? The answers to these questions are key to explaining the influence of culture on parents' behaviors.

Based on the data I collected, I discovered that fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States shared unique views on parent-child relationships. For example, Japanese fathers and mothers viewed the parent-child relationship as reciprocal. That is, both parent and child

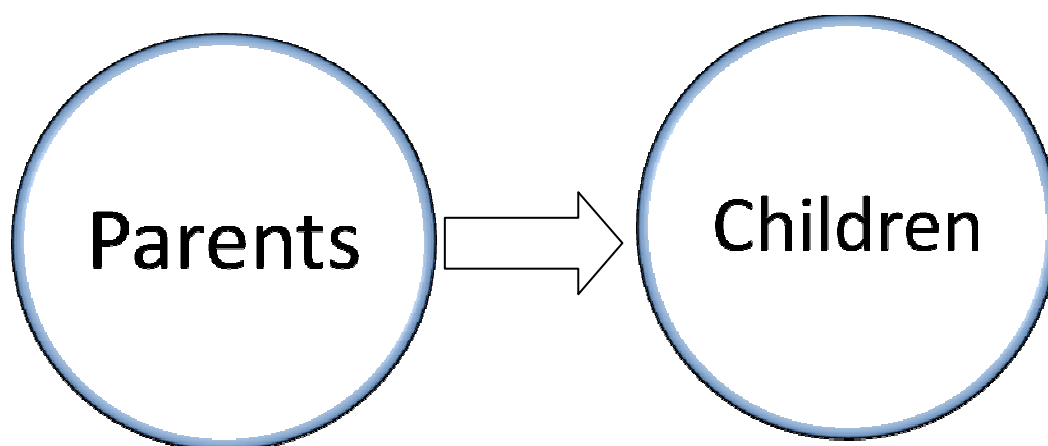


could be teacher or student, depending on the context. Japanese parents said they taught their children, but they discussed incidents during which they felt they learned from children as well. Figure 6.1 is an illustration of Japanese parents' perceptions on parent-child relationships. In contrast, American parents tended to see the relationship with their children in one direction, as 6.2 shows. Parent-child interactions were similar to teacher-student communications, where parents act as a life coach for children; as a result, many American fathers and mothers emphasized the importance of their influence over their children's formation of morals and values while they were still young.

**Figure 6.1: Japanese Parents' View of their Relationship with their Children**



**Figure 6.2: American Parents' View of their Relationship with their Children**



### **JAPANESE PARENTS' VIEW OF CHILDREARING**

In chapter 5, I discussed that participant parents in Japan and the United States used cognitive processes in different ways to describe childhood experiences with their parents. I also discovered that parents in the two countries shared unique cognitive processes when looking at their relationship with their children; therefore, I will demonstrate Japanese parents' approach in this section. Examples of questions that I asked during the interview to understand how parents saw their children were: What kind of person do you want your children to be? What do you do to encourage the children to be like that? How do you spend time with your children? Are there any concerns about raising children?

When Japanese fathers and mothers described their relationship with their children, they did not draw a sharp line between themselves and their children. Instead of having the approach that parents were the teachers and children were the students, Japanese parents viewed that parents and children as both teachers and students, depending on the situation. In other words,

parents and children learned from each other and grew up together in Japanese parents' mind. In addition, Japanese parents, compared to American parents, tended to talk more about how gender differences (i.e., parents and children) played a role to construct parenting philosophies and practices. In the following section, I will discuss two variables that emerged from my analysis of the interviews.

### ***Children will Learn from Parents***

When fathers and mothers in Japan discussed parenting experience with their children, the main focus of attention was on how much their children learned from their parents rather than how much parents influenced their children. In a way, the consequences were similar in that children learned adequate skills to live as social beings; however, the processes used to accomplish this goal were not the same. In Japanese parents' mind, parents were guides who showed children the right direction. It was up to children to decide how much they learned from their parents, and up to the parents to do their best to demonstrate the right way to live. For example, Kengo said:

Kengo: I would like to be the guide. I want to be the guide for him until he gets older.

Interviewer: Can you be a bit more specific?

Kengo: I think that he will grow up seeing how I live ... For example, types of jobs, how to use money, how to relate to people ... I think that he will learn what to do by watching how I am doing all those. I especially feel that way recently. My way of speaking influences him a lot. As I said earlier, I feel that I have to show him examples until he can solve problems. If I think about it now, my parents did that, too. Well, I don't really think too seriously about it. But I want to be an example for him as much as my parents did for me.

Kengo raised three interesting ideas. First, he said that he wanted to be “the guide” for his son. I asked him to describe his answer in detail because I wanted to understand exactly what he meant. Then Kengo said he must be a good example because his son would learn from the things he did and the way he acted. Instead of verbally teaching his son, Kengo tried to direct his son through perceptions (of types of good jobs, ways to handle money, and social skills). Second, Kengo mentioned the timing he would focus on being his son’s guide (“until he can solve the problem”). Kengo said that he wanted to be a guide “until he [his son] gets older.” I was going to ask how old was old enough for Kengo to stop being a guide, but then he continued talking about types of job, usage of money, and interaction with others. These were not the kinds of things that four- to six-year old child would learn from his father. Stated differently, Kengo saw that there were various aspects of life that his son could learn from Kengo over time.

LaRossa and Reitzes (2001) discussed how the culture of childhood in the United States became more *chronometrical* over time, as scholars and pediatricians increasingly talk about child development on year-by-year bases or month-by-month basis (i.e., when children should start talking, eating solid foods, and walking). LaRossa and Reitzes (2001) explained that *chronometrical childhood* emerged due to various historical forces; one of which was industrialization. Both adults and children were considered to be part of the workforce in an agricultural society; as a result, the distinction between childhood and adulthood tended to be more blurred. Industrialization encouraged people to move from rural agricultural life to factory work in a city. Children were less likely to be part of the labor force; as a result, the idea of “modern” childhood emerged.

In the wake of industrialization, children were more likely to be protected under the law and expected to have specific rights as members of society. Emergence of the new ideology

such as “modern” childhood provided the idea that adults (protectors, workers) and children (protected) belonged to the separate groups. Second, parents became more aware of children’s physical, emotional, and intellectual development due to medical advancement such as pediatric medicine and developmental psychology. Many parenting experts advised parents what “normal” child development should be; therefore, parents were pressured to follow what to do and when to do for their children. Third, emergence of the complex school system (e.g., public school vs. private school) put an emphasize on IQ. As a result, parents and school teachers became more aware of children’s cognitive development in order to classify children according to their age and intelligence. These historical forces not only changed the pace of children’s life but they also created power dynamics between parents and children because parents were expected to be a gatekeeper for their children’s development.

Although the patterns were not identical, industrialization, medical advancement, and the development of school system also occurred in Japan over time. I agree that some aspects of Japanese children’s development are chronometrically examined (i.e., physical and intellectual development); however, participant Japanese fathers and mothers were less likely to talk about their children’s learning process during the course of parenting at least when their children were four- to six-years old.

Lastly, at the end Kendo said, “I want to be an example for him as much as my parents did for me.” He learned about life from watching his parents, and he wanted to do the same for his son. His way of thinking could be interpreted as not very positive because Kengo’s father, Kengo himself, and his son might select similar lifestyles instead of doing better over the generations. In Chapter 5, I said that competition generally was not the Japanese parents’ focus when they were thinking about the relationship with their parents. It appeared to be the same

when Japanese parents thought about the relationship with their children. Masaharu's narrative explained this point. He worked about 50 hours a week as a sales representative. Although he spent only a limited time with his son during week, he did volunteer to be a coach of his son's baseball team so that he could share time and interest with him. I asked what being a parent meant.

Masaharu: What are parents? I guess they are someone who shows children a life path.

Interviewer: What do you mean "life path"?

Masaharu: So, I tell him what is right and wrong based on my beliefs. I don't mean to enforce him, but I want to let him know. Well, that's my ideal. (laugh)

Masaharu's response was very comparable with Kengo's. When parents said, "I want to teach my child how to ...," the direction was one way, from parents to child. Participant American fathers and mothers tended to use this view during the interviews. Masaharu and Kengo's views were different because the teaching was reciprocal. Parents provided knowledge, but the children also needed to be involved to select the given information. The different views of the parent-child relationship between Japanese parents and American parents could be supported by child developmental study. For example, Azuma (1994) examined how mothers in Japan and the United States helped children to accomplish various tasks. She found that Japanese mothers alluded to children's mistakes (e.g., "Why don't you try again?" "Are you sure?"), and encouraged them to find the solutions. In contrast, American mothers were more likely to explicitly tell their children they were wrong (e.g., "It is wrong." "Not that."). Although her study was on mothers, I saw the same patterns in my interviews with fathers. Japanese fathers were more likely perform the role of guide, and American fathers were more likely act like teachers.

Yuji also talked about his parenting beliefs by using an example. Yuji and his wife Kanako were raising two sons. Yuji was a government employee, and Kanako was a school teacher. Although both did a significant amount of household chores and childcare, Yuji's mother lived with them so that she could watch their two sons until Yuji and Kanako came home from work.

Interviewer: What are parents?

Yuji: What are they? Someone who watches over children?

Kanako: That's exactly what I thought about.

Yuji: I just watch what he does and if he did something wrong, then I say, "Wait." As long as I can see what he is doing, I let him be free. If he said he wants to go somewhere and it is okay with me, then I will say, "Go." If I think it is bad, then I just say, "Wait." I think that is enough.

Yuji was not really illustrating how he would handle the situation when his son decided to go somewhere. Instead, he was trying to explain that this was the way he interacted with his son. It could be about the types of school or job his son wanted to select and/or the ways his son socialized with others. Yuji was less willing to make decisions for his son. He wanted to help his son to make better decisions by giving him a signal to think about bad decisions again.

Many Japanese fathers and mothers said they wanted to "watch over" their children. I was curious about how they stated this, so I asked for details whenever Japanese parents used the phrase. Each parent used different examples to explain their point but all shared the idea that they wanted to "watch over" children as Naoko and Hiroshi described:

Interviewer: You said earlier that you want to watch over your child. Can I ask what you mean by that?

Hiroshi: Right. I am not sure how to explain because it is about the future. I guess that I will say and do things for him to a certain extent, but other than that I just stay back and watch what he does.

Naoko: Let him think about it.

Hiroshi: Right. I don't want to be overprotective. So, I watch him from behind and help him if it is necessary.

When Japanese fathers and mothers thought about raising children, they tended to focus on children's lives in a large context. Japanese parents were less likely to wonder whether they were making the right decision on each step because there were multiple paths to reach the same goal. Their perspective was in contrast to American parents who tended to believe that every decision had to be right because it led to the next step which ultimately led to reaching the goal. Just like Kanako and Yuji, Naoko and Hiroshi did not focus on a specific incident or behavior as an example; instead, their explanations were very general.

It could be difficult for people who preferred to communicate in more direct ways to understand what Japanese parents were trying to do. Either way, Naoko and Hiroshi were also a couple who wanted to relate with their child in a reciprocal way. Naoko and Hiroshi, as well as other Japanese couples, did not view good and bad as polar opposites or belonging to two categories; instead, they looked at things as a continuum from extremely good to tremendously bad. As long as their child's behavior or decision was at an acceptable level based on their standards, Japanese parents tended to make peace with it. Therefore, Japanese fathers and mothers expressed less control over their children's life.

During the data analysis, I discovered a unique pattern among Japanese mothers' narratives. Although Japanese mothers agreed with the idea of being a guide and wanting their children to learn from them in general, they were more aware of gender roles during the course of childrearing. I provide two examples here. Shizuka was the mother of two girls and one boy. She was a stay-at-home mother at the time of the interview. Because the focal child was one of



her daughters, the interview was mainly about that child; however, Shizuka articulately discussed her gender role expectations of all of her children.

Shizuka: People often point out that girls and mothers are the same gender. Boys see mothers as an eternal girlfriend. I don't know what to say, but my daughter and I are like rivals. But when I raise her, I want her to watch what I do. If she was a boy, then I would want him to watch his father well.

Interviewer: What makes you think so?

Shizuka: Well, they have to live like that anyway. I would like them to learn the basics from us.

Interviewer: Is there anything specific that you want your daughter to learn from you?

Shizuka: Daily routine. For example, boys can walk around naked in the house, but girls ... should be shy to do that.

Shizuka also took the position of guide as a parent; however, she classified types of behavior she wanted her daughters and son to learn from her or their father. In her mind, certain behaviors were gender specific and that learning and following gender role expectations help children to have an easier time in society; therefore, Shizuka tried to optically socialize their children about gender roles on what girls can do and cannot do. Mika was another example.

Mika: I want him to look up his father. I want him to think about how to live as a man. I want him to ask his father if he faces a challenge, but decide what to do himself.

In Mika's mind, there were at least two categories of lives: as a man and as a woman. Although she gave her son the freedom to make decisions, Mika wanted her son to think about things from a man's perspective.

Due to various historical forces such as economic changes, legal changes, and the feminist movement especially after World War II, Japanese values have become more gender egalitarian over time (Mita 1985; Robins-Mowry 1983). Gender role attitudes of Japanese men

and women became more egalitarian particularly since the 1970s (Prime Minister's Office 1988), and women's educational attainment and employment rate increased (Azuma and Ogura 1984). However, Suzuki (1991) reported that Japanese women still highly value the roles of women at home (e.g., wife and mother) more so than do American women. In the same study, she pointed out that Japanese women and American women shared unique approaches to find a role model. Japanese women were much more likely to seek a female role model. American women tended to not to consider gender as a main concern to identify a role model; their role model could be a male or female.

Living in an individualistic culture versus collectivist culture might explain the difference. For example, if woman lived in collectivistic culture such as Japan, it is harder to ignore the relationship to others to define their identities and roles. Therefore, once Japanese women are married and have children, they are more likely to stress the roles of women (wife and mother) and seek the female role model. Even if Japanese women wanted to be business oriented, they are more likely to find female role model who did well in the business field but also performed good mother and wife role at home. In a recent study, Yanagihara (2007) noted that Japanese mothers still ran the household even though they had a full-time job, and Japanese fathers who participated in her study spent just 37 minutes a day with their children on average which is one tenth of how much mothers spend time with their children. In contrast, in an individualistic culture like the United States, one would select the role model who made her happy as an individual. A woman might look up to a person who was highly educated and business oriented, regardless of gender, if she found happiness in it because one's construction of identity was less likely rely on the relationship to others.

Finally, some Japanese mothers did not express the importance of control or power over their children's lives. The following are two examples. Shoko was the mother of a daughter and son. She and her partner lived outside of the city with in-laws (her partner's parents).

Shoko: Well, what I can do is just to raise him. Ah ... it really ... children grow up themselves. It's not like I "raise" her ... I let her know good and bad things, but she grows up regardless.

If we took what she said literally, it sounded almost as if she was neglecting her daughter.

("Children grow up themselves. It's not like I 'raise' her ... she grows up regardless.") We should not assume, however, that she did not do anything for her daughter. During the interview, I saw Shoko interacting quite a bit with her children. She provided snacks and listened to the children's stories patiently. Shoko explained the interview to them and told them to say "hello" to me.

There probably were two reasons that Shoko explained childrearing the way she did. First, Shoko was one of the parents who believed the main role of parents was to be the guide for their children. Because she was the supporter rather than the teacher, she did not feel much pressure to lead her daughter's life, but would stay back and be proud of her daughter's development. The second point was the composition of her family's household. As I mentioned earlier, Shoko lived in a three-generation household, which meant that there were four adults (grandfather, grandmother, father, and mother) who took care of the children. The family ran a business from home; therefore, all four were in each other's presence most of the time, even though they were working. If there were four adult family members at home (and all get along well), the weight of childcare on the mother was lessened because all could share tasks, even if the tasks were not evenly distributed. Shoko could be under less pressure, causing her to feel more relaxed about childrearing. Although it was true that among participant parents, Japanese

fathers and mothers presented less control over their children's life, cases similar to Shoko were decreasing. Makino (2006) reported that 24 percent of Japanese families lived in three generational household in 2003 compared to 54 percent in 1975. The three generation household thus is less common in Japan now. Parents, especially mothers, are the main care givers for children; as a result, today's mothers may express more control over children's life than yesterday's mothers might have.

### ***Parents and Children are Linked***

Another variable I want to discuss here is how fathers and mothers in Japan viewed the relationship with their children and interacted with them. As I described in Figure 6.1, Japanese fathers and mothers located their children very close to them in their minds. Based on my data analysis, there were three main ways to illustrate their views. I want to explain the first approach with the narratives of Kenji and Hitoshi. During the interview, Kenji said, "my hobby is my family." He truly enjoyed spending time with his partner and son, and he described that the three of them were always together on Sunday. The following conversation was about a childhood memory with his mother.

Kenji: My mother used to take me to X city when I was young. I loved going to the toy store in the mall.

Interviewer: Yes, there are two big malls.

Kenji: Exactly. I used to watch the trains and stuff. My mother took me.

Interviewer: Do you remember it well?

Kenji: Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you think you remember it well?

Kenji: Well, I loved it. That's why I take my son to do the same. I assume that he likes it because I liked it. It may be for selfish reasons though.

Kenji talked about this memorable event with his mother, and then said he tried to do the same for his son. He went to the toy store not because he still enjoyed it, but because he remembered how much he enjoyed it as a child and believed his son would feel the same. Kenji added to this point that, "It *may* be for selfish reasons," but Kenji saw his son's position from the view of his own childhood. In addition, he focused on feelings associated with the event rather than consequences of whether it was educational or not.

Hitoshi also paid attention to having common emotions with his daughter. He worked 50 hours a week for a moving company.

Hitoshi: I don't want to sit still. I want to keep doing something. That's why I go places with her.

Interviewer: O.K. So, one reason is that you want to do something. Do you want to do something for her by going places?

Hitoshi: I don't think about much, but I think ... If I enjoy it, I think she enjoys it as well.

During the interview, Hitoshi was a little apologetic because he did not remember much about the childhood experiences he had with his parents. Therefore, Hitoshi focused on present situations, unlike Kenji's remembered events, but Hitoshi also believed his daughter would enjoy something if he did. Again, Hitoshi's focus was emotion. Later on the interview, I asked Hitoshi where he often went with his daughter. He answered that he and his daughter loved to go to amusement parks when he had the chance.

It was not only emotional states that the Japanese parents viewed as close to their children. Hiroshi, for example, understood that he and his son taught and learned from each other. Because he saw that the relationship with his son as reciprocal, he did not create a rigid

boundary between parents and child. Hiroshi was comfortable suggesting that he and his son grew up together.

Hiroshi: Well ... I ... I look after him until he grows up ... teaching what good and bad things are. Once he knows how to distinguish, I want him to do it in his way. But until then ... I want to enjoy and grow up together with him. I would like us to grow up together.

Asami and Masaru were another couple who also suggested that they grew up with their child. They were raising one girl and two boys. Although Asami and Masaru were not the youngest parents I interviewed in Japan, they became parents at the youngest age among the Japanese respondents. Masaru was shy during the interview, but he and Asami looked at each other often to confirm each others' opinions. The impression I received from their interactions was that Masaru and Asami communicated well on a daily basis to do well as younger parents.

Asami: It may not be the answer to the question, but I can do anything for my daughter. I never felt that way before. Once I became a parent, I realized how much I can do and I understand that my parents also did their best for me.

Interviewer: When do you feel so?

Asami: For example ... maybe it's how parents should be, but when I am really tired and my daughter wakes up. I feel unhappy, but I still do things for her even though I am exhausted.

