

REFLECTING ON THE DIMENSIONS OF FATHERING IN GERMANY AND JAPAN

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INTRODUCTION

The valuation of fatherhood is a topic of academic interest in Japan, Germany, as well as in many other countries. LaRossa (2012: 39, 43; 1988: 451) points to the difference between culture and conduct of fatherhood: By “culture of fatherhood”, LaRossa refers to shared norms, values, and beliefs about fatherhood, whereas the “conduct of fatherhood” refers to the actual behavior of fathers. I would add that it is furthermore important to see the conceptualization and interpretation of being a father on an individual basis in order to fully comprehend the construction of the “culture” and “conduct” of fatherhood. This short overview here therefore provides on the one hand a comparison of fathers and the gender division of labor in the household in Germany and Japan as one of the exemplary places where fatherhood is conducted – or not. On the other hand, the chapter also gives insights into the cultural debate(s) about the interpretation of fatherhood: What does it mean to be a father in Germany and Japan? Is fatherhood culturally “tied to societal concepts of masculinity and femininity” (LaRossa 1997: 15; Nakatani 2006; Döge 2007) and how does this seem to influence the conduct of fatherhood?

When looking at present-day fathers and their concepts of fatherhood, considering previous research findings and historical discourses on fatherhood is important, so that cultural as well as historical developments and socio-ecological processes can be incorporated into the analysis. Germany has a long tradition of discussing the role of authority and fatherhood, about the absence of fathers after the two World Wars and its consequences for families and German society (Mitscherlich 1963; Brumlik 2013), and about the role of fathers in and beyond the nuclear family model as conceptualized by Parsons and Bales (1955). In Japan, the discussion on fatherhood has mostly been a discussion about roles of fathers, and started a bit later, in the 1990s (Ishii-Kuntz 2013; Fuess 1997; Mizukoshi, Kohlbacher, and Schimkowsky 2015; Rush 2015).

Using the Parental Well-Being Survey data, as described in detail in Huber (2018) in this volume, this article compares fathers, respectively

issues of fathering in Germany and Japan. I aim to identify differences and similarities between German and Japanese fathers, particularly in respect to their socio-demographic situations and well as the way they divide household labor with their wives or partners. I hope to understand from the data how LaRossa's differentiation model between culture and conduct can help unravel and explain the seemingly stark differences between Japanese and German fathers.

For this I conducted cross-tabulations of variables related to values fathers have in relation to their socio-economic background or the way they have organized their division of household labor.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fatherhood is a research field in Germany and Japan, and it is, looking at similar socio-economic, structural conditions for both societies, important how fatherhood is developing. The influence of cultural and normative historical determinants is strong and we firstly need to reflect upon the fatherhood discourses in both countries. By analyzing normative preferences of fathers in Germany and Japan I focus on three historical conditions to explain our findings: social discourse, family policy, and settings within the family since the beginning of the 20th century.

After World War II the discourse about authority and absence (whether fathers had died, had traumata, or for other reasons were not capable of nurturing and caring for their children) of fatherhood in Germany increased. Researchers pointed to an increasing gender-division of labor and of power in decision-making processes (e. g. Schelsky 1953: 333; Pross 1978: 122). Radical social changes in the 1970s then included the new formation of the father figure: fathers should be more emotionally involved in the relationship with their children (Fthenakis 2006). Especially the educational expansion of women is a contributing factor for the shift in gender roles during the last century in Germany (Tölke 2007). As a result, on the one hand, there is this cultural debate about fathers and their paternal involvement in German society and on the other hand fathers still work a lot more hours than mothers do and it continues to be mostly women who nurture the children (Maiwald and Dornes 2007). So it is imperative to understand how fathers value their role and fatherhood overall in Germany.

In Japan in the 1910s and 1920s, significant social changes led to the shift in main responsibility for children from the father and the paternal household to the mother of the child (Fuess 1997: 391). After World War

