Two Plus One Still Equals Two: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Japanese Family

Diana Adis Tahhan

Abstract: This article explores family dynamics in Japan as reflected in Japanese sleeping practices. Sleep, in a Japanese context, is often associated with co-sleeping (*soine*) and feelings of *skinship* [intimacy through touch]. Ethnographic research, undertaken in 2005 in North-East and Western Honshu, indicates that there is an identity logic in certain sleeping practices that incorporates a 'purposeful tension', while in others, there is a relational logic in which *skinship* is manifest. In this article, I explore these states of relationality through *kawa no ji* [sleeping with the child in between parents]. Empirical evidence derived from participant-observations and interviews provides the basis for understanding two relational states in *soine*: exclusive and inclusive family relations. In exclusive relations, *kawa no ji* is used to separate or alienate a member (or members) of a family, while inclusive relations establish a connection and all-encompassing space 'between the family' that provide possibilities for *skinship*. This article offers an understanding of how the space is inhabited 'between the family', and how this constrains or allows intimacy.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the potential for intimacy in the Japanese family through sleeping practices. Using *soine* [co-sleeping] as a point of reference, two states of relationality are developed: an encounter 'between the family' (relational) and a non-encounter between 'family members' (non-relational).[1] The aim of this paper is to explore the nature of these states in two ways: (1) *exclusive relations*, whereby *soine* is used to separate or alienate a family member, and (2) *inclusive relations*, where *soine* connects the family and contributes to the space between them being intimate. Of course these are not necessarily stagnant, unchanging states. It is common that the relationship might slip between such modes of exclusion and inclusion. The concepts used for analysis are 'desire' (Hegel 1977) and 'abjection' (Kristeva 1982) in the context of exclusive relations, while inclu-

---

[1] 'Between the family' incorporates all the family and includes a sort of infinitude where the family is not limited to a 'unit' but comprises the relationships implicated in the family; 'family members' refers to the individuality and subjectivity of each person. There are no possibilities for connection as each member is so full of 'self' and identity.

sive relations draw out implications for 'flesh' (Merleau-Ponty 1968) and *mi* (Ichikawa 1993),[2] which includes an all-encompassing space in the family possible through *soine*.

Sleep, in a Japanese context, is often associated with co-sleeping (*soine*) and physical proximity. Although some scholarship on co-sleeping refers to functional reasons such as house size and lack of space (Caudill and Plath 1986, Lebra 2004), certain relational states in *soine* are often associated with *skinship*.[3] In many cases of *soine*, the child is at the centre or *in between* the parents. This way of sleeping is referred to as *kawa no ji* style [sleeping like the character for river] since it imitates the three flowing lines that make up that character. Caudill and Plath's (1986) study on Japanese sleeping practices shows that families tend to co-sleep in Japan, and in some cases, up until the child is fifteen years of age. This ritual might shift from parent-child *soine* to sibling *soine*. Although these trends have been changing, co-sleeping still plays an important part in Japanese relationships and daily life.

Co-sleeping is marked by cosy warmth and tenderness. Ben-Ari (1997: 36) posits that this is achieved through "intimate caresses" and the "transfer of body heat between adults and children".[4] Ben-Ari suggests that such experiences of co-sleeping involve the whole person, including the body. In this paper, I explore more fully this notion of co-sleeping as an "embodied experience" in inclusive relations that requires connection and relatedness, while the intention and motivation often found in exclusive relations makes *soine* an un-connected experience.

My analysis of *soine* is derived from interviews conducted in a regional city in North-East Honshu and Western Honshu in 2005. Furthermore, I attended classes in a hospital which comprised of post-natal, pre-natal and breastfeeding classes; a community health centre including massage, nutritional classes and home visits; as well as a daycare centre (*hoikuen*) where children were separated into classes according to their age-group. I pursued interviews and discussions with people I met through contacts and in these classes. I conducted 68 interviews (38 structured and 30 in-depth, unstructured interviews) with parents, teachers, nurses, midwives, and class

---

[2] The most common translation of *mi* is "body". However, to refer to Ichikawa's concept of *mi* simply as body attributes *mi* to the physicality of the *finite* body and disregards the depth it includes.

[3] *Skinship*, a Japanese neologism based on the two English morphemes 'skin' and '-ship', can be paraphrased as "intimacy through touch" (Lebra 2004, Ben-Ari 1997) and with the "prolonged physical proximity" on which mother-child relations are based (Rothbaum *et al.* 2002).

