

# Social Mores of Intercultural Families in Japan : An Exploratory Study

Paul Spijkerbosch

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松 山 大 学  
言語文化研究 第30卷第1号 (抜刷)  
2010年9月

Matsuyama University  
Studies in Language and Literature  
Vol. 30 No. 1 September 2010

# Social Mores of Intercultural Families in Japan :

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Scolding one of my children some time ago, I came to the realization that her response was exasperating me. She was looking down while listening, and was not uttering a word at any point ! To me, whenever I was scolding her, the experience was frustrating, probably due to my realization that I wanted her to offer appropriate feedback, and give me regular eye contact in this kind of situation. However my wife informed me, when asked, that she had no problem with this behavior, although it might depend upon the situation.

My daughter's behavior reminded me of how Japanese students tend to react while being admonished. This led me to wonder if such behavior was cultural in nature, and if so, were there any other examples of social mores that reflected cultural norms in daily life. Furthermore, I reasoned, intercultural families seemed to be ideal environments to explore compromises between parental values played out among their children. I wondered how children from intercultural homes would reconcile their parent's views with their friends' and society's in general. How would this be resolved through school, where Japanese youngsters seem to absorb the accepted social norms ?

This paper uses in-depth interviews with intercultural families living in Japan to reflect on literature on social mores, and consider what these participants thought on a range of issues related to these intriguing questions.

### **Social Mores**

Social mores are often the source of conflict in any community. The difference between behavior expected, and that performed, often creates a dissonance that can reverberate far beyond the initial perceived shortcoming. In German-speaking countries, people feel affronted if you don't give prolonged eye contact during conversation or when toasting one another. My Swiss brother-in-law has informed me of this necessity a number of times !

Communities have invariably, over the years, developed a harmonious social environment by generally adhering to a common set of social and moral precepts, particular to their area, known as social mores. As children were raised, they were taught these social mores by interaction with their parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends and others. It would be natural to assume that, over time, social mores would undergo gradual changes in response to their perceived utility. However in recent years, social mores have allegedly been undergoing rapid changes. Changes that can be linked to adjustments in social behavior facilitated by media (Morrison et. al. 2007), migration, and social networks (through technology and mobility).

Japan has been one of the few countries around the world to have retained a relatively homogenous society, even as other countries have found their communities experiencing rapid influxes of not just migrants, but immigrants. Increasingly however, foreigners have settled down in Japan, raising children, and becoming

long-term members of communities (Ministry of Justice, 2007). Although it is normal to assume that children are faster than adults to attune to localized social behavior, questions remain over how children reconcile the mores of their foreign parents with those of their community.

### **Biculturalism**

It is normal for a large proportion of children around the world to grow up in a bicultural or cross-cultural environment (Pollock and van Reken 2009, World Bank 1995, Dutcher 1994). Others learn through school, travel, or work. Consequently, throughout their life, many are exposed to multicultural experiences. As the world has become increasingly close-knit through technological advances, experience of (and flexibility toward) different cultures has, and increasingly will, provide various opportunities for people. Biculturalism is not a dichotomy of haves and have-nots however ; it is more of a grey scale describing various levels of confidence with which individuals can interact with other cultures (Ardila 2007, Baker 2006).

Although cross-cultural knowledge has been widely shown to be very useful for a number of reasons, when we consider the implications of learning certain social mores, the ramifications are somewhat more difficult to ascertain. Particularly if the parents are from different cultural backgrounds : from each other, or from their host culture.

### **Parenting**

Historically, for a variety of reasons, parents have been the main source of information for their children. Despite increasing societal interdependence, this

primary role of parents has largely remained unchallenged across cultures. In recent years, research on parental issues has been carried out on the premise that there may be a disparity on how the role of the parent is perceived by community members (Kolar and Soriano 2000, Bornstein et al. 1998).

Researchers have found that parents generally impart social mores that will enhance their child's social adaptation (Youniss, 1994). This is regardless of social class and culture, even when parents are of different cultural backgrounds (Kolar and Soriano, 2000 ; p 14). Importantly, according to Bowes and Hayes (1997), parents generally endeavor to be flexible in the type of social mores that they teach their children over time.

Furthermore, parents from a foreign culture will often encourage their children to emulate host culture practices, rather than the parents' (Youniss, 1994), although this would probably depend upon how useful host practices were perceived. Kolar and Soriano (2000) found in their study (of the Australian component) of an International study on cross-national parenting, that parents would usually be willing to sacrifice their own cultural norms and social values if host culture values would be perceived as being of better value for their child's future.

