

# The Changing Japanese Family: A Psychological Portrait

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## The Watanabe Family

Together with their 14-year-old daughter Akiko and 16-year-old son Michio, Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe (“Everybody”) live in a small town within the Chiba prefecture, at the outskirts of Greater Tokyo. Each morning, Mrs. Watanabe gets up first and prepares the family’s breakfast. After hurrying through his meal, Mr. Watanabe dashes off for his bus and later tries to catch his train for Central Tokyo. Altogether, it takes him well over an hour to reach his office—no wonder, since the Tokyo-Yokohama zone makes up the largest urban conglomeration on earth.

The children, in turn, are off to their *juku*, a tutorial cramming school. Hopefully this will help them pass the highly competitive entrance examinations for a good college. With everyone else gone, Mrs. Watanabe begins to clean the apartment, only to leave a few hours later for her part-time job.

Mr. Watanabe returns to his home quite late in the evening, even though nominally he is supposed to work only eight hours per day. All too often, however, he has dinner and some drinks at a restaurant together with his colleagues or with employees of related companies—both for the sake of friendship and of good business. On some weekends, he plays golf with customers. On other Sundays when he stays home, he is tired and spends much of his time watching TV on the sofa.

Mrs. Watanabe has more time to talk with her children and understands them well. She is the primary disciplinary figure, though at times, she asks her husband to admonish the children about some undesirable behavior. But Mr. Watanabe hesitates to do so, because he knows too little about his children and lacks confidence in his ability to be a good father.

Years before, Mr. Watanabe had been introduced to his future wife by one of his colleagues. Although she continued to work after the wedding, when she became pregnant, she left the company. Their relationship has changed over the years; for example, after their first child arrived, she began to call him “daddy” (and she became “mom”), a usage suggesting that the family revolves more around the children (and their education) than the marital relationship. At home, she is in charge of housekeeping and the family’s finances, but daddy plays a crucial role in deciding important questions such as the future of their son. They have time to talk together after the children have gone to bed but, at times, she feels that daddy is uncommunicative. Nevertheless, husband and wife trust each other, even though they do not profess their love to each other in the Western style.

As a first son, Mr. Watanabe feels obligated to take care of his parents. He has heard, however, that in some families, conflicts have arisen between the wife and her mother-in-law once they are living in the same house. Consequently, Mr. Watanabe decided to live close to his parents, but in a separate home—a decision that evoked little opposition from his wife. Still, the two know that one day, his aging parents will live in their home so that they can be better cared for.

At first glance the Watanabe family might just as well be a Western family living in New York, London or Stockholm rather than in Tokyo. The uncommunicative and exhausted father spending his Sunday afternoon as a TV-watching “couch potato” with a beer in his hand, the harried housewife holding a part-time job, the small family size, the central role of education in the lives of the two teenage children—all these are themes pervading the lives of numerous middle-class families residing in other industrialized countries.

But beneath the apparent cross-cultural similarities, a different family psychology makes itself felt. Consider, for instance, the matter of divorce: the likelihood that Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe will divorce each other is small compared to the chance that Mr. and Mrs. Smith in New York will part company. In spite of some very real cross-cultural similarities, the cohesiveness of the Watanabe family is based on a different—if mostly implicit—social contract compared to that holding the Smith family together. To this day, the Japanese family remains a more stable and cohesive unit than the American, English, or Swedish family.

In this chapter, we consider the Japanese family from three perspectives. To begin with, the Japanese family

constitutes the central institution of a unique, unusually homogenous, highly organized and integrated island society not to be found anywhere else on earth. At the same time, Japanese society continues to share many features with other Confucian-heritage societies with a Buddhist past such as Taiwan, Mainland China, and Korea. Finally, Japan is one of the most modern “information societies” on earth and therefore shares many features with other information societies mostly located in Western Europe and North America.

Ethnically, linguistically, and culturally, Japan is more homogenous than any other major country. 99.4% of its inhabitants are citizens. Non-citizens include, for instance, the *Zainichi Kankokujin*, persons of Korean ancestry who were born and live in Japan. Among the “minority groups” are the *Hisabetsu buraku*, an indigenous group who in earlier times were treated as outcasts but whose status has been improving thanks to various efforts by the Japanese government. Standard Japanese is the official language and is understood by almost everybody, although many dialects of it exist. The country’s literacy rate is close to 100%, a very large percentage of the population has undergone at least 12 years of rigorous schooling governed by society-wide standards, most Japanese feel themselves to be middle class, and low crime rates demonstrate the success of most Japanese families in socializing their children. While economic inequalities are certainly important in the lives of Japanese families, they tend to be less visible and less destructive than those that can be encountered in Brazil, the United States, or France.

Economically and to some degree culturally, Japanese society is divided into the “mainstream” and “nonmainstream” sectors. The Watanabe family, for instance, belongs to the culturally dominant mainstream since Mr. Watanabe is a “company man” working for a large corporation offering lifetime employment and extensive benefits. Mrs. Watanabe, in contrast, holds a part-time job, as do many women. In this context, “part-time” does not refer to the number of hours she works—they may indeed be many—but to the fact that she works for a small enterprise considered to be outside the mainstream sector. Her salary is comparatively small, her benefits perhaps meager, and should an economic downturn occur, she might lose her position. Only about 30% of all Japanese workers (mostly males) enjoy mainstream lifetime employment in the big companies, whereas 70% of them work in small companies, mom-and-pop stores, on farms, and so on. The varying economic conditions of families, in turn, substantially influence their joint lives: Some fathers working in mom-and-pop stores or small local companies, for instance, are more likely to enjoy numerous interactions with their wives and children than many fathers working for large companies.

The division between mainstream and nonmainstream exerts an important influence on economic opportunities, social mobility, social status, the education system, leisure activities, gender roles, the contemporary family, child-rearing practices, the aspirations of young men and women, and the nature of retirement for aging family members. It should be added that in recent years, Japanese society has grown economically more unequal (Sugimoto, 1995, p. 43).

Because of the (relative) cultural homogeneity of Japanese society, our essay emphasizes the common themes of, rather than the differences between Japanese families. In this context, we pay less attention to the lives of the very rich or the very poor, but instead focus on those 90% of the Japanese who see themselves as ordinary members of the middle class. We do, however, wish to point out two major sources of cultural differentiation. These include sharply delineated, though steadily changing, gender roles as well as important generational differences in regards to attitudes, values, and behavior patterns. The pleasures and tensions of Japanese family life can only be understood if we take into account the myriad forces of rapid social change, as well as the strongly gender-typed nature of Japanese society.

In the following, and based on cross-cultural as well as indigenous investigations, we sketch the cultural context, evolution, and current situation as well as some of the major problems of the Japanese family according to the findings of historical studies, developmental psychology research, sociological surveys, and investigations of pertinent folklore.

#### JAPANESE CULTURE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE JAPANESE FAMILY

Given their relatively isolated geographical position on an “aircraft carrier of the eastern shores of Asia,” the Japanese have developed a unique culture based on the intertwining of indigenous, Chinese, and Western influences as well as the relentless onslaught of the forces of modernization. From China came Confucianism, Buddhism (as modified by various Chinese traditions), a major portion of the Japanese writing systems (but not the language per se) as well as many artistic traditions. Confucianism in particular has shaped many past and current Japanese beliefs about the central role of the family, its patriarchal composition, the importance of

sharply differentiated gender roles, the traditional division of parental roles into “Stern Father—Benevolent Mother,” the moral force of “filial piety” uniting ancestors, grandparents, parents, children, and future descendants, a heavy emphasis on the importance of duties, obligations, and loyalties, and many other aspects. Confucianism was especially important during the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) during which Japan was largely isolated from the rest of the world. Today, the influence of Confucianism continues in an attenuated and frequently invisible mode as the structure of the Japanese family is steadily transformed by economic and cultural changes.