II, then, within the changing employment and work role context, an actual 'absence' of fatherhood emerged: "Only during the eighties was there a challenge to the postwar sexual division of labor in child rearing, when the media discovered the emergence of gentle (*yasashii*) fathers who, born after the war, functioned as playmates to their children in contrast to the demanding 'education mother'" (Fuess 1997: 384). During the 1980s, Japanese researchers began to study fatherhood because of two reasons: one concerns the male role perception for the sake of the children and the second is the relationship between husband and wife for the wife's sake (Fuess 1997: 396). Fuess (1997: 382–396) argues that it was never about the fathers' sake or what motivated them. In Japan, until the 1990s there had been no open discourse about family roles and the mother remains to inhibit a very prominent position at home (Fuess 1997: 382), despite all changes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The distinction of fathers' culture and conduct is important, because from a historical perspective, they are not synchronized. Often changes in fathers' culture are confused with changes in fathering, meaning fathers' actual behavior. And sometimes vice versa, changes in behavior are mistaken to be a paradigm shift on the value level. It is precisely the failure to grasp this asynchrony of conduct and culture that often leads to misrepresentations and exaggerations of behavioral change (LaRossa 1988). Often enough, small value changes of certain strata within society have been mistaken for changes in conduct of the majority. It is not even clear if the asynchrony of culture and conduct ever comes to an end: it could very well be that as soon as a changing culture actually affects conduct, culture again changes in the other direction, in opposition to the new conduct. It is worth keeping this asynchrony in mind, especially when comparing two countries as distinct as Japan and Germany.

In demographic research, it is often assumed that behavioral changes in nuptiality and fertility follow an almost universal pattern, which can be described as the (first) demographic transition. The second demographic transition (Van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe 2014) is characterized by an ageing of the population, a reduced propensity for young people to get married, and accompanied by a low fertility rate below replacement level. There are contending theories about the reasons for these changes – one of them holding patriarchal norms in family-related institutions responsible (McDonald 2000). McDonald differenti-

ates between individual-oriented institutions like voting rights and labor market participation, where women in Western countries have almost achieved parity to men, and family-oriented institutions. Within the family, gender equity is reached much slower than in public institutions. This discrepancy between high gender equity in the political sphere and on the labor market, and low gender equity in the family and related institutions is seen as reason for low fertility rates (McDonald 2000).

Another explanation for changes in fertility is Hakim's preference theory (2003). As opposed to McDonald's macro-level orientation on institutions, Hakim is applying a model rooted in lifestyle preferences, values, and attitudes of the individual. Thus fertility outcomes are, since contraceptive methods have started to be controlled by women, results of lifestyle choices by women and men, influenced by an institutional frame and by random life events on the micro-level.

In terms of gender equity, it has been argued that Japan is lagging behind Western countries such as Germany, especially when it comes to the family (Zahidi, Leopold, and Ratcheva 2016; Greenstein 2009). Following McDonald's reasoning, there are two ways out of the low fertility trap: 1) increasing gender equity within the family, and 2) increasing gender equity within family-related institutions and family policy. While aspects of family policy are discussed in the chapters by Bertram (2018) and by Holthus (2018) in this volume, option 1) will be debated here – especially on fathers' culture and conduct. Some related aspects are addressed in the chapter about partnership satisfaction by Fankhauser, Holthus, and Hundsdorfer (2018) in this volume.

The hypotheses guiding these reflections here are derived from the following assumptions: Conduct lags behind culture, and Japan is lagging behind Germany concerning the second demographic transition. If cultural change predates change in conduct, a discrepancy of culture and conduct can be expected in Japan, as well as in Germany. Thus, I formulate hypothesis (a) as follows: Japanese fathers show a higher level of gender egalitarianism in their culture than in their conduct. Germany on the other hand, is at another point in the transition where culture already translated into a change in conduct, so that hypothesis (b) states: the behavior of German fathers is more egalitarian than that of Japanese fathers. Their culture could very well be divergent from this relative egalitarianism, with possible reactions ranging widely from countering the changed conduct as well as corresponding with conduct.

DATA

To compare fathers in Germany and Japan and their well-being, there needs to be an empirical concept as to which determinants to measure. The survey used here is based on the concept of parental well-being, which focuses on seven dimensions of well-being and asks about them in comparable questionnaires in Germany and Japan (see Huber 2018 for details).

ANALYSIS

In a first step, the conduct of fathers will be examined, operationalized by various items asking for the responsibility in household and childrearing chores.

Fathers' conduct

If we talk about caregiving fathers and the gender division of labor in the household in Germany and Japan on a micro-level, there is one significant difference between both countries: in Germany there is a general tendency that fathers share duties with their spouse as opposed to Japan, where the mother is often solely responsible for household and childrearing tasks. When we take a look at all 14 household and childrearing tasks, in Japan more than half of the mothers are solely responsible for eight chores, while in Germany more than half of them are solely responsible for only three out of 14 chores. This first impression already supports hypothesis b), that German fathers' conduct is more egalitarian than Japanese fathers' conduct.