One of the reasons for parents being such significant conduits of social mores for their children, is the multi-cultural concept of responsibility: parents have usually been held accountable for their offspring's behavior. Societies have generally codified the concept of child-care, ensuring that parents remain sensitized, and locked in, to their legal responsibility.

## **Behavior regulation**

Bronfenbrenner's model (Appendix I) illustrates the interactive principle underpinning a child's development (Bronfenbrenner 1998 ; Santrock 2007) . Throughout a person's life, there is an ongoing process of adjustment, involving two elements ; self-induced, and externally induced, known as regulation (Berns, 2010). Regulation theory explains the process of adapting or conforming behavior in response to specific stimuli (Hoyle, 2010 ; Baumeister and Vohs, 2004) .

The process of regulated behavior, as it is communicated, provides a rich source of fascinating research opportunities, ranging from child development (Berns, 2010) to intercultural comparisons (Brumark, 2006 ; De Geer and Tulviste, 2005 ; 2002). De Geer and Tulviste (2005, 2002) concluded that there were specific differences between families living in their own country, and those living in host cultures, raising the concept of cultural socialization as the main driver of social mores. In contrast, Brumark (2006), when considering family interaction over dinnertime, concluded that family structure, conversational genre and communicative goals would have more influence on regulatory behavior than socio-cultural issues.

## **Social changes**

Bowes and Hayes (1997) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's social ecology model (Appendix I) can be used to describe the multi-dimensional inter-relationship between various factors in the conveyance of social mores. As individuals age, their interaction with various social agents (friends, neighbors, parents, schools, communities, laws, and jobs) leads to changes in their social behavior. Clearly,

this depends on the strength of relationship with any particular agent at certain moments in time.

In Japan, as more and more families experience double parental employment, child-raising responsibility has become an increasingly public concern. Community childcare centers, public schooling, and interest and sports groups have started to impact more deeply on children's social values. Rather than automatically echoing parental mores, children have begun to emulate those who take care of them. In fact, many parents in Japan now expect schools to impart a significant portion of social mores. Furthermore, it is common in Japan for parents to use the relevant (usually local) school to facilitate issues over even neighbors social mores.

The education system has become one of the most important socializing processes in contemporary society. Rather than simply providing an education, it has become a powerful regulatory institution (Smith, 1998). Schooling until an individual's majority has become the standard in many industrialized countries: Japan is no exception. Most younger people attend some form of schooling in Japan until the age of 22. Social values learned through interaction in the school environment have become de facto societal mores.

## Japan

Researchers have argued that group co-operation has been the defining nature of Japanese society, as opposed to, for example, American society, that is based on 'a kind of pioneering spirit' resulting in more emphasis in child-rearing on independence, creativity, and self-assertion (Davies and Okeno 2002, 135; Shimizu and LeVine 2001). Davies and Okeno (ibid, 135) detail research carried out by

Azuma (1994) that provides insight into cultural differences in child-rearing. Azuma (ibid) found that Japanese parents tended to utilize 'seep-down' parenting, which involved two aspects. Firstly, behavior tends to be learned through imitation rather than through verbal analytical explanation. Secondly, Japanese parents focused on the maintenance of a harmonious relationship with their children, even preferring to 'give-in' rather than be consistent in terms of discipline. Emphasis is placed on avoiding confrontation, focusing instead on the absorption, over time, of the required behavior.

In scrutinizing the tradeoffs between economically advanced societies which emphasize personal autonomy and those that prioritize collectivism in the name of harmony, Popenoe (2008) believes that Japan has been able to retain social harmony, while utilizing economic benefits, previously considered to be part of the individualistic model. Nevertheless, Popenoe (ibid, 50) argues, there are signs that Japan is moving in an individualistic direction. In the midst of growing personal autonomy and concomitant social mobility, the traditional family unit is under pressure.

### **School**

Davies and Ikeno (2002) believe that the 'seep-down' absorption of preferred behavior is also followed at school, primarily at the younger preschool and elementary school stages. Teachers focus on harmony in groups by dividing students into small groups, and demonstrating required behavior.