Other religious influences include the native Shinto religion, several sects of Buddhism, Christianity, and a variety of “New Religions,” some of which have a special appeal to housewives. These religions have intermingled over the centuries and been “Japanized.” For instance, it is not uncommon for a person to have been presented as a young child to the Shinto gods (kami), married according to a mixture of Shinto and Christian traditions, and be buried according to Buddhist rites. For many Japanese, religion means mostly the practice of family related rituals and celebrations, rather than adherence to a tightly organized system of beliefs. Following Japan’s isolation during the Tokugawa period, the Meiji government (1868-1913) attempted to modernize Japan so that it could compete successfully with the Western nations. It strengthened the centralization of the political system and introduced unified laws for all of Japan. Before the Meiji restoration in 1868, a considerable variety of family systems existed across Japan. These were influenced by local as well as class differences reflecting the tight class system made up of warriors, administrators, farmers, artisans, and tradesmen. During the Meiji era, a patrilineal family system largely based on Samurai norms was legally enforced. Furthermore, the government used the formal education system to spread patriarchal standards throughout Japan. In the newly constructed public schools, the students were taught traditional Confucian family virtues such as filial piety, as well as the fundamental importance of loyalty to the nation. For women, the Meiji policies reinforced the complementary roles of *ryosai kenbo* (Good Wife, Wise Mother)—an emphasis that implicitly continues to influence modern policies as well as many social mores (Uno, 1993).

With the end of World War II in 1945, the anti-democratic social system adopted before the war was subjected to severe criticism and a democratic system based on the US system was adopted. The new government abolished many aspects of the patrilineal system and democratic principles were introduced into the legal system dealing with the family. For example, primogeniture was abandoned and equal legal rights of succession for both sons and daughters, regardless of birth order, were stipulated. Since that time, the Japanese family has been changing, both because of the new legal system as well as the changing economic circumstances and evolving cultural traditions.

Japanese ideas concerning family and household structures have tended to oscillate between an emphasis on the traditional *ie* system and on modern, democratic family structures. The term *ie* refers to a supra-individual household group having economic, kinship, religious, and political functions. At birth, children’s names are entered in the *ie* or family household registry since individual birth certificates do not exist in Japan. The *ie* includes ancestors as well as several generations of living family members. The continuation of the family line is of utmost importance and the family is organized hierarchically. Traditionally, the *ie*, more than the Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples, formed the center of religious practice, with *ie* officials presiding over their own rituals. Even today, for many Japanese, the ancestors remain a central focus of religious practice. Although the ancestors have ascended to a sacred realm, they continue to serve as protectors of, and advisors to, the family. If no suitable child (especially no son) exists to continue the *ie*, a variety of adoptive options may be considered. In many cases, a younger son from another family will be adopted. He is taken into the new *ie* after marrying one of the daughters of his new family, whose name he will adopt. His psychological position in the new home, however, is often difficult since he is dealing with a group of people who have already lived together for many years and formed bonds of affection and mutual interest.

The traditional family hierarchy placed the father at the top, with the heir-presumptive (most often the oldest son) next, to be followed by the other males according to descending age. Below them ranked the females in order of age. Especially among the wealthy and powerful, extended family groupings (*dozoku*) played an important role during the course of history. These included the central stem as well as satellite “branch houses” who owed loyalty and services to the main branch. The common people, in contrast, were more likely to live in smaller and less hierarchically ordered family groupings (Kumagai, 1995; Passin, 1968). Today, *dozoku*-like though modernized family conglomerations continue to be of some importance in the upper echelons of society where they serve to protect economic and political interests as well as maintaining the social status of the family.

Although the *ie* lost some of its functions and legally enshrined prerogatives after World War II, it continues to be of importance in modern Japan though typically in modified and attenuated form. In contrast to the hierarchic organization of the *ie*, modern families place greater emphasis on the equal rights of the family members. A national poll of the NHK Institute of Opinion Research (1984) confirmed, however, that many Japanese continue to feel a bond with their ancestors, such as the fathers of their grandparents: 59% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I feel a profound connection to my ancestors” and 68.5% of the interviewees confirmed that “I often visit our ancestors’ graves during the Bon Lantern Festival and the equinoctial week.”

To the Japanese, authority relations in the family have “provided a model for authority relations in non-kinship groupings. The terms *oya* (parent) and *ko* (child), for example, have been extended in meaning to indicate supervisors and inferiors” such as “employer and employee, leader and follower” (Passin, 1968, p. 240).

Familism, then, has been a pervasive influence in Japanese society, and family-like relationships and groupings continue to persist in shops, companies, landlord-tenant relations, and even in organized crime. Japanese gangster movies, for instance, may depict *oyabun-kobun* (godfather-crime family soldier) relationships somewhat similar to those portrayed in the American mafioso movie, *The Godfather*.

Whether completely modern, more traditional, or most likely in-between, families are expected to play a key role in the lives of everyone. For instance, a study showed that 46.7% of Japanese adults selected “families” as the most important factor influencing juvenile delinquency when compared to other factors such as a person’s general social environment and his/her character (Prime Minister’s Office, 1995). Above all, families are expected to play a central role in the enculturation and socialization of children. However, the demographic and psychosocial structure of the Japanese family system is undergoing major changes that, in turn, are giving rise to a variety of family and societal problems.

#### Demographic Description of Japanese Families

In this section, we describe some current demographic aspects of the Japanese family based mainly on the source book of the National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems (1999).

The total population of Japan in 1998 was 126 million and the average life expectancy was 77.2 years for males and 84.0 years for females. These are the highest life expectancy figures in the world, and by the year 2015 one in four Japanese will be an elderly person. The age distribution of the population is depicted in Table 1. It shows that the percentage of children is comparatively small. This situation is not due to high childhood mortality rates, since these are now very low. For example, the infant below-one-year death rate was .36% in 1998. However, birth rates have declined dramatically in recent decades: The total fertility rates were 3.65 per woman in 1950, 2.13 in 1970, and 1.34 in 2000. A rate of 1.34% is far below the population replacement rate of about 2.1 children for each woman, and it is doubtful that the slowly increasing but controversial immigration of persons mostly from other Asian countries will be able to stem a threatening future population decline. (By way of contrast, the present birth rate in the US is 2.08 per woman.)

Women, who had been wives for 15 to 19 years, had an average number of 4.27 children in 1940, 2.20 children in 1972, and 2.21 children in 1997, respectively. The fact that the respective numbers of births per married female in 1972 and in 1997 were almost the same may seem to be inconsistent with the fact that the total fertility rate decreased dramatically from 1970 to 2000 (see above). But the increase of single females and the later marriages of females can help to explain this apparent inconsistency: Between 1970 and 1998, the mean age of first marriage increased from 26.9 years to 28.6 years for males and from 24.2 years to 26.7 years for females. Similarly, the percentage of single females 25-29 years old increased dramatically from 18.1% in 1970 to 48% in 1995. The corresponding increase for males was from 46.5% to 66.9%. An increasing number of men find it difficult these days to convince a young woman to become their life partner, while others are reluctant themselves to start a family.

The family size has shrunk dramatically over time. For example, the average number of family members was 4.9 in 1920, 3.7 in 1970, and 2.9 in 1995. One may ask why the mean number of family members decreased in spite of the fact that the number of elderly has increased in the society. In this context, it should be noted that the elderly increasingly live apart from their children. For instance, the percentage of those persons who were at least 65 years old and living with their son or daughter declined from 69.0% in 1980 to 50.3% in 1998.