[4] Although Ben-Ari's (1997) analysis is based primarily in the context of a daycare centre, it is still highly relevant to *soine* in the home.

facilitators. These usually took place during or after the actual classes attended. These discussions as well as observing and participating in *hoikuen* classes, especially at sleep-time, helped me become more attuned with possibilities for relational and non-relational encounters in *soine*.

Although I formally interviewed 68 people, there were over 620 people who became part of my lived experience through the participant observation classes and interviews. Often my form of sampling reflected opportunistic sampling (Patton 1990), which involved following new leads during fieldwork and pursuing interviews with people. This frequently resulted in "information-rich cases for in-depth study" (Patton 1990: 182). Due to the nature of the participant-observation classes, a large proportion of my sample was women between the ages of 28 to 40. However, through these contacts, my sample size extended to include women of other ages as well as male participants (husbands, fathers, friends).

In interviews and participant-observation classes, there was an emphasis on the significance of co-sleeping to maximise the wellbeing of the child. Similar to Caudill and Plath's (1986) findings, even when participants had ample space for children to sleep separately or with other siblings, it was still preferred for children to co-sleep with parents (and in some three-generational homes, grandparents). In one case, a participant slept in a double bed with her husband while her child co-slept in the same room in a baby bed. In other cases, children slept next to their mother on the same futon, while the father slept on the other side of the mother (or, in another room). Most participants, however, upheld the traditional *kawa no ji* ritual of *soine*: the child at the centre of, or *in between*, the parents.

Kawa no ji was deemed necessary by participants for several reasons, although initially responses were grounded in practical and functional reasons such as there not being enough space. Other 'practical' childrearing conditions mentioned included: the danger of earthquakes, the relief (*anshin*) it provides for parents and children, as well as the convenience for mothers, to co-sleep and eliminate disturbances to sleep.

EXCLUSIVE FAMILY RELATIONS

It is helpful to establish the terms 'exclusive' and 'inclusive' relations through everyday examples before adapting these to experiences of *soine*. The term 'exclusive relation' refers to the alienation that can emerge between marital couples where the child is the focus. An emptiness appears in these families when the father is cut off, or excluded, from the relationship so that the mother-child relationship can take primacy (focus). Consider the following quotes, which reflect common responses about child-

centeredness (*kodomo chūshin*) and an associated de-emphasis of the marital relationship (see also Caudill and Plath (1986) and Tanaka (1984)):

> After children are born, it [the marriage] becomes child-centered (*kodomo chūshin*). So, the marital relationship disappears/dies (*na-kunaru*).
> (Yukari, female, 27 years old)

> After children are born, your mind and eyes become filled with your children. That's all that is in your head. I don't have time to spend with my husband. Rather than saying I don't have time, even if I did, I wouldn't want/need it.
> (Miyuki, female, 35 years old)

The above comments suggest a distinction between marital and parent-child relationships, with a particular emphasis on mother-child relationships. The child becomes the 'focus' of the family seen through the term *kodomo chūshin*. It is not the emphasis on the child which is important here, because, as we will see in inclusive relations, this focus on the child can actually become a manifestation of intimacy where the family participates through the child. That is, *kodomo chūshin* might sometimes open up possibilities for the child to become the life of the family where all are implicated in one another. However, the above comments suggest that the distinction, or, rather, compartmentalisation of the marital and the parent-child relationship, is more of an intentional shift or process: once children are born, "the marital relationship disappears/dies" (Yukari). *Kodomo chūshin* seems to become the overarching focus in the family: the disappearance or death of the marital relationship suggests that the relationship between the husband and wife doesn't play a part in the life of the family.

In these cases, the father seems uninvolved with the primary family relationship or interactions. For example, although Miyuki stated that "your mind becomes filled with your children", she also expressed a preference to not spend time with her husband: "Even if I did [have the time], I wouldn't want/need it". It seems that Miyuki is satisfied with her eyes and head being "filled" with her children, and that there is no real need or space for her husband. I conducted a separate interview with Mikyuki's husband to gain an understanding of how he feels:

> Because we have kids, the lifestyle is busy right? For mum (*okāsan*),[5]

---

[5] The terms spouses call each other are adapted to the perspective of the child (Lebra 2004). For example, it is common after the birth of the first child to no longer address one's wife by her first name but by the term her child would use when addressing her, *okāsan* or *mama*.

it is always the kids; for me, it's always work. Sunday is a holiday, but because my wife and the kids always have something on (*nanika ga aru*), I go somewhere (*dokka ni ikimasu*) with my fellow employees.
(Ken, male, 37 years old)

As Miyuki and her husband's comments suggest, it seems as though Ken is not active in the life of the family, and, moreover, that he feels excluded. Firstly, it is clear that Ken fills his own life with work and other non-family activities on Sundays. His reference to "*nanika ga aru*" ["have something on"] suggests that he does not really know what his wife and their children do. Furthermore, his response about what he does on a Sunday is also non-committal: "*dokka ni ikimasu*" ["go somewhere"] suggests that he does not really have a set place to go to. It is fair to assume that Ken is not very present in the home because, when he is there, he does not feel wanted.