Wray (2008, 90) also examines and compares features of the Japanese and American school system. Regulatory processes in the elementary Japanese school



system focus on the individual's self-reflection and self-discipline. Classes are broken into small groupings fostering self-sacrificing behavior; the teacher often does not punish students, rather, they tend to manipulate the class groupings into self-regulation.

Japanese school rules apply beyond the school boundaries to teach the public behavior that parents 'are supposed to' inculcate (Wray, 2008; p 98). Wray argues that when public students engage in misbehavior outside school, public consensus is that the school system is failing, rather than that the parents are (Ibid; 98).

Most parents approve of the profusion of school rules and expect schools to begin character-molding from preschool days (Foljanty-Jost 2003). Nevertheless, others believe character training and moral education should be done at home, rather than at school. Wray (2008; 107) goes on to argue that as Japanese society is becoming more diversified, specialized, choice-oriented and individualistic, schools nourish uniformity and conformity, resulting in maladjusted children. Considering that parents have probably been able to more quickly adapt social mores that would stand their children in good stead in the future, it raises the question over how quickly a large school system could similarly adjust.

## Home

DeVos (1993; 124) points out Lanham's argument that a Japanese mother's concern with social compliance, or with other consequences of a child's behavior, is not about obedience or disobedience, but about how a child may hurt the feelings of others and hence do poorly socially. Maternal discipline avoids a test of wills (Ibid, 124). According to Davies and Ikeno (2002, 137), Azuma (1994) described the

process of thinking about others as *kimochi-shugi*. For example, if a child angrily damages something, the Japanese parent would remonstrate mildly by saying something like, *Kawaii so na oningyousan itaite itteruyo* “Poor thing... the doll will be so sore...”. Conversely, a mother from an American culture is more likely to demand compliance, increasingly firmly; “*That’s naughty! Don’t do it!*” Considering others has been a prerequisite for proper behavior in Japan.

### Methodology

Ten intercultural families were interviewed; five in which the foreign spouse was male, and five female. Clearly, as this research was focusing on the context of intercultural families within a Japanese milieu, one spouse needed to be Japanese. Likewise, both parents had to be interviewed, preferably separately, in whichever language was deemed necessary. This was to assess whether there would be any ‘cultural’ bias both within, and across, families for certain behavioral acts.

Due to the small number of participants, it was decided to select foreign spouses from similar backgrounds. All were either from North American or Antipodean backgrounds, with one coming from Argentina. All were selected on the premise their cultures were similarly egalitarian, an observation made by Dugan Romano (2008, 123). One important attribute in marriages that was not specified in the interviews was the issue of religion, although there was opportunity to describe social mores that could conceivably be connected to participant’s metaphysical beliefs.

To avoid skewed data arising from the gender of participants with specific reference to the development of social mores within families, as noted, five of the

selected foreign spouses were female, and five male.

The families were short-listed using the following criteria ; at least one child ranged in age from 6 to 12, both parents could be interviewed, one spouse was Japanese, and finally, the family all lived together. In addition, some effort was made to get a fairly representative family demographic. In this case, four families had one child, four had two, while two had three or more children.

All participants were interviewed individually. All Japanese spouses were interviewed in Japanese using a Japanese interviewer. This was to ensure any filtering of responses through linguistic or cultural means were minimized. Similarly with the foreign spouses, all were interviewed in English. Although the foreign interviewer's nationality was usually not the same as the participant, this was not considered a drawback.

Interviews were administered with an Interview sheet (see Appendix II), which took approximately one hour to complete. Interviews were audibly recorded to ensure the richness of the responses could be retained.

## Results

### *Children and language policy*

Language skill has been strongly correlated to cultural awareness. Family language policy (if there was one) was considered pertinent to assist in obtaining a profile of the parental attitudes toward culture.

Four couples had a mono-language policy ; two focused on the language of the

foreign spouse, two focused on Japanese. For the Japanese policy, both couples asserted that ‘this is Japan’ as their rationale. Three couples had an explicit OPOL (one parent, one language) policy. OPOL is when each parent communicates in their own language with the child(ren). Three couples had an ‘easygoing’ policy, whereby both parents used both languages interchangeably, or, did not require anyone in the family to use any particular language at any point.

### ***Parental issues***

Half (ten) of the respondents, regardless of culture, considered the Mother to be the primary caregiver, while the rest considered the role to be shared equally between parents. Some commented that this role changed in regard to the child’s age, job responsibilities, economic pressures, and the availability of (Japanese) grandparents to assist in childcare.