The Japanese family type has been steadily changing since the end of the World War II, when the patriarchal system lost some of its power. The distribution of family types respectively in 1970 and in 1995 is depicted in Table 2. As can be seen, the percentage of lineal families was 13.4% in 1970 but declined to 11.2% in 1995. The

percentage of nuclear families was 58.7% in 1995 and this percentage has not changed much during the last thirty years, since in 1970 nuclear families already made up 56.7% of all families. In contrast, the proportion of singles and married couples without children increased over time. It should be added that traditional three-generation households can be found most frequently in the more conservative rural areas where people live in larger homes and continue to follow somewhat more traditional life patterns.

Will Japanese families abandon the lineal family system altogether in future years? As mentioned above, there are the current tendencies of late marriages, an increasing number of singles, more married couples without any children, and the many elderly who do not live with their children. However, many of the current parents still would prefer to live with their sons or daughters when they become older, a preference inconsistent with the nuclear family system. In a recent survey, 64.3% of all parents who had 0-15 year-old children said that they wanted to live with their children in their old age (Prime Minister's Office, 1996), although not all of them will see their desires fulfilled. The corresponding percentages for parents of Korea, US, and England were 46.4%, 8.9%, and 5.1% respectively suggesting that modern East Asian parents are still far more likely to wish to live with their children when compared to Anglo-Saxon families.

Two additional aspects of Japanese family life should be mentioned. First, an increasing number of wives are working outside their family homes; thus, in 1999, the percentage of working mothers was 42.7% (this percentage did not include those active in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries). However, the rate of working mothers with children below the age of three was only 23.4%. In addition, the percentage of part-time workers (less than 35 hours per week) among women was 52.8%, and this percentage has been increasing rapidly in recent years: 37.4% of all female workers (above 15 years old) are now part-time workers and that percentage is three times the percentage of 1980.

The frequency of international marriages has also increased, even though their absolute number remains fairly small. The rate of intermarriage between Japanese and foreign persons in Japan was 0.5% in 1970, but 3.82% in 1998. Half of the marriages in 1998 were between Japanese and Chinese or Koreans, respectively.

In general, these demographic data suggest that there are now a greater variety of family styles than before. They include traditional nuclear families, families consisting of elderly parents living together with their sons and/or daughters, elderly couples, childless families, families with an adopted son, and others. However, in the interests of perpetuating society, many families continue to consider the socialization of their children as their main task.

## The Socialization of Children

### Folk Beliefs About Children

Traditional Japanese nursing styles for young children have been described as permissive when compared to those found in Western societies such as the United States (e.g., Benedict, 1946). Even nowadays, many parents hold permissive attitudes toward young children. For instance, The Prime Minister's Office (1996) compared the attitudes of parents in Japan, Korea, and US, finding that 38.6% of the Japanese parents, but only 8.2% of the American parents endorsed the statement, "Young children should be allowed to do what they want; only as they grow older should discipline be imposed."

Traditionally, the Japanese people subscribe to the belief that children, before the age of seven, are in the sphere of gods; that is, they belong to a sacred realm. In addition, the children are thought to be in an intermediate and unstable status between "the world of gods" and the visible world. Consequently, children's misbehavior was tolerated even if it took place in sacred spaces, for example in front of the gods in Shinto shrines. Additionally, those children who had died before the age of seven were not buried in graves, because they were expected to return to the world of gods. Thus, the Japanese people traditionally believed that children are influenced not only by parents, family, and the community, but also by the invisible presence of supernatural beings (Hara & Minagawa, 1996). Elderly persons too are seen as being close to the gods, because after death they will return to them.

From the foregoing, one may mistakenly conclude that the Japanese believe in the innate goodness of children because they regard them as staying close to the world of the gods. However, a large-scale cross-national survey did not show such a belief (Prime Minister's Office, 1973). Instead, the Japanese were more likely to believe that human nature is bad than respondents from other nations including the United States, England, West Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Yugoslavia, India, Philippines, and Brazil. Thirty-three percent of all Japanese 18-24 year-olds agreed with the statement, "Human nature is fundamentally bad;" in contrast, only 16 % of the US adolescents agreed with it (Prime Minister's Office, 1973).

The Japanese believe that children are not innately morally good, because the gods' world from which the children are said to come is not an entirely moral world: the beliefs about children only imply that parents should accept their young children's actions as being pure rather than impure in nature, but not necessarily as moral rather than immoral.

Earlier folk beliefs continue to influence present-day family and socialization practices. In this context, one may note that many Japanese parents follow traditional rituals for children. For example, on November 15th (shichigosan) they pay visits to Shinto shrines with their three- and five-years-old boys as well as their three- and seven-year-old girls. In addition, parents especially in the rural areas may threaten their misbehaving children by citing the supernatural force of Bachi, a kind of "punishment by gods" (Naito, 1987). Children's day is observed on May 5th. (TRUE?) COULD YOU PLEASE ADD A VERY BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHILDREN'S DAY?)

An amusing example that traditional beliefs continue to affect the Japanese is shown by the decrease of children born in the hinoeuma year (Hara & Minagawa, 1996). The year of 1966 was a special hinoeuma year, which occurs only once every sixty years. Females who are born in a hinoeuma year are believed to be strong-minded and difficult to deal with by their husbands. Sure enough, the number of births in 1966 was dramatically reduced when compared to the previous and subsequent years: The number of births in 1965, 1966, and 1967 was 1,824,000, 1,360,000, and 1,936,000, respectively (National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems, 1999).

#### Expectations Regarding Childrearing

According to the results of a comparative research project among parents from the US, Japan, and Korea (Prime Minister's Office, 1982), Japanese parents, more than Korean and American parents, expect their children to be "considerate of other people," "to be cooperative," "to observe rules of conduct," or "to have a sense of civic responsibility." In contrast, they emphasize "leadership," "fairness," and "emotional stability" less than Americans, and "politeness" less than Koreans (see Table 3). These differences are consistent with the notion that the Japanese society is collectivistic in nature, placing a special emphasis on considerate, cooperative, responsible behavior in the context of group relationships. Other virtues consistently emphasized for Japanese children include endurance, diligence, and empathy. Other virtues consistently emphasized for Japanese children include endurance, diligence, empathy, and being a responsive, cheerful youngster.

Azuma, Kashiwagi, and Hess (1981) found that the Japanese mothers of 5-year-olds expected their children to learn to be obedient to adults and to be courteous at an earlier age than US mothers. In contrast, US mothers expected their children to master certain social interaction skills with other children such as "verbal assertion of self." The Japanese mothers were less insistent on such skills. In general, Japanese children are indulged during their earliest years, but once school starts, society places more and more stringent demands on the youngsters. Peer group socialization, enculturation into clearly delineated gender roles, and deep immersion into one's school culture are also of great importance, thereby adding to the clearly delineated and collectivistic nature of Japanese socialization practices.

#### Interactions Between Children and Mothers

Caudill and Weinstein (1969) compared prevailing maternal care and infant behaviors in urban middle-class families in Japan and the US. They observed interactions between mothers and 3-4-month-old infants finding that the Japanese mothers held their infants more frequently but talked less frequently to them. In addition, the Japanese infants were less physically active. The Japanese mothers stayed with their infants longer but were less encouraging of their verbal and physical activities. Caudill and Weinstein suggested that from early on Japanese infants acquire Japanese personality traits and virtues such as obedience and a collectivistic orientation, although their findings may also have been influenced by the fact that many Japanese families live in small apartments and houses.

Another study showed that Japanese mothers frequently refer to the feelings of other persons when controlling their children's behaviors. For instance, in a study by Hess, Azuma, Kashiwagi, et al. (1986), Japanese mothers used "appeals to feeling" more frequently and "appeals to mother's authority" less frequently than US mothers. Whereas from early on US mothers tend to elicit their children's verbal responses and expect frequent feedback from them, Japanese mothers focus on maintaining a relationship between themselves and their children. In this

they are unusually successful. Miyake (1993), for instance, reports that in experimental studies using the Strange Situation, Japanese infants do not exhibit avoidant attachment behavior. Instead, they attempt to prevent separation from their mothers in order to foster a deep bond of dependency.