Masaru: Well, I kind of feel like we grow up with the kids. It may be because we are still very young ...

Asami: I agree.

There were two interesting points in the conversation. Asami said, "I can do anything for my daughter (the focal child of the interview)." Based on the way she said it, she did not draw a boundary between things she did for herself and for her daughter. She also pointed out the timing, saying she had never felt that strong a bond before she became a parent. Then, Masaru

added that he and Asami also grew up through raising children because they learned how to be patient and sacrifice their own needs for their children.

Third, Japanese parents tended to talk about their children as a part of them. For instance Kasumi said:

Kasumi: I also think that parents are absolute. You know, we start to understand during adolescence that parents make mistakes. Although they are wrong, we can forgive parents. If someone else did it, we wouldn't forgive. But we can forgive if it is our parents. I think it probably is the same for children. I forgive my children because they are mine.

In Kasumi's mind, there were good things and bad things done by her parents or children and things done by others. Kasumi said, "I forgive my children because they are mine." She probably assumed that her parents were like that, so Kasumi also forgave her parents in return. She was mentally classifying two groups of people: the in-group (parents and children) and the out-group.

Finally, Masaru described how his identity changed once he became a parent. He was a government employee. His work schedule varied depending on seasons. He usually worked 40 hours a week, but he was at work over 60 hours a week during busy times. Masaru loved outdoor activities. He enjoyed running, biking, and swimming. One of his dreams was to do these with his son once the son became a little older. He said:

Masaru: It is not the same if my child is here or not. I didn't know before he was born, but I feel that I am alive because of him.

Interviewer: When do you feel that way?

Masaru: Well, I think I feel like that every day. If he wasn't here, I wouldn't have to work. It is a bit extreme example though.

For Masaru, his son was a part of him because he said, "I feel that I am alive because of him," and he felt that way every day. Then, he added, "If he wasn't here, I wouldn't have to work."

Parents often said they worked so the family would survive, especially the children. It probably was true if we considered the commitment they had to make for the job. The idea was not totally correct, however, because individuals have to work to support themselves. What Masaru was probably trying to say was that he worked extra hard for his son's well-being; as a result, his selfhood was greatly influenced by his son. To summarize how Japanese fathers and mothers viewed the relationship with their children, they tended to locate their children very close in their mind such that parents and children had a reciprocal link and would teach and learn from each other.

## **AMERICAN PARENTS' VIEW OF CHILDREARING**

When American fathers and mothers talked about their children, they tended to draw a sharp line between themselves and their children to specify individual roles in the relationship. For example, parents were seen as teachers and children were students. Fathers and mothers in the United States constructed parenting beliefs and practices based on these ideas. Two variables helped to explain American parents' approach to the relationship with their children. In the following section, I will provide examples from the interviews.

### ***Parents' Influence over Children and Timing***

When American fathers and mothers described their parenting experiences with their four- to six-year-old children, they tended to focus on the importance of timing and the influence of parents over children's moral, value, and personal development. Parents and children were viewed as two different categories of family members, and it was assumed that the parents would be the ones to decide what and how to teach their children. Control over the children's learning was direct from parents to children (see 6.2).



Matt, for example, was father of daughter and son. He worked about 50 hours a week in the legal field. Although he had limited contact with his children during the day, Matt reported he was involved in his children's life when he was at home. Matt was also very conscious about his daughter's academic and social advancement and he said:

Interviewer: Do you [Matt and Jane] talk about your daughter?

Matt: Absolutely, but we talk about schooling and whether we are making the right decisions. We talk about what kind of scheduling or events and we talk about her a lot. We both think that parenting is the number one priority and right now is the most critical time because this is the time that is most moldable.

The message Matt was trying to convey was very common among the American parents I interviewed. Three reasons may be help to explain why. First, Matt said, "... we talk about schooling and whether we are making the right decisions." The decisions that a father and/or mother make today (e.g., whether their child goes to a private school, public school, or parochial school) would lead to decisions they may have to make tomorrow (e.g., the kinds of friends with whom their child interacts, the elementary school to which their child goes). Because American parents viewed that one mistake might lead their daughter to the totally different path, they seemed to emphasize the importance of everyday decision-making regarding their children's lives. During the interviews, Japanese parents also said they thought about what was the best for their children (i.e., types of school, friend). But they were less likely to stress the idea that every decision counts for their children's future, seeing different routes to take to reach the same goal.

Second, Matt said, "... parenting is the number one priority and right now is the most critical time because this is the time that is most moldable." In this sentence, he was talking about the importance of timing when teaching children life lessons. He believed that the four- to six-year-old time frame was the "most moldable" because a child interacted with limited groups

of people who were usually known through his or her parents, and learned various life lessons through parents and acquaintances. Once his daughter went to school for a longer hours, she would talk to more people and learn values with which her parents might not necessarily agree. Thus, Matt was trying to mold his daughter's life views during this early time. American parents, in other words, seemed to cut their children's life course more precisely than Japanese parents did. American fathers and mothers tended to insist on the importance of children's age; however, Japanese fathers and mothers were less likely to talk about what they currently should do because of their children's age.

Third, Matt categorized priorities into parenting and non-parenting activities. According to him, parenting activities were more valuable than other priorities. Giving a rank of categorizations (e.g., types of task, groups of people) was often done among American parents during the interviews.

Similar to Matt, Katherine emphasized timing and her influence over her daughter's development.

Interviewer: O.K. Then how about meaning of a parent for you. What does it mean for you to be a parent?

Katherine: We both talked about, but now is the time — until he was 30 and I was 27, no you were 33 — to do our own things. Poured into ourselves and once they came into our lives, it's now our duty and responsibility to pour as much as we can because the time we can influence her is so limited ... If I have any ... My goal that ... what I want for my child is ... I want to have influence over her. I don't want to lose influence over her. I want to be able to influence her.

In her mind, Katherine classified time as before or after she became a parent. Until she had her first child, she focused on her life; but Katherine's center of attention shifted to her child after becoming a parent. Katherine said that it was not just her life but life as a couple with her partner that changed after becoming a parent.

According to Zerubavel (1997), we have different ways to reckon time. For example, the way we use calendars or clocks to refer to happenings can be called *standard time-reckoning frameworks* because everyone knows exactly when things occurred (i.e., “my life changed when my daughter was born at 2 a.m. on April 2, 2005”). In contrast, Katherine used *social dating frameworks* which is the method of reckoning time when a couple recalls an event to describe temporal change. (Levine refers to this as “event time” in contrast to “clock time” [Levine 1997].) Katherine explained how she and her husband started their collective life as parents since the birth of their first daughter. In this case, transition was more events oriented than telling me the exact date and time of their transformation. During the interviews, couples often used *social dating frameworks* or event time such as “when our daughter started to go school” and “when we moved to the new house.” Each event may not have significant meanings on the calendar or other people, but participant parents used incidents as symbolic of their transition as a couple.

The age of the child was also important to her when Katherine discussed timing. According to her, there was a time limit during which she and her partner could influence their child’s life. Although she did not specify when the cut-off point of a child’s influential age was, it was clear that she categorized a child’s development based on whether she could influence it or not. It is also important to note that Katherine’s categorization might directly affect her parenting style and interactions with her daughter. During the influential time, Katherine might emphasize teaching her daughter certain things (i.e., morals, manners), and then she might shift the way to influence her daughter later by focusing on different aspects of life.

Roger provided a comparable view of his relationship with his son. Roger and Susan (his wife) were telling me about some parents of their daughter’s friends. According to Roger and

Susan, some parents did not seriously take parental responsibility. I asked what they thought the responsibilities of parents were. He said:

Roger: We as a family try to sit and have dinner together, even if it's frozen pizza. We sit around the table, so I need ... there is no need ... my son has no right or expectation of privacy. If I think that he is doing something and it is going to not benefit or get him in trouble, I am allowed to go look at his room. My responsibility is to keep him straight so that he does know right and wrong. He will be on the right track.

Although he participated in his son's life by sharing hobbies and attending his soccer matches, Roger set a clear boundary between him and his son. He said, "my son has no right or expectation of privacy" and "my responsibility is to keep him straight." Evidently, the father had more power and influence over his son's life in Roger's mind as well. The direction again was liner from father to son.

Another interesting point was that participant American fathers and mothers expressed a sense of control over their children's life that I did not witness as much during the interview with Japanese parents. I found the pattern very interesting because stereotypical Asian parents' images were authoritative ("do as I say") and American parents were often described as parents who were friendly and allowed children to negotiate the deal. It could be due to the age of children in my sample. Parents of older children might have responded differently. In any case, American fathers and mothers were more likely to emphasize the importance of control over children than did fathers and mothers in Japan. American parents tended to explain that good parents were the ones who supported children's development based on social, medical, political, and moral expectations. American parents might pay more attention to controlling their children's life due to their perception of danger. Crime rates (e.g., abduction, gun accidents) are much higher in the United States, compared to Japan; consequently, American parents might feel

stronger needs to be in control to protect their children. Good parents, in their mind, needed to be in control.

According to Nisbett (2003), being able to control situations is an important aspect for Americans because it relates to their mental health and self-esteem. If that is the case, expressing a sense of control over their children's life relates to American fathers' and mothers' self-esteem as a parent. Losing control over their children means viewing oneself as an incompetent parent. Nagashima (1973) also discussed how American individuals often assume that speakers are responsible for convincing listeners. In other words, speakers needed to clearly state the expectations and rules to lead listeners to understand the situation. When parents were dealing with children, parents were expected to exercise their full capacity to make their children follow what they said because it was the parents' responsibility as speakers. Thus, cultural expectations in an individualistic culture might influence the perception of the relationship between parents and children.

Taylor, another father, grew up as a gifted child. He skipped two grades, so he was always the youngest child in his class and among peers. He recalled his childhood, mentioning that he had some challenges because he was physically smaller and unable to participate in certain events. For example, he wasn't allowed to wrestle with classmates in gym class and he had a hard time dating during high school because girls did not want to date a younger boy. As a result of his experience, Taylor was very conscious about age-appropriate things in his daughter's life.

Taylor:	I don't know ... I can't speak for folks across the board. But I think it is one of those things where my deep fear is that, as parents, if I were to try to empower someone who doesn't have the skill or maturity to make rational decisions at this point of time, I will be doing a disservice to them because I am putting them in a position to fail. So, I think that regardless of social, political beliefs, you really need to provide structure for these
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years and you can do whatever you want while their teenagers and raise whatever you want to after that. But, at this point of their life, they are children still. They don't know what boundaries are and I always tell Courtney, but the scariest thing for me isn't the drug dealer or serial killer but teenagers, because a teenager is large enough and physically big enough. They can do stuff. Shoot things and that, yet they don't have mental maturity to understand the true consequences of what they can do. That makes them more dangerous. So, that's why to me it's more important to provide so much structure at this point and set boundaries so that when they get past a certain age or maturity level, you can take off. So, we are very conservative about what we let them do.

When Taylor talked about what he needed to do for his daughter, he said, "... if I were to try to empower someone who doesn't have skill or maturity to make rational decisions at this point of time, I will be doing a disservice to them because I am putting them in a position to fail." He was aware of (classifies) what his daughter could do and could not do at this age; consequently, he decided to focus on age-appropriate lessons and activities for her. Similar to Matt, Taylor seriously questions decisions he made because he believed his present actions on behalf of his daughter would make her a responsible teen. In other words, he believed that every choice needed to be made wisely because one bad decision could lead a child down the wrong path. This might be due to Taylor's view that life and events were either a success or failure.

Lillian was a mother who shared similar views to Taylor's. Lillian was a stay-at-home mother. She said that she liked creative activities, and decorating the house was one of her interests at the time of the interview. Lillian also said that time went very fast and that she did not have moments to complete projects because she was driving around the city for her son's activities. Thus, she was conscious about her son's needs, and decided on what she should focus on to take care of him in each stage of development.

Interviewer: What are parents?

Lillian: First thing comes to my mind is huge responsibility. I think it shifts in different ages. When they were born, keeping this individual alive and

taking care of needs, clean, and feed. When he starts to get older, how to keep them, how to teach them, how to walk, read, how to engage with other kids and now ... he is six. Now it shifted again. How to keep him safe and how do I encourage him in what he wants to do and how do I feed him because he is always hungry, you know. Everything.

Lillian's son was six years old and just started to go school. Although there were other people who could encourage and help her son discover what he wanted to do, such as school teachers and peers, Lillian found it very important to manage "everything" for her son. Thus, many American respondents were very conscious about the timing and control of their children's development and accomplishment. Stated differently, American fathers and mothers tended to see their children's life chronometrically.

### ***Parents and Child are Separate Entities***

In the previous section, I discussed how American fathers and mothers interpreted what it meant to raise four- to six-year-old children. The way American parents related to their children was similar to a teacher-student relationship. This section further explains American parents' mental map to see the relationship with their children. I begin the discussion by using Isabella and Matthew's narrative because it sums up what most American fathers and mothers told me on this subject. Matthew and Isabella recently moved to a suburb looking for a better school for their children. Matthew worked as a consultant which required him to take many business trips from two weeks to two months at a time. Although he had to be away from home, Matthew clarified that he was coming back home on weekend to spends time with children. Isabella was a stay-at-home mother during week, but worked as a nurse on Saturday and Sunday. She was also actively involved in children's school activities. Isabella told me that she often worked as a

volunteer at their children's school, which, for her, was very important because she could learn what was happening at the school (i.e., what children talk about, how teachers do their work).

Interviewer: Well, I now like to ask you as a parent. What does it mean for you to be parent? You saw your parents and you are parents now. What do you think it [being a parent] is for you?

Matthew: Well, we just try what's best for kids. Always do what's best for them. Like we moved because we wanna be in a good school district. You look at what kinds of car because of safety issue. You look at, you know, where we are gonna eat because what they can eat or not.

Isabella: And whether it's a kids-friendly environment, you know. If a restaurant considers for that. So, we are watching their best interests.

Matthew: Right. Everything is always them first and we are second. That's just how it is.

Isabella: Right, we always put them first.

Isabella and Matthew had a four-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son. The focal child for this interview was their daughter; however, it was difficult for them to think about the two separately. During our conversation, Isabella and Matthew raised three interesting ideas. First, it was clear in the narrative that Isabella and Matthew classified their family member into two groups, Isabella and Matthew as parents and their children (see Figure 6.2). In Chapter 5, I discussed how Westerners tended to categorize things and demonstrated how American fathers and mothers classified the generation of parents to talk about the relationship with their parents (e.g., parents of my parent's generation vs. parents of my generation). Similar to that, Mathew and Isabella were using classification to exhibit their relationship with children. Although they could have talked about groups based on gender (e.g., mother and daughter vs. father and son), they used age (adults vs. children) as a marker to set the boundary.

How they prioritized these groups was the second fascinating point. After they created categories of family members, Isabella and Matthew weighted the importance of attention to



each group's needs. According to Isabella and Matthew, their children's needs came before taking care of their interests. The father said, "Everything is always them [children] first and we are second. That's just how it is." For Matthew, parents and children belonged to two different groups, and parents should satisfy their children's needs first all the time. In Matthew's mind, this was not just the best but the only way parents were supposed to relate to their children.

In actuality, there are various types of parenting beliefs and practices based on time period, social class, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and religious beliefs. For example, Lareau (2003) compared parenting styles between middle-class parents and working-class parents, and found that two groups of parents tended to have diverse views for what was best for their children. Middle-class parents practiced a *concerted cultivation* parenting style, in which parents organized their children's daily schedule to foster children's talent and personalities that were necessary to successfully survive in contemporary western capitalist society. For example, parents might identify children's talents (i.e., music, art, sport), and encourage them to participate various activities (i.e., piano lessons, painting classes, soccer games) to foster their abilities. Parents who practiced concerted cultivation were more likely let their children negotiate with them (i.e., how many carrots they have to eat on their plate), and parents tended to treat their children as small adults who have a power to discuss certain issues with adult members of society. On the other hand, working-class parents tended to use an *accomplishment of natural growth* parenting style, in which parents allowed children to grow freely due to their time and economical constrain. Children were less likely take extracurricular lessons. After school, children decided how to spend their time and with what to spend it. Parents who practiced accomplishment of natural growth were less likely to allow children to negotiate deals;

instead, they encouraged their children to follow adult's orders. Both groups of parents loved their children and tried to do their best, but their approaches to raise children were very different.

Historical time is another barometer to compare parenting practices. In agricultural societies, children worked in the fields with their parents and were considered laborers. Children were also expected to take care of various household chores. Such activities were considered as good for children for educational reasons (Zelizer 1985). Parents also were more demanding and strict, compared to how today's parents are. Thus, the best parenting style could be diverse, depending on the historical periods.

In Matthew's and Isabella's mind, there was only one way for being a good parent, which was to prioritize their children's needs all the time. Everything that parents did had to be in the best interests of children. They reified such parental expectation "*as if* they were something else than human products-- such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 89). According to Berger and Luckmann, understanding the process of role reification is important because how people reify role expectations is related to their behavior. Using Matthew and Isabella as an example, they always checked whether places (e.g., restaurant) they visited as a family were child friendly because Matthew and Isabella accepted it as true that this is what parents must do. Although Matthew and Isabella were juggling between work and home life (i.e., Isabella took care of children during the week and Matthew took care of children during the weekend), they could still afford to have a lifestyle that one parent could stay at home for children. If they were dual earner working-class parents, it was very difficult for them to keep up with the expectations. Thus, their family status influenced the way they view how parenting should be.

Andrea raised similar points as Isabella and Matthew, said:

Andrea: As a parent, I really think that you are the boss. You are the parent, not a friend. I don't and can't ... I don't get people trying to be their friends. I mean I want to have a friendly relationship with my children and I want them to feel comfortable coming to me, but I want always for them to know that I am mommy and we are in charge. So, we can talk about it and you can raise your voice, but we will make an ultimate decision and that's the way it is going to be. I still think that parents have to be that way.

In Andrea's mind, a parent was "the boss" who had an ultimate power over a child's life and the children followed orders. Stated differently, they belonged to different categories: leaders and followers. She said she wanted a friendly relationship with her children, but not a friendship. In addition, Andrea wanted to make sure that her children shared the same perspective (parents are the decision-makers and children do what they are told). Ultimately, she believed this was the best way to raise children, so Andrea incorporated it into her parenting beliefs and practices.

Isabella, Matthew, and Andrea's views were not the only way parent-child relationships were described among American parents. In the following examples, I introduce different ways American parents classified family members and focused on fostering their children's well-being. Erica and David did not express power dynamics between them and their son; instead, Erica and David emphasized that their son should find his own individuality. Both of them worked at the same university as professors. Erica told me that they tried to travel at least twice a year so that their children could be exposed to diverse cultures. One of the questions that I asked them was "What do you think are the important personal characteristics for your child?" The following narratives were the excerpts from the conversation.

Erica: Self-reliant. Self-security.

David: I think it is to have the ability to think and act and make the choice that is the right one. Not just what's right for parents and society, but I want him to have the knowledge to make a decision and be happy with it.

Erica: I think it's more self-security rather than independence. I mean, rely on your own decisions. You feel secure about your own individuality and individual decisions.

In David's mind, there were various kinds of decisions a person made in life: 1) to please parents, 2) to fulfill social expectations, and 3) to make you happy as an individual. He wanted his son to have the skill to determine what he wanted and how he should approach it to get there. Erica agreed with David that she wanted that her son to fulfill his needs and find ways to satisfy his goals. This parenting view meant Erica and David saw their son as an individual who could make his own life path. Although both were willing to support him, Erica and David did not stress their power over their son's life.