Some more specific differences regarding the individual chores can be found as well, such as for example in the case of doing the finances: while in Germany both parents are responsible, in Japan mostly the mother has the responsibility. Controlling finances has a different significance in Japan, in many cases women have large control over the household finances, and men only receive small allowances from their spouses for personal expenses (Ishii-Kuntz 1994). Therefore, control of household finances is less an expression of gender inequity in Japan than an empowerment of the mother versus the breadwinning father. When it comes to chores that are either traditionally male domains, like repairs, or a newly emerging one, like playing electronic games with the children, distributions in Germany and Japan are quite similar. A detailed breakdown of housework and childcare work distribution for

the individual is given in the chapter by Fankhauser, Holthus, and Hundsdorfer (2018).

Asking fathers in Germany and Japan about childcare support in the employment system, more German fathers considered it important to be able to work at home while Japanese fathers consider it more important to freely decide on flex time.

Table 1: Opinion on childcare support measures in the employment system (%)

		Not	More or less	More or less		
		important	unimportant	Can't say	important	Important
More flexibility in emergency situations	J	0.2	1.2	9.4	33.5	55.8
	G	0.1	0.1	2.8	29.8	67.1
To be able to work at home	J	1.7	6.3	26.3	41.7	24.0
	G	2.6	9.2	22.8	32.7	32.6
To be able to freely decide on flex time	J	0.5	3.3	16.3	46.9	33.0
	G	0.1	0.8	4.1	32.1	62.9

Fathers' culture

What does it mean to act like a father or a mother when it comes to child-rearing, and how are fatherhood and motherhood tied to “societal concepts of masculinity and femininity” (LaRossa 1997: 15)? In order to answer this question, other dimensions of fatherhood have to be considered as well; in order to find out more about the culture of contemporary fathers. Taking Hakim’s (2003) preference theory as a starting point, lifestyle preferences concerning work-life balance of mothers and fathers have to equally be investigated. The survey used here asked fathers in Germany and Japan about what employment situation of a couple fathers would consider ideal during various stages of the life course (see Table 2).

Table 2: Ideal work arrangements of married couples/partners (%)

Assumed parental circumstances	Both employed						One employed						Neither works	
	Both work fulltime		Only woman works parttime		Only man works parttime		Both work parttime		Only woman works		Only man works			
	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G
No children	83.3	84.2	11.0	9.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	1.9	0.8	0.3	4.4	2.1	0.6	--
Youngest child is below age 3	9.8	4.5	17.6	26.2	0.1	0.1	0.4	5.2	1.2	0.1	69.5	41.9	1.6	--
Youngest child attends daycare	14.6	11.0	46.2	53.5	0.1	0.4	0.6	3.8	3.0	0.1	34.8	13.1	0.8	--
Youngest child goes to school	26.1	18.3	53.7	56.5	0.1	0.5	0.6	3.3	4.1	0.1	14.7	5.9	0.7	--
Children are adults and have moved out	66.2	78.3	21.5	16.1	0.1	0.0	0.9	3.5	1.5	0.1	7.5	0.5	2.3	--

Note: Due to slightly different phrasing between the questionnaires, categories were omitted in this table, resulting in total values below 100 percent in the case of Germany.

During the stage of the life course when the youngest child is below age three and during the time when the youngest child attends daycare or kindergarten, the Japanese fathers in our data prefer that only men are employed and that women stay at home. But when the youngest child goes to school, fathers in Japan and in Germany mostly want that both parents are employed, yet that the wife works part-time. During the “empty nest”-period, when children have moved out of their parent’s home, the majority of both Japanese and German fathers want their spouses to work full-time again. Overall, Japanese fathers express a more traditional workstyle preference than German fathers, especially when it comes to the time when the child is below age three. Interestingly, there is a minority in Japan, which endorses dual full-time employment regardless of the age or existence of children. This leads to higher approval rates for dual full-time employment in Japan than in Germany, and that throughout all periods of parenthood except for the “empty nest”-period.

Coming now to parenting ideals as part of the “culture of fathers”, it is of importance to analyze the question: “What is a good mother?” for both fathers in Japan and Germany (see Table 3 below). Fathers in both countries want mothers to spend as much time as possible with their children and to show affection. But there are also significant differences between the fathers: in Germany, fathers believe their personal satisfaction to be important and that mothers should participate in sustaining the family financially. In Japan, the father’s own satisfaction is less important and it is not expected of mothers to sustain the family financially. So there is a very traditional concept of what a good mother is to be like in Japan as opposed to Germany, which of course influences fathering in both countries. The labor market involvement of women is heavily tied to this circumstance: In Japan, 70 percent of the fathers think it is not important for mothers to help sustain the family financially whereas, contrarily, in Germany 62 percent of fathers think it is important. Fathers were also asked whether they deem it important that mothers concentrate on their work and leave childcare to their husbands: 90 percent of Japanese fathers do not believe it to be important, while among German fathers this portion only reaches 68 percent. In addition, 32 percent of German fathers actually think employment is an important part of being a good mother.