Below is an example of Satoko, who also makes a clear distinction between her husband and her son, Zen. At the beginning of our conversation, Satoko informed me that her husband at times was trying to hold her hand in public but that she would pull away after a second or two. She stated that although she loved holding Zen's hand, she did not like her husband trying to touch her. Furthermore, she also said that he tried to hold her hand at night but she would hold Zen's hand instead, while they sleep. When I asked why not her husband's hand, her distinction was grounded in discourses of *ittaikan* [feelings of one body]: "Because a mother and her children are *ittai* [one body] it's only natural".[6] Although she did not explicitly state that she was not *ittai* with her husband, she did express her preference for her child *over* her husband, as opposed to a general feeling of 'familyness' between the three of them. Consider the following comment:

It's not a matter of who is most important. My child is above, my husband below. If my child were to die, I would go crazy. But if my husband were to die, I wouldn't.
(Satoko, female, 30 years old)

There seemed to be a link between Satoko's prioritising her child over her husband and her wanting to become *ittai* with her child. Her husband's presence appeared to be almost inconsequential vis-à-vis the strong desire to be *ittai* with her child. Even if her husband wanted to take a more active

---

6   *Ittaikan* has been paraphrased as feelings of 'oneness' (Lebra 1976) and 'merging' and 'unity' (White 2002: 111). The etymology of the kanji itself, *ittai*, refers to being 'one body'.

part in the life of the family, there seemed to be little space or opportunity for him to do so. The same problem is reflected in the following statement by a 52 year old father:

> I thought that once we had children, we would be able to spend time together, but it seems as though my wife wanted to live separately with the children. When I finished work early I'd go home straight-away. But even if I went home, there wasn't much of a need for me to be there. Also, when work was busy, my wife would put a futon in a separate room for me … even if I wanted to sleep together.
> (Shin'ichi, male, 52 years old)

Shin'ichi's comment suggests that his wife wanted to be *ittai* with the children and that his presence was felt to be an impediment to this. Although there seems to be a meaningful relationship between mother and child in the two cases just described, I will argue that such attempts to become one and merge or unite with a child are not a reflection of intimacy. Instead, there is an empty, hollow space between the two people that is based on a logic of identification.

According to Hegel's analysis of desire, such a logic is based on the subjectivity and self-consciousness of "I", where there is "primarily simple existence for self" (Hegel 1977: 231). The subject strives to know itself, particularly in relation to the other. That is, the "knowing subject" is "absorbed" by the other, an "object he is contemplating" (Kojève 1980: 4). Locating the "known" object, the conscious self is "separate" and "distinct" from the object (Hegel 1977: 228). For the subject to be assured of his own Ego, he comes to his own self-consciousness and "self-identity by exclusion of every other from itself" (Hegel 1977: 231). There is a "revelation of an emptiness" (Kojève 1980: 5) here, as the object has been "negated". That is, that which is non-subject (non-I) is destroyed, transformed, or merged, to reaffirm I's subjectivity. The desired object is transformed to be that which the subject seeks. The subject is "brought back to himself" only by desire, and is unable to "see" the object truly.

If we return to the family and the aim to merge through *ittaikan*, we can see that there is a similar identity logic at play: there are two separate subjects or a subject-object relationship between these family members, where the intention and motivation to merge overtakes the actual feelings of intimacy otherwise possible. The quest for oneness actually disables possibilities for relation because issues such as objectification, control and separation are at play. The subject (i.e. mother) uses her object (i.e. child) to separate herself from her husband. There is no intimacy *between* them, for the possibilities end *in* that relationship. This state of oneness is stifled

by subjectivity and self-consciousness which "in general is desire" (Hegel 1977: 167).