Some parents discussed their struggle between letting their children find their individuality and wanting to influence them. In the following conversation, Brad and Mary talked about how they were socializing their daughter about religion. Brad and Mary were raising one daughter. Brad worked full-time as a show director, and he loved to read books. Mary used to be a school teacher, but she decided to become a stay-at-home mother after giving a birth to their daughter.

Brad: I worry about religion and our daughter because I was raised in a Catholic household and I worry about how she is growing up. I mean about religion.

Mary: We don't go to church unless we are visiting family, and if we are visiting family and we go. I think everything ... if we visit family, we come to church, but I would like ... I don't necessarily want her to grow up without religion. I don't consider myself religious. I think that I grew up going to church and I don't think that I am atheist, sort of agnostic or not practicing. But I would like her to have certain knowledge about religion. So, we just need to figure out how to do that. I am less concerned. I do want her to have experience.

Brad: Which is interesting that I am a writer and English language and Shakespeare and you know ... I certainly believe it is hard to transmit to someone six years old about the distinctions and lay out ...

Mary: No, you can just talk about what people believe in and the tricky part is “What do you believe?” To answer that question is ...

Brad: I don’t think that she personally believes in it right now. I am so uncomfortable with the political and cultural ramification of raising [children under] Christianity ...

Mary: I think there is a certain control you have over your child. You can guide them and hopefully they come back. You know. I am just saying I am less afraid.

Mary started out talking about her religious experiences, and said that she wanted to provide her daughter the opportunity to choose her own religious beliefs or how to practice religion by providing various experiences and knowledge. In a way, Mary was a little more relaxed than Brad, saying she hoped her daughter would decide to approach religion similar to her beliefs; however, Mary was fine if her daughter did not follow her because her daughter had her own individuality.

On the other hand, Brad was struggling. Although Brad theoretically understood that his daughter should be able to choose what she believes, he was not comfortable thinking about the possibility that she could choose something opposite to his religious beliefs. He worried about it a great deal because Brad wanted to influence his daughter regarding religion but it was also important in his view of parenting to allow her to have her own individuality. Other American parents also articulated similar struggles that Brad expressed.

Based on the previous studies on parenting, American parents stressed fostering their children’s individuality so that they could make their own choice. Nisbett (2003) discussed that many American mothers strongly hoped their children to act independently; therefore, they constantly expected their children to do their own things by asking them their choice (e.g., would you like to have orange juice or apple juice? do you want it in a cup or a glass?). Middle-class parents who Lareau (2003) observed also let their children negotiate with adults in daily lives

(e.g., “Do you want to explain to your doctor how your stomach feel?”) so that they learned to be assertive even in adult circles. Their challenge emerged when fathers and mothers tried to balance cultivating children’s individuality and their strong sense of control over their children. As I talked earlier, having a sense of control related to many Americans’ self-esteem. However, fathers and mothers needed to let their sense of control go if they would like their children to have own individuality to make their decision; thus, American parents might face challenges in between two important cultural expectations.

In this chapter, I discussed how fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States viewed the parent-child relationship, and how they interacted with their children. By using examples from the interviews, I demonstrated how Japanese parents and American parents looked at their relationships with their children. The next question that I want to uncover is couples’ view on their partnership as parents. How did parents in Japan and the United States construct parenting philosophies as a couple?

## CHAPTER 7

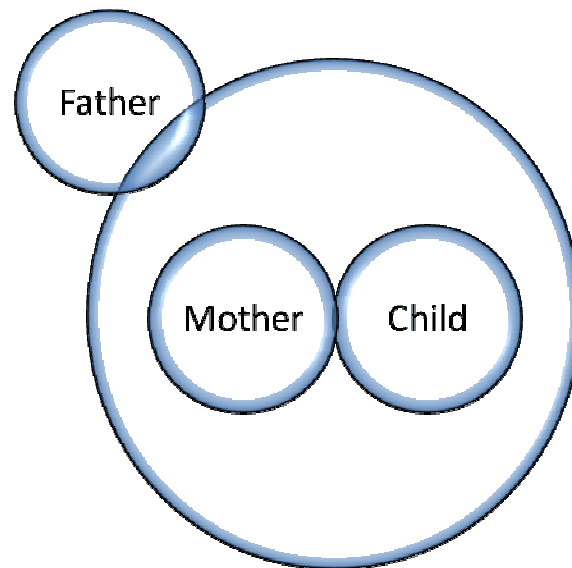
### **“WE ARE A TEAM BY ACCOMPLISHING GEDNER ROLE EXPECTATIONS” VS. “WE ARE A TEAM BASED ON EQUALITY”**

In the previous chapter, I compared and contrasted how fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States viewed their relationships with their children. While I was analyzing the data about the parent-child relationships, another variable emerged: parents' views on the relationship with their partners. Because participant parents lived together (either legally or socially married) to raise their children, fathers and mothers discussed how they approached their children as a couple.

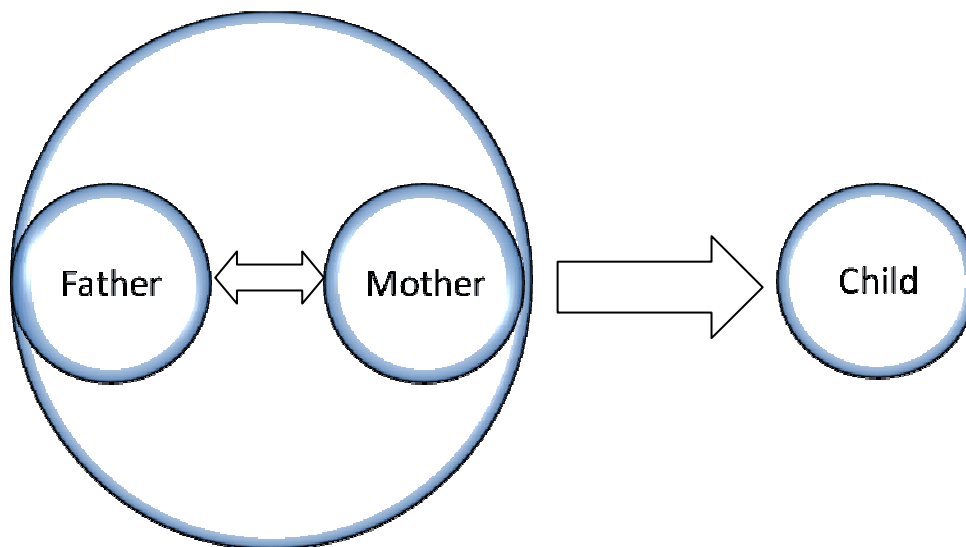
How did Japanese couples and American couples divide household chores and childcare duties? How did parents see the gender relationship with their children (e.g., father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son)? How did couples view their partnerships once they become fathers and mothers? I discovered that fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States used different cognitive processes regarding these questions as well; as a result, their answers were very diverse.

In this chapter, I will illustrate how Japanese parents and American parents saw their relationships with their partners while raising four- to six-year-old children. Stated differently, I will talk about how American and Japanese fathers and mothers construct the meaning of “couple” to interact with their children. Figure 7.1 and figure 7.2 illustrate the mental map of Japanese parents and American parents when discussing their partnerships during the course of childrearing.

**Figure 7.1: Japanese Parents' View of their Partnership**



**Figure 7.2: American Parents' View of their Partnership**





During the data analysis, the usage and meaning of the pronoun “we” became interesting because who parents classified as “we” shifted often during the interview. For example, Japanese and American parents may be talking about “we” as a family, or father and child, or mother and child, or parents and child. How did parents use the term “we” during the course of parenting? How did fathers and mothers interpret the foundation of partnership? When did they use “we” as a couple to interact with their children? The answers to these questions were very different between Japanese parents and American parents.

Japanese couples tended to use the term “we” most to refer to mother-child and/or father-child relationships when discussing parenting. At the same time, Japanese mothers tended to explain to me that they were trying to teach their children the role of their father; therefore, father, mother, and children could share the similar views as a family, as Figure 7.1 shows. For example, Japanese mothers often said that they tried to remind their children that their fathers were respectable hard working individuals so that fathers’ existence would remain in children’s minds even if fathers were absent at home due to their busy work schedules. By so doing, mothers and children became “we” who share the same view on fathers. In addition, Japanese couples did not highlight equality as the foundation of partnerships. Although the parents worked as a unit and divided tasks between them, who did what seemed of little concern if they could function as a family. In contrast, American fathers and mothers were more likely to address the importance of equality in their partnership. Even if couples practiced traditional gender roles (e.g., father is the breadwinner and mother is the homemaker), during the interview many couples explained to me that they made that decision together. Additionally, American parents often viewed the father and mother as a unit against their children, stressing the idea that

“we” (father and mother) needed to be on the same page to effectively interact with the children, as Figure 7.2 demonstrates.

## **JAPANESE PARENTS’ VIEW OF THEIR PARTNER**

In Chapter 6, I discussed how Japanese fathers and mothers viewed the relationship with their children. Japanese parents tended to see this relationship as reciprocal, so that parents and children taught and learned from each other. Did this mean Japanese parents’ childrearing approach was focused on father-child and mother-child units? How did Japanese parents relate to their children as a couple?

I found that Japanese couples tended to construct their partnership based on a division of labor by gender roles. At least among the 24 heterosexual Japanese couples I interviewed, ideas about “being fair” or “being equal” were not the main concern when raising four- to six-year-old children. Instead, Japanese fathers and mothers tended to seek harmony in the partnership. I do not mean to say that American couples did not care about harmonious relationships or that they equally divided household chores and childcare between fathers and mothers. Even if they said they shared equal amount of duties, what they said was usually not the same as what they did. The point is that many American couples tried to convince me how they equally divided chores based on fairness and equality. Japanese couples did not say equality was important aspect in their partnership. Instead, Japanese fathers and mothers explained to me that they were more likely to divide their parental roles based on gender role expectations (e.g., father takes disciplinarian role, mother takes comforting role) so their children could experience both. In the following section, I will discuss two variables that emerged from the data to illustrate Japanese parents’ mental map when describing parental partnership.

***Accomplishing “Gender Role Expectations” is Key for the Relationship***

When Japanese parents talked about childcare activities, they were less likely to focus on physical tasks such as how they divided cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry; instead, they paid attention to emotional duties. For instance, Japanese fathers and mothers discussed who should take the authoritative disciplinarian role and who would provide comfort for the children.

Yoshimi was a good example. She was raised in the traditional Japanese home where her father was the breadwinner and took an authoritative role, and her mother was the stay-at-home mother and took nurturing role for the family. Her ideal parents were the traditional authoritative father and the kind mother, just like her parents.

Yoshimi: I talked to [my father] when I faced big challenges like choosing college or jobs. Other small things ... I talked to my mother. We talked at the kitchen. When my mother does not know what to say, my father came in. So, basically my father is the one with authority and my mother did small things for us. I think that would be good. I mean ... I want to become like my parents. But my husband is very good at the small things, so he may be doing both.

Interviewer: What do you mean “small things”?

Yoshimi: Like discipline. I don't pay attention to many things. For example, I tend to let her go even if she hasn't finished eating or I am not good at making her sit until she finishes eating.

Yoshimi's parenting style was positively influenced by her parents because she saw them as model parents. What I want to point out here is that Yoshimi was not only observing how her father and mother uniquely interacted with her, she also analyzed how her father and mother coordinated the role to communicate with their children. As a result, Yoshimi viewed two categories of roles. One person took care of big issues, such as considering children's school or career paths. The other person supported the children's development by teaching them manners. For her, the key to successful parenting was to divide the roles between father and mother.

Kanako also tried to construct her ideal parental partnership based on memories of her father and mother.

Kanako: My mother didn't say much. She probably was thinking a lot of things, but she didn't put them in words. Big things like selecting schools and stuff, it was more like they talked together and my father told us what to do. It was like that. We sort of do the same.

According to Kanako, her father was vocal and her mother was quiet, especially when family discussed important issues. Although her father and mother might have talked together, it was her father who showed more authority to her than mother. Kanako observed that her father and mother intentionally structured their partnership so Kanako would experience the authority and respect of her father. Then Kanako said she and her partner followed the footprint of her parents. It was not only Japanese mothers who believed in the division of labor based on gender differences of parents. Japanese fathers also expressed similar ideas.

Kengo: My father never yelled at me over my grades for example. My mother had a lot to say. I think that my father consciously didn't say much because my mother was saying a lot. When I think about it, I feel that is what I should do for my child. It's difficult, though.

Kengo also recalled how his father and mother coordinated their parental partnership and used them as role models. What was interesting was Kengo's interpretation of his parents' communication styles. He remembered his father and mother using different approaches to interact with him. His father was rather quiet, while his mother was talkative and wanted to express her thoughts. I was not sure why they were so, but Kengo believed his father deliberately became quiet in order to balance the parental roles.

Gender equality was not the main concern for Japanese parents; instead, it seemed they saw gender difference as inevitable when living in Japanese society. For example, Satoshi and his partner lived in a three-generation household (Satoshi's parents, Satoshi and his partner, and

their children). Because the family ran a business at home, Satoshi was often at home, allowing him to participate in his children's lives more. Satoshi noted that he was going to PTA meetings and taking his children to camps because he wanted to make sure his children understood that their father did the best he could with them. Satoshi answered my question, "How do you divide childcare and household chores?":

Satoshi: We don't really divide chores. Whoever can do, will do. It's not like women should do this and men should do that. I think men and women pay attention to different things.

It appeared Satoshi supported gender equality because he said, "It's not like women should do this and men should do that." But then he continued to say, "I think men and women pay attention different things." Unless he was really conscious about gender equality and went against gender-expected behaviors, Satoshi was more likely to believe in a *cognitive division of labor* where men and women see the world differently and fathers and mothers socialize children differently. His view perpetuated a gender-specific approach.

In the case of Masanori, the roles between father and mother were also clearly divided. Masanori and had a son. The family was very active, traveling to many places and social events. Masanori's parents were very traditional: the breadwinner father and the stay-at-home mother who spent her time and energy on Masanori and his younger sister. The following was his answer to the question, "What do you think are the roles of father and mother to raise your son?"

Masanori: If Yuki was working, it isn't that different, but ... what can I say? Ah ... I think that it's a father's role to take social responsibility or financial responsibility for family, and a mother takes care of the household. It doesn't matter whether the kids are boys or girls.

He also added:

Masanori: My mother used to help me to do homework ... maybe until middle-school.

Interviewer: She sat with you? Is that what you mean?

Masanori: Right.

Interviewer: Do you want to do this for your son?

Masanori: Well, that's what I want my wife to do.

I was not sure if he was joking because he smiled after he said this, but later Yuki told me that Masanori had a list of things that he expected her to do as a mother, which was based on his recollection of his mother. Doing homework with children, organizing family pictures, and spending much time with children were some examples of what was on the list. Yuki said that it was challenging to accommodate his requests at the beginning of their marriage because she was not raised similarly; however, she added that she wanted to do her best to make Masanori happy. Thus, Masanori and Yuki also followed stereotypical gender role expectations.

Hidetoshi and Masako also did not pay much attention to the equality in their partnership; instead, they seemed comfortable taking the breadwinner and the home-maker gender roles, respectively.

Hidetoshi: Do we divide childrearing? Yes, we do. I depend on my wife for everything. (laugh)

Masako: Well, it's not your fault because of time. He helps me when he does not have to go to work. I think that is fine.

Hidetoshi: But you don't ask me to do anything particular.

Masako: We both do them together when you have time.

Based on the conversation above, neither father nor mother complained about their division of labor as long as each satisfied her /his roles which are based on gender specific.

### ***Mothers Keep Working Fathers' Existence Alive at Home***

In the above section, I discussed how Japanese fathers and mothers viewed the parental

partnership. The division of labor, based on gender or personality, was key to constructing a harmonious parental partnership. How then did parents relate to their children? If their relationship was not based on equality, what were the ways they communicated with their children?

Scholars who study Japanese families have suggested that fathers and mothers construct unique relationship with their children. Although gender relationships and women's social status have changed in Japan over time, due to increasing number of women's higher education and labor force participation, researchers repeatedly have found a distinctive pattern in the last several decades. For example, almost 50 years ago, Vogal (1963:212) conducted ethnographic observations of families in Japan and concluded that "father is treated in many ways as a high-status guest in the home, a welcome, friendly, and even jovial guest, but one who stands on the periphery of the intimate circle of a mother and children." Even in the survey conducted by the Japanese Broadcast Corporation in 1980 revealed that 80 percent of Japanese men and 74 percent of Japanese women agreed with the statement that "If a husband and wife disagree on something, the husband should make the final decision." In contrast, 40 percent of American men and 34 percent of American women supported the same statement (NHK Hoso Yoron Chosajo 1980: 53). Thus, Japanese, more so than Americans, tended to feel more comfortable with the idea of elevating fathers' position at home. Befu (1986) also discussed that Japanese mothers and children often shared a strong bond which was very unique compared to American families which emphasized the conjugal partnership in raising children. Similar to the above point, Ishii-Kuntz (1999:38) discussed that Japanese children often hold favorable images of fathers, even though they have limited interactions with fathers due to long working hours, because "mothers

maintain the psychological presence of father by reminding children of fathers' provider role."

My research also offered examples of this point, and variations of the division of labor at home.

Masako's narrative included various points that many Japanese mothers mentioned:

Masako: Well, because I spent a lot of time with my mother, she is the basis of how a woman is for me. Whether it is good or bad, she is my basis. My father spoiled me because my mother was very strict ... He was strict about money, but he played with me and cooked for me. That is why I seek that kind of father's image in my husband. If we had a boy, I want my husband to teach our son about life as a man. I have heard about how his father raised him. His father was very strict and told him not to make girls cry. I want him to be like his father. But if our daughter says something negative about her father, I will correct her. I believe that it is a mother's fault if a daughter looks down on her father. I mean ... If a mother looks down on her husband or says things like, "Don't marry to someone like your father" to her daughter, she looks down her father. My mother never said bad things about my father. My father was not perfect at all, but she didn't say anything. I saw her doing so I learned that's something I shouldn't do. Kids spend more time with mothers so that they will listen to what mothers say. Because I spend more time with her, I have an advantage. That's why I shouldn't say ... Besides, my husband can't stay at home that much because of his job, he usually comes home at 1 am and goes to work at 8 am. He doesn't have much time to spend time with her. He doesn't have regular day offs ... sometimes once or twice a month. That is why I let him buy her anything and let him take her places.

In Masako's mind, gender played a big role in explaining the relationship between parents and children. For example, she believed that she learned how women (mothers) should behave from her mother. As a parent, Masako was also trying to pass down to her daughter norms that were the guidelines of how a good mother should think. Masako and Hidetoshi did not have a boy. If they had a boy, she probably would have wanted Hidetoshi to teach him norms about what and how men (fathers) were supposed to think and act just like his father did.

Another very interesting point Masako made was the close relationship between a mother and child. According to Masako, her perspectives and evaluations of Hidetoshi transferred to her daughter's mind. She relied on *rules of remembrance* to teach her daughter what to remember



and what to forget about her father. Therefore, it was extremely vital that she express her respect and gratitude for Hidetoshi, especially since he was often away from home working. Masako took it as a personal failure if her daughter disrespectfully talked to her father. The discussion was interesting because Masako took on more responsibility raising the children. Hidetoshi's presence was lacking due to his work conditions; however, the children's perspectives on their father's involvement might not be the same because Masako constantly reminded father's presence.