Asking about mothers taking parental leave, almost 90 percent of German fathers, but only 70 percent of Japanese fathers find it important. This is most likely induced by the different eligibility criteria of parental leave in the respective countries. For more detailed information, see Holthus (2018) in this volume.

Table 3: Fathers' images of a good mother (%)

Image of a good mother	Totally unimportant		Not really important		Important		Very important	
	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G
To spend as much time as possible with the children	0.0	0.0	5.3	0.5	52.4	20.9	42.4	78.7
To show affection to the children	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.1	32.8	11.8	66.5	88.1
To always completely be orientated to the children's needs	25.6	2.0	61.3	31.4	10.8	47.6	2.2	18.9
To let other people (spouse, etc.) also participate in childrearing	2.6	0.2	16.2	5.1	61.2	42.0	20.0	52.7
To consider her own satisfaction	0.7	0.7	19.8	11.0	68.3	51.8	11.2	36.5
To concentrate on her work and leave childcare to her husband	35.3	13.5	57.6	53.8	6.5	25.4	0.7	7.3
To sustain the family financially	11.6	3.8	59.8	33.9	25.2	35.4	3.5	26.9
To take childcare leave and to take over childcare	5.3	0.0	26.0	1.8	50.8	41.1	17.9	57.1
To take parental leave (only in Germany)	--	1.9	--	7.9	--	31.8	--	58.4
To be highly involved in the children's education (only in Japan)	0.9	--	14.7	--	60.6	--	23.8	--

Gendered parenting values

To demonstrate the individual conceptions of fatherhood and motherhood, it is important to dig even further into paternal values. As laid out above, the differences in values between German and Japanese fathers about their images of a "good mother" are significant, even more so than in regards to the evaluation of the meaning of "good father". The answers here show a wide gap for the answers concerning fulfilling children's needs. Japanese fathers, in contrast to German fathers, do not think that this is an important value at all, neither for a good father nor a good mother. However more than 50 percent of the German fathers deem it very important to always act with the children's needs in mind in order to be a good father or a good mother.

Table 4: Fathers' images of a good father (%)

Image of a good father	Totally unimportant		Not really important		Important		Very important	
	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G
To spend as much time as possible with the children	0.3	0.0	6.6	1.3	54.0	35.6	39.1	63.1
To show affection to the children	0.1	0.0	2.1	0.2	37.5	15.6	60.3	84.2
To always completely be orientated to the children's needs	25.9	3.0	63.2	36.0	9.9	47.5	1.0	13.6
To let other people (spouse, etc.) also participate in childrearing	2.8	0.5	16.4	7.4	55.5	37.9	25.3	54.2
To consider his own satisfaction	1.6	1.0	28.9	13.9	62.2	56.3	7.4	28.8
To concentrate on his work and leave childcare to his wife	30.7	12.6	56.6	41.8	12.1	33.1	0.7	12.5
To sustain the family financially	0.3	0.5	4.1	3.5	47.2	26.2	48.4	69.8
To take childcare leave and to take over childcare	8.6	0.2	52.0	4.1	32.5	40.4	6.9	55.3
To take parental leave (only in Germany)	--	13.2	--	34.9	--	33.0	--	19.0
To be highly involved in the children's education (only in Japan)	1.8	--	22.5	--	58.9	--	16.9	--

Many different factors influence norms and values. As pointed out in Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological-model (1981), the social environment in different systems and under different historical circumstances influences individuals. These might contribute to why we see these significant differences between German and Japanese fathers, such as that most of Japanese fathers do not think it is important to only concentrate on work and leave childcare to their wives (85 %), yet almost half (45 %) of German

fathers find this important. This is one of the rare instances where Japanese fathers express a more egalitarian attitude than German fathers. When viewing this question in the light of Hakim's preference theory (2003), one could argue that Japanese fathers show variability in their life-style choices: not for every father career is the most important factor in life. There are others who would prefer to adapt their work-life balance according to their wives' preferences and their children's needs, and who put their family life at the top of their priority list. Then again, values or wishes and actual conduct can diverge significantly, as to achieve this is probably much harder for Japanese fathers within the given social structures than it would be for German fathers.