In desire, there is no respect for difference, only an attempt to find sameness through that which is known. In such a "mirror logic", the subject does not see the other person for who they truly are; the desire is to see self reflected back, to find sameness. The subject is "brought back to" himself/ herself. In this desirous relationship, Satoko does not see who her child truly is; there is oddly no relation as her relationship with her child and husband is about her self: "If *my* child were to die, *I* would go crazy". Here, she uses her child as a means to her own end, clinging to and desiring her child's presence. The two are not implicated in each other; there is no meeting here. There is a sort-of reciprocal mastery, whereby Satoko elevates both herself and Zen above her husband, while Zen's life seems to be that which sustains her. As Hegel (1977: 234) notes, "the master is the consciousness that exists for itself". In the case of Satoko, her own subjectivity seems to take precedence. However, she relies on her child's consciousness to exist. The concept of mastery should be considered within the context of Hegel's Master and Slave, or Lordship and Bondsman:

> It [the master] is a consciousness existing on its own account which is mediated with itself through an other consciousness, i.e. through an other whose very nature implies that it is bound up with an independent being or with thinghood in general. The master brings himself into relation to both these moments, to a thing as such, the object of desire, and to the consciousness whose essential character is thinghood. (Hegel 1977: 234–35)

Through the mirror logic of desire, Satoko seems to be making Zen into an object "whose essential character is thinghood" (Hegel 1977: 235) and a means to her end. She confirms her own existence (her own subjectivity) through how it is that she sees herself through him. That is, she is anxious and fearful and tries to stabilise and control her identity through the mirror of her child. There is no authentic meeting or space for intimacy here, only control. She holds his hand so as *not* to hold her husband's hand. This unity is based on an exclusion where the child is known to be different and unique, but especially, not-husband. However, this consciousness and calculation results in a further separation between mother and child, as subject controls object through what they see or know.

We see a similar example of control and objectification if we return to Shin'ichi. He seemed to feel alienated as his wife physically separated him from the 'family' space in the home. Of course there could be several interpretations as to why she wanted Shin'ichi to sleep in a different room when work was busy. For example, perhaps she wanted to ensure her hus-

band's sleep would not be disrupted by a crying baby, particularly when work was busy. However, Shin'ichi felt that his presence was not necessarily required ("wasn't much of a need for me to be there") and that his preferences were not taken into account ("even if I wanted to sleep together"). He felt as though he was not needed.

EXCLUSIVE RELATIONS IN *SOINE*: ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER

When *kawa no ji* is used to achieve an exclusive state between members of a family, there is often an alienation and separation of one of the persons involved. The three parallel strokes of the kanji character take on a different symbolic meaning in *soine* in such relations. There are three bodies which are separate and contained: father, child and mother. There is no relation between them; the space between them is empty and hollow.

Consider the case of Kiyoshi, who is currently undergoing a divorce:

> In Japan, we sleep together in *kawa no ji* for the sake of the family. The mother and father can then watch over their children. But, in my case, my wife didn't want to sleep together. Therefore *kawa no ji* was used, in our situation, not as an expression of love, but to separate us as a married couple. Really, in my case, my family was more important than my work, but it was like my wife never needed me, so I focused on my work.
> (Kiyoshi, male, 52 years old)

Kiyoshi refers to *kawa no ji* as a positive practice "for the sake of the family": it can be the space within which the child is watched over and intimacy can happen. However, we can see that the ritual of *soine* is more for Kiyoshi's wife's sake than for the child's. Through *soine*, she uses their child as the barrier to separate her and Kiyoshi. Although Kiyoshi's case seems to be quite overt, there were more subtle forms of exclusion in interviews with other participants. Consider the case of Yō:

> Before we had kids, we had our separate beds in one room, where my wife slept on one and I slept on the other. Our beds were separated, one here, one there, [because otherwise] when one of us would move, the other [one's side of the bed] would move, too, and that's bad, so we had separate beds. Then we had our child and were living our life with him. And so the three of us would sleep, and the way the three of us would sleep was concentrating on the child in the centre. So in that way we slept together and it's what I think was best. It was the best way. We put both beds together and slept. But when our child

became bigger, my wife didn't seem to want to be close to me, so once again, we separated the beds and slept separately.
(Yō, male, 53 years old)

Although Yō is not explicit in claiming he was excluded from the 'family', there are reasons to suggest his alienation. Prior to having their child, Yō and his wife slept in separate beds that were "lined up" next to each other. Once they had their child, they pushed the two beds together and slept with the child in the middle, in what was, in his opinion, "the best way". However, when the child was old enough and presumably moved into his own room, their beds were separated once again. Yō's reference to the initial stages of separation seemed to be accepting: "When one of us would move, the other would move, too, and that's bad". However, such movements and disruptions did not seem to be a problem when sleeping with their child. But, it seems that Yō can no longer understand their space of separation now that their child sleeps separately and the beds are separated once again. He now feels as though his wife does not want to be near him.