One respondent considered themselves marginalized, but put this down to spouse personality rather than cultural pressure. Three (Japanese) others suggested their spouse was probably marginalized, but asserted that this was either due to ; their (spouse’s) personal choice, the situation – “*This is Japan*”, or simply inevitable as in “*they are living abroad*”.

Interestingly, seven couples separately considered their child(ren)’s most frustrating behavior to be reticence, while two thought their children were too noisy, careless or selfish. Reticence (and its connection to *identity*) seems to be a recurring theme in intercultural families in Japan, and has spawned a number of books, websites and extensive research. In these interviews, reticence seemed to emerge for a number of different reasons : single-child families, identity issues, personality, and their child’s environment.

***Social Mores***

All respondents wanted their children to be sociable, and speak up. They connected this desirable trait to greetings, departures, visiting someone, the dinner table, requests, and being at school. However in the classroom, half of the Japanese respondents wanted their children to be quiet and listen, while the foreign parents maintained the desire that their child be more communicative in class. One foreign parent however, noted the difference between being too disruptive to that of simply seeking clarification.

Most respondents wanted their children to help out in the house by doing chores, although half the Japanese respondents commented that they had no requirement to actually do so.

When being scolded or receiving advice, the foreign spouse generally wanted their child(ren) to listen, respond and if appropriate, give an opinion. Nine of the Japanese respondents preferred their children to listen, be quiet, and change their behavior-obviously similar targets, but different methods of getting there !

Being in public, the foreign spouse preferred their child to not *shout* or *be erratic*, but instead to *be considerate*. If they were older and hanging out, they wanted their child to *stay in contact*. Most Japanese respondents echoed the need to *be considerate*, while three didn't want their child(ren) to *throw away garbage*. Two Japanese respondents (who had only daughters) focused on *security awareness* in public.

When pushed to consider what factors affected social mores, three foreign respondents listed the environment (being at school or at home), six considered

culture (through the family), while one insisted gender (roles in society) to be significant. On the other hand, three Japanese respondents listed culture (anywhere – in home or in the community), four believed the environment (at school, at home, or elsewhere), and three considered life experience to be important.

### ***Intercultural Family***

Most of the respondents believed that they needed to discuss issues with their spouse as they arose. Three respondents (two Japanese and one foreign) however, insisted that their spouse follow the same philosophy.

Communicating with others was considered equally important by respondents. Eight couples believed that it was very important to communicate as a family with other intercultural families, and most commented that it was necessary for their children to realize that others were the same as themselves.

All the foreign spouses commented that it was very important for their child(ren) to learn foreign social mores, while those Japanese spouses who answered considered it of 'some' importance, but that Japanese mores were more important at this particular moment in time.

Most couples were united in believing that traveling overseas was at least of some importance for their children to acquire social mores. On the other hand, two foreign spouses noted that it was of little importance as child(ren) tend to learn them regardless from their foreign parent. One Japanese parent had had such a bad experience that their children and he himself were not at all interested in going there again in the future.

While being abroad, nine couples did not have any problem with social mores, although one Japanese respondent believed *cleanliness* was perceived as being different abroad. On the other hand, on returning to Japan, another (Japanese) respondent found that their child often didn't want to *wear shoes* outside.

### **Regulation**

When asked to consider how Japanese caregivers instruct social mores, half of the Japanese respondents had no idea, while the other half thought it depended on the situation. The male respondents tended to have little idea. *Class size* and *student character* were mentioned by two respondents as ameliorating factors.

On the other hand, all of the foreign respondents thought that Japanese caregivers tended to *be repetitive* or *avoid confrontation*. Two respondents found this process very frustrating, and recollected wanting Japanese, in general, to *get to the point*. Three others mentioned that it depended upon the person—although they couldn't be any more specific than that despite gender, age and familiarity being suggested. Two mentioned that it *depended upon the situation* (specifically, *hoikuen is more easy-going than yochisha*). Other comments included; *(the caregiving) gets stricter as students get older, teaching experience is important, in public Japanese are less likely to reprimand, when kids are younger, (caregivers are) more yasashii, (caregivers) only scold at school, and (most caregivers are) usually female*.

Most respondents believed that there was no difference in their family environment to that of their own society in the way that behavior was regulated. One Japanese respondent commented that *my home environment is in Japanese*. However, one believed *family dynamics are more important than culture*.