There are other examples. For example, Yuki said:

Yuki: I think that eventually he will come not to listen to me . . . I mean I will discipline him, but I want his father to be the ultimate person to make him listen. His father doesn't have to say much most times, but . . . I also want to show him that I respect his father. Then he will respect his father as well. I sometimes hear that kids will look down on their fathers if their mothers behave so. I want to keep telling him that his father works for us. I want him to understand that.

Yuki repeated that she intentionally taught her son that he should remember that his father was a great and respectable person who worked hard for the family. In the way, she did not have to believe that her partner is a good father; however, it was Yuki's role as a mother and partner to make sure that the father's positive image remained in son's mind.

Naoko and Hiroshi approached their partnership like Yuki and Masako did. Naoko and Hiroshi had a small grocery store outside the city. Because there were a limited number of stores in town, they tried to open the store six days a week; as a result, Hiroshi worked long hours that restricted him from spending much time with his son. They said:

Naoko: It's not about who does what, but . . . we can eat and buy clothes because his father works for us. Without him working for us, we can't live like we do. I often teach him that.

Hiroshi: Right. Let him know . . . when I get paycheck.

As a couple, Naoko and Hiroshi tried to keep Hiroshi's existence alive at home even though he was often absent as well.

To summarize Japanese couple's view on parental partnership, participant Japanese fathers and mothers seemed comfortable dividing household chores and childcare duties based on gender role expectations. As long as Japanese couples formed harmonious parental relationship to function as a family, equality and fairness tended to be less of a concern.

### **AMERICAN PARENTS' VIEW OF THEIR PARTNERS**

In Chapter 6, I showed how the relationship between American parents and their children was similar to teachers and students. The power relation was in one direction from parents to children. However, I started to wonder how I might be able to explain the power relationships among three family members (father, mother, and child). Did fathers and mothers communicate with their child as a couple? How did fathers and mothers keep a sense of partnership? How did the gender of parents and children play a role when interacting with each other?

I learned that American fathers and mothers, unlike Japanese fathers and mothers, tended to approach childrearing as a couple. The ideal parenting style among American couples was that the father and mother were a team and taught their child. When American fathers and mothers formed a partnership, they were very conscious about equality and fairness between each other. In addition, keeping a sense of a romantic partnership was often discussed by participant parents in the United States, although none of Japanese couple mentioned romantic relationship during the interviews.

This is also supported by previous studies. In the United States, the conjugal tie is the main union in the house even after children arrive (Befu 1986). Quinn (1982) conducted a conversational analysis of 11 couples' interviews to examine how husbands and wives used the

term “commitment” in American marriage. She found that participant couples often said that commitment was based on promise, dedication, and attachment. Moreover, couples believed that commitment should be lasting, equally shared, brings mutual benefits, compatibility, and so on. Quinn’s study emphasized the importance of partnership in American marriage. In the studies of Stryker and Burke (2000), and Reitzes and Mutran (2002), scholars examined how stable marital or premarital couples talk about their identities. They found that three quarters of their participant couples emphasized the centrality of couple identities in addition to other identities such as friend and coworker.

***Being “Fair” is the Foundation of the Relationship***

What happens when couples become parents? Cowan and Cowan (2000) found that there were five alterations in individual’s and couple’s life after the transition to parenthood: (1) a person began to reconsider the construction of one’s identities, (2) the division of labor changed between husband and wife, (3) a person started to have a new relationship with their parents (grandparents of couples’ child), (4) a person or a couple readjusted their relationships with their friends and coworkers, and (5) a couple learned a balance between a parenting partnership and a romantic partnership.

The parents I interviewed were raising four- to six-year-old daughters and sons; therefore, parents had to pay attention to their children to keep them safe - - feeding them, washing their clothes, taking them places, and planning for their future. To run their daily routine smoothly, American couples said that they tried to work together as a couple even though it might not be a fifty and fifty arrangement.

For example, Jane and Matt were raising a daughter and son. Jane was a stay-at-home mother and Matt was usually at home for family dinner except during business trips about two days out of a month. I asked them how they divided child care.

Jane: He does a lot ... ah ... but

Matt: I try as much, like night time readings and stuff, and routines during week. On the weekend, I try to spend as much time with them so that she can do her personal stuff. So, we do definitely divide things.

Interviewer: O.K.

Jane: But he does a lot. He does baths and other bed-time duties every night. I feel it's a good thing for the kids because they haven't seen him all day. They want to see him, so.

Interviewer: Then what are your jobs?

All: (laugh)

Matt: Everything else 24/7.

Jane: What do I do? Usually he gets dishes started after dinner, so I clean up the kitchen, and packing lunch for the next day and feeding pets, cleaning house, doing laundry that I finished half way done, kind of things.

There were several interesting points in the conversation. First look at how Matt classified his daily routines. For Matt, there were parenting duties that he did during the week and weekend. During the week, he took care of the children's night-time routines. What Matt did over the weekends included his children's day-time routines. Because he worked during the weekdays, he was unable to take care of the children's day-time routines during those days. He said, "I try as much ... so that she can do her personal stuff. So, we definitely divide things." Matt acknowledged that Jane did more child care since she did not work outside the home; however, he tried to do as much to be fair to Jane as a partner. Although Matt believed spending

time with children was good for his children, at least from this conversation, Matt's focus was on being a good partner for Jane.

How about Jane? Jane's center of the attention was a little different. Jane said, "I feel it's a good thing for kids because they haven't seen him all day. They want to see him, so." For Jane, Matt's participation was meaningful for their children. Yet Jane gave Matt a lot of credit. She repeatedly emphasized that, "Matt does a lot." Either way, it was important for both Matt and Jane to evaluate their parental partnership based on their sharing childrearing duties.

Megan and Raymond also expressed the significance of fairness. Megan and Raymond had twin boys. Megan was a homemaker and Raymond worked in the field of television broadcasting. Although he spent a significant amount of time for work, he mainly worked at home which allowed his sons to see him. The following conversation was their answer to my question about the division of childcare.

Megan: We share everything together.

Raymond: We try to.

Megan: Everybody cooks, everybody do laundry, everybody clean, everybody ...

Raymond: You do more laundry though.

Megan: Sure, but it's not ... I mean they contribute to the chores and he does more mechanical things [such as changes light bulbs and cuts grasses] that I don't know about. But generally it's not clearly divided.

Megan and Raymond talked back and forth about whether they equally shared household chores, although the differences in their opinions might be based on their perspectives and how they determined what things were equivalent.

Erica and David also mentioned equality, but they introduced a unique approach that turned out to be a very common way of sharing household chores among American couples.

- David: Do we divide chores? No, we don't divide them because we ... both have to take care of house. Who wants to cook all the time?
- Erica: Yeah, I think it's more ... something like he will cut the tree and I don't do that.
- David: Or clean the toilet.
- Erica: Right. I will be like "ah ..."
- David: So, it's more function of our personalities.

First, David said that "Both have to take care of house. Who wants to cook all the time?" In David's mind, he contributed equally to family life. Without disagreeing with David, Erica proposed the perspectives that there was some division of labor between the two of them. Then David observed that such division of labor was based on each other's personality. What he meant was that duties were not divided based on gender. Although personalities were often associated with gender because men and women are socialized to have certain personal characteristics (i.e., boys are expected to be physically and emotionally strong, assertive, and disorganized, and girls are expected to be physically and weak, emotional, and organized), it was less contentious to *say* who does what was based on one's personalities rather than explicitly talk about gender differences.

In the previous section, I discussed that American couples often claimed their partnership was based on equality; however, it did not mean they evenly divided and shared the household chores. Jane and Matt, Megan and Raymond, and Erika and David were good examples to demonstrate how the division of labor at home was done mostly by mothers; however, all three couples rationalized how they distributed various works to stress fairness. Braun, Lewin-Epstein, Stier, and Baumgartner (2008) summarized that couples used three approaches to legitimate their views of equality in partnership during the course of childrearing: (1) time availability (see also

Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robin 2000; Kalleberg and Rosenfeld 1990; and Davis and Greenstein 2004), (2) resource dependence (see also Brines 1994; Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, and Natheson 2003), and (3) gender-ideology (see also Lavee and Katz 2002). Jane and Matt, for example, used time availability approach. Based on this approach, one may point out an inability to contribute an equal amount of household chore duties due to long hours of work away from home, and say that he/she would contribute more if he/she had more time at home. Matt was unable to spend time at home, but he legitimized the equality by saying that he contributed household chores and childcare as much as he could when he was at home. Thus, he used a time availability approach.

The narrative of Megan and Raymond was an example of resource dependence. This approach looked at the power relationship between spouses. If one held more resources (i.e., making more money), then a partner was expected to do more work at home. Raymond had a high income as a vice president of the company. Megan was a stay-at-home mother. Although it was not clear how Raymond and Megan viewed their power dynamics in above narratives, Megan explained to me during the interview that she would like to make financial contribution to the family once their children became older. On the other hand, Raymond seemed fine with the current situation that he was the breadwinner and Megan was a home-maker. Thus, Megan gave him credit and legitimized their division of labor even though Raymond suggested that he did less than what Megan did because Megan did not have financial contribution.

The third approach that a couple used legitimized their contribution to household chores based on gender-ideology. By using this method, a couple may say that the division of labor is based on gender role expectations such as a male is the stronger gender so that he would do physical labor such as moving and changing car oil, and a female would be good at nurturing

tasks such as cooking and cleaning. In my U.S. sample my sample, I did not find any couples who clearly followed gender-ideology to divide parenting practices. This might be due to participant couples' religious backgrounds, educational levels, and social classes. I might have found couples who decided who did what at home based on gender role expectations if my sample included a more diverse set of couples.

Susan and Roger was another couple who made sure they did not run their household based on the gender roles; instead, they said they made a mutual decision based on their personalities. Susan and Roger were raising a son and daughter. Their daughter was the focal child for the interview. Susan was a stay-at-home mother, but she recently started to go back to school to complete her bachelor's degree. Roger worked full-time, but he could be home for dinner most days. During the interview, Susan and Roger talked about when they first became parents. Both were working at the time. Roger took two weeks paternity leave so he could stay with Susan after giving birth to their son. Susan explained that Roger asked her if she wanted him to stay at home to take care of their baby so she could go back to work, but he changed his mind three days later:

Susan: Oh yeah. He is like, "I couldn't do that." That's why we decided. So, I don't know, I mean that I want her to know that choosing that option still is a lot of work. It's not easy giving up a lot of things like socially, financially, and things change, but that doesn't make it a bad decision. But she [her daughter] needs to know that. She has got other options rather than staying at home. She can do it for a while and continue to work or whatever or so.

Roger: She had a job. She was taking care of kids. That was a choice we made together. You know, that is the one thing that I want to make sure that my daughter will understand. That was a choice we made together to try to do appropriately. That's not something I told Mom that "You are staying at home." That's not the way it is.



According to Susan, they decided she would stay at home to take care of the children because Roger could not do it; they said his personality did not fit the role, though he did offer to be a home-maker. Roger explained, over and over again, that they talked about who would stay at home with the baby and made a decision together. He clarified that he did not make Susan to take that option; therefore, they negotiated based on things other than gender role expectations. Susan also made clear that her decision to become a home-maker was hard because she lost her social life and financial power; therefore, her life choice was also courageous. In minds of Susan and Roger, working outside home and staying at home to parent belonged to different categories of parenting duties; in addition, they perceived a home-maker as powerless. I also noticed that parents often emphasized gender equality when they were talking about their daughters rather than sons by saying that they wanted their daughter to know that they could have options. However, none of parents in either country encouraged their sons to be homemakers.

Finally, Katherine's narrative explained a different way to focus on a partnership:

Kathrine: As much as I pour, for kids, a lot of time and energy and all of my resources, I do have in my back and front of my mind that our relationship is too important for not to let it fail. For not let our intimacy go. As easy it is for us to be too tired to be intimate for one another, both of us find the time and make the time to not that get away from us.

Katherine viewed two types of relationships. One was her relationship with her children. The other was her relationship with her partner, which she described as a romantic and intimate partnership rather than a parental partnership. She remarked that she and her partner had to intentionally focus on their romantic relationship. American couples who participated in the interviews also tended to agree about the importance of intimate partnerships, although none of Japanese participant couples even mentioned it.

### ***We Work Together as a Unit to Raise Children***

In the previous section, I demonstrated how American fathers and mothers interpreted and constructed their partnership when raising children. For them, gender equality was the basis of a healthy relationship. Also, we could say that American fathers and mothers had a strong sense of working as a couple. How did they incorporate these ideas during the course of childrearing? How did they interact with their children?

Lillian and William's case provide a good example of what I found. The following are excerpts from what they said when I asked them how they divided household chores.

William: It changes. We were together for a long time before we married and got married and had children. When we had a child, the nurse gave us advice ... 3Cs. Clear, consistent, and concise. As long as you follow this, you are fine.

Lillian: What is that to do with division of labor?

William: Right. The point is that I realized it's between us. That's the biggest problem.

Lillian: You are right.

William: Right. We need to communicate and be clear about him. I also see tons of adults saying, "What did you tell him?" Even simple things.

Lillian: Right. Like making a dinner.

William: Right. Then we start arguing. We need to talk to each other so that we are clear. Otherwise, kids are like, "What is going on?"

Lillian and William had two children, a girl and a boy in that order. As I described earlier, William was very aware of being a good father. He participated in his son's soccer team. He took the disciplinarian role at home. Also, William was a good storyteller. In the conversation, he made the point that the relationship between the father and mother needed to be clear, consistent, and concise. In other words, William believed the father and mother had to

communicate well so they were always on the same page. The father and mother could not be confused on what they were doing when interacting with their children. In a way, he was also expressing the importance of parental partnership in raising children (see Figure 7.2). Father and mother belonged to the same island of meaning (i.e., teacher, leader) and their children belonged to the different island of meaning (i.e., student, follower).

Similarly, Katherine and Josh wanted their children to see that the father and mother were working together. Katherine was a stay-at-home mother, but she was heavily involved in many volunteer activities. Josh worked more than 50 hours a week as a construction manager. His job required a long commute, so he was leaving home early in the morning and coming home around 7 pm. When I asked how they were dividing childcare duties, Katherine jokingly said she did everything before Josh came home and gave him the children to do the rest of their daily routines, such as brushing teeth and tucking them into bed. Then she added:

Katherine: No, not to escape. But the same story that I don't want to escape. I don't want them to see me finding a time for me to escape from them. I want them to see me wanting to have a family. I want them to see he and I are . . . .

Josh: Working together.

For them, the important thing was to let children know that their father and mother were working together as a unit to raise them.

Other parents also discussed that they approached childrearing as a couple in a more general sense. For example, Brad and Mary said:

Brad: We talk about everything, constant analysis. You know. What was her day and how she is growing and setting our goals and trying to ...

Mary: Yeah. I agree.

Brad emphasized their parental partnership by saying, “We talk about *everything*,” and “setting *our* goals.” Mary agreed. Thus, American couples tended to stress the idea that constructing parental partnership based on equality and fairness was healthy and meaningful to raise their children.

In this chapter, I talked about how couples in Japan and the United States viewed the parental partnership. To summarize, Japanese fathers and mothers tended to see their parental partnership as based on the gendered division of labor. In the United States, couples tended to emphasize equality and fairness as a basis of their parental partnership. In the following chapter, I will discuss the fourth theme that emerged from the data: parents’ views on individuals in a society.

## CHAPTER 8

### “INTERDEPENDENT CHILD” VS. “INDEPENDENT CHILD”

In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States viewed their parental partnership and how it affected interaction with their children. Although Japanese couples and American couples displayed diverse forms of parental partnerships, couples in both countries said that their parenting goals were based on social expectations in their societies. Parents emphasized the importance of teaching skills that would help their children survive and be happy. For example, parents would teach children how to hunt if they lived in a society where hunting was the best way to stay alive. In these parents' minds, good hunting skills would be the most vital aspect of stable and happy life for their children's future; therefore, they would foster these skills in their children. Since hunting was not the main focus of contemporary life in Japan and the United States, what were Japanese and American parents seeing as important aspects to living happily as a member of society? This is the question I will discuss in this chapter. As I mentioned earlier, there are many cultural differences between Japan and the United States; however, what is necessary to understand is parents' interpretation of their cultures. Through my research, I learned that fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States shared diverse views on their children's futures.

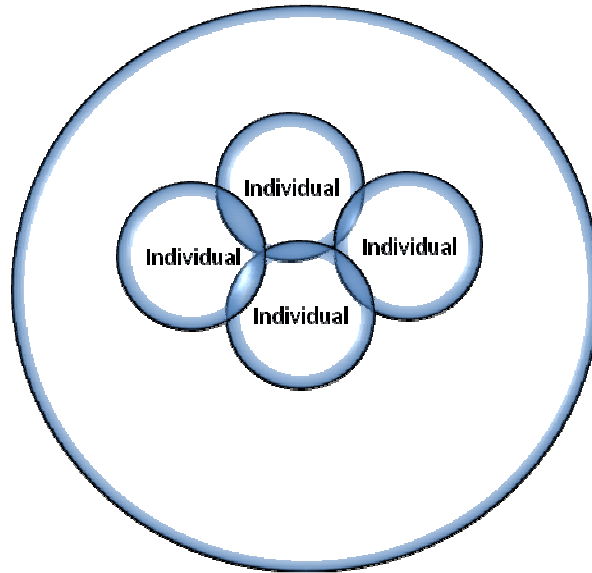
During the interviews, I asked parents, “What kind of person do you want your child to be?” To answer the question, Japanese parents and American parents searched for personal characteristics necessary for success and happiness in their societies. One might assume that Japanese and American parents' answers were different because Americans lived in an individualistic culture and Japanese lived in a collectivist culture, or their answers would be similar because both countries were industrial capitalist societies. How parents symbolize

success in society determines the aspects of their children's lives they attempt to foster, causing them to approach parenting differently. Thus, deconstructing parents' meanings is important to understand how parenting styles are socially constructed.

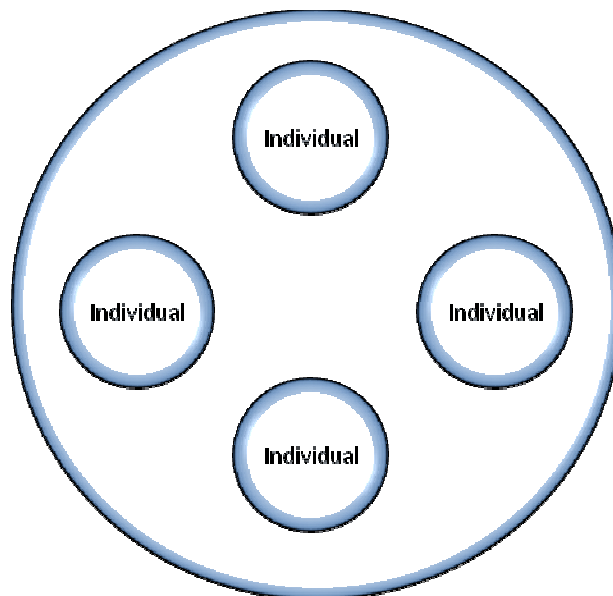
Figure 8.1 illustrates how Japanese parents saw individuals in a society, whereas Figure 8.2 illustrates how American parents' view of individuals in society. For Japanese parents, individuals cannot survive without others. Stated differently, fathers and mothers in Japan stressed the view that harmonious interdependency was the key for one's success and happiness. At least once during the interview, almost all Japanese parents mentioned that being able to understand others' feelings was a very important characteristic as a member of society because they tended to view society as an aggregate of individuals who helped each other. For Japanese fathers and mothers, individuals would not be able to succeed if they were unable to get along with people around them. Therefore, Japanese fathers and mothers told me that they tried to cultivate their children's ability to get along with people.