The space between the members of Yō's family needs to be considered within the context of the subject-object relation in desire. It seems that his wife not only masters Yō by determining when their beds stay close together or separate, but she also masters her child through using his body to act as a sort-of buffer between her and Yō. The purposefulness in their experience of *soine* can be seen through Yō's wife joining the beds only for the sake of co-sleeping with her child, removing any possibility for intimacy. Thus his wife cuts off her husband through the ritual of *soine* in two ways: having a gap between their beds, and using the child's body as a means to separate them. The way the gap between them is filled becomes relevant: the space between them is empty and can only be partly filled by the child. In this way, the child makes the hollowness in the family *felt* particularly when he ceases to co-sleep with his parents.

Yō's situation bears some similarities with that of Masahito's family, all five members of which used to co-sleep for a four-year period. When the boys were old enough (nine and ten), they moved to their own room. However, his wife, Yōko, resisted their daughter Yuki moving into her own room, too, but had her continue to sleep between her parents until she was 15 years old. Yōko's comments on this some 20 years later suggest that she wanted to 'fill her space' with her daughter rather than her husband. As a result, there were various problems that occurred between all three family members as Masahito still slept in the same room but their daughter was used as a buffer. As Yōko recalls:

> I didn't really like him. And because I didn't like him and Yuki being close, if she and [her] dad touched I would say, 'Yuki-chan *dame!*' (that's wrong!)…So I didn't think it was good when Yuki would get close to him. That's why I would certainly say to Yuki, 'Don't sleep with your dad'.
> (Yōko, female, 60 years old)

Yōko used *soine* with her children as a means to separate herself from her husband. She used her daughter's body until the age of 15 to achieve this separation. It seems that all three bodies here were contained in their own identity, each on the 'other' side of the river. As Yōko further described the relationship with her husband:

> Sex glues you together for a long time. A very long time, being glued together. That kind of touch is long, right? And for women that causes really miserable feelings.
> (Yōko, female, 60 years old)

Yōko's above two comments about disgust and her tendency to separate herself and Yuki from Masahito need to be seen in the context of Kristeva's (1982) concept of abjection. "Abjection offers the opportunity to theorise an aesthetics of disgust founded upon ambiguity" (Meagher 2003: 30). Abjection contributes to excluding anything that is a threat. The "abject" is "radically excluded" (Kristeva 1982: 2). In the case of Masahito's family, Yōko seemed to explicitly exclude her husband by admonishing her daughter to not sleep with her dad. Though it is not clear whether Yōko was trying to achieve a state of oneness (*ittaikan*) with her daughter, using her daughter's body to separate herself from her husband and her daughter from her father suggests issues of abjection were present. Abjection includes the subject pushing away that which is closest. The subject is not disgusted by the abject because it is foreign, but because it *is* so close, the subject wants to make it foreign. It seems that Yōko wants to distance Masahito as far from her as possible. While desire manifests mirror logic, the abject is the *shadow*, where subject remains tied to abject even when wanting to run away from it. There is an ambiguity in abjection as the abject is pushed away even though in some ways the subject is drawn to the abject. In the present case, this ambiguity became manifest in the fact that, as Yōko mentioned during our interview, she always wanted to get divorced but each day passed and she could not. Masahito on his part said that although his wife probably contemplated divorce, she never actually would divorce him because she truly loved him.

The above examples show that *soine* is a conscious practice in many families to separate the conjugal pair. We have seen how the husband be-

comes the object or abject, easily discarded or removed from one room to another, or made to feel as though he did not belong in the space of the family. *Soine* in these cases can be interpreted as being used as a strategy by the wife to exclude the husband (Masahito, Shin'ichi, Kiyoshi). However, alienation and exclusion might not be initiated by the wife, but may be a response to the husband's tendency to 'escape' the household and the responsibilities associated. For example, there were cases in my study where men used sleep-time as a way to escape. Sleeping separately was sometimes preferred by men so that they could get maximum sleep without being disturbed. In other cases, this escape moved outside the house and the space of the family.[7]

In the case of Masahito, it is easy to sympathise with his situation, as his wife appears to have feelings of disdain towards him. However, as the two separate interviews continued, it became clear that her reasons for feeling this way might be based on personal choices made by Masahito over the years. Both Masahito and Yōko claimed that he "played" too much. He enjoyed going out with friends after work and playing Mah Jong until early morning hours. On many occasions he never came home. Yōko would constantly emphasise her patience, while Masahito stated that he regretted the time spent playing instead of being at home. Although Masahito recognises now that he was not present enough when his children were younger, it seems that his absence contributed to Yōko's feelings of disdain towards him. It is difficult to know whether his response to her alienating him was absence or if his absence contributed to her response to alienate or exclude him.

