

# CHILDREARING ATTITUDES AND VALUES OF GERMAN AND JAPANESE PARENTS

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Today's rapidly declining birthrate, women's increasing participation in the labor market, the globalization of economy, society, and culture, as well as other social changes are having an enormous effect on altering the environment in which children are raised. That is the case both in Germany and Japan. Many parents in both countries forego parenthood altogether in greater numbers. And for those men and women becoming parents, pressures on raising the "ideal" child are growing. Parents in both countries report feeling pressured to provide the best for their child(ren) and to offer a multitude of options to their children at a very early age, be it the learning of a foreign language, an instrument, or sports from a very early age onward. All these efforts can make having children a costly endeavor. Parents, and particularly mothers, in both countries face long-existing cultural scripts of how they are to raise their children: German mothers used to be called "Rabenmutter" [raven mother i.e. callous mother] if they put their children into a daycare center in order to go back to work; Japanese mothers equally were seen as the ultimate ideal full-time care-taker for their children at least up to age 3. These views have become less prevalent in both countries, as Germany and Japan have seen significant changes in the last couple of decades. However, these values regarding parenting have nonetheless lingered on to a certain degree and therefore still seem to impact mothers' and fathers' views on parenting even today.

How this exactly plays out in the behavioral patterns of parents with regard to childrearing as well as their values regarding good parenting is the focus of the first part of this chapter. Values and behavioral patterns of parents can be tied to LaRossa's (2012) distinction of fathers' and mothers' culture and conduct, and is thus closely connected to the study by Olbrich (2018, in this volume). In part two, we further look at the relationship between parents' awareness, behavioral patterns, and their overall life satisfaction levels. As outlined in the introduction by Bertram and Holthus (2018) in this volume, mothers' overall life satisfaction in both countries is lower than that of fathers. Furthermore, the well-being of parents is closely tied to the well-being of their children, thus it is imperative even for the study of child well-being to understand the well-being of the parents on a deeper level.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VALUES AND BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS OF PARENTS  
WITH REGARD TO CHILDREARING IN GERMANY AND JAPAN

The increase in dual-earner families both in Germany and Japan in the last couple of decades has led to an increase in the number of children awaiting entry to nursery schools in metropolitan areas, and entry is becoming more and more difficult. In Japan, the gap is filled to a large extent by privately-run daycare centers which exist besides the public daycare centers (see Holthus 2018 for more detail). Germany, on the other hand, implemented a law to guarantee a daycare center space for any child age 3 and up in 1996, expanding it in 2013 to children age 1 and up. Yet in Germany, the demand is met not only by daycare centers and formal institutions in general, but also by the widespread use of “day moms” (or childminders; *Tagesmütter*). The equivalent in Japan, called *hoiku mama*, is much less favored by Japanese parents (see Holthus, Huber, and Tanaka 2015 for details).

Despite the expansion of childcare outside the home and realm of the parents, we still see lingering feelings that parental care is to be preferred. The analysis of the survey data on parental well-being (see Huber 2018 in this volume) reveals that half of the fathers in both Germany and Japan believe that “at least half of each day should be spent together with children younger than three years old.” This shows values as part of “father’s culture” which stand in stark contrast to their conduct, and seem to express unfulfilled wishes. These incongruities between the increase in dual earner families and the increased use in institutionalized childcare on the one hand, and the desire for and high value placed on parental childcare on the other hand, bring us closer to a deeper understanding of the discrepancies between the ideal and the real situation of Japanese and German parents in regards to their solutions for and attitudes towards child-rearing.

*How much time should a mother or father spend together with her/his children?*

The answers to the question “How much time should a mother or father spend together with children under three years of age?” are shown in Figure 1. It shows how much time mothers think fathers should spend, and how much time fathers think mothers should spend with children under three years old.

The most frequently chosen response among Japanese mothers when evaluating how much time fathers should spend with their children was “time has nothing to do with it” (55.0 %), followed by mothers thinking that it should be “about 1 to 3 hours” (35.8 %). About one third of Japa-

**Figure 1:** Ideal time parents are to spend with their children: Japan and Germany



nese fathers in their evaluation of mothers responded with “time has nothing to do with it” (35.2 %), followed by “whole day” (30.8 %). The response that found most approval among German mothers when evaluating how much time fathers should spend with their children was “between about 1 to 3 hours” (49.9 %), which was followed by those thinking that “time has nothing to do with it” (24.8 %). German fathers in their evaluation of mothers responded with “all day” (47.9 %), followed by “about half a day” (35.2 %). It is interesting to note that fathers in both countries themselves think they should spend more time with children than mothers think they should.