Likewise, nine foreign spouses believed that there was no difference. Some noted ; *(I) have to induce feedback ; only when I'm involved is it the same, and (my spouse) and I respond differently to our child.*

When asked how their child(ren) responded to regulating behavior from others, Japanese commented ; *(my child) listens to my father even if they disagree, (my child) listens to a third person more than us, if (my child) can understand the reasoning, she responds well, younger ones listen to older ones, (my children) become quiet and withdrawn whenever anyone tells them off, and they don't respond well in public as they feel 'different'. Foreign spouses commented ; (they) respond according to the situation, if the person is a stranger, they ignore them, they are too passive and reticent in the classroom, they respect people in uniforms, each child reacts differently, and my child is well balanced.*

### ***Social Change***

There was no discernible difference between culture or gender for respondents feeling that their own social mores had changed during their relationship. Instead, any difference was attributed to their child(ren) growing up. Accordingly most respondents also believed that they had not changed compared to their own culture, although one foreign spouse immersed himself in only Japanese culture, while one Japanese spouse said she followed her husbands (foreign) culture. Two foreign spouses also commented that they had become more reserved. Gender was not an apparent issue.

Half of the Japanese respondents thought that they had become more interactive with their community. Two mentioned that it was because of their children going to school—they had subsequently become much more entwined in their community,



while two others considered it due to their foreign spouse's active interest in their community interaction. Three believed that they had reduced community communication and become more reticent, while two others saw no need for such communication.

Foreign spouses had mixed reactions as well, with comments including : *no change, try to be considerate, things don't bug me as much as they used to, I don't care any more, my life has become regulated through gender and role requirements,* and one believed that *they had become more reserved.*

Both Japanese and foreign respondents believed that they had not changed when it came to relying on social mores that they had learned themselves as a child, and that it was 'natural' to use childhood values.

Across cultures, both family size had a big influence : *older kids teach younger ones,* as did child-rearing experience : *I was more relaxed after the first one.*

The age of children also had a big influence on the development of social mores across culture. Factors suggested by the respondents included *the number of kids, psychological character or social responsibility* if they were to exhibit trust and give responsibility to their children as they got older.

There was no difference for how respondents thought their social mores corresponded to child gender. Naturally parents who had either one child or children of the same gender could not offer informed comment, but for those who could, they believed that sons or daughters gravitated more to the same-sex parent as they aged. This was widely seen as an opportunity to teach gender-based roles.

When respondents considered the responsibility of various agents to raise children, all considered Parents to be the most important, as it was *their job*. When considering Friends, all respondents seemed to believe the age of their child to be the most significant. As the child got older, it became more important, with comments including ; *they help each other, they pick up on each other's behavior, depends on who — we need to be flexible, and they act like a pack and regulate each other accordingly*.

With regard to School, there was no clear distinction between cultures, although there was a link between spouses. Five respondents believed it was because *they spent a lot of time spent there*. Others noted that ; *school was a place to learn all day*, a (Japanese) respondent said, *morals are taught there*, and a (foreign) respondent informed that *they learn Japanese values there*.

There was some difference across culture in response to Local Government. Answers seemed to be philosophically-based. Foreign respondents seemed to answer according to the 'group versus individual' dichotomy : Individuals are responsible for their actions. All Japanese responses focused on *indirect influences*, such as providing tax money for services. One family considered the issue to be very important, and noted that *Japanese social mores among younger people had deteriorated a lot. Town morals affect children's morals*, commented one (Japanese) respondent, while their (foreign) spouse believed that *young family parents seemed to have little responsibility to raise their children appropriately*.

In contemplating how Japanese social mores are changing, there were a large variety of answers : popular Japanese responses included ; *more selfishness and the ignoring of responsibility*, and that *community interaction was dropping*. Other

contributions were : *less volunteering or active PTA work recently, more single families, less children, have to be more aware of strangers, and people use the school to complain about neighbors.* Foreign respondents did not provide any duplication of answers, but nevertheless, provided an interesting list of changes : *People have less responsibility these days, Japanese are more accepting of foreigners and different ways of thinking, Japanese can't handle criticism, Japanese are in denial—their society is seeing the late development of looser social mores, young people want to be free, but confuse free and freedom, Japan is getting too protective, technology is affecting interaction, and there is an increasing incidence of murder.*