The Japanese custom of children co-sleeping with others points to a very close mother-infant relationship. In this context, Caudill and Plath (1966) interviewed 326 families in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Matsumoto and found that 91% of the children below 6 years of age slept with some adult(s). Azuma, Kashiwagi, and Hess (1981) confirmed these results. They found that 20% of the three-year-old children slept with mothers and 50% of them with parents, or parents and sibling(s), but a mere 4% of the children slept with their fathers only. In contrast, 91% of the US children slept alone or with siblings. In addition, it was found that the co-sleeping did not depend on the number of rooms and spatial arrangements in the family home. These results suggest that Japanese families provide very close attachment opportunities for their children although adolescents get their own rooms (or rooms shared with siblings): 67% of 13-18 year-olds have their own room and 23.2% of them have shared rooms with siblings (Primary Minister's Office, 1991).

Some sociologists and psychologists, especially those following the psychoanalytic tradition, have emphasized the mother's role in the upbringing of Japanese children and adolescents (e.g., Doi, 1973; Yamamura, 1971). Yamamura, on the basis of an analysis of TV programs presented between 1959-1967, suggested that the ideal image of the traditional mother has been that of one who devotes herself completely to her child (though not necessarily accepting all of her child's desires). As a consequence, the Japanese continue to feel a powerful debt of gratitude to their mothers throughout their lives—a debt that can never be repaid in full. This image of an ideal mother has been propagated since the Meiji era.

Doi (1973) argued that the indigenous concept of *Amae*, which refers to feelings of attachment, the desire to be accepted, and needs for dependency and nurturance from a benevolent superior, sensitize the Japanese to the behaviors and feelings of others. Doi pointed out that the prototype of *Amae* is the infant's desire to be "one with the mother" and to deny the fact that while they are together, they nevertheless are also independent of each other.

The close mother-child relationship has served as a model for some forms of psychotherapy originating in Japan such as Naikan Therapy. Inobu and Yoshimoto originally developed it, and some correctional systems and therapeutic institutions have adopted it. In this kind of therapy, patients recollect and examine the memory of receiving care and benevolence from a particular person at a particular time, and then recollect memories of giving back to that person. Through this process, the patients are expected to become aware of the basic interdependency of their existence and to feel gratitude toward others. In this therapy, the mother has typically been the crucial reference person, because she is devoted to, and in close contact with, her child (Murase, 1986). Ignoring the details of the descriptions by these authors, the mother's potent influence on the psychological development of her children may be summarized as follows.

- a) The Japanese are orientated toward group harmony and caring for each other.
- b) This emphasis derives from the prototype of a close mother-child bond.
- c) Children and adolescents experience the dedication of their mother and will continue to feel a profound debt of gratitude to her throughout their lives. Consequently, they will be motivated to realize her expectations both during childhood and—in more subtle ways—throughout adulthood. In addition, the original attachment bond will influence their interactions with others throughout life.
- d) Although Japanese society is highly patriarchal on the surface, many Japanese have a submerged psychic layer resulting from Japan's "emotional matriarchy." It encourages dependency feelings, well into adulthood—and especially so in the case of men. In this context, one may surmise that when young mothers feel isolated or discontent with their marital relationship, they may be even more motivated to establish a close bond with their child.
- e) The close bodily interaction between mother and young child will, in the child's later life, induce longings to return to the early "paradise." For instance, quite a few Japanese teenagers, and even adults, report wistfully that they would like to be young children again.
- f) Following psychoanalytic theory, we would expect that early experiences of merging physically-emotionally with one's mother will subsequently lead to an unusually vivid, physically tinged fantasy life emphasizing developmentally early psychosexual themes. These may find expression, for instance, by one's becoming interested in the widely dispersed manga (cartoon comics). Some manga read by teenage boys portray a lurid world of sex, bodily preoccupations, and violence directed against women. In contrast, the manga read by

teenage girls are more likely to depict a highly imaginative world of romantic adventures and other encounters in faraway lands. The contrast between the fantasy world of the manga and the restrained, orderly world of Japanese everyday life is quite remarkable (Schodt, 1983).

g) Because many early mother-infant interactions are physical, nonverbal, and empathic in nature, we may expect Japanese culture to emphasize the importance of feeling and body oriented forms of interaction. This is indeed often the case. Great sensitivity to the feelings and implicit expectations of significant others, an emphasis on empathy as the cornerstone of Japanese interpersonal morality, some distrust of eloquent speech making, and the frequent use of subtle, indirect means of communication are common characteristics influencing interactions in small groups such as the family.

h) Many families live in small homes with paper-thin walls that facilitate close contact. Such living situations would appear compatible with a mother-centered child-rearing style that emphasizes a kind of “emotional osmosis” rather than the importance of firm ego-boundaries and individualistic self-assertion.

#### Interaction Between Fathers and Children

Traditionally, Japanese fathers were expected to adopt stern attitudes toward their children. The “rigorous father” was one of the well-known ideal father types in the pre-World War II era (Shimizu, 1983), and such fathers continue to be admired. For example, according to the results of comparative research by the Prime Minister's Office (1982), 72.7% of all Japanese fathers and mothers who had 0-15 year-old children agreed with the statement, “What is most of all needed for a father is to be stern and to have decisive attitudes toward his children.” To this question, 77.5% of Korean parents but only 49.0% of the American parents and 63.8% of the English parents agreed. In spite of this expectation for Japanese fathers, however, they are losing their authority in many families (Shimizu, 1983).

Fathers in Japan tend to spend less time with their children when compared with those in some other societies. This is especially true for mainstream “salary-man” families in the cities, although on the whole less true in some of the more traditional rural families. The Ministry of Education (1994) conducted a comparative study about the amount of time fathers and mothers spend with their 0-12 year-old children during a typical weekday. Japanese fathers spent 3.32 hours per day with their children; this was the shortest amount of time when compared to Korea (3.62), Thailand (6.00), US (4.88), England (4.75), and Sweden (3.64). In contrast, Japanese mothers spend 7.44 hours per day with their children compared to mothers in Korea (8.44), Thailand (8.06), US (7.57), England (7.52), and Sweden (6.49). It should be added that in Ishii-Kuntz's (1996) study, Japanese fathers spent less time with their sons than US fathers, but almost the same amount of time with their daughters. The author interprets this result by pointing to the father's feeling that the daughter will soon be “taken away” by marriage.

There are also 480,000 cases of absentee-father families, the so-called Tanshinfunin (Tanaka, 1994). Typically, when a father is transferred and moves to a place near his office, his family may not move with him, especially if they believe that the new environment will lead to educational disadvantages for the children.

Some studies have suggested that many fathers have little chance to demonstrate their authority. For instance, the image of fathers selected by a group of 10-15 year-olds included characteristics such as “dedicated to his work” (57%) and “generous” (46%), whereas the concepts “strict” (26%) and “strong” (20%)—which appear to be more authority related—were selected less frequently (Management and Coordination Agency, 1987). In addition, a study of the Prime Minister's Office (1993) showed that 33.7% of all 18-24 year-olds consult with their mothers about their problems, but only 18.8% with their fathers.

Several authors have explored the problems that Japanese families have in terms of their insufficient influence as agents of children's moralization (e.g., Central Education Council, 1998). As Shimizu (1983) argues, because many fathers cannot perform their traditional role as children's socializers in a satisfactory way, mothers are led to perform both of the parental roles, which formerly had been expected to be separate. The father's role was to introduce strict social norms to their children as the agent of society, whereas the mother should accept children with benevolence. In a study by the Management and Coordination Agency (1987), only 23.3% of the Japanese children aged 10 to 15 years selected their father as the figure of “the one who is strictest with you.” In contrast, 47.1% of them selected their mother for this role, and 21.7% chose both parents. By way of comparison, 44% of US children selected fathers for this statement, 34% selected mothers, and 14% selected both. Accordingly, Shimizu (1983) has argued that because Japanese mothers must adopt both roles, they may feel ambivalent and as a result, anxious.