When we take a look at the gender discrepancies of how much time mothers ‘should’ spend with their under three-year olds, it becomes apparent that both in Japan and Germany fathers think that mothers should spend more time with their children than the mothers themselves believe. This discrepancy between the sexes is bigger in Japan, where for example the answer that “time has nothing to do with it” was chosen roughly ten percentage points more often by mothers than fathers. On the other hand, the amount of fathers who believe that mothers should spend the “whole day” with their children was 2.5 percentage points higher than in the case of mothers, meaning that these fathers would basically want them to be stay-at-home mothers. This discrepancy in the time desired for mothers to spend with their children is an indication for an overall larger divergence in the culture of fathers and mothers in Japan. German parents’ views on the mother role are less divergent, however altogether more traditional. Almost half of the fathers and mothers think that mothers should spend the whole day with their child. Yet whereas the proportion of mothers who stated that they should spend “all day” with children under the age of three years old was approximately half in Germany, it was only approximately one third in Japan.

We believe that the structural conditions regarding institutionalized childcare have an influence on the value system of parents in both countries. An important reason in this respect is that the number of children between the ages of 0 and 3 that are accepted into nursery facilities is small in both countries, and thus a large number of mothers temporarily withdraw from the labor market to raise their children at home after giving birth, either by taking childcare leave or by quitting their former employment. Figures for the year 2014, released by the OECD, show that the proportion of children between the ages of 0 and 3 accepted into daycare facilities is less than 10 percent in Germany and around 15 percent in Japan, both of which are very low figures; When both public and private daycare centers and preschools are taken into account, Germany shows a rate of 32.3 percent and Japan a rate of around 30 percent among all 0 to

2-year olds (OECD 2015). These rates are not as high as in Scandinavian countries like Denmark, Norway, or Sweden, but they are much higher than in Japan and Germany ten years ago, when they were around 15 percent in Germany and 20 percent in Japan. The low numbers for Germany can be explained by the high ratio of parental leave-takers. For more information about family policies in the two countries, see the chapters by Bertram (2018) and Holthus (2018) in this volume. Although the governments of Germany and Japan are adopting policies to increase spaces in daycare centers as a measure to counter low birthrates, there are still large numbers of children on the waiting list in Japan, and this makes it difficult for mothers to work.

### *Good father and mother ideals*

Other than spending time with their children, as discussed above, what else makes a good mother and father? In Table 1 below, parents' responses regarding their ideal father and mother image are shown. Percentages represent the combined responses "important" and "very important" from a four point Likert scale reaching from "totally unimportant" to "very important."

The two common elements between Germany and Japan are that almost all mothers and fathers see it as important for being a good parent "to show affection to the children" and "to spend as much time as possible with the children." We furthermore learn from the data presented in Table 1 that more than 90 percent of German and Japanese mothers and fathers believe it is important for the father to sustain the family financially. Opinions are more divided when it comes to the image of a good mother: Whereas about 60 percent of German parents deem it important for mothers to sustain the family financially, it is of only very limited importance to Japanese mothers and fathers (28.7%, respectively 33.4%). Returning to the questions about what constitutes a good father, the two common elements between Germany and Japan are that high percentages of both mothers and fathers selected "to sustain the family financially" as necessary for fathers.

Regarding the issue of childcare leave, about 90 percent of German mothers and fathers believe this to be important for mothers, yet only about half of all parents consider it important for fathers, expressing still a quite conservative understanding of the division of roles. Among Japanese parents, about 80 percent of mothers and fathers see this as important for mothers and only about 30 percent as important for fathers, thus exhibiting even more conservative role values for Japan in the case of fathers. In the case of mothers the lower percentages of mothers could, at first sight, be thought to be less conservative. However, quitting one's profession upon

Table 1: Characteristics of “good mothers” and “good fathers”