Table 5: Values of Japanese and German fathers (%)

Personal values	absolutely not important		not really important		important		very important	
	J	G	J	G	J	G	J	G
To accomplish something for yourself	0.7	0.7	7.7	9.5	59.1	58.3	32.5	31.5
To do something for others	1.0	0.3	14.6	4.9	66.5	53.8	17.9	41.0
To realize yourself	0.8	1.1	15.2	13.9	61.8	54.3	22.2	30.7
To be successful at work	0.5	0.6	7.2	7.4	55.0	49.7	37.3	42.3
To purchase your own home	8.5	6.6	35.4	29.3	37.1	33.3	19.0	30.7
To live happily with your spouse	0.4	0.7	1.3	1.3	24.8	15.6	73.5	82.4
To have children	0.3	0.4	2.7	1.4	37.2	28.1	59.8	70.1
To participate in social activities	12.8	14.4	51.9	47.5	31.0	31.5	4.4	6.6
To travel (only in Germany)	--	8.3	--	44.9	--	36.6	--	10.2

When it comes to parental leave, however, 52 percent – more than half of the surveyed German fathers – are of the opinion that it is important to make use of this possibility, but only 40 percent of Japanese fathers believe this to be important. It is important to keep in mind that structurally, it is also much easier for German fathers than for their Japanese counterparts to take parental leave. Furthermore, more German fathers think it is important that other people participate in childrearing. Looking at the question whether a good father should consider his own satisfaction, there are 30 percent who think this is very important, but only about 7 percent of Japanese fathers think it is very important to fulfil their own satisfaction. Somewhat reductionist, this may seem to be an expression of a less individualistic value system, which leads to respondents not emphasizing their self-interest to the same degree. Indeed, as LaRossa (2012) points out, that there is an immense difference between the (change of the) culture of fatherhood and the conduct of fatherhood (LaRossa 2012: 43), which leads to varying outcomes of different individual values concerning fathering. I believe the data presented here for German and Japanese parents supports this assumption.

CONCLUSION

When conducting a cross-cultural comparison of fathers, as it has been done here, it is essential to look at numerous issues of values, attitudes, and ideas in order to understand why we see certain conducts of fatherhood. Paternal values concerning fatherhood in Germany and Japan are distinct in regards to some dimensions; when it comes to the question of how much attention a child needs, or how important a mother's or father's personal satisfaction is. These differences can be attributed to a different cultural value system, where social harmony plays a bigger role than personal happiness in Japan in comparison to Germany (Kaufman and Taniguchi 2010). When it comes to attitudes about gender equity, fathers' culture in Japan and Germany does not differ all too much. Overall, Japanese fathers show more traditional values, especially when it comes to their ideal image of mothers. When it comes to the notion of gendered separate spheres, the question whether fathers should leave childrearing to their spouses, Japanese fathers surprisingly display less traditional values than German fathers. When fathers' conduct is analyzed, Japanese fathers are clearly more traditional than German fathers, who share housework and childrearing tasks with their spouses much more often. All in all, these results concerning fathers' culture only partially support hypothesis (a) that Japanese fathers show more egalitarianism in their culture than in their conduct. However, hypothesis (b), namely that German fathers' conduct is more egalitarian than Japanese fathers' conduct, finds support in the data. Taking into consideration LaRossa's model of asynchronous changes in culture and conduct, combined with the model of the second demographic transition, one could argue that in Germany the change in fathers' culture already led to a change in fathers' conduct, while in Japan, fathers' conduct is still lagging behind fathers' culture. At the end of the 1980s, LaRossa argued that the much talked-about change in father roles in the US was mainly occurring on the level of culture, and barely at all on the level of conduct. In the meantime, a change of conduct took place in Western countries like the US or Germany (Altintas and Sullivan 2016). In Japan, some evidence can be found that fathers' culture is less traditional than fathers' conduct, which might lead to a slow transformation process of fathers conduct, just as it happened in many Western countries. Some evidence of a slow but gradual increase of Japanese husbands' participation in household work has already been reported on in the literature (e. g. Tsuya et al. 2012). In this view, Japanese fathers are 'lagging behind' their German counterparts.

In this study, I found numerous similarities, but also significant differences concerning fatherhood in Germany and Japan and it is not only be-

cause of historical but also cultural and individual reasons. To begin to understand fathers diversity, I used different levels on which fatherhood can be constructed and must be seen – as based on the idea of LaRossa (2012). The combination of three levels: firstly father's conduct, showing the "real output" what fathers do within the family, secondly father's culture – a cultural and societal influence on fathers –, and thirdly the individual concept of fathers with individual values, norms, and lifestyle preferences. Such a theoretical differentiation carries the potential to improve the understanding of prior research and future inquiry into the realm of fathering.

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