It should be added that many fathers working in nonmainstream occupations, e.g., on farms or in local stores, will see more of their children and wives than mainstream fathers sent overseas by their corporation to head a branch operation. In Japan as elsewhere, economic conditions are bound to have a major impact on family life.

### Adolescents and Youth

In Japan, a greater value is assigned to an individual's academic career than his/her actual ability. Thus an emphasis on achieving a brilliant academic career through hard work is ingrained in the child throughout his/her upbringing, since a parent's desire for the child's happiness in life seems only achievable if the child successfully completes tertiary education. In fact, 67.5% of parents expect their sons to graduate from a university and 39.6% of them expect it of their daughters (Management and Coordination Agency, 1996). Clearly, the pressure to succeed academically is greater on sons than on daughters, and so, many girls are sent to junior colleges that teach them to be "lady-like."

These high expectations are, however, not always attained. 26.6% of mothers answered "very much dissatisfied" and 31.6% of them answered "fairly satisfied" when asked about the school achievements of their third-grade middle-school children although only 7.0% of mothers were "much dissatisfied" with their third-grade primary school children. In contrast, only 16.8% of fathers felt dissatisfied with their third-grade middle school children (Shimizu, 1983). Many teachers and researchers have pointed out that numerous children experience problems such as low self-esteem and a lack of commitment because of academic pressures to prepare for, and succeed in, the fiercely competitive entrance examinations. Some other children adamantly refuse to go to school or become the victims of school bullying (Kameguchi, 1998).

After graduation, when sons and daughters get their first jobs, they develop relationships with colleagues and superiors at their place of work. However, they continue to enjoy profound relationships with their parents. Typically, they attempt to live up to their parents' expectations. In a study conducted by the Department of Citizens' Life of Metropolitan Tokyo (1977), 67.3 % of 20-25 year-olds answered that their fathers had high hopes for them and 63.4% wished to live up to their expectations; 73.9 % of them said that their mothers placed high expectations on them, and 70.6% wished to fulfill them. These percentages were much higher than those corresponding to other reference persons such as "colleagues or friends"(33.4% and 25.9%, respectively). These results are consistent with the aforementioned notion that parents, and especially the mother, profoundly influence the moral character of their children and adolescents. It should be added that in many situations, parents—and especially mothers—may prefer to use an indirect, guilt-inducing style of conveying their expectations to their children, rather than giving them direct commands. Children (especially boys), in turn, may resist the socialization process and in some cases even hit their parents.

Nevertheless, surveys have repeatedly pointed to major gaps in lifestyle and values between parents and adolescents (e.g., Prime Minister's Office, 1973, 1993). It is not rare for Japanese adolescents to face internal conflicts between their wish to live up to their parents' expectations (because they feel deeply indebted to them) and their own convictions and lifestyle preferences. Consequently, some of the domestic violence perpetrated by sons, especially against their mothers, is thought to result from conflicts between internalized parental expectations and the sons' own wish to achieve an independent identity. In this view, the son's violence represents an attempt to cut himself off from strong feelings of dependence on his parents.

In addition, sociologists and journalists have recently uncovered "parasite singles," that is, daughters who, for many years, depend on their parents financially and in other ways, to support their single lifestyle. They frequently live at home. These supposedly "parasitic" singles may go abroad to learn a foreign language, attend college to learn additional skills, become counselors, and so on. They know that if they marry, they will be expected to spend quite a few hours engaged in housekeeping tasks. Should a child arrive, they probably will feel they should abandon their full-time job. Consequently, some of these single women may prefer to live their own, independent lives rather than follow the traditional path of becoming wives and mothers (Orenstein, 2001). That society feels deeply ambivalent about these singles becomes clear when we consider the derogatory nature of the label used by some journalists and others to refer to them.

The aforementioned findings and trends suggest that in the future, Japanese adolescents will need to strike a new balance between feelings of dependency on their parents, the desire to gain independence, their attitudes toward gender roles, and the shifting expectations of their peer group, the world of work, and the larger society (White, 1993).

## Marriage

After graduation from high school or college, most young men and women get jobs. As many as 70% of 20-30-year-old females find employment (Department of Women in the Ministry of Labor, 2000). They enter the “life stage for marriage” as traditionally defined. *Miai-kekkon* [traditional arranged marriage] was the most common marriage style until the early 1960s. For instance, in the 1930s, 69.0% of all marriages were arranged (National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems, 1998).

In contrast to modern “love marriages,” *miai* are based on observing traditional formalities, rely on the initiative of others, do not depend on premarital interaction, and do not presume that romantic love is a precondition for marriage. It is expected that love—or at least some kind of respectful attachment—will follow rather than precede the tying of the marriage knot. The marriage partners tend to emphasize that respect between husband and wife and the fulfillment of expected duties should take priority over more transitory feelings, sexual satisfaction, and mere companionship. The families involved tend to be especially concerned about their honor, their status, and their position in a network of stable community relationships (Blood, 1967). When in the 1960s, Blood compared arranged marriages with love marriages, he found that on the whole, both wives and husbands tended to be more satisfied with arranged marriages. Because modern love marriages place a greater emphasis on emotional infatuation and involvement, they introduce an element of instability given the transitory nature of many human feelings. Consequently, traditional mature persons may believe that the pervasive modern trend toward love marriages furthers immature dependence on unrealistic expectations as well as an individualistic (egotistical) disregard for the wider interests of the community, the extended family, and the needs of children for a stable home.

*Miai* (arranged meetings) were typically set up by respected and knowledgeable women of the community such as wives of rental-house owners and wives of superiors in the workplace. These go-betweens (*nakodo*) would gather detailed information about marriageable young women and arrange meetings with the intention of finding a marriage partner for them.

The percentage of arranged marriages has sharply decreased over the years and was a mere 9.9% between 1995-1997. Instead, modern men are becoming acquainted with prospective marriage candidates mainly in the workplace (33.6% in 1997) or on the basis of friends’ or brothers’ introductions (27.1%) (National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems, 1998). The decline of *miai* has been linked to the increased chance of meeting prospective partners at the workplace, the increasingly individualistic outlook on life emphasized by modern education, and the paucity of traditional go-betweens due to the increasing diversity and fragmentation of traditional communities. Nevertheless, some young people find it difficult to meet suitable marriage partners, as may be the case for young men working in computer system or oil companies where they are unlikely to meet female colleagues. Consequently, many companies now provide go-between services, an industry that has come to mean big business. It should be added that go-betweens such as family friends, relatives or mentors are frequently employed in love marriages as well, where they can be helpful in arranging delicate negotiations between the families involved. Consequently, some differences between “love marriages” and arranged marriages may be more apparent than real.

Weddings frequently blend Eastern and Western customs and symbols. They often include a traditional Shinto ceremony, in which the bride and the groom wear beautiful *kimonos*. This may be followed by a Christian-style observance when the participants appear in formal Western attire. Even in the case of love marriages, a go-between couple is likely to serve as witnesses during the marriage ceremony since the marriage is expected to cement relationships not only between the couple, but also between their families-of-origin. Some well-to-do families stage elaborate and expensive weddings cumulating, for instance, in a laser show during which the couple emerges dramatically from a gondola. Many weddings nowadays take place in hotels or wedding halls, the high point typically being the *hiroen* (“publicity banquet”) during which the new couple are celebrated in speeches and an elaborate dinner is held in their honor. Much of the attention throughout the whole proceedings is on the bride, since it is understood that she, more than anybody else, is undergoing a fundamental change in status, residence and lifestyle. However, some weddings are deliberately of a much simpler and less formal nature.