Nonetheless, the above examples suggest that, for some fathers, there is a desire to be more active in participating in the life of the family, but that certain attitudes from their wives and rituals such as *soine* make it difficult for them to feel included. The examples also show that separation, and for many, using the child's body to separate the conjugal pair, can be indicative of the distance they feel between them. There is no connection between these family members.

This being said, the discussion will subsequently continue by exploring *inclusive* family relations and how *soine* can connect the family. This is not through the identity logic of body of the subject and body of the object (and abject) but through a relational logic that includes more than subject and body.

---

[7] References to a father's absence in the Japanese family are manifest in terms such as *chichioya fuzai* [father absent from home] (Nakatani 2006), *sodaigomi* [oversize refuse] (Lebra 2004), and father as mere "lodger" (Salamon 1986).

<center>INCLUSIVE FAMILY RELATIONS</center>

Not all families are characterised by exclusive relations. In some, there is a state of 'togetherness', where life happens within the family. The child is the life, not the hollowness, of the family. This life and togetherness does not end *in* the family but bears an all-encompassing relationship that finds meaning in the world through inclusion. For example, the love parents feel for one another is deepened through the love they feel for their child, and although this love is reciprocated, it extends to and includes other places, people and objects. Consider Hiro's comment.

> When children are born, the *fūfu* [married couple; lit. 'husband and wife'] rapidly becomes a part of something deeper. Becomes a part of something deeper, larger. The *fūfu* relationship disappears and it becomes *kazoku* [family].
> (Hiro, male, 41 years old)

For Hiro, it is clear that his understanding and experience of the family does not include a compartmentalisation of the parent-child and the marital relationship. There is no entity lost or excluded when the child is born. In fact, the significance of the family takes on a new meaning. The space it inhabits is inclusive of father, mother and child, not as separate entities but as *kazoku* [family] which exists through being necessarily connected.[8]
 Consider Takafumi's comment:

> Putting things into words is quite…difficult (laughs). I say it to my children. I don't say it to my wife, but I say it through my children. I say, "I love your mum"… I always say that "I love *mama*". I don't say it to the actual person (don't say it to her directly) but say it through my children.
> (Takafumi, male, 62 years old)

Takafumi's family is necessarily connected. He communicates with his wife largely through his children. For him, the love for his wife is not located in her, as a separate subjectivity or body, but finds meaning and significance through the state of being in-relation with the family. There is an

---

[8] The term *kazoku* is used here not as an institution or unit, but as a meeting that happens between the inclusive family. This meeting is not polarised or binary (inclusive or exclusive) but an acceptance of difference (not desire) that happens through participating in the life of the family. *Kazoku* is not a unity of a family versus the rest of the world. Such a unity is also brought about by its alienation. Instead, *kazoku* extends to and connects with other places, people and objects.

all-encompassing space between the *kazoku* which includes the whole family, not as separate entities trying to achieve oneness and unity, but as relational beings that are connected. People are not just located in their own subjectivity or body. The boundaries in the relationship cannot be controlled or deciphered.

The *kazoku* is implicated in environment, objects, connection, and bears relevance to two concepts that offer ways of understanding the space and depth in 'lived' bodies. These two conceptualisations of depth and all-encompassing space between bodies are 'flesh' (Merleau-Ponty 1968) and *mi* (Ichikawa 1993). Although inclusive of the body, *mi* and flesh are not restricted to or contained by it. The depth in flesh and *mi* dislocate the dichotomy of mind-body and develop ideas that include the space around the body and mind, and a "relational existence" (Ozawa-De Silva 2002: 6). In *mi*, there is an infinite (all-encompassing, whole, not-contained) space that includes body, mind, heart (spirit), self, relationality, and whole existence, including that which is attached to *mi* (i.e. garments or belongings of the body).[9] In the flesh ontology, there is a reversible relation where "every perception is doubled perception…speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, perceiving-being perceived circularity" (Merleau-Ponty 1968). This circularity or reversible relation blurs body-world boundaries. There is a reverse in relationship that occurs as the *kazoku* participates in and through one another: no longer mother, father and child's body as separate bodies, they become a different body that is mixed and inclusive. Just as they are implicated in one another, *mi* is also implicated in other *mi* (Ichikawa 1993: 91). The all-encompassing space in both *mi* and flesh is a useful conceptual tool in understanding the non-locatable, non-Cartesian, inclusive relations in *soine*.