Many American parents, in contrast, hoped their children would be independent, self-sufficient human beings because they believed these characteristics were fundamental to becoming a productive member of society. American fathers and mothers placed a great deal of weight on the importance of education for a number of reasons, but most of all to find happiness because they believed higher education would lead to finding a good job that would sustain a stable lifestyle.

**Figure 8.1: Japanese Parents' View of Individuals in Society**



**Figure 8.2: American Parents' View of Individuals in Society**



## **JAPANESE PARENTS' VIEW OF IMPORTANT SKILLS IN SOCIETY**

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I discussed how Japanese parents tended to focus on the interdependency to talk about a relationship. For example, the parenting styles of Japanese fathers and mothers were modifications of their parents to a great extent. Japanese parents tended to form a reciprocal relationship between themselves and their children because they believed parents and children taught and learned from each other. When Japanese fathers and mothers constructed their parental partnership, they also depended on each other. At least among participant parents for this research, the gendered division of labor was not seen as negative. Japanese parents tended to see fathers and mothers as having different roles, so that inequality was expected but not their main concern in the parental partnership. Then, how do Japanese parents see the relationship with non-family members in society? That is the question I will discuss in this section.

From the data, I found that Japanese parents valued the idea that members of society should help each other. Because people taught, learned, and supported each other in society, it was very important for Japanese parents that their children understood others' feelings and cared about others. For Japanese parents, it was these skills that were keys to surviving in society and becoming happy individuals. Two variables emerged from the data to explain the views of Japanese fathers and mothers which I will talk in the following sections.

### ***“Being Able to Understand Others’ Feelings” is Most Important***

Regardless of parents' gender and children's gender, many participant Japanese parents agreed that they wanted their children to be able to understand the feelings of others. Being able to empathize and sympathize was the most important value in Japanese society; therefore,



Japanese parents believed children could be successful in the future if they were able to understand other's feelings. I will discuss this in more detail through several narrative excerpts.

The first example is Hidetoshi. Hidetoshi and his partner lived with their two sons in a small city. He said:

Hidetoshi: I hope that my son will be a thoughtful person and be able to understand others.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Hidetoshi: Well, it is because we don't live alone. We all are related to one another, especially if you live in a small city like here. I think that relationship is important. That is why.

During the interview, Hidetoshi told me about the situation in their town where everyone knew each other. The town sometimes functioned as a family. For example, people often got together for barbecues and planned various events for children. They had their own baseball teams for adults and children. People found jobs through other people. Because of such close relationships with neighbors, it was essential that people get along with others. It might be okay if you were the only one who suffered from not getting along with your neighbors; however, your family usually faced challenges as well because they were more likely to feel uncomfortable participating in community activities or lose job opportunities. Thus, Hidetoshi wanted his son to have the ability to get along with others as a member of society.

Similar to Hidetoshi, Masaharu emphasized the ability to understand situational contexts.

Interviewer: So, it is important for you to be able to understand other people's feelings. I understand what you mean, but my understanding may be different from yours. Can I ask why you think it is important?

Masaharu: People can't do anything by themselves. Because there are many people, our lives are constituted. So, I guess that we can't do anything by ourselves. That is why it is important to understand other people's feelings.

In Masaharu's mind, there was no classification between helpers and the helped. People supported each other, and that was how society functioned. If you were not aware of others' feelings, you did not know how to help, or you did not even know if others were looking for help. People who lived in a society such as Japan were expected to understand other's needs without verbal communications. Their relationships were also reciprocal. If you help others, then others would be willing to help you when you needed support. Thus, being able to understand others' feelings was a *cognitive norm* for the basic building block of a give-and-take relationship.

For Shun, the skill of taking others' positions was an indispensable characteristic for human beings. Shun and his partner was raising a son and daughter. His daughter was the focal child for this interview.

Shun: I want her to be a kind person.

Interviewer: What kind of person is kind?

Shun: Someone who would protect weaker persons. I mean, someone who understand other people's pain and recognize bad things are bad things. It is common sense, but there are not many people who can be like that.

Interviewer: What makes you think so?

Shun: Well, for example, there are parents who complain about the greeting at school lunch. There are mothers who say, "We are paying for lunch," and "Why does my child have to say "itadakimasu"? I think it is nonsense. Don't say things like that. That is nonsense. It is a common sense. You need to be able to understand that.

In Japan, people say "*itadakimasu*" before they start eating. The term does not have a direct translation in English. In a way, "*itadakimasu*" means multi-dimensional. It includes a sense of appreciation toward the food, farmers, and servers. The term has a connotation of modesty. People often learn to say it when they are very young; therefore, people automatically say it at

the table. In many cases, the Japanese do not find the practice religious; instead, they see it as good manners.

Interviewer: Can I ask why you think people should be able to do that?

Shun: Right. I think it is a minimum matter to live as a human being. If you are born as a human being ... you can speak, you have a brain, and you can judge. That is why I want her to be a kind person. I mean that being kind is basic. If I think about it, it is even funny to say, "I want her to be a kind person," because it is something you have to be in the first place. But I want her to be a person who understands common sense.

First, Shun said he wanted his daughter to be a kind person who would be able to understand other's feelings and distinguish morals. Then, Shun talked about some parents of his daughter's classmates. According to Shun, the mothers complained that the school made their children say "*itadakimasu*." Because they were paying for their children's lunch, the food was not given, so they believed the children were entitled to eat without such modesty. Shun thought that the view was *cognitively deviant* (Goode 2008) that these mothers' view of the world was against what was expected in Japanese society. He did not appreciate the conflict because he did not see the necessity of the argument. One explanation for Shun's feelings was that he was less likely to perceive sharp boundaries among/between people. Who was more superior or powerful than another was not his focus. He did not see the competition in the situation; therefore, Shun did not understand why the mothers were upset over "*itadakimasu*." For him, the mothers' actions made other people feel badly because it destructed social order, and therefore the mothers were unkind.

Many Japanese fathers and mothers said they wanted their children to be able to understand others' feelings because if children know what bothers people, they do not cause people trouble. Every time parents mentioned this, I asked them to clarify what they meant by

“causing people trouble.” I was curious to know the types of behavior that Japanese parents consider trouble-making. Let’s look at Sanae’s answer:

Interviewer: You said you don’t want him to do unforgiving things. What kinds of things are unforgiving?

Sanae: Things that cause people trouble.

Interviewer: For example?

Sanae: For example? I think that I don’t want him to do things that make other people uncomfortable or sad. It’s not about breaking a law.

Sanae described two types of behavior that potentially caused people trouble: one was to “make other people uncomfortable and sad,” another was to break the law. For her, the focus was the feelings of others rather than breaking the law. Of course, we could hurt others’ feelings by breaking the law. In fact, many laws were created to protect people from harm; however, Sanae’s focus was more on the feelings of others during daily interactions. Shizuka shared very similar view with Sanae. She said:

Shizuka: I want her to be cheerful.

Interviewer: What do you mean by “cheerful”?

Shizuka: Right. Free from all cares and do what she wants. Of course, within limits. She shouldn’t cause people trouble.

Interviewer: In your perspective, what things cause people trouble?

Shizuka: I guess ... things that make people feel bad. For example, a person who cuts in line is lacking in common decency. I don’t want her to do such things. Something is okay if she believes that it is a good thing to do, but I don’t want her to do obviously wrong things.

Shizuka’s focus was also the feelings of others. Common sense and social order were important to keep for Shizuka as a social being. In some sense, the parents I described above discouraged

their children from being unique and different because that could easily cause conflict and make others feel uncomfortable.

Some Japanese working fathers said that they wanted their children to learn how to speak English so they could understand more people's feelings in the global society. For example, Kengo worked in a factory where many Brazilian immigrant workers were working.

He said:

Kengo: I work at a factory and have many Brazilian coworkers. Well, they don't speak English ... it is hard to communicate with each other. That is why I think it is good to be able to speak English.

Interviewer: Do you have many foreign coworkers?

Kengo: Yes.

Interviewer: How do people communicate with each other? Do you have interpreters?

Kengo: No. Some of them can speak broken Japanese. We communicate through them. I think that it is nice to be able to communicate with people who are not Japanese.

I want to point out a contradiction in Kengo's narrative. Although his coworkers were Brazilians who spoke Portuguese and that was why he felt the importance of learning a second language, Kengo wanted his daughter to learn English specifically. During the interview, I asked him why he chose English rather than Portuguese. His answer was that he wanted to learn Portuguese, but he saw English as a more versatile language for his daughter to learn in social settings. In Kengo's mind, there was no distinction between natives (Japanese) and visitors (immigrants). In addition, he seemed not to care about the power relationship between them. For example, he could complain that the Brazilian workers were not learning Japanese; instead, he was almost apologetic for not being able to speak Portuguese. Satoshi raised a comparable point:

Satoshi: I would like to let [my daughter] take English lessons.

Interviewer: How come?

Satoshi: How come? I don't know. I just thought it is not good if she can't speak a little English.

Interviewer: In what occasions? You know? I am just curious.

Satoshi: Ah ... you know, if you go overseas today, you can communicate in Japanese. But at the same time, there are many people who speak English to communicate in Japan. I feel bad when I can't respond to them in English. So, I thought being able to speak English, you know, daily English, would be nice.

Satoshi did not work with immigrant coworkers, but he recognized that there were many immigrants/visitors in his surroundings; as a result, he felt that the Japanese also needed to reach out to them for help.

I do not mean to say that the majority of Japanese perceive immigrants as Kengo and Satoshi do. In fact, the Japanese are not always kind to immigrants. Tsuda (2009), for example, reported that some Japanese held cultural and social class prejudices against immigrant because Japanese have not been exposed to diversity. Therefore, Kengo and Satoshi's views were very unique and should not be generalized as a population. According to Tsuda (2009), the numbers of immigrant workers have been increasing in Japan due to rapid expansion of economy to fulfill the Japanese labor supply since the late 1980s. Among immigrants, the largest group are South American nikkeijin (Japanese descendants who grew up outside of Japan), and over 330,000 South American nikkeijin reside in Japan. One of the Japanese cities where I conducted interviews has many factories (e.g., Yamaha, Kawaii, Honda, Suzuki); as a result, a large number of Brazilian immigrants reside in the city to work for these factories. In recent years, the city created the first Brazilian elementary school in Japan. Because participant parents tended to have more chance to interact with immigrants, their views could be very unique.

Finally, I want to introduce some mothers' understanding of the world. Consider Sachiko and Mika's narratives.

Sachiko: Right. I want him to get along with everyone.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Sachiko: I think that there are people who just want to get along with certain groups of people, but I want him to be liked by as many people as he can. That way, he would be able to live better. It is not just at school, because you can't survive well if you don't get *along* with people at work.

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Mika: I want her to be a likable person. I want her to have very good friends who she can get along with for a long time.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Mika: I think ... it is important to be independent, but I also think she can enjoy and have a good experience by going places with friends. Having good friends enriches life, I think. I don't think being a loner is a bad thing though.

For Sachiko and Mika, being able to understand others' feelings and have good friends were the essential qualities for their children to survive and to have happy lives. In their minds, the interrelationship was the main focus; as a result, the power relationship regarding who did better than the other was not a major concern in their children's everyday life, at least when they were young.

### ***Education is Not a Symbol for Success***

Almost all Japanese fathers and mothers stated that being able to understand others and get along with others were the keys for success and happiness for a social being in Japan. In Japan, the term *education mama* is often used to describe mothers who are enthusiastic about their children's educational achievement even when children are very young. These mothers

would not mind investing their money, time, and energy to provide intellectual stimuli for their children. Knowing the phenomenon of *education mama*, I wondered how participant Japanese parents viewed their children's education. From the data, I found that Japanese parents were less likely to put emphasis on their children's education, at least while their children were four- to six-year olds. In the case of Masako, for example, there was no direct relationship among higher education, a good job, and a stable life. Masako said:

Masako: I want him to learn skills to survive. He is a boy. It would be very nice if he could use his talent for work, and his talent makes contributions to society or to help others. That is ideal. I hope he can live like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Can I ask what you mean by "skills to survive"?

Masako: I would say ... I want him to have knowledge to live in terms of money and social status, especially after he finished school. It is not about higher education. I want him to have skills to be able to see opportunities and to make good judgments. It's important to learn how to do it since he is still young, otherwise he won't be able to make a good choices in life. So, I want him to store that kind of knowledge.

Although her definition of survival skills was a rather abstract concept, Masako clarified that survival skills did not come automatically with a diploma. In other words, higher education was not a symbol of success or stability for Masako.

Other parents compared and contrasted what made their children happy. In their minds, kids who had many friends were more likely to be happier than smart kids. In a way, they talked about these as two categories of children's personal characteristics. If they had to select one over the other, many Japanese parents ranked having many friends before education. For example, Daisuke said:

Daisuke: I want him to be able to get along with many people. I think it is fine as long as he has an average education.

Interviewer: What do you mean by "average" education?



Daisuke: You know, just in the middle or even upper lower level among his peers would be fine. As long as he is not extremely below the average, I am fine. Instead of being a smart kid in school, I want him to become a person who can get along with people.

Interviewer: Okay. Can I ask what you mean by “get along with people”?

Daisuke: Sure. Having many friends is one example. There are kids who get stressed out from friendship now. I think they are trying too hard to get along with others. Of course, everybody is different and you feel stress to a certain extent. But I think that stress can be reduced depending on how you see situations and he can learn it while he is still young. I want him to learn how to get along with others without feeling much stress.

For Daisuke, conformity was the key to getting along with others; therefore, he wanted his son’s education to be in the middle, rather than very good or extremely bad, because either one placed his son in a deviant group.

Toshihiko also mentioned that he was happy as long as his son earned “average grades at school.” Toshihiko taught at a middle school. During the interview, he told me various issues that his students were facing. Some problems were familiar ones (e.g., dating) and other issues were serious (e.g., attempted suicide). Although his son was much younger than his students, Toshihiko’s parenting beliefs were influenced by his daily interaction with his students.

Interviewer: What do you mean by average?

Toshihiko: It means ... as long as he can do what he wants to do. For example, I want him to have a goal. Say ... I want to become this, that is why I need to go to this school in this town. He doesn’t have to go to the top school. Also, I want him to be healthy.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Toshihiko: Right. I teach in a middle school. I see many kids and think that kids who are able to understand others’ feelings and get along with others are much better than smart kids.

As a teacher, Toshihiko interpreted that kids who have many friends were much happier than smart kids who focused on study.

The importance of education was sometimes talked about in the context of children's gender. Some parents really wanted their daughters to have skills to understand others' feelings instead of having a college diploma because these parents believed girls would be happier by fostering behavior. For instance, Shoko and Masaharu said:

Shoko: I agree. You don't need education once you finish school.

Masaharu: Right. There are many unhappy educated people. I think she will be much happier if she learns manners, etiquette, and femininity. So, I want her to be happy rather than smart.

Shoko completed two years at a liberal art college, and Masaharu graduated from four years college in economics; however, higher education was not a symbol of success for them, especially for their daughter. To summarize, Japanese fathers and mothers tended to expect their children to learn conformity because they believed that children's life would be richer and happier if they could get along with others. For that matter, Japanese parents were less likely to encourage their children to be unique and stand out from the crowd.

### **AMERICAN PARENTS' VIEW OF IMPORTANT SKILLS IN SOCIETY**

In the chapters 5, 6, and 7, I looked at how American parents tended to see their relationships with their own parents, children, and partners. I found that American fathers and mothers were less likely to focus on interrelationships to construct their parenting beliefs and practices. For instance, American fathers and mothers were more likely to construct their own parenting styles different from their own parents, and want to exceed their own parents' parenting approach. From American parents' view, the parent-child relationship was similar to that of a teacher and student. Parents taught children; thus, the direction of their relationship was one way from parents to children. American fathers and mothers more likely stressed the

importance of equality in a partnership to raise children; therefore, they were less likely to value interdependency. How did American parents' see individuals in society? How did persons in the United States see their relationship to other members of society?

Nisbett (2003) discussed that Westerners tend to say that the individuality and independence are the important personal qualities whereas East Asians are more likely emphasize the ability to depend on each other to create harmony of the group. I also found that participant American parents saw one's individuality and independence were the best qualities for their children to survive and be happy. In their minds, being independent and having individuality were two different categories of personal aspects. Being independent was often associated with individual's financial ability; consequently, American parents used higher education as a symbol of reaching that goal. On the other hand, American fathers and mothers said that persons who had individuality knew exactly what they liked and were not afraid of being different from others. Because an independent person who had her/his own individuality did not depend on other people, she/he had much power or control over her/his own life. When American parents talked about the relationship among/between people, they tended to see that there were two groups of people: leaders and followers. If they were asked to select one over the other, American parents were more likely to choose the leader category.

### ***“Independence” is the Most Important Personal Characteristic***

America is an individualistic culture where persons' physical, emotional, and financial independence are highly valued to become a productive member of society (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Nisbett 2003; Rubin and Chung 2006). Many researchers studied how these cultural expectations influence parenting styles. Kohn (1987) and Triandis (1989), for example,

suggested that American parents tended to highlight self-reliance, independence, and creative behavior; ultimately, parents encouraged children to be assertive individuals. Befu (1986), Bornstein, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, and Ogino (1990), Bornstein, Tal, and Tamis-LeMonda (1991) also added that American mothers anticipated children's early mastery of verbal competence and self-actualization which support one's independence. The parents I interviewed in the United States also often agreed that these were important personal characteristics; therefore, they encouraged their children to develop them.

What was going on in American parents' mind when they determined what they want their children to foster? American fathers and mothers pointed out that they expected their children to find their individuality. In their minds, there were two groups of people.

One category included people who did not stand out in the crowd because they preferred social conformity, so who they were and what they did were not unique. The opposite category of people believed in an individual's uniqueness and did not shy away from being noticed in the group. American parents wanted their children to be the latter group of individuals. One interesting finding was that American parents also tended to stress the development of individuality more when their children were girls. For example, Roger and his partner (Susan) were raising a boy and girl. As I described in Chapter 7, they were very aware of gender equality in their partnership. They were also cognizant of gender when raising their daughter (the focal child of this study). During the interview, the couple often suggested that they tried to instill in their daughters the importance of gender equality. The following was one example.

Roger: No, I don't. I guess with my son ... I guess I don't say it that much because what is understood is that you can go and do whatever you want to do. A lot of times, I would just ... we'd be planning and she is like, "I can't do it because I am a girl," and I am like, "You can. It doesn't matter if you are girl. You do whatever you want and do." I find myself saying that to her more. I said that to her, but I don't say that to my son because

traditionally boys can do whatever they want to do. But if she tries to say something like, “I’m a girl” or “Girls can’t do that” you know, and then I always make that point like, “Yes, you can.” I don’t want her to be like that. I want her to be that role and want her to make her own life and make her own decisions. If she wants to take that role, and then that’s fine. But that’s not going to be predetermined.

In Roger’s mind, there was a boy’s world and a girl’s world. Boys were allowed to do whatever they wanted; in contrast, what girls could do was generally limited. Because boys had more options, they had more chances and control over their lives compared to girls. Roger tried to counteract this idea. He wanted his daughter to have many options; therefore, he taught his daughter not to follow gender stereotypes. The ultimate goal for Roger was to encourage his daughter to be an independent person.

It was not just fathers who encouraged daughters regarding gender equality. Many American mothers did, too. For example, Mary and her partner had one daughter. Mary said:

Mary: I think that I am aware as her mother of wanting to raise a strong daughter. Kind of independent, not boxing in any gender roles sort of things. That’s more mother-of-a-daughter kind of things.