## Husband and Wife

After the wedding, the physical and psychological situation of the new couple leads to many changes—especially if they live together with the husband’s parents. Consequently, one sometimes reads about conflicts

between the wife and her husband's mother or sister in the newspaper advice columns. Some of the problems reported occur because of the differences between the "culture" (kafu) the wife brought with her when she left her family of origin, and the culture of the husband's family. In a related fashion, conflicts may arise between the hopes and expectations of the new couple and the norms endorsed by the rest of the husband's family. The traditional role assignments for husbands and wives have become more flexible and collaborative in recent decades, but in many families they remain firmly in place. According to Yuzawa (1995), the belief that "husbands should work outside the home and wives should take care of the home" was confirmed by 80.1% of women in Tokyo in 1982, but by only 55.6% in 1992. According to a survey of the Prime Minister's Office (1992), most of the work in homes is assigned to wives rather than to husbands (or the whole family): cleaning (84.5% vs. 11.6%), preparing dishes (90.0% vs. 5.1%), caring for young children (63.4% vs. 17.9%), teaching the children (48.7% vs. 24.7%). Whereas many wives in the survey said they decided daily family finances (70.5%), husbands tended to hold greater decision-making power in other important areas such as buying a house (53.2%). As a whole, when asked which person had the real decision-making power in their family home, 61.0% of the respondents said "father," 11.6% answered "mother," and 19.1% said "both."

### SOMETHING ON SEXUAL RELATIONS, BIRTH CONTROL, ABORTION

The divorce rate decreased from 1882 to 1960 but has increased since then. For instance, the divorce rates were 0.7% in 1960 and 1.94% in 1998 (Tokuoka, 1981; National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems, 1999). Tokuoka (1981) explains the changes by noting that while the traditional type of divorce has decreased over time, the modern type of divorce has increased since 1960. The former type of divorce occurred when a wife could not successfully adapt to the enlarged family, and the latter type occurs because of a psychological mismatch between husband and wife in a context where the rapidly changing family system leads to divergent and sometimes contradictory role expectations and norms for family life. It should be kept in mind, however, that in spite of some recent increases in the divorce rates, they remain well below the rates found in most other industrialized countries.

Children frequently command a central position in the family. For example, from the arrival of the firstborn child, Mr. Watanabe began to be called "father" by his wife, while he began to call her "mother." In the future, with the advent of grandchildren, Mr. Watanabe will become "grandfather" for his wife, and he will refer to her as "grandmother."

In 1998, 40.4% of divorced couples had no children, although only 5% of all married couples are estimated to have no children (National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems, 1998). The data are consistent with the Japanese proverb, "The child is an iron clamp to [hold together] parents." However, it is uncertain whether having children would decrease the likelihood of divorce. In addition, it is easy to point out covariates of divorce, such as the couple's respective ages: younger married couples who tend to have no children and enjoy better chances of getting jobs to support them after their separation divorce more frequently than older couples.

Masuda (1981) pointed out that the image of the relationship between husband and wife in traditional families is unclear when compared to the more definite image of good parent-child relationships. He argued that in the traditional family, the relationship between wife and husband is not well delineated because the total family system is focused on the parent-child relationships. In addition, because of rigid traditional norms for male-female interactions, the couple is unlikely to express their love to each other even in the home.

The spheres of many couples' lives do not overlap all that much. They may have few mutual friends and are unlikely to attend many social functions together. Quite a few marriages are arranged for the sake of convenience, and conjugal love is not necessarily the crucial ingredient of a successful Japanese marriage. Furthermore, even if the early phases of the marriage were characterized by sexual passion and romantic attachment, these can easily evaporate over time—a process that in most cases does not endanger the stability of the marriage. Some wives agree with the ironic phrase that appeared some dozen years ago as part of a TV commercial: It is nice that the husband is fine and out of the home. In contrast, other wives may resent the merciless demands made by their husbands' companies on his time and energy. The resentment may be fueled as much by the wife's concern that he plays too little a role in the upbringing of the children as by her desire for his companionship. Still other wives may be tempted to start an extramarital affair, possibly with a man they met in the course of their part-time work. Extramarital affairs and sexual encounters, however, have traditionally been the prerogative of men who, if so inclined, can easily avail themselves of the services of barmaids,

strippers, mama-sans and other women working in the extensive sex and entertainment industry (Louis, 1992). As is the case in the Watanabe family, the relationship between many spouses tends to have a slightly “cool” quality so that they take each other for granted. In addition, they relate to each other not so much as partners having different qualities, personalities, and opinions, but rather as two halves of a unit. They may try to avoid discussions in which different perspectives are revealed, preferring instead to act as a functional unit held together by tacit understandings and a mutual concern for the welfare of the children and the home. Some men, in particular, distrust “rational” discussions and would rather rely on unspoken agreements; or else they might attempt to avoid discussions of family problems by staying away from it much of the time. Masuda (1981), for instance, cited the findings of the NHK Research Center, which asked the husbands “What are you for your wife?” Many of them answered “breadwinner of the family” (40.6%), “like a friend” (17.7%), or “something like air or water” (11.9%)—that is a person who is tacitly taken for granted. To the corresponding question about husbands, wives answered “friend” (25.9%), “like air or water” (22.3%), “breadwinner of the family” (18.9%), or “like a mother” (9.5%). [“LIKE A MOTHER”?]

Because of increased life expectancy rates, married couples are now spending more and more years with each other. This raises, among other things, the question of how the Japanese are dealing with the graying of their society, the changing roles of the elderly in the family, and the ongoing redefinition of family roles and relationships in the post-retirement phase.

### THE ROLE OF THE ELDERLY IN THE FAMILY

Whereas much research on families has focused on the relationship between parents and young children, very few studies have investigated relationships between aged persons and other family members (Kawai, 1988). The status of older persons in the family is an important theme in Japan because the number of elders is increasing steadily, although their status is often ambiguous due to the changing nature of the Japanese family. Different generations may hold different beliefs: the elderly frequently hope to live with their son’s family, but, as in the case of the Watanabe family, the younger generation may feel more ambivalent about living together with their parents.

According to Yuzawa (1995), in 1990, 34.5% of persons at least 64 years old lived with their married sons or daughters and grandchildren, 13.7 % with their single son(s) and/or daughter(s), 24.2% with their husbands or wives, and 15.2 % alone or in institutions. The ratio of aged persons who lived with their sons and/or daughters and others was 87.3% in 1960, decreased to 60.6 % by 1990, and has since declined even further. These percentages are much higher than those found in the United States (1.3% in the case of persons at least 60-year-old in 1960).

Once the Japanese grow older, many face the problem of how best to live with their son’s family. In the traditional three-generation family, the grandfather gradually hands over his role to his sons. Hasegawa (1983) describes how this process occurred among farming families living near Osaka. At first, the grandfather handed over financial responsibilities, such as managing the family budget, to his sons and later allowed them to become the final decision-makers in the family. Finally, the oldest son was officially registered as the head householder. In contrast, the daughters-in-law became responsible for most of the housekeeping tasks soon after they entered the family. The grandmothers took on or continued with complementary roles in housekeeping. The new wives were expected to obey the family patriarchs—typically their fathers-in-law—and to devote themselves completely to their new families. The older generation kept their status as householders until a certain age, which varied with the profession and other considerations, till they retired from active life.

Minoura (1987) discussed the status of wives within families living in a farming area. In interviews, many older women stated that they had been treated cruelly by their mothers-in-law, but nowadays, they must accept that their daughters-in-law are becoming much more assertive. Minoura explained this new assertiveness in the following way. To begin with, there were only a few women who wanted to marry farmers, and this situation raised the wives’ bargaining position while weakening the traditional family system. In addition, they were increasingly going out into the workplace to earn their own salary. Finally, as the frequency of arranged marriages declined in which the women were asked to join an *ie* rather than simply marrying a husband, the wives adopted new attitudes toward their marriage. Increasingly, they felt a greater obligation toward the marital relationship, rather than the family at large. It should be added that in recent years, farming families have been forced to look for potential wives for their sons in other Asian countries such as the Philippines—a surprising development for the Japanese who like to emphasize the racial integrity of their society.