INCLUSIVE RELATIONS IN SOINE:
THE RIVER THAT FLOWS THROUGH THE FAMILY

Soine in inclusive relations inhabits a different space than the contained and identified bodies in exclusive relations. The space between them is all-encompassing and inclusive: it is not mother, father, and child as separate entities, but rather, a meeting that includes the space 'between the family' as a whole. In *soine*, the connection between the *kazoku* shifts so that who is child and who is parent and whose presence comforts whom becomes

---

[9] For a succinct description of the meanings of the word *mi*, see Ozawa-De Silva (2002: 27–28), who describes 14 different meanings of *mi*, including dead flesh and living flesh.

blurred. Unlike *soine* in exclusive family relations, *soine* in inclusive relations is not a 'marital' ritual or a 'parent-child' ritual but rather an inclusive ritual. The space between them manifests *mi* as inclusive of child and parents.

Soine and *kawa no ji* comprise a cosy, intimate experience that includes a meeting of more than just bodies. There is a depth and all-encompassing space between co-sleepers that enables *soine* to be a relaxed, sought-after experience. *Soine* and *kawa no ji* become manifestations of intimacy where touch is *felt* in various ways, contributing to the depth of the experience of intimacy. Consider Yūji's comment:

> I love looking at our kids' sleeping faces. While they would sleep, I would hold hands with *mama* from above the children's heads and sleep. That was great, because everyone was together.
> (Yūji, male, 52 years old)

The space between Yūji's family was not just located in the hands of him and his wife, or the sleeping faces of his children. This space between them included more than just located subjects and body parts. There is a feeling of togetherness with Yūji, his wife and his children, that does not require the children to be awake. If we consider *ittaikan* in the context of this togetherness (Nakamura 2003), we open up possibilities for a meeting. This meeting is not of a subject's body and an object's body (as in exclusive relations), but rather, a meeting of *difference*. These bodies do not merge to become one; a space opens between the family to experience the potentiality of *ittaikan* through togetherness, in flesh and *mi* that include a non-locatable body.

Aside from the practical functions for *soine*, reasons for co-sleeping in the second part of the analysis have become defined more in terms of *skinship*. Though the meaning of 'skin' tends to locate *skinship* in the body, when considered in the context of "secure intimacy" (Ben-Ari 1997), *skinship* seems to be manifest in more encompassing forms. For example, the terms *anshin* [relief] and *anshinkan* [feelings of contentment and relief] were often associated with this vital state of secure intimacy that children apparently require before falling asleep. Consider the following two statements:

> *Soine* is something which provides the child with relief (*anshin*).
> (Hatsue, female, 50 years old)

> While they [the children] are sleeping, we can watch over them. It's a relief for the parents too.
> (Takeshi, male, 31 years old)

As described here, it is not just the child who is made to feel at ease through *soine*, but the parents as well. Such underlying feelings of connectedness and togetherness through *soine* can exist even without all family members actually sleeping together. In the case of the Mizuno family, for instance, the parents used to sleep in separate rooms when their children were younger, so that the children could sleep with their mother, Ayako. For Ayako, even though she and her husband were sleeping in separate rooms, they were still together:

> Our family slept the five of us together…but because we couldn't all five fit next to each other, we were in two rooms. But that doesn't mean we were separated. My husband slept in one big bed, the kids and I slept in another, that sort of thing. Even though it was two rooms, we were still together.
> (Ayako, female, 60 years old)

The dialectical interplays of distance and proximity exist in this case as the family members sleep in separate rooms but are not really "separated". In accordance with Merleau-Ponty's concept of depth, there is a "distanced contact" and "proximity through distance" (Cataldi 1993: 11) that enables Ayako/their children to still *feel* close to her husband/their father. The spirit of the family still exists in sleep, even though they are not co-sleeping in the same room. This space between them is filled with the life of the family, and the tangibility of flesh and *mi* implicate parents and children in an inclusive space. Consider her husband's comment, where he refers to the connectedness and togetherness experienced in the space of their family. *Soine*, he implies, is not necessarily specific to the contained room in which the family lies:

> We used to always gather and talk about various things. And also have a bath together. But when it was time to sleep, everyone couldn't fit in one room. But even though we all slept in separate rooms, that was still good. Because up until sleep-time, we spent time all together. So it felt as if we were still together.
> (Takafumi, male, 62 years old)

In Takafumi's comment, physical separation exists only insofar as there is a dislocation of the space between members of the family. For him, even if they are 'physically' separated while asleep, there still exists a depth and all-encompassing space (like *mi*) that connects them, making proximity through distance possible. They are still together even though they are in different rooms. This example suggests that inclusive relations still exist and are felt even when not physically proximate.