In response to the assertion that intercultural families will have influence on changing social mores in Japan, all except two Japanese respondents believed so, but some qualified that with comments, such as ; *intercultural families becoming normal, interaction through our children, society is made up all types, so intercultural families are just one aspect, Japanese are very conservative, media will influence more—TV talent responses to intercultural issues will influence Japanese society more.* Those who disagreed commented ; *Japanese are becoming more withdrawn, and only intercultural families are changing.*

All foreign respondents thought that intercultural families would influence mores in Japan to some degree. Comments included ; *through observation of international families, through interaction with foreigners, and creating different expectations in Japanese families.* One thought very little because Japanese are taught that foreigners are interesting, but Japanese culture is best.

When asked to consider what other factors would have a bigger influence on

social mores in Japan than intercultural families, popular suggestions by Japanese respondents included ; *media*, and *the economic situation*. Other suggestions included *education*, and *going abroad*. Popular responses by foreign respondents included ; *going abroad*, *media*, and *aging society*. Others included ; *game addiction*—stops interaction, *the economy*, *inappropriate government policies*, and *role models*.

## Discussion

Criticizing institutions in a foreign country is a very normal thing to do (Romano, 2008). In Japan, the education system is a favorite target of foreign residents. Intercultural families will often relocate abroad to avoid the education system in Japan for a number of reasons. Unsurprisingly then, while Japanese respondents to this research wanted their children to listen and be quiet in the classroom, foreign respondents wanted their children to be sociable, and not so reticent. Two foreign respondents commented that they supplant these ideas at home whenever given an opportunity.

Disappointingly, the Japanese respondents did not answer as predicted in the interview when it came to reasoning why school was so important for learning social mores. In Japan, schools are the source of many social forms of behavior. In fact, school officials work closely with town officials to ensure that parents tow the line when it comes to obeying school rules. One example of this coercive process is that local public schools usually forbid their students from traveling out of the town/school district unaccompanied by their parents. This eliminates, for example, train transportation to shops in other districts if unaccompanied. Even if parents might allow it, they would be censured by the school if discovered. Often in day-to-day

conversation, Japanese Mothers will complain about the plethora of school rules, while their husbands will usually respond every now and then with the ubiquitous *shikata ga nai*; ‘it can’t be helped’. Instead, respondents, regardless of culture, focused on the fact of time: children learn social mores at school simply because they spend so much time there. Clearly the interview question needs to be tweaked to elicit a more appropriate response. Conceivably, it could well be due to the acculturation of couples—couple’s attitudes slowly merging into a common familial approach, distinct from either culture.

Although culture seems to be a useful reference point at times, more often than not it appears more likely that both spouses in a family seem to be somewhat acculturated to each other; each somewhat different from their own culture. In other words, although respondents mostly thought that they had retained the mores of their own culture, perhaps they had subconsciously modified certain values to retain harmony in the house; a kind of synchronization. This would fit in with statistics and literature that underscore how in a healthy relationship, people drift from prior beliefs toward developing harmonious ‘third-way’ constructs for their current relationship.

Interestingly, although a common culture would logically provide common ground, in this research, it appears that the need to discuss issues and reach compromises is facilitated by disparate cultures. An intercultural couple usually find that they need more time than mono-cultural couples to discuss and resolve differences in opinion. This of course can be linked back to language issues and mutual understanding over various subjects. However, based on the interviews in this study, some intercultural couples seem to use culture as a convenient pressure valve. If they have a difference of opinion, it is not the spouses’ personality, lack

of etiquette or family differences that are blamed ; rather, it is the culture of the other person that is 'blamed' for the disagreement. Undoubtedly, couples are using this technique to resolve issues, or as a scapegoat for misunderstanding. This would be conceivably reinforced through the language medium, as one spouse is likely at a disadvantage when a certain language is employed.

The issue of identity unsurprisingly arose, as noted earlier. Clearly, language, culture and identity are all related. Romano(2008) informs us that children need to feel that both cultures are viewed positively if they are to be anything more than a 'half'. Although literature hints that children will eventually balance their own sense of identity as they grow up, parents need to reconsider, or at least explain to their children, when able, their language (culture) policy.