A much-discussed potential problem concerns the relationship between the wife and her mother-in-law. In this context, Sodei (1977) examined the contents of advice columns in various newspapers over a period of 10 years. He found that more than 30% of those problems involving aged persons revolved around tensions between wives and their mothers-in-law. Kawai (1988) pointed out that typical conflicts occurred when the beliefs of wives clashed with those of their mothers-in-law who, in turn, wanted to assert their traditionally superior role. It is also likely that for the husbands, there was the further conflict between their deep-seated feeling of dependence on their mothers and the modern emphasis on the equal rights of all family members. Consequently, husbands may find it difficult to side with their wives rather than their mothers, even if they agree with modern notions of the nonhierarchical nature of the family.

An additional problem concerns the nature of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Japanese tend to believe that grandparents spoil their grandchildren, labeling such (supposedly) selfish and poorly disciplined children “grandfather’s (or grandmother’s) children.” In this context, grandparents may tend to favor their grandchildren because they see them as the heirs to the family name. At the same time, they struggle to adhere to conventional family norms governing the grandparent-grandchildren relationship.

In the context of a collaborative study of three-generation families living in Osaka, Fujimoto (1981) argued that grandparents have come to be placed in an ambivalent status in the current transitional period of the lineal family system and the nuclear family system. The results of the study showed that most grandparents had intimate relations with their grandchildren, but one-third of them refrained from acting as child-rearing authority figures for them. They came to accept the idea that only their sons and daughters should have the responsibility to educate their grandchildren.

In today’s fast paced world, grandparents often find it difficult to teach their grandchildren who are being prepared to live in a society quite different from that in which the grandparents themselves grew up. The grandparents can, however, offer affection, care, and general guidance. Thus they may play a supplementary role to the parents by, for instance, teaching their grandchildren by example what it means to become older and to face death. In this context, the current elders have the task of redefining their role in the socialization of their grandchildren within the new family system.

There is the further question about the role of the family in caring for aged members, such as bedridden aged persons and persons on their deathbed. According to Yuzawa (1995), bedridden elders increasingly wish to be taken care of by their spouses, social helpers, or institutions rather than by their daughters-in-law. These changes in attitude will further weaken the lineal family system. It should be noted that in 2000, the Japanese government introduced a new social insurance system providing financial support for the time when aged persons need in-home care. These developments mean that the aged persons must learn to adapt to the contract-nature of being cared for in an institution or in their home by trained personnel who are strangers rather than family members. Many companies adhere to the policy that their employees must retire at age 60. In this context, many employees will retire from their posts, but stay on in the company or a related company as part-time workers receiving a reduced salary. The Ministry of Labor (2000) has published statistics showing the following percentages for working persons: 94.5% for 55 year-old persons, 73.8% for the 60 year-olds, and 55.8% for the 65 year-olds indicating a gradual decrease of work involvement with advancing age.

Many retirees are contemplating changes in their lifestyle and spend more time at home: in the aforementioned survey, 87.1 % of the men in their sixties said that they usually have dinner with their wives, although only 59.7% of the men in their thirties gave the same reply. However, a mere 37.0% of the elderly indicated that they discussed their troubles and concerns with their partners. That percentage was practically the same as that for the men in their thirties (38.3%).

In addition, many of the elderly experience anxieties about their health status. In a survey by Yuzawa (1995), 52.3% of the elderly indicated that they sometimes or always felt anxious about their health, 31.1% said they felt lonely or isolated, and 28.4% were worried about their social relationships.

Altogether, it seems clear that many of the elderly need to redefine their relationship with each other and how to spend their free time. Many books are now being published that discuss how newly retired persons may find new purposes in their everyday lives.

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Table 1. Age Distribution of Japan's Population in 1998

Ages %	
From 0 to 9 years old: 9.5	
10 to 19:	11.7
20 to 29:	15.0
30 to 39:	12.9
40 to 49:	14.4
50 to 59:	14.2
60 to 69:	11.5
70 to 79:	7.3
80 to 89:	3.6

Source: National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems (1999, p.).

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Household Types in 1970 and 1995

Members of family	1970	1995
Married couple; no children	9.8	17.4
Parents and a child or children	41.2	34.2
One parent and one child or more children	5.7	7.1
(Total nuclear family	56.7	58.7
Married couple and their parent(s)	1.2	2.0
Married couple, their parent(s) and one child or more children	12.2	9.2
Total Lineal family	13.4	11.2
Married couple, their parent(s) and other kin	.8	.3
Single	20.3	25.6
Others	1.1	3.3

Source: National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems (1999, p.).

Table 3. Characteristics Which Parents Desire for their Children: Japan, US, and Korea\*

Characteristics	Japan (%)	US (%)	Korea (%)
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Polite	34	26	61	
Observing rules of conduct or having a sense of civic responsibility	45	24	32	
Is fair, has a strong sense of justice	11	32	10	
Considerate of other people	62	27	9	
Emotionally stable	5	29	15	
Responsible	40	50	58	
Patient or persevering	18	9	19	
Cooperative	17	6	13	
Ability to insist on his/her own opinion in the presence of others	30	15	28	
Creative or original	8	18	8	
Ability to plan ahead or do things without help		16	19	29
Leadership	3	25	11	
Not wasteful of money and other things	12	14	6	

\* The numbers reflect percentages of characteristics selected by parents from a list of thirteen characteristics (multiple choices allowed).  
Source: Adapted from Prime Minister's Office (1982, p. 49).

#### 4 Adolescents

According to Sengoku (1998), Japanese high school students tend to answer, "I have not received from the influence of others", on their characters more than US students. For example, 31.5 % of the Japanese sample answered that they have been influenced by nobody on the "honesty": Only 6.6% of US students answered in this way. 32.3%, 38.6%, and 16.1% of the Japanese students answered that they have been influenced by fathers, mothers, or friends, respectively. In contrast, the corresponding percentages for US students were 62.3%, 80.3% and 31.4%. These tendency are same for the other characters such as "love to neighbors", "not being selfish" and so on.

Considering the low frequencies of disciplinary statements by the Japanese parents aforementioned, the results is easily understandable.

Also, some surveys suggested that Japanese adolescents have come to lack the moral awareness to obey the moral rules such as keeping promise comparing with Western countries like US (Management and Coordination Agency, 1987). For example, to the question "Which of the things on this card do you think a boy and girl of your age should never do?", 51.1% of the Japanese adolescents pointed the card of "telling a lie". While, 77.8% of US correspondents pointed the card. Then, some Japanese authors pointed that Japanese parents must recover their socialization powers (e.g. Central Education Council, 1998).

It may be true that Japanese parents have had tendency to pay much attention to academic achievements of their children and to neglect the moral superiority except "study hard or work hard" or "do not bother others to maintain group harmony".

However, it should be noted that there may be some other explanations about the findings, which also suggest another aspect of moralization in Japan. As mentioned in the section of the child-rearing the Japanese parents do not have the tendency to make explicit statements of a disciplinary nature. Thus, it is possible that there is a difficulty to attribute their moral characters to some persons. Additionally, it is possible that the relativism or situationalism of the Japanese morality, which has been pointed by some authors such as Reischauer (1988) and Naito and Gielen (1992), may influence the answers of the Japanese students. If it is the case, the answers of the Japanese students may represent in some degree the effects of Japanese moralization.