In this state of inclusion, there is a hidden dimension that cannot be touched physically. In this space, something shifts: something passes through the relation, between the relation, and moves *soine* from being defined within the container of subjects and bodies to a much more 'fleshy' relation that enables *skinship*. The concepts of flesh and *mi* offer alternative ways of looking at *skinship*, encompassing much more than just physicality. There is a presence of heart, spirit, and an infinite quality that is connected and not defined. Through this non-locatable space, feelings of intimacy and connection happen.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

This article has shown that the practice of co-sleeping (*soine*) is not necessarily a site of intimacy, but depends on the way the family inhabits space. When the child's body is used to separate the conjugal pair, the space 'between the family' becomes fragmented and based on exclusion. The relationship is loaded with a purposeful tension and possibilities for intimacy are constrained. *Soine* cannot be a manifestation of intimacy if it is located in a finite, corporeal, surfaced body. The depths of flesh and *mi* do not exist here, as the emphasis in identified bodies is on the space *around* the contained subject's body. *Soine* becomes a non-relational experience that is grounded in an identity logic of subject-object (the body of the subject and the body of the object). There cannot be a meeting of such separate bodies as they cannot really touch one another in an intimate, 'fleshy' sense. Instead, *soine* is used to achieve a certain state for one's own benefit.

When the child's body is not a finite entity but participates in relation, the space 'between the family' is inclusive and connected. In fact, *soine* can only be a site of intimacy if it includes more than just physicality contained in a finite body. The space 'between the family' is intimate when there is more present than just body: there is a connection that includes body but also infinite possibilities such as 'flesh' and 'mind' and 'heart'. In relational logic, this depth 'between the family' has consequences for how we look at intimacy in Japan. There are no insides and outsides in relationality: there is a connection between the family that shifts boundaries so that who is who and what is what becomes blurred. Through this connection, *kazoku* and *skinship* take on a new relational meaning.

REFERENCES

Ben-Ari, Eyal (1997): *Body Projects in Japanese Childcare: Culture, Organization and Emotions in a Preschool*. Richmond: Curzon Press.

Cataldi, Sue L. (1993): *Emotion, Depth, and Flesh: A Study of Sensitive Space. Reflections on Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Embodiment*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Caudill, William and David W. Plath (1986): Who sleeps by whom? Parent-child involvement in urban Japanese families. In: T.S. Lebra and W.P. Lebra (eds.): *Japanese Culture and Behavior*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 247–79.

Hegel, Georg W.F. (1977): *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (first published in German in 1807).

Ichikawa, Hiroshi (1993): *Mi no kōzō: Shintairon o koete* [Structure of *mi*: Overcoming the theory of the body]. Tokyo: Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko.

Kojève, Alexandre (1980): *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kristeva, Julia (1982): *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lebra, Takie (1976): *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Lebra, Takie (2004): *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Meagher, Michelle (2003): Jenny Saville and a feminist aesthetics of disgust. In: *Hypatia* 18 (4), pp. 23–41.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1968): *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Nakamura, Tadashi (2003): Regendering batterers: Domestic violence and men's movements. In: J. Roberson and N. Suzuki (eds.): *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*. London: Routledge.

Nakatani, Ayumi (2006): The emergence of "nurturing fathers": Discourses and practices of fatherhood in contemporary Japan. In: M. Rebick and A. Takenaka (eds): *The Changing Japanese Family*. New York: Routledge, pp. 94–108.

Ozawa-De Silva, Chikako (2002): Beyond the body/mind? Japanese contemporary thinkers on alternative sociologies of the body. In: *Body and Society* 8 (21), pp. 21–38.

Patton, Michael Q. (1990): *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Rothbaum, Fred, Karen Rosen, Tatsuo Ujiie and Nobuko Uchida (2002): Family systems theory, attachment theory, and culture. In: *Family Process* 41 (3), pp. 328–50.

Salamon, Sonya (1986): "Male chauvinism" as a manifestation of love in marriage. In: T.S. Lebra and W.P. Lebra (eds.): *Japanese Culture and Behavior*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 130–41.

Tanaka, Masako (1984): Maternal authority in the Japanese family. In: G. A. DeVos and T. Sofue (eds.): *Religion and the Family in East Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 227–36.

White, Merry (2002): *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.