Interviewer: Can I ask what you mean by independence?

Mary: Let’s see what I mean by it? Sort of ... Maybe self efficient, or could be a leadership type of thing, and confident and sociable. You know not needing someone to define her. (laugh)

Similar to Roger, Mary focused on fostering skills that will enable her daughter’s independence. Not following gender stereotypes of female was a symbol of being an independent person. What was interesting was that it was often daughters who were encouraged to abandon gender stereotypes. There were some parents who taught their sons to cook and clean. These tasks were often categorized as feminine household duties; however, parents did not necessarily understand these as feminine tasks. For them, being able to cook and clean was one aspect of being

independent. In addition, Mary said “as her mother ...” and “That’s more mother-of-a-daughter kind of things.” She categorized that raising an independent woman was a mother’s role.

Although American fathers and mothers wanted their children to be independent so they did not have to depend on others, parents also understood that the relationship with others was inevitable in society. When American parents explained the relationship with others, they tended to view those relationships as between two categories of people: the leaders and the followers. If the relationship among/between people was unavoidable, then American parents preferred their children to be the leaders. Excerpts from Mary and Brad’s narratives illustrate the views of American parents.

Interviewer: What kind of person do you want your child to be?

Mary: Right. What I’d like her to be is tolerant ... people have many different experiences and backgrounds, but I also think that kind of like a leadership in school, you know, rather than exclusive in terms of socially with her school. I don’t know what to explain. Can you elaborate?

Brad: I agree, so I would elaborate on that. For example, I remember very specifically when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, maybe ten years old. I had a strong personality in class and a group ... a little group was formed and there was a boy the other kids didn’t like and I really fought for him regardless he wasn’t funny, he wasn’t handsome, or any good at sports. I remember my parents really reinforcing how they were proud of me that I included him in sports. There is a certain leadership role that a lot of times are necessary to be kind of in school social situations. So, we already started to discuss with her in terms of taking a leadership role. So, I think that’s very much a part of it.

First, Mary said that she wanted her daughter to be able to understand people’s feelings because we lived in the diverse society, and then she mentioned the leadership skill. Brad elaborated on Mary’s point that being able to understand others’ feeling was a required ability to take leadership. For American parents, the social relationship tended to have one direction: from the rescuer to the rescued. Obviously, the rescuers were the independent ones and the rescued were

the dependent ones. Thus, when American parents saw the relationship in the society, they preferred their children to be the independent ones.

Many American parents also stated that they wanted to encourage their children to have their own individuality. Megan and Raymond said:

Megan: Strong family values ... that one notion is that taking care of your brother and family and be aware of others. I think that is important.

Raymond: But still they ... I want them to have freedom. Try new things, think outside the box. Don't be afraid to be different from others.

Interviewer: How would you encourage this?

Raymond: If they want to go to school wearing shoes on the wrong feet, that's okay. Do that. Wear mismatching socks; put spikes on your hair. Do. I want to paint my face. Paint. Don't be afraid to do things. Look different and be different.

Megan was raised by Greek immigrant parents in the United States. At the beginning of the interview, she told me that the family was the main focus of her family because of her Greek cultural background. Megan's narrative in the conversation also explained her background. Then, Raymond added that he wanted his son to have freedom, which means to have creative thinking and not being afraid of following those thoughts. For him, the creative person was unique and good. On the other hand, the person who did similar to others was not creative and, thus, boring. It was a hierarchal classification of people's personal characteristics.

In this section, I illustrated the characteristics as a member of society most important for American fathers and mothers who were interviewed. How can individuals attain such characteristics? In the next section, I will demonstrate American parents' answers to that question.

### *Education is a Symbol for Success*

Although American parents wanted to socialize their children to be independent individuals, there were limitations. Four- to six-year-olds could not cook, could not go places alone, and could not make important decisions regarding things such as their schooling; therefore, many American fathers and mothers suggested that they made these everyday decisions for their children's futures. American parents especially stressed the importance of education for their children's futures. For these parents, "education" and/or "a diploma" was a symbol of success. Their answers were consistent across all groups of parents (father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son). In some cases, the idea was based on personal experiences. Susan was the first example of this. She recently went back to school to complete her bachelor's degree. She said:

Susan: So, I don't know from that perspective . . . I don't know . . . education is just really optional. I think . . . Had I been a male, and then I wouldn't have dropped out first place. I had to, and then, end of discussion. I don't know for girls. I think it is. But I don't know anymore because I think about my daughter. I don't want that to be an option. I want her to do whatever she wants to do, but I want her to have a degree.

She first stated that college was an option for her daughter. Then, she recalled when she took a break from school and realized that she would have had to finish the degree if she were a man. After thinking about how gender played a role in her lack of educational attainment, Susan concluded that she wanted to insist her daughter have a degree. In her case, higher education was a symbol of the gender equality.

Matthew also talked about the importance of education using his own experiences. According to Matthew, he left college once and returned a year later.

Interviewer: What made you change?

Matthew: Well, it's just maturity.



Interviewer: Maturity. Was there any specific event or something?

Matthew: I mean, I just decided that I didn't wanna be a garbage man for the rest of my life or working at McDonald's. I always worked one or two or three jobs. So . . . and it wasn't just where I wanted to be when I am 40, you know? Get where you wanna be. You need a college degree. Most college degrees, well you don't do what you got the degree for. You gotta have it, and I'd rather have it. I want her to have it.

Matthew then added later on:

Matthew: Well, at this point, we encourage her to go to school. I mean, we will encourage her to go to college. We have a college fund for her. Well, it's a plan. (laugh) That's the plan. Obviously, she still has to plan and she can say not to go. But that degree, regardless what to do, opens a lot of doors that can't open before.

In his mind, there were two types of jobs. One group included jobs that did not require higher education, such as garbage collector or fast food restaurant worker. For him, these jobs were younger people's jobs; therefore, he did not mind doing these jobs when he was younger. Then, he realized, as he "became more mature," there was another category of jobs that required a college degree. His observation was that people did not necessarily use the knowledge they gained in college in their eventual career; however, having the diploma changed the kind of job one could get and provided more opportunities for life. For Matthew, a diploma symbolized maturity, a professional job, success, and happiness.

Kelly and Duane had a similar perspective. Both graduated from prestigious colleges and had professional jobs.

Kelly: I want her to be a kind and caring person and also go to college and get a good job.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Kelly: Because so much you can learn through education. So much. We know that there are a lot of stupid people going to college (laugh) but just being there for four years, then you get so much out from there.

Duane: And more opportunities. Right.

Kelly: Yeah. You can't get a job without a college degree.

Duane: You can still go to college and work at pizza place. That's fine, but the other way around is rare.

The way that Kelly and Duane mapped out an individual's life course was interesting to analyze. In their minds, the consequences of higher education went like this: College → experiences and knowledge → diploma → opportunities → good jobs → higher income → stability → happiness. Although Kelly said, "there are a lot of stupid people going to college," the diploma brought them opportunities to get a good job. Duane also stated that people with a diploma have options to either work at a corporation or at a pizza place, but people without the diploma only have the second option. The point to be made here is that we can see how American parents' view was one direction. There was the possibility that people cannot obtain a good job even with the highest diploma because of other factors, such as their personality and social skills; however, American parents were less likely to focus on that. Consequently, many American parents found importance in higher education, although the pattern emerged because most participant parents were middle-class families.

Lareau (2003), who compared parenting styles between working-class parents and middle-class parents, discovered that parenting styles are related to parents' social class. Working-class parents let their children make their own after school schedule. One reason was that these parents could not afford transportation and extra curriculum expenses. In contrast, middle-class parents orchestrated their children's daily activities so that they could foster children's academic, musical, and physical talent. Although not many participant parents did not seem to organize their children's daily schedule to an extent that children were taking multiple

lessons a day, many mothers were stay-at-mothers who were driving around the town for their children's educational and social activities, similar to Lareau's (2003) demonstration of typical middle-class families. A different pattern may have been found with a more diverse sample.

Just like the parents I discussed above, Raymond believed going to college provides knowledge and job opportunities. What was interesting was that Raymond also shared a corporation's perspective about diplomas.

Megan: I don't think you can underestimate the importance of education for any purpose. So, the more educated they are, the better for me.

Raymond: Yeah, two purposes are . . . one, you really become an age that you are exposed to you didn't realize and you relearn the history. You learn things over again. So, you become a more rich person in college. Second reason is, you just, it's just hard to get anywhere without a degree. It doesn't mean that you are smarter by having that paper, but that's the fact. I work at "A" company and if you don't have a college degree, then you aren't hired. That's it. If you have three hours short and go back and finish them, we will interview you. It doesn't have to be a communication major, but they want to know that you are an individual who is committed enough for four years of school.

According to Raymond, a corporation viewed a diploma as a symbol of commitment. A company was not looking at intelligence; instead, they saw a hard-working personality in the diploma. By having the diploma, you could be in the category of people who were considered to have a good work ethic; in contrast, if you did not have a diploma, you were seen as someone who lacked the qualities to be effective in the workforce.

The last example is Nadia's view on children's higher education. She presented what education symbolized for her in a very fascinating manner.

Nadia: Ah . . . maybe it's for mothers, but a lot of pressure to make sure that your kids are better than others. The end result is if they went to the right college. You know. The decision that I am making this month about preschool is going to be the right decision to send her to go to the right college so that she can make enough money to survive. You know, I hate that feeling of competitions.

Interviewer: Where do you think that pressure comes from?

Nadia: I don't know. Maybe other mothers, but I think that they also feel from other mothers. So, I don't know ... maybe it's a part of this culture. But I don't like that feeling.

In the passage, Nadia said that children's higher education was important because it also related to the evaluation of mothering skills. If children went to a prestigious school, it showed that they had smart and supportive mothers. She was already feeling the pressure to send her daughter to a good college, even though her daughter was only four years old. Based on her observation, the phenomenon applied to mothers. In fact, several mothers hinted to pressures similar to that Nadia describe; however, none of the fathers I interviewed expressed that they felt evaluated by their children's education.

To summarize how American parents viewed individuals in society, they tended to see that individuals who were financially and emotionally independent were successful because they could have more control over their own life as well as others. American fathers and mothers also tended to emphasize the importance of education because it would open the door for success. Thus, American parents incorporated these beliefs to construct their parenting beliefs and interacted with their children.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSIONS AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

How do fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States learn and internalize their everyday events, interactions, and past memories to incorporate these things into their parental philosophy? How do Japanese and American parents construct the meaning of “parent” as a social being? To uncover the answers to these questions, I conducted 48 conjoint interviews with Japanese and American couples raising four- to six-year-old children. Through the research, I learned how and why fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States are similar and/or different in terms of their parenting beliefs and parenting styles. As a result, I now have a better understanding of parenthood in two nations. I also have a better understanding of how fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States strive, in their own unique ways, to ensure their children’s happiness.

This research was strongly inspired by Nisbett’s (2003) study of the different thought processes of East Asians and Westerners, as well as my personal experiences from living in both Japan and the United States. Although extant literature, including Nisbett (2003), discusses the notion that people in Japan and people in the United States tend to think differently, my research is not just a simple application of such studies for three main reasons. One, we could anticipate the differences between thought processes of fathers and mothers in the two countries; however, we could not know exactly how diverse their constructions of parenting beliefs were without examining different aspects of parenting processes. To fully understand why parents behave the way they do, it is necessary to directly explain the cognitive worlds of the parents. For example, I described the interview settings in Japan and the United States: Japanese parents let their child

stay in the same room where we were having the interview, whereas American couples sent their child to her/his room so that we could focus on the interview. After analyzing the data, the reasons why parents in the two nations did so were not simply a matter of culture (i.e., Japanese parenting styles vs. American parenting styles). Based on my research, I add the clarification that Japanese fathers and mothers tended to feel comfortable to be interviewed in front of their child because these fathers and mothers were more likely to see their child as a part of them. In contrast, American parents created a spatial boundary by sending their child to the next room because they were more likely to view a separation between parents and children, as I illustrated in Chapter 6. Similarly, Japanese couples might feel more natural to let their child sit between them in a movie theater because their concept of “we” is less rigid than that of American couples who often used the term “we” to refer to the father and mother as a unit. This may help to explain why American fathers and mothers could be more likely to sit together, as I discussed in Chapter 7. Thus, my research demonstrated how culture and cognition together create family relationships.

Second, this study emphasized the importance of debunking commonly shared views and beliefs about family relationships (i.e., intergenerational relationships and parental partnerships). By using cognitive sociology as a framework for this study, I try “to promote greater awareness of our cognitive diversity as social beings,” and operate on the assumption that “[the] more we become aware of our cognitive differences as members of different thought communities, the less likely we are to follow the common ethnocentric tendency to regard the particular way in which we ourselves happen to process the world in our minds as based on some absolute standards of ‘logic’ or ‘reason’ and, thus, as naturally or logically inevitable” (Zerubavel 1997:10). Even though there are multiple ways to describe what good/bad parenting styles are

and who good/bad parents are across the globe, we tend to support what we think is logical. As a result, we sometimes blame parents who are raising children under different environments, conditions, and logics. This study was intended to extend the current theories pertaining to the cognitive “logic” of family relations.

Third, the cross-national analysis of parents’ cognitive processes ensured the importance of developing sophisticated comparative research methods in the future. Conducting cross-national research can be challenging due to the limitations of researchers’ language barriers and cultural understandings--limitations that scholars have often talked about. I want to add the consideration that researchers need to be aware of the diverse cognitive processes of their sample populations. To fully examine the relationship between causes (i.e., independent variables) and effects (i.e., dependent variables), researchers should consider the potential influence of these three factors: interpretation of language, cultural traditions, and cognitive processes.

In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, I discussed variations of the views of Japanese parents and American parents that influence the construction of parenting beliefs and practices. Overall, the parents' constructing of parenting beliefs and practices basically depended on how they thought about for four analytically distinct relationships: (1) their relationship with their own parents; (2) their relationship with their children; (3) their relationship with their partner; and (4) their relationship with others in society. Whereas parents from both nations similarly mentioned each of these four aspects, the cognitive processes of fathers and mothers in Japan and those of American parents were different when they described each relationship. The participant couples were homogeneous in terms of family composition (i.e., heterosexual couples raising at least one child who is four- to six-years-old), educational background, class, country of origin, and age.

Yet it was hard to ignore the distinctive ways in which Japanese parents and American parents viewed the world to construct their parenting beliefs.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 9.1 illustrates an overview of my findings. In *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently ... and Why*, Nisbett (2003) discussed how different religious, geographic, and historic backgrounds created the practices of collectivism in East Asian countries (Japan, China, and Korea) and individualism in Western countries (with specific focus on the United States). He also demonstrated the patterns of cognitive processes that East Asians and Westerners exhibit. East Asians, for example, tend to see things in a holistic manner, in which various aspects influence occurrence of an event. According to Nisbett (2003), it is hard for East Asians to think without considering social contexts. In contrast, Westerners tend to understand things in a linear way (i.e., event A leads to event B which, in turn, leads to event C). The thought process of Westerners tends to be more narrowed and direct because social contexts are of less concern to explain an event.

By living in a collectivistic society and an individualistic society, respectively, Japanese parents and American parents learn to interpret and internalize past events and their relationships with others. I analyzed parents' cognitive worlds by using Zerubavel's (1997) six cognitive acts as a framework of my research. As a result, I discovered that there are four aspects that influence the construction of parenting beliefs and practices. Ultimately, I found that Japanese parents and American parents create their beliefs in a distinctive manner.

In previous chapters, I discussed each point (i.e., how parents see their relationship with their parents, how parents see their relationship with their children, how parents see their parental



partnership, and how parents see their relationship with others in a society) by using excerpts from the interviews. In the following sections, I want to recapitulate these points to clarify the overall picture of the findings.

**Table 9.1: Differences in Parental Cognition between Japanese and American Parents**

	<b>Japanese Parents</b>	<b>American Parents</b>
<b>The Relationship with their own Parents</b>	Focusing on social contexts of parents  “Parents are my mentor”	Focusing on parents’ personality  “My parents are examples of who I do not want to become as a parent”
<b>The Relationship with their Children</b>	Children will learn from parents  Parents and children are linked	Wanting to influence and control children’s life  Parents and children are separate entities
<b>The Relationship with their Partner</b>	Gender role ideology is the foundation of the relationship  Mothers keep working fathers’ existence alive at home	Being “fair” is the foundation of the relationship  We work as a unit to raise children
<b>The Relationship with others in a Society</b>	“Being able to understand others’ feelings” is the most important personal characteristic  Education is not a symbol for success	“Independence” is the most important personal characteristic  Education is a symbol for success
<b>Parental Beliefs and Practices</b>	Manufactured through Reciprocal Relationships	Manufactured through Self Motivation

### ***The Relationship with their Own Parents***

One of the aspects that influenced the construction of parenthood among participant parents was the relationship with their own parents. Although fathers and mothers in both Japan and the United States talked about how interaction with their parents influenced the formation of their parenting beliefs and practices, the cognitive processes to interpret and internalize their experiences varied between Japanese parents and American parents.

The findings support Nisbett's (2003) explanation of popular cognitive processes of East Asians. Japanese fathers and mothers tended to evaluate their parents' parenting skills based on various social contexts (e.g., busy work schedules); as a result, they often found excuses for their parents' wrongdoing (e.g., not being able to spend time with family). At the same time, participant parents in Japan paid greater attention to processes (e.g., the amount of effort their parents made to spend time with children) than to consequences (e.g., whether their parents actually spent time with children). Because Japanese fathers and mothers tended to focus more on the social contexts and processes, they were more likely to give their parents credit, talking about their parents as mentors to guide their own parenting.

What about American parents? The analysis revealed that American fathers and mothers tended to use a linear explanation to discuss their parents' parenting skills. For instance, participant parents in the United States tended to ignore social contexts; instead, they paid great attention to their parents' personalities to evaluate their parenting behavior. The key, for American parents, was whether their parents actually spent time with them or played their favorite sports with them, rather than whether they tried hard to spend time with them under busy work schedules or physical separation due to divorce. Thus, American fathers and mothers tended to be more critical in evaluating their parents.

My cross-national comparison supported the idea that how parents interpret and internalize their relationships with their parents has more influence on their construction of parenting beliefs than the kind of relationship they had with their parents. In addition, our thought processes are greatly related to the culture that we identify with. Culture and cognition together create family life.

### ***The Relationship with Children***

The way participant fathers and mothers in Japan and in the United States internalized social expectations and roles of parents were another aspect that influenced the construction of parenthood. Acknowledging this fact is especially important because the way that parents view the roles of parents and children directly relates to the way that parents interact with their children.

Japanese participant parents tended to say that the parent and child can both teach and learn from each other. In other words, a parent can take the role of teacher or student, depending on the situation. Even though children are often seen as powerless beings who are just learning to become members of society, Japanese parents still emphasized the fact that they can learn from their children. The direction of the relationship, in other words, was reciprocal for Japanese fathers and mothers rather than consistently one-directional from parents as teachers to children as students. At the same time, Japanese parents tended to view their children as an extension of themselves by saying things like “we grow up together” and “my child must be enjoying it if I am enjoying it.” Such perspectives support Nisbett’s (2003) findings that Japanese (East Asians) pay attention to the social contexts and thus stress the importance of reciprocal relationships.

In contrast, American participant fathers and mothers tend to believe that parents are teachers and children are students, regardless of the situation. To accomplish the role of teacher, parents are expected to coach their children well so that children can go through the appropriate developmental stages. It is a parent's responsibility to shape who their children are, especially when children are young. Therefore, American parents expressed a strong sense of control over their children's lives.