Anyway, it is true that the Japanese parents have a difficult task to moralize their children considering the Japanese morality and the international morality which their children should acquire in their future.

4/9/01 new information/some comments

My comments on the first part (around P 3 ) of the dradt:

(The sentences beginning with "\*" are my comments)

“Ethnically, linguistically, and culturally, Japan is more homogenous than any other major country. Although there are some minority groups—principally Koreans, Chinese, the indigenous Ainu, and the indigenous Burakumin—the government states that 99.4% of all inhabitants are “Japanese.” “

\* First, the word “Burakumin” must be changed to “people from Hisabetsu buraku”, because “Burakumin” is criticized as a discriminatory word among Japanese like “Negro” in US and are not allowed to be used in Japan. Second, I am afraid that readers may misunderstand the situations of Japan by the last sentence. As a Japanese, I feel something curious by treating Korean in Japan, the Ainu and “people from Hisabetsu buraku” as in the same line. It is difficult for me, a non-native speaker of English, to understand the precise meanings of the last sentence, so I would like to confirm the sentence is consistent with the following Japanese situations.

The government admit the persons who get nationality of Japan as Japanese (not in terms of ethnicity or race). Perhaps, the percentage of “99.4%” may be that of the persons who get Japanese nationality. But, the Korean who were borne and have stayed in Japan but do not have nationality of Japan are not accepted as the Japanese by the government. They are called “Korean who stay in Japan” (“Zainichi Kankokujin” in Japanese). The number of them amounts to more than 500 thousand.

While, the Ainu and “Hisabetsu buraku persons” are endowed Japanese nationality at birth. The Ainu had their own culture and language, but now very few people succeed them (no Ainu persons speak the Ainu language, now). The people from “Hisabetsu buraku” is not a ethnic group. This minority group was like the Indian outcast. The Japanese government has made a effort to extinguish the differentiation.

Considering these circumstances, I feel some curiosity in reading Korean, the Ainu and “People from Hisabetsu buraku” as non-native English speaker.

“Japanese (the Tokyo version of it) is the official language and is understood by almost everybody although many other dialects exist. “

\* “(the Tokyo version of it)” is not true. Precisely “it is mainly from the Tokyo version of it), because the persons in Tokyo spoke and speak differently from the “Standard Japanese” in some degree. We know well “the Tokyo dialect”.

“Japan’s literacy rate is close to 100%, a very large percentage of the population has undergone 12 years of rigorous schooling governed by society-wide standards, most Japanese feel themselves to be middle class, and low crime rates demonstrate the success of most Japanese families in socializing their children. While economic inequalities are certainly important in the lives of Japanese families, they tend to be less visible and less destructive than those that can be encountered in Brazil, the United States, or France. One cannot find any true slums in Japan although minority group members such as many families of Korean descent live in ghetto-like parts of big cities. “

\* I heard that some Korean people live in “ghetto-like part” after twenty years from the end of world war two. At least now, we cannot find “ghetto-like“ are of Korean or Chinese. There are some places where the many Koreans live and make “Korean towns” like the small one of the Chinese town in San Francisco. But, they are far from slum. So, the last statement is curious for me.

“Economically and to some degree culturally, Japanese society is divided into the “mainstream” and “non-mainstream” sectors. The Watanabe family, for instance, belongs to the culturally dominant mainstream since Mr. Watanabe is a “company man” working for a large corporation offering lifetime employment and extensive benefits. Mrs. Watanabe, in contrast, holds a part-time job, as do most women. In this context, “part-time” does not refer to the number of hours she works—they may indeed be many—but to the fact that she works for a small enterprise considered to be outside the mainstream sector. Should an economic downturn occur, she might lose her position. Mrs. Watanabe, in turn, may be less committed to her work and her company than is her husband for whom work is all consuming. Only about 30% of all Japanese workers enjoy mainstream lifetime employment—and very few of them are women.”

\* I am sorry but I do not think the conceptions alone explain well the situations of Japanese families, although I understand the some efficacy of the conceptions of the major and the minor.

I think that there is two streams: the traditional and the modern or Western-like. The traditional women worked hard and involved themselves to the companies even as part time workers (even now the kind of women do so). They felt much obligation to the shops they worked at. In contrast, even some fulltime workers of young age do not feel obligation and been not involved in the companies. They do not feel that they are a member of company as families.

So, I suggest that the traditional-modern dimension is more useful to explain the phenomena in Japan. Then we must seek for the cultural characteristics about this dimension.

#### Addition 10

1. There are only a few available findings about the elderly. There are many books by religious parties about life after-death. (but there are no research findings on the Japanese ideas about it.) They explained various ways theories and there is no research findings on the Japanese ideas about it. Thus, it is very difficult to construct paragraphs on the elders and Japanese families. I construct some paragraphs under the situations. Anyway, the Japanese society come to face with the problem how to care the elders.

5. In these days, I found some papers which criticized the papers about Japanese father's authority. They pointed that there are almost no evidence which show the Japanese fathers had authority in old days. So, the statements like "the Japanese father come to lack their authority" may be not true. So, we must be careful in describing about the father's authority.

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**THIS IS THE ACTUAL WRITING ABOUT THE TOPIC.**

56.6 % of the elderly died in their home in 1970, but the percentage has been rapidly decreasing. In 1992, only 20.1 % of them died in their home (Yazawa, 1995). This downward shift may be explained on the one hand by the increase of institutions and hospitals established for caring for the elderly, and on the other hand, by the fact that the elders now live with their sons or daughters and their families, or the elder's wives or husbands, who may not have the ability to care for their sick spouses in the home. This suggests the social problems of terminal care of elderly persons, because the Japanese elders seem to wish to die beside their families in their home. Again, the Japanese society faces the problem of how to redefine the role of families and communities based on the changing life-cycles of the people.

When people die, most of the funerals are held in Buddhist temples by the families of the deceased person. The deceased are buried in the families' graves or new tombs (if their family has gotten bigger) sometimes when they established branch families and so on. Benedicts (1946) pointed out fifty years ago, that the Japanese do not admire ancestors but close relatives, because they come to forget or do not concern themselves with the graves of family members more than three generations before (For example, they do not care for the fading name on the graves of father's father's father's name). This may be true for the current Japanese except for a few distinguished families. However, according to the Yanagita schools, traditionally the Japanese believed that spirits of people go to the mountains and there, take care of their families. Thus, it is plausible that the Japanese admire ancestors as a whole and keep the close relatives in their mind by imagining them in the graves. This is consistent with the fact that most Japanese (may) regard families as comfortable institutions (social structures) where the members are closely related emotionally but are not looked at or regarded a apart of the family in the context of the historical family line, except a few distinguished families. It may be possible that the Japanese who believe in (life?) after death have been affected by native ideas, Buddhism, and so on. The form of rituals had been introduced by Japanese Buddhism. At any rate, the degree to which the current people understand or interpret the ritual is another problem.

Japanese married couples control birth relatively in high degree. According to National Institute of Social Security and Population Problems (1998), in 1997, 81.6% of the wives (20-50 years old who lived in the systematically sampled areas) answered that they practiced contraception (60.4%) or had practiced it in some days (21.2%). The wives, ages 35-45 years old practiced in a relatively higher degree than the younger ones and the elderly. 70-80% of the wives who had no plans to have more children practiced contraception.

However, the percentage of the wives who had experienced abortion was 22.8% in 1997. Although the percentage has decreased from 39.8% in 1984, many birth controls are (achieved??) attained through abortions. Considering the strong mother-child relation, it is predicted that the mothers deciding abortion may have conflicts within their minds. While, the absolute rejection to abortion is minority opinion (Yuzawa, 1995).

There are some problems concerning the abortion: How can we decrease the abortion rate, how can we support the mothers of psychological problems and so on. To answer these problems, we need to know the situations of the mothers who accept the abortions and their moral conflict about the abortions.



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