Marginalizing one spouse is likely to create dissonance in the child's development of social mores. Although in Japan a child can learn similar Japanese mores from a variety of sources, they are reminded everyday that they are different—by looking in the mirror, or being told by their peers. However, if the foreign parent's language or mores are marginalized, then their child is likely to feel like they are 'less' than their peers. If the Japanese culture is being marginalized in the home, then the Japanese parent may find that they are 'working behind the scenes' to rectify the situation, with school teachers or neighbors.

One trend that emerged from the interviews that echoes literature, is that social mores are dynamic. But then, if they are dynamic, why do we focus on the method of getting to the desired change in behavior? After all, presumably our children will grow up and assimilate other mores as time goes on. Perhaps parents teach social mores to 'connect' with their children as they grow up, ensuring they

have more in common with each other.

Undoubtedly, we are continuously modifying our social mores in response to the attitudes expressed around us: spouse, kids, neighbors, or the media—people seem to be refining behavior to suit themselves. My own Mother tells me that I shouldn't wash the dishes the way I do when I go back to visit her. Conversely, my wife was horrified when she found our daughter shampooing her hair in the bathtub after returning from New Zealand!

### **Future research**

Due to the possible mutual acculturation of the respondents in this research, one interesting idea would be to interview a number of mono-cultural Japanese respondents, to see how their perceptions differed from those in this survey. After all, some researchers believe that people who live overseas or get involved with people from other cultures are probably somewhat atypical of their own culture. Are they like the early adopters of the diffusion of innovations model, or are they simply dysfunctional members of their own culture?

Another possibility is to interview intercultural families whose foreign spouse hails from a very different culture to Japan; one in which religion or gender, for example, is a significant issue.

In recent years many second or third generation Japanese, known as *nikkeijin*, whose parents or grandparents emigrated to South American countries in the past, have been coming to Japan, largely for financial reasons. An interesting avenue of research would be to look at the *nikkeijin* families in Japan, and consider how

significant culture is for specific social mores, such as evaluating conversation at the dining table.

Throughout rural Japan there are many foreign residents married to Japanese. This is a peculiar demographic that arose from the disinclination of Japanese women to marry farmers. Evidence exists that these marriages are mono-cultural in nature, and it would be intriguing to record the views and attitudes of both spouses, their children, and even perhaps the grandparents, to parental cultures and social mores.

The author wishes to acknowledge receipt of special funds 2008 provided by Matsuyama University in support of the preparation and development of this article.

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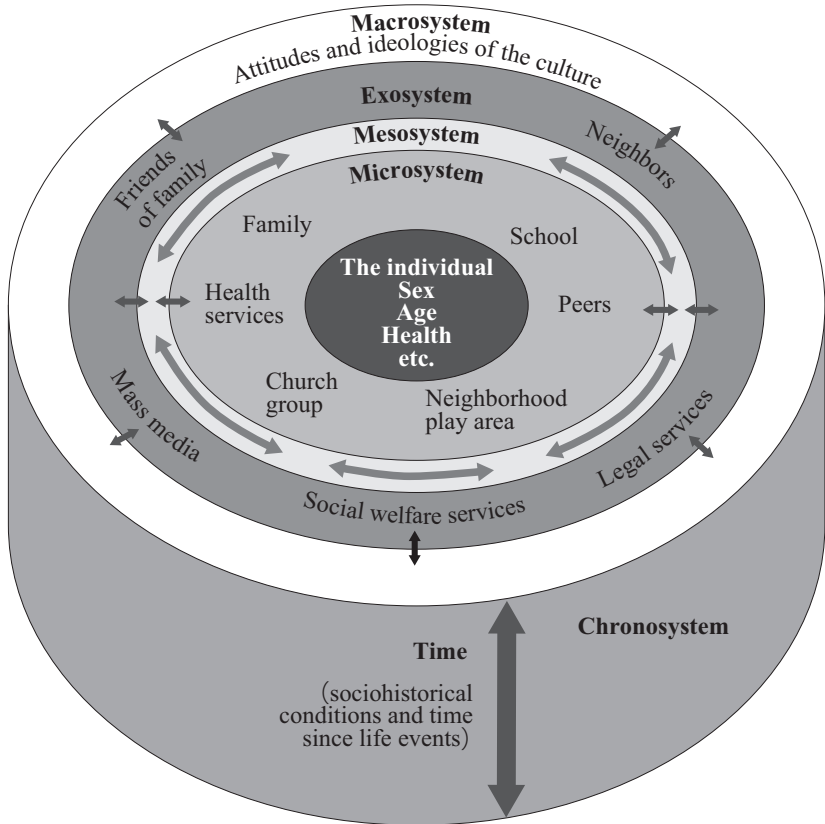
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**Appendix I: Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological theory of child development**