### ***The Relationship with their Partner***

I interviewed heterosexual couples who were legally married and living together to raise their children; therefore, the couples' parental partnerships were often discussed during the interviews. To acknowledge their understanding of the parental partnership was an important aspect used to capture their parenthood experiences because it explained how they view the roles of father and mother. By comparing narratives of parents in Japan and the United States, I discovered that Japanese parents and American parents used different cognitive processes to view parental partnerships during the course of child-rearing. There were two main examples that explained their diverse perspectives: (1) the way they used the term "we" to talk about family members, and (2) participant parents' internalization of gender roles in a family.

The word "we" can be used in many forms to talk about family members, dependent upon the situation. It can refer to "a father and a mother who share the parental partnership." "Father and child" can be "we," just as "mother and child." Among Japanese participant couples, the term "we" was often used to refer to the "mother and child" unit as opposed to a relationship involving the father. I also discovered that the method they used to divide family members was related to Japanese parents' observation of gender roles. Japanese fathers and mothers tended to

clarify the distinction between the father's role and the mother's role. Their approach was akin to a structural functionalist approach, with the implication that each family member has his or her own functional role within the family. The father takes an instrumental role, which is to be the breadwinner, disciplinarian, and authoritative figure for the other family members. The mother plays a more expressive role, in which she is the main caretaker for her family (Parsons 1964). Japanese mothers tended to believe that teaching children about their father's greatness was one of the tasks needed to accomplish an expressive role. Mothers, especially those whose partners worked longer hours, stressed the importance of teaching their children to appreciate hard-working fathers. Although these mothers had financial support, they interacted with their children as if they were single mothers by caring for the child at home. Because participant fathers and mothers in Japan interpreted and internalized cultural expectations of fathers and mothers as such, mothers were willing to team up with their children to share the views of fathers. Consequently, Japanese couples used the word "we" often to refer to the mother and child relationship. Japanese fathers and mothers were also more likely to find their expected roles in family settings (social contexts) and the tasks that they were assigned.

American couples conversely used the term "we" more often to refer to the father and mother unit. To apply Nisbett's discussion (2003) on American's linear view of the world, it is reasonable to assume that the teachers (the father and mother) should be on a separate team than the children. Nisbett also pointed out that westerners are more likely to emphasize equality or if they are working with other people as a team. Whether or not American fathers and mothers actually teamed-up in the parental partnership based on equality and fairness, American couples tended to stress the idea that the father and mother should work together as equal partners to

interact with their children. This view may have “made sense” to the American parents, but it is a culture bound view.

### ***The Relationships with Others in the Society***

During the interviews conducted for this study, fathers and mothers in both Japan and the United States said that they hoped that their children were happy. I then asked “what is children’s happiness?” Japanese parents and American parents had different answers to this question. In addition, I discovered that their definition of children’s happiness influenced how these fathers and mothers viewed their relationships with others in a society.

For Japanese parents, the ability to understand others’ feelings and respond to them is an important personal characteristic of humans as social beings. In a way, participant parents expected their children to be aware of social contexts. Japanese fathers and mothers also believed that such awareness skills aided their children’s happiness. A person who does a great job of understanding others makes a good helper for people; consequently, others are more likely to help this person in the instance that they need support. Depending on the situation, one can be powerful (the helper) or powerless (the one in need of help). Living in collectivistic culture, as Nisbett (2003) described, fathers and mothers in Japan tended to say that helping one another is the key to sustaining human relationships. One of the fathers even said that “one may be able to find and keep a job if he or she can get along with people even without special skills and higher educational degree.” It could be said that the Japanese parents’ view that understanding others’ feelings can lead to happiness also shows a form of linear thinking. In fact, it is not. In Japan, people and situations are more likely to be thought of as different and unique in each interaction.

Therefore, individuals are expected to be flexible by considering people's varied emotions and thoughts and also considering varied social contexts.

Fathers and mothers in the United States seemed to agree that being independent (e.g., physically, emotionally, and financially) makes an individual happy within a society; therefore, these mothers and fathers tried to encourage their children to become independent beings. According to American parents, having a degree (e.g., college diploma) was essential to becoming an independent person because it can lead to finding a good job, one which provides financial security and self-worth. Similar to what Nisbett (2003) explained, American parents' views on human life tended to be linear: education leads to a good job, which leads to financial security, which leads to emotional security, which ultimately leads to happiness. For fathers and mothers in the United States, each step was clearly defined and expected.

Comparing and contrasting the cognitive processes of how parents in both Japan and the United States viewed individuals in a society clarified the reasons to explain the great emphasis placed on education of children even when they are young, as well as Japanese parents' eagerness to teach social skills to their children.

## **PARENTAL PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES: MANUFACTURED THROUGH RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS VS. MANUFACTURED THROUGH SELF MOTIVATION**

In the above sections, I summarized the way fathers and mothers who live in diverse societies use different cognitive lenses to interpret their everyday experience during the course of childrearing. The center of discussion in this section is to talk about the characteristics of

parental beliefs and philosophies that were created by parents in Japan and the United states who share unique mental processes.

Japanese fathers and mothers tended to believe that their parenting beliefs and philosophies were greatly influenced by the interaction with other people. What they believe changed over time through the interaction with their own parents and children; therefore, their parenting beliefs were not static. Instead, they tended to feel comfortable saying that they were still learning to build their parenting beliefs through their everyday interaction with other people and experiences. At the same time, Japanese parents tended to view what parents can do for children to have certain limitations. Fathers, for example, have multiple roles (e.g., parent, partner, worker, and friend); as a result, fathers cannot devote all of their time, emotion, and energy for their children. The important goal for Japanese parents was to do their best while they are with their children. Their creation of parenting beliefs and philosophies thus tended to be *passive*; parenting beliefs and philosophies were manufactured through the reciprocal relationship with other people.

On the other hand, American fathers and mothers tended to claim that their inner hopes to become an ideal parent crafted their parenting beliefs and philosophies. Parents in the United States tended to believe that they have an absolute power and responsibility over what kind of parents they are and/or will become. To achieve the goal, parents should identify the types of personal characteristics that they need to obtain, and seek to keep such personalities regardless of their social conditions (e.g., work schedules, difficulties of marriage). Thus, their construction of parenting beliefs and practices tended to be *active*: I create my parental beliefs and philosophies.



## THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

By analyzing the cognitive worlds of 24 Japanese couples and 24 American couples, I sought to understand how culture and cognition construct concepts of parenthood. This study further explains the social construction of parenthood by linking the mind with the behavior of parents within a specific social structure. Parents in Japan and in the United States tend to interact with their children differently because fathers and mothers interpret various aspects of their life in unique ways as social beings living within certain cultures (i.e., collectivist and individualist). Simultaneously, this research extends the sociological importance of previously established findings. For example, cross-national comparisons of parents' narratives help to clarify the reasons for certain family phenomena, such as "intensive mothering" (Hays 1996) and gender inequality, as well as shed light on the issues centered on the low fertility rate in Japan. This study further raises questions about how family scholars should approach parenting research in an increasingly interconnected world.

### *Intensive Mothering and Fathering*

In *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, Hays (1996) discussed the ideology of "intensive mothering." Intensive mothering refers to "a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children" (Hays 1996: x). According to Hays (1996), American society puts too much pressure on mothers to negotiate the roles of a good worker and a good mother. In the workplace, mothers are expected to be "ruthless" to survive in a competitive business environment. At the same time, mothers are expected to be kind and selfless with an ability to pour in as much affection as needed for childrearing.

Lareau (2003) also talked about the intensity of childrearing practices among middle-class families in the United States, though her focus was not only on mothers. Lareau referred to the parenting styles of the middle-class parents as “concerted cultivation.” Parents who follow this style of parenting try to devote a large amount of time, energy, and money to their children. Both fathers and mothers feel responsibility to find and develop their children’s potential. To achieve this goal, parents drive children to before-school-and-after-school extracurricular programs (i.e., piano, soccer, swimming lessons). Lareau found that, even in day-to-day interactions, middle-class parents treated their children as small adults by patiently reasoning with them and teaching them negotiation skills. To become a successful parent, the middle-class parents were expected to do quite a bit.

In studies of Japanese families, Honda (2008) similarly discussed the phenomenon of mothers who pour lots of energy, time, and money into their children’s education. Children’s success is often measured by mothering skills; therefore, Honda argued that some Japanese women feel a tremendous amount of pressure to do well as mothers to the point that they harm their own emotional and physical stabilities.

Without a doubt, the social expectations of parents are increasing in both Japan and the United States. How do mothers in both countries deal with the situation? Which group of mothers is more likely to struggle in managing these social expectations? The answer is not simple, of course, because human emotions are hard to measure. Additionally, as I demonstrated, mothers in Japan and mothers in the United States interpret and internalize the course of events differently. However, it is relevant to mention that the cognitive processes of American mothers may cause them to feel more social pressure than Japanese mothers feel. American mothers generally consider themselves the teacher and their child(ren) the student; as a result, one of their

main messages was that they did not want to lose control over their children. It seems as if American mothers feel they cannot make any mistakes in raising their children. In contrast, Japanese mothers understand their situations as “we (both the parent and the child) teach and learn from each other.” Japanese mothers appear to have an easier time accepting mistakes because they allow themselves to be considered a learner.

Comparing fathers in Japan and fathers in the United States similarly suggests how society’s control over their cognitive worlds has an impact their fatherhood. For Japanese fathers who are trained to view their relationships with their own fathers as reciprocal, fatherhood is not a competition about which generation of fathers is better than the other. As a result, Japanese parents tended to view their fathers as their mentors. In contrast, American fathers tend to see their relationship with their fathers as a game of sorts. They compare themselves with their fathers to determine which of them is better. To classify themselves as better, they sometimes denigrate what their fathers did, while accentuating what they see as their own positive traits.

There should be no implication that Japanese parents are more “laid back” than American parents; there are multiple issues that mothers and fathers in both nations go through. In fact, being a parent is challenging, regardless of the country of origin. The point is that the cognitive processes of Japanese parents and American parents are influenced by cultures (i.e., collectivism and individualism), which, in turn, influence the cognitions of fathers and mothers. Thus, future researchers should examine the link between culture and cognition to fully understand the impact of culture on family life.

### ***Gender Equality/Inequality***

One of the goals of this study was to examine how gender has an impact on family relationships; therefore, I compared and contrasted the cognitive processes of fathers and mothers, as well as parents who are raising daughters and sons. Although the difference between parents' national backgrounds and cultural backgrounds divided the patterns of cognitive processes between fathers and mothers in Japan and in the United States, cross-national comparisons of parents' cognitive worlds brought to light some gender issues in Japan.

The low fertility rate in Japan has been the center of attention since 1987, which was when the fertility rate dropped to 1.57 children per woman. Because low fertility rates potentially caused various other issues (e.g., aging, labor force, economy), the Japanese government started to take action. In 1999, the government held a national campaign that promoted fathers' childcare involvement by using the slogan, "A man who doesn't raise children can't be called a father" (Ishii-Kuntz, Makino, Kato, and Tsuchiya 2004, Ishii-Kunz 2003, and Kagayama 1999). The Japanese government thought that women might consider having more children if they received more childcare assistance at home from their partner. The campaign, however, did not help to increase the fertility rate.

From the findings of this study, I would assume that Japanese mothers may not be in need of childcare support from the fathers as much as the Japanese government believes. Although increasing women's higher education and employment indicate that Japanese women are seeking gender equality (see also Osawa 1988, Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura 2001, and Shirahase 2007), participant Japanese parents tended to follow the gender ideology of fathers taking a more instrumental role (i.e., breadwinner, disciplinarian, authoritative figure) and mothers playing an expressive role (i.e., taking care of household chores). Fathers and mothers

in Japan thought that being able to show a division of labor between genders was good for their children because children could then perceive and experience both sides. If Japanese couples supported an equal gender division of labor at home similar to the way American couples support it, fathers' childcare assistance might mean that mothers would consider having more children. In the absence of that, greater father involvement is not necessarily going to lead to Japanese couples deciding to have more children.

### ***Globalization and Parenthood***

The findings from cross-national studies about parents' cognitive processes underscore the importance of understanding families in a global context. Fathers and mothers in both Japan and the United States belong to different cognitive traditions, norms of focusing, and rules of remembering; therefore, parents in Japan and the United States interpret and internalize the world in different ways. For example, Japanese parents and American parents evaluated the divorce of their own parents differently. Japanese parents were more likely to consider the various reasons and processes as to why their parents had to divorce. As a result, Japanese fathers and mothers tended to be more forgiving and understanding about their parents' divorce (at least during the interview). In contrast, American parents tended to pay attention to the fact that their parents indeed divorced. For them, the reasons for why parents had to divorce were outside their focus. Thus, the parental divorce has a different impact on the construction of parenting beliefs for parents in the two nations. In addition, the way parents determine their relationship with their children after divorce could vary, depending on whether the couple is Japanese or American. American couples, who see the father and mother as a team against the child, are more likely to consider and/or expect equal parental participation after the divorce.

However, sharing parental duties after a divorce would be challenging for Japanese couples because of the strong bond that had been created between mother and child. To an extent, divorced Japanese fathers could have a difficult time interacting with their children.

Issues such as parental divorce are associated with the way one approaches marriage and family. We can likely find parenting books on a range of issues, such as child discipline, sex education, divorce, and remarriage. These books are circulated worldwide and introduced in each nation by being translated into various languages. In fact, many American parenting books are translated into Japanese so that Japanese parents can learn parenting skills from them. For instance, *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care* and *More Magic Words of Parenting* by Dorothy Law Nolte were originally published in the United States but are also popular child-rearing books in Japan. Books that offer parenting advice are created to support parents. In addition, learning about parenting skills from other cultures expands parents' knowledge bases, mentalities, and views. However, the advice and suggestion that make sense to American parents may not make sense to Japanese fathers and mothers; consequently, international parenting books can be a source of confusion at times. Acknowledging the existence of the different cognitive processes should be the responsibility of family researchers, parenting experts, and media producers (e.g., publishers) so that they can be extra sensitive to and supportive of the parents who are seeking assistance.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The findings reported here are based on interviews with Japanese fathers and mothers who lived in relatively small cities. It is possible that Japanese parents who live in a large city, such as Tokyo, would offer different views than those that were presented here. In addition,

participant Japanese couples were similar in terms of their social class, which may have restricted the diversity of views that were expressed. Future research should examine the cognitions of Japanese parents across a range of settings and social classes. The same can be said of the American couples, who were drawn from a large Southeastern city and a small Midwestern city. Their social classes were also similar. Future research with other couples from different parts of the United States and social classes would help to further illustrate the processes presented here.

All of the couples that participated in this study were heterosexual couples who live in the same household to raise their children. From the interviews I conducted, I discovered how social structure (i.e., collectivism, individualism) influences parents' cognitive processes to construct parenting beliefs. However, there are many single fathers and mothers, and gay and lesbian individuals and couples raising children. There are also Asian parents raising children in the United States. How do these parents view the world? Are their cognitive processes similar to those of the participant couples in this study? Is it a matter of national and cultural backgrounds that strongly impacts parents' cognitive processes rather than family structure? Answers to these questions will extend the literature of how culture and cognition construct family life.

Finally, I want to clarify the goal of my research to encourage more researchers to conduct cross-national qualitative studies to decipher cognitive processes. Many scholars have discussed how people who live in different cultures (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism) think and/or behave differently to point out the influence of cultural systems. When researchers report their findings, they often talk about people in dichotomous terms (e.g., East Asians are this way, but Americans are that way). To a certain extent, my research findings were similarly presented.

However, one of the main goals of my study was to examine the complexity of our mental processes by closely analyzing what fathers and mothers in Japan and the United States were thinking. In doing so, for example, I discussed how the gender of parents and children may influence thought processes, and implied that some Japanese and American parents think similarly. The sample's size and characteristics restricted, to some degree, my ability to illustrate diversity within each group. Further cross-national research on the cognitive processes of fathers and mothers under various cultural systems hopefully will go beyond, and perhaps build on, what I have been able to do, and contribute to our understanding of culture, cognition, and parenthood in the world's homes.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Culture, Cognition, and Parenthood in Japanese and American Home**  
**Saori Yasumoto**  
**Interview Schedule**  
**March 17, 2008**

**I. Demographic Information**  
**For Mother:**

1. How old are you?
2. What is your race/ethnicity?
3. What is your occupation?
  - a. Professional
  - b. Managerial
  - c. Clerical
  - d. Sales
  - e. Service
  - f. Agriculture, forestry, or fisheries
  - g. Craft/operation
  - h. Armed forces or security
  - i. Homemakers
  - j. Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. What kind of work do you do in this occupation?
5. How many hours per week, on average, do you work at this occupation?
6. What is your education?
  1. less than high school
  2. high school
  3. some college
  4. college graduate
  5. graduate degree
  6. other \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was your total income before taxes for 2006?
  - a. 0-\$19,999
  - b. \$20,000-\$39,999
  - c. \$40,000-\$59,999
  - d. \$60,000-\$79,999
  - e. \$80,000-\$99,999
  - f. \$100,000-119,999
  - g. \$120,000 or higher
  - h. Refused



**For Father:**

1. How old are you?
2. What is your race/ethnicity?
3. What is your occupation?
  - a. Professional
  - b. Managerial
  - c. Clerical
  - d. Sales
  - e. Service
  - f. Agriculture, forestry, or fisheries
  - g. Craft/operation
  - h. Armed forces or security
  - i. Homemakers
  - j. Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. What kind of work do you do in this occupation?
5. How many hours per week, on average, do you work at this occupation?
6. What is your education?
  7. less than high school
  8. high school
  9. some college
  10. college graduate
  11. graduate degree
  12. other \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was your total income before taxes for 2006?
  - a. 0-\$19,999
  - b. \$20,000-\$39,999
  - c. \$40,000-\$59,999
  - d. \$60,000-\$79,999
  - e. \$80,000-\$99,999
  - f. \$100,000-119,999
  - g. \$120,000 or higher
  - h. Refused

**For Couple:**

1. How long have you been married?
  
2. How many children do you have? Please list *gender* and *age* of your children. This may include stepchildren and children from previous marriage.

## II. Parenting Questions

1. What was your family structure when you were 4 to 6 years old?

2. Who raised you?

3. What are the kinds of things that your parents did for/with you when you were young and you want to do for/with your child?

What are the kinds of things that your parents did for/with you when you were young and you do NOT want to do for/with your child?

What are the kinds of things that your parents did NOT do for/with you when you were young and you want to do for/with your child?

4. What are the kinds of lessons you took when you were young and want to encourage your child to take? Why?

What are the kinds of lessons you took when you were young and do NOT want to encourage your child to take? Why?

What are the kinds of lessons you did NOT take when you were young and want to encourage your child to take? Why?

5. What kind of person do you think your parents wanted you to be? Why do you think so? Can you provide examples?

a. Did your parents expect you to have a certain job when you become adult?

b. Did your parents expect you to have certain characteristics, such as to be strong or kind?

c. Did your parents encourage you to go to college?

6. What kind of person do you want the focal child to be? Why? Can you provide examples?

- a. Do you expect the focal child to have a certain job when s/he becomes an adult?
- b. Do you expect the focal child to have certain characteristics, such as to be strong or kind?
- b. Will you encourage the focal child to go to college?
- d. What kinds of things did you expect the focal child to learn by this time?