Source : Santrock 2007

## Appendix II : Interview sheet

### A. Background information

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 . Age                 | 2 . Length of time married |
| 3 . Nationality/Culture |                            |

### B. Children

- 1 . Number
- 2 . Ages + Gender + School level (in Japan)
- 3 . Previous marriage
- 4 . Language Policy with children (eg. In house, Outside)

### C. Parental

- 1 . Who is the main caregiver (for children) in this family ? Has this situation changed over the course of bringing up your children ? If yes, please describe specifically how you think this may have impacted on the child's upbringing ?
- 2 . Do you feel that one parent's values have been marginalized in your family ? If so, please explain how or why.
- 3 . Please give examples of the most frustrating social behavior exhibited by your child(ren).

### D. Social Mores

*Describe what you think is important behavior for your child (ren) in regard to the following situations. Please also note if they have changed as your children have matured.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 . Greetings   | 2 . Housework   |
| 3 . Saying goodbye  | 4 . Personal hygiene  |
| 5 . Having a guest  | 6 . Being scolded   |
| 7 . Visiting someone  | 8 . Arguing/discussing  |
| 9 . Eating  | 10 . Giving advice  |
| 11 . Showing appreciation   | 12 . Getting advice   |
| 13 . Requesting   | 14 . Helping others   |
| 15 . Being in a public place (outside)<br>(eg. Train station, to/from school)             | 16 . Being in a public place (inside)<br>(eg. Shopping mall, restaurant, onsen) |
| 17 . Hanging out (outside)  | 18 . Exiting/Entering a building  |
| 19 . In classroom   | 20 . At school  |
| 21 . Any other situation  |   |
| 22 . What factors affect social mores in your view ? Culture ? Gender ? The environment ? |   |

(Eg. small house, living with relatives)

### **E. Intercultural Family**

Assuming you and your partner have different behavior values for certain situations, please give (an) example(s) for each of the following questions.

1. How have you responded to having different values when raising kids ?
2. How important is it that you communicate (involving your children) with foreigners ?
3. How important is it that your children learn about foreign social mores ? Why (not) ?
4. Does international travel have any influence on the social mores in your family ?
5. How often do you travel overseas with your children ?
6. How long do your children spend overseas ? Who do they stay with ?
7. Have you ever had any problems with perceptions of social mores while traveling ?
8. Have any of your family members ever had any problems with perceptions of social mores in Japan after returning from a trip ?

### **F. Regulation**

1. How do you think many Japanese caregivers teach social mores ? Repetition ? Avoiding confrontation ? Remonstrative ? Do you think that this depends upon gender (of both child or caregiver) ? Does it depend upon the age (of either child or caregiver) ? Does it depend upon the situation (eg : restaurant, at school, at home) ? Please give (an) example(s).
2. Does the process of regulation in your family (or Japan) differ compared to your own culture ?
3. How do your kids respond to (external) regulation ? Does it depend upon something, such as the identity of the other person ?

### **G. Social change**

1. How have your social mores changed over the course of your role as parent due to the following factors (please explain your answer) ? :
  - i) your relationship with your partner,
  - ii) your immersion in the local community,
  - iii) ties with your own culture (for the foreign partner),
  - iv) reversion to your own childhood values,
  - v) number of kids,
  - vi) gender of kids,

- vii) age of kids,
- viii) Other (please specify)

2. How important is the responsibility of the following agents to raise children? Please indicate your opinion on the scale below. Also, please reason your answer.

**Parents**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

**Care giver (please specify)**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

**Extended family**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

**Friends**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

**School**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

**Local community**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

**The local government**

1 - - - - - 2 - - - - - 3 - - - - - 4  
 Very                      Somewhat                      Little                      None

3. Some people say that the social values of society are changing. For example, they point to the increasing popularity of baby sitting, or people other than parents not telling off others' kids any more. Could you please give at least one example of how you think social mores are changing in Japan.
4. Do you think intercultural families are or will have any influence on changing social mores in Japan? Why (not)?
5. Do you think any other factors will have a greater influence on changing social mores in Japan? Please explain, and give examples.
6. Whom influences (socializes) whom more? The child(ren) or the foreign parent?