7. What does it mean for you to be a parent? (All of the following may apply; i.e., parents may indicate more than one.)

- a. responsibility
- b. emotional satisfaction
- c. burden
- d. joy
- e. other \_\_\_\_\_

Probe for variety of meanings

8. What does it mean to have a son? What does being a father/mother of a son mean?  
What does it mean to have a daughter? What does being a father/mother of a daughter mean?

- a. Do you think raising a son is no different than raising a daughter? Or do you think raising a son is different than raising a daughter? Why do you think this way?
- b. Do you think you would act differently toward the focal child if s/he were the opposite gender? Why do you think this way?
- c. Do you think there are differences between being a father and a mother of a son? Do you think there are differences between a father and a mother of a daughter? Why do you think this way?
- d. Are there certain things a father should do with and do for a son? Are there certain things a mother should do with and do for a son? Are there certain things a father should do with and do for a daughter? Are there certain things a mother should do with and do for a daughter?

**9.** When spending time with the focal child, what sort of things do you do? (All of the following may apply; i.e., parents may indicate more than one.)

- a. We have meal together
- b. We talk
- c. We watch the same TV program
- d. I teach about housework or do housework together
- e. We play sports or I teach sports
- f. We do hobbies together or I teach hobbies
- g. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Probe for variety of activities

**10.** What is it like to be a parent in the 2000s?

- a. Do you think parents in the 1950s were different from or similar to you? How so?
- b. Do you think parents in the 1970s were different from or similar to you? How so?
- c. Do you think parents in the 1990s were different from or similar to you? How so?

**11.** While raising your child, do you have any concern or problems about issues, such as: (All of the following may apply; i.e., parents may indicate more than one.)

- a. Education expense
- b. Our house is too small
- c. I don't spend enough time with my child
- d. Having a child and a job is difficult
- e. Child's health
- f. Child's safety
- g. Bully
- h. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Probe for variety of concerns and problems.

**12.** Do you divide parenting in your household? If so, how?

**13.** How often do the two of you talk about the focal child? What do you generally talk about?

**14.** Are there additional questions you think it important for me to ask?

日本とアメリカの文化、認識、そして子育て  
安元 佐織  
インタビューの予定  
2007年11月19日

## I. Demographic Information

お母さん：

1. あなたの年齢はいくつですか？
2. あなたの人種は何ですか？
3. あなたの仕事はなんですか？
  - a. プロフェッショナル
  - b. マネージャー
  - c. 受付
  - d. 販売
  - e. サービス
  - f. 農業、森林業、漁業
  - g. 製作
  - h. 警察、警備員
  - i. 専業主婦、専業主夫
  - j. その他
4. あなたの主な仕事は何ですか？
5. 週何時間働いていますか？
6. あなたの最終学歴は何ですか？
  - a. 中学卒業
  - b. 高校卒業
  - c. 短大卒業
  - d. 大学卒業
  - e. 大学院卒業
  - f. その他 \_\_\_\_\_

7. あなたの2007年の年収は以下のどれに当てはまりますか? (税金を引かれる前の金額)

- a. 0から199万9999円の間
- b. 200万円から399万9999円の間
- c. 400万円から599万9999円の間
- d. 600万円から799万9999円の間
- e. 800万円から999万9999円の間
- f. 1000万円から1199万9999円の間
- g. 1200万円以上
- h. 無回答

お父さん：

1. あなたの年齢はいくつですか？

2. あなたの人種は何ですか？

3. あなたの仕事はなんですか？

- a. プロフェッショナル
- b. マネージャー
- c. 受付
- d. 販売
- e. サービス
- f. 農業、森林業、漁業
- g. 製作
- h. 警察、警備員
- i. 専業主婦、専業主夫
- j. その他

4. あなたの主な仕事は何ですか？

5. 週何時間働いていますか？

6. あなたの最終学歴は何ですか？

- a. 中学卒業
- b. 高校卒業
- c. 短大卒業
- d. 大学卒業
- e. 大学院卒業
- f. その他 \_\_\_\_\_



7. あなたの2007年の年収は以下のどれに当てはまりますか? (税金を引かれる前の金額)

- a. 0から199万9999円の間
- b. 200万円から399万9999円の間
- c. 400万円から599万9999円の間
- d. 600万円から799万9999円の間
- e. 800万円から999万9999円の間
- f. 1000万円から1199万9999円の間
- g. 1200万円以上
- h. 無回答

ご夫婦：

1．結婚して何年になりますか？

2．全部で何人のお子さんがいますか？ 全員の性別と年齢を教えてください。

## II. 子育てについての質問

1. あなたが4歳から6歳の時の家族構成を教えてください。

2. 誰が主にあなたを育てましたか？

3. あなたが子供の頃親がしてくれた事で あなたが子供にしてあげたいと思う事がありますか？どんな事ですか？ なぜそう思うのですか？

あなたが子供の頃親がしてくれた事で あなたが子供にしたいと思う事がありますか？どんな事ですか？ なぜそう思うのですか？

あなたが子供の頃親がしてくれなかった事で あなたが子供にしてあげたいと思う事がありますか？どんな事ですか？ なぜそう思うのですか？

4. あなたが子供の頃していた習い事で自分の子供にもさせたいと思うものはありますか？どんな習い事ですか？ なぜそう思うのですか？

あなたが子供の頃していた習い事で自分の子供にさせたくないと思うものはありますか？どんな習い事ですか？ なぜそう思うのですか？

あなたが子供の頃しなかった習い事で自分の子供にさせたいと思うものはありますか？どんな習い事ですか？ なぜそう思うのですか？

5. あなたのお父さんお母さんは あなたにどんな人になってほしいと思って子育てしていたと思いますか？ なぜそう思いますか？ なにか良い例があったら聞かせてもらえますか？

- a. あなたのお父さんお母さんは あなたに大人になったらなにか特別な仕事に就いて欲しいと言っていましたか？
- b. あなたのお父さんお母さんは 特別な性格があなたに身に付くのを期待していましたか？
- c. あなたのお父さんお母さんは あなたが子供の頃大学に行く事を勧めていましたか？

6. あなたは子供にどんな子になってもらいたいですか？ どうしてそう思いますか？ なにか例があったら聞かせて下さい。

- a. あなたには将来自分の子供に就いてもらいたいと思う仕事がありますか？
- b. あなたは自分の子供にどんな性格を身に付けてもらいたいですか？
- c. あなたは自分の子供に大学進学を勧めますか？ なぜそうしますか？
- d. あなたは今の時点で子供にどんな事を学んでいて欲しいですか？

7. あなたにとって親とはどんなものですか？

- a. 責任
- b. 満足感
- c. 重荷
- d. 楽しみ
- e. その他 \_\_\_\_\_

いろいろな意味があるか尋ねる

8. あなたにとって男の子を持つとはどんな事ですか？男の子にとっての父親母親とはどんなものだと思いますか？ あなたにとって女の子を持つとはどんな事ですか？女の子にとって父親・母親とはどんなものだと思いますか？

- a. 男の子を育てるのと 女の子を育てるのは同じだと思いますか？ それとも違うと思いますか？ なぜそう思いますか？
- b. もしあなたの子供の性別が違ったら あなたは今と違う接し方をすると思いますか？ なぜそう思いますか？
- c. 父親と母親の役割は男の子を育てるうえで違うと思いますか？ 父親と母親の役割は女の子を育てるうえで違うと思いますか？ なぜそう思いますか？
- d. 父親が男の子のためにすべき事や男の子と一緒にするとよい事はあると思いますか？ 母親が男の子のためにすべき事や男の子と一緒にするとよい事はあると思いますか？ 父親が女の子のためにすべき事やするとよい事はあると思いますか？ 母親が女の子のためにすべき事やするとよい事はあると思いますか？

9. あなたがお子さんと接する時 主にどんな事をしますか？

- a. 食事と一緒にする
- b. 話をする
- c. 同じテレビ番組を観る
- d. 家事を教える、家事と一緒にする
- e. スポーツをする
- f. 趣味と一緒にする
- g. その他

いろいろな意味があるか尋ねる

10. 2000年代の親とはどんなものだと思いますか？

- a. 今の親は1950年代の親と比べてどうだと思いますか？  
なぜですか？
- b. 今の親は1970年代の親と比べてどうだと思いますか？  
なぜですか？
- c. 今の親は1990年代の親と比べてどうだと思いますか？  
なぜですか？

11. 子供を育てるにあたってなにか心配な事がありますか？

- a. 教育費
- b. 家が狭すぎる
- c. 子供と過ごす時間が少ない
- d. 仕事と子育ての両立
- e. 子供の健康
- f. 子供の安全
- g. いじめ
- h. その他 \_\_\_\_\_

いろいろな意味があるか尋ねる

12. お父さんとお母さんとの間で子育ての役割分担はありますか？ あったら詳しく説明して下さい。

13. お父さんとお母さんとの間でお子さんの話をされますか？ どんな事について話されますか？

14. 上記の質問以外でなにか大切だと思う質問はありますか？

**APPENDIX B**  
**RESEARCH FLYER**



**ARE YOU A MOTHER OR FATHER WHO IS RAISING FOUR-TO-SIX YEAR OLD SON?**

**If you are, can you participate in my research?**

I am a Ph.D student at Georgia State University. I am studying about how parents in the United States and Japan think about meanings of parenting, and seeking couples who may be able to participate in my research.

If you can participate in the research, I would like to have a face-to-face interview with you to talk about how you think about parenthood. The interview will last about an hour to two hours. All interviews will be confidential and will be held in places and times convenient to you.

To see if you qualify, please contact Saori Yasumoto at 404-413-6532 in the Sociology Department at Georgia State University or [syasumoto1@gsu.edu](mailto:syasumoto1@gsu.edu). Each participant will be asked to sign an informed consent form, and will receive a copy of the informed consent.

Thank You





4歳 5歳 もしくは6歳のお子さんをお持ちのお母さん お父さん  
リサーチにご協力していただませんか？

研究者のプロフィール

**安元 佐織 (やすもと さおり)**

日本の大学で経済学を学び卒業後渡米して社会学を学んでいます。現在はジョージア州立大学で博士号を取得するための論文を書いています。家族社会学 社会心理学 ジェンダー学を中心に日本とアメリカの文化の比較をしながら研究を進めています。

現在日本とアメリカに住む4歳から6歳のお子さんを持つお父さんお母さんが どのように子育てについて考えているかについての研究をしています。そのため 日本とアメリカのお父さんお母さんに1時間から2時間ほど 子育てについてのお話をうかがっています。日本のお父さんお母さんにお会いするために5月に帰国する予定でいますので是非ご協力お願いします。インタビューの時間や場所は参加して下さるお父さんお母さんのご都合に合わせます。私は夜や週末でも大丈夫です。

短い期間の帰国になってしまいますので インタビューの予定を帰国前に立ててしまえたらと思っています。参加して頂けるようでしたら是非下記のところにご連絡下さい。参加を決める前にもっと詳しい研究の内容など知りたいという方も是非ご連絡下さい。

**安元 佐織 (やすもと さおり)**

404-467-0108 (アメリカ)

053-475-8542 (日本)

メッセージを残して頂けたらこちらからお電話します。

**s a o r i y a s u m o t o @ h o t m a i l . c o m**

**APPENDIX C**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Georgia State University  
Department of Sociology  
Informed Consent

**Title: Culture, Cognition, and Parenthood in Japanese and American Homes**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Ralph LaRossa  
Saori Yasumoto

**I. Introduction/Purpose:**

You are asked to participate in a research about how parents in Japan and the United States who are raising four-to-six year old child think about parenting. You are being asked to participate in the study because of your experience as a parent. The interview will take one to two hours. You have the right to ask any questions to clarify the interview. About 48 couples will be involved in the study.

**II. Procedures:**

If you decide to participate in the study, you will have a face-to-face interview to talk about how you think about parenthood. You will only interact with the student principal investigator. You and the student principal investigator will agree upon the time and place of the interview. The interview will last from one to two hours. If necessary, a follow-up interview will be scheduled. The follow-up interview will also last between one and two hours.

**III. Risks:**

There are no predictable risks to participate in this research. Although answering questions about sensitive topics might make you feel a little uncomfortable, you may ask to pause or stop interview if you feel distressed. Risks are not more than in a normal day.

**IV. Benefits:**

There are no direct benefits by participating in this study, but the information about how parents think in Japan and the United States may provide the knowledge about how culture and parents' cognition are related.

**V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:**

Participation in research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this research. If you decide to be in the research and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or discontinue participation at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled. After completing the interview, you are not obligated to provide additional information, or to participate further in the project.

**VI. Confidentiality:**

We will keep your records private to the extent of the law. After the interviews are transcribed, the tapes will be erased. We will use a pseudonym for all names during the study. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified

personally. Data will be stored in computer and I will use protected passwords to reach the data. Printed data will be stored in a cabinet or draw that can only be opened with a key. Only Saori Yasumoto will have direct access to the data. There will be occasions when Saori Yasumoto and her advisor, Dr. Ralph LaRossa, will review the interview transcripts together.

### **VII. Georgia State Disclaimer and Contact Person:**

If you have questions about the study, or believe you have suffered any injury, you may contact Dr. Ralph LaRossa at 404-413-6507 or Saori Yasumoto at 404-413-6532. Your personal physician will make arrange for appropriate management and treatment for any physical or psychological injury resulting from this study. Georgia State University, however, has not set aside funds to pay for this care if something should occur. Call Dr. Ralph LaRossa at 404-413-6507 if you have questions about this study.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Compliance at 404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu).

### **IX. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:**

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this project, please sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Subject**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Subject**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Principal Investigator**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

ジョージア州立大学  
社会学部  
同意書

タイトル: 日本とアメリカの文化、認識、そして子育て

研究者: Dr. Ralph LaRossa (ラルフ ラローサ 博士)  
安元 佐織

### I. 研究の紹介と目的:

あなたは日本とアメリカに住む4歳から6歳のお子さんを持つ親がどのように子育てについて考えているかについての研究への参加を頼まれました。参加の理由はあなたが実際に4歳から6歳のお子さんを育てているからです。インタビューは1時間から2時間かかります。48組くらいのお父さんお母さんにこのリサーチに参加してもらう予定です。

### II. 手順:

参加された方はインタビューで子育てについてどう考えてらっしゃるのかについての質問をされます。インタビューは安元佐織が行います。インタビューの日程と場所は参加者の方の都合に合わせます。もしインタビュー後お聞きしたい事があつたら安元佐織が連絡させていただきます。

### III. 危険:

このインタビューに参加する事によって危険な事はありません。答えたくない質問でなごがあつたりインタビューを中断したくなつたら教えてください。

### IV. 利益:

インタビューに参加する事で直接の利益はありません。しかし日本とアメリカのお父さんお母さんがどのように子育てを考えているかについての知識は皆さんに文化と親の認識がどのように関係しているかについての情報を提供します。

### V. 自発的な参加と撤退

このリサーチへの参加は自発的な行為に基づくものです。あなたには参加を拒否する権利があります。もし参加している最中に気が変わった場合はいつでも止める事ができます。はじめに提案されたりサーチに参加する事によっての利益はインタビューを中断した場合でも得る事ができます。あなたにはインタビュー後に追加情報を提供したりほかのリサーチに参加しなければならないなどの義務はありません。

### VI. 個人情報に関する要項

インタビューでの情報は法律によってプライベートな場所に保存されます。インタビューの内容が書き写された後 インタビューを収録したテープは消却されます。あなたのプライバシーを守るためリサーチは仮名を使って行われます。あなたの本名やその他の個人的な情報は一切出版には使われません。

## VII. ジョージア州立大学の権利の放棄

このリサーチに関する質問や要望があつたら ラルフ ラローサ 博士 (404-413-6507) か 安元 佐織 (404-413-6532、053-475-8542) まで連絡下さい。このリサーチに参加したことで身体的や精神的に被害があつた場合はあなたのかかりつけの医師と相談して下さい。しかしジョージア州立大学はこのような事態が起きた時の基金は用意していません。

## VIII. 連絡先

このリサーチに関する質問などは ラルフ ラローサ 博士 404-413-6507 までお電話下さい。

リサーチに参加するにあたってのあなたの権利や心配事などがありましたら スザンボグトナー 404-413-3513 もしくは [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu) まで連絡下さい。

## IX. 参加者からの同意書

この同意書のコピーを参加者に提供します。

リサーチに参加する意思があつたらサインをして下さい。

参加者

日付け

参加者

日付け

日付け

研究者

**APPENDIX D**  
**TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC OF CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

**Table 1: Demographics of the Characteristics of the Respondents**

	<b>Japanese</b>	<b>Americans</b>
<b>Age</b>		
<b>(Father)</b>	25-29 (2) 30-34 (10) 35-39 (7) 40-44 (2) 45-49 (3)	25-29 (2) 30-34 (5) 35-39 (5) 40-44 (8) 45-49 (4)
<b>(Mother)</b>	25-29 (2) 30-34 (10) 35-39 (9) 40-44 (2) 45-49 (1)	25-29 (4) 30-34 (4) 35-39 (7) 40-44 (8) 45-49 (1)
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
<b>(Father)</b>	Japanese (24)	White (20) Black (3) Asian American (1)
<b>(Mother)</b>	Japanese (24)	White (23) Black (1)
<b>Education</b>		
<b>(Father)</b>	High school (9) Junior College (3) College (10) Graduate School (2)	High school (1) Some College (1) College (17) Graduate School (5)
<b>(Mother)</b>	High school (10) Junior College (10) College (3) Graduate School (1)	High school (0) Some College (5) College (15) Graduate School (4)



	<b>Japanese (Frequency Distribution)</b>	<b>Americans (Frequency Distribution)</b>
<b>Occupation (Father)</b>	Sales (10) 42% Teacher (1) 4% Government Employee(1) 4% Manufacture (5) 21% Professional (7) 29% Homemaker (0) 0%	Sales (6) 25% Teacher (1) 4% Government Employee(1) 4% Manufacture (1) 4% Professional (15) 63% Homemaker (0) 0%
<b>(Mother)</b>	Sales (6) 25% Teacher (2) 8% Government Employee(0) 0% Manufacture (1) 4% Professional (0) 0% Homemaker (15) 63%	Sales (4) 17% Teacher (1) 4% Government Employee(0) 0% Manufacture (0) 0% Professional (5) 21% Homemaker (14) 58%
<b>Income (Father)</b>	¥0-199,999 (0) 0% ¥200,000-399,999 (4) 17% ¥400,000-599,999(13) 54% ¥600,000-799,999 (5) 21% ¥800,000 or more (2) 8%	\$0-19,999 (1) 4% \$20,000-39,999 (2) 8% \$40,000-59,999 (7) 29% \$60,000-79,999 (4) 17% \$80,000 or more (10) 42%
<b>(Mother)</b>	¥0-199,999 (21) 88% ¥200,000-399,999 (2) 8% ¥400,000-599,999 (1) 4% ¥600,000-799,999 (0) 0% ¥800,000 or more (0) 0%  (1 US dollar = 97 Japanese yen)	\$0-19,999 (17) 71% \$20,000-39,999 (1) 4% \$40,000-59,999 (3) 13% \$60,000-79,999 (1) 4% \$80,000 or more (2) 8%
<b>Years of Marriage</b>	1-4 years (1) 4% 5-9 years (21) 88% 10-14 years (2) 8%	1-4 years (2) 8% 5-9 years (11) 46% 10-14 years (11) 46%
<b>Numbers of Children</b>	1 (4) 17% 2 (12) 50% 3 (7) 29% 4 (1) 4%	1 (9) 37% 2 (12) 50% 3 (3) 13% 4 (0) 0%