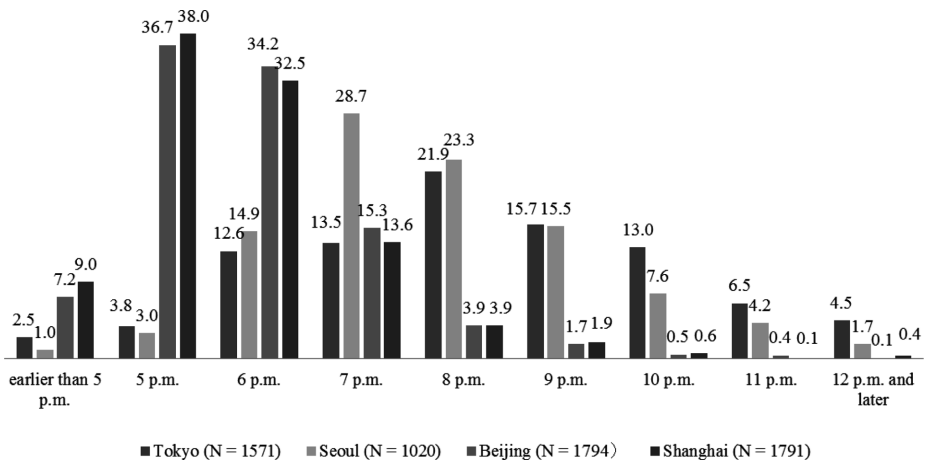
	Japan				Germany			
	Good mother		Good father		Good mother		Good father	
	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%)	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%)	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%)	Fathers (%)	Mothers (%)
To spend as much time as possible with the children	94.7	94.8	93.1	93.4	99.5	99.4	98.7	98.4
To show affection to the children	99.3	99.5	97.8	99.0	99.9	99.9	99.8	99.7
To always completely fulfill the children's demands	13.1	12.5	10.9	8.3	66.5	69.1	61.1	61.4
Spouse / partner's participation of childcare	81.2	85.9	80.7	73.6	94.7	93.8	92.1	89.4
To consider his/her own satisfaction	79.5	84.6	69.6	79.7	88.3	93.3	85.1	91.4
To concentrate on his/her work and leave childcare to one's partner	7.2	3.0	12.8	12.0	32.7	30.5	45.6	44.1
To sustain the family financially	28.7	33.4	95.6	96.7	62.3	67.8	96.0	94.3
To take care of the children equally as much as possible	88.9	84.0	86.8	84.6	98.2	97.7	95.7	96.2
To take childcare leave and to take over childcare	68.7	77.7	39.4	30.3	90.2	91.3	52.0	45.3
To be highly involved in the children's education	84.4	88.3	75.8	70.8	-	-	-	-

childbirth and therefore exiting the labor market altogether for a certain period of time is considered even more the ideal for Japanese mothers – less so in Germany. In Japan, 3.16 percent of fathers and 81.8 percent of mothers take childcare leave (as of 2016). The reason why the percentage of fathers who take childcare leave has so far failed to increase, despite governmental incentives, is owing to the custom of spending long hours at the workplace and a corporate culture that makes it difficult to take parental leave. For more on this issue, see Nagase (2018) in this volume.

An international survey of fathers with small children carried out in East Asia (Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, and Tokyo; Benesse 2014a) indicates that fathers in Tokyo return home later than fathers in other cities, with approximately 40 percent arriving home after 9 p.m. (see Figure 2). As the majority of Japanese children between the age of 0 and 6 go to bed at around 9 p.m., most fathers arrive home at around the time their young children are going to sleep, and therefore have very limited interaction with their children on a daily basis.

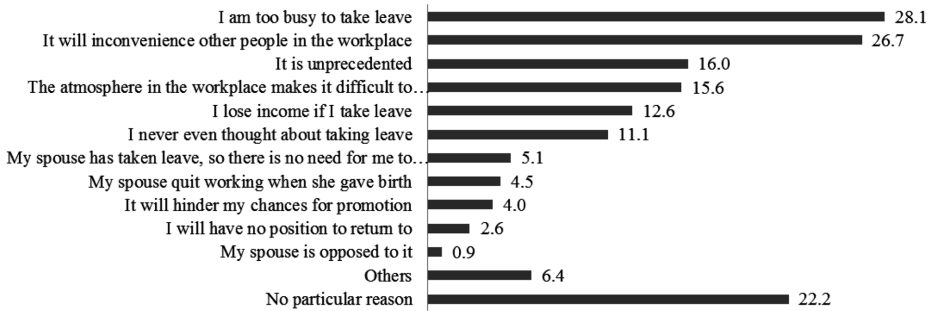
In addition, the most common reasons given by Japanese fathers for not taking childcare leave in yet another survey (surveying fathers in Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei, Seoul, and Tokyo; Benesse 2014b) were: “too busy to take leave,” “it will cause inconvenience in the workplace,” and “there is no precedent,” indicating that it is difficult for fathers to apply for childcare leave because of the pressures regarding workload, workplace norms, as well men’s consideration of colleagues’ workloads (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2:** Average arrival time of fathers from work



Source: Benesse 2014a.

**Figure 3:** Reasons for not utilizing the childcare leave system



*Note:* A maximum of 3 multiple answers were accepted. Includes only respondents who did not select “Used the childcare leave system”. Fathers up to the age of 49.

*Source:* Benesse 2014b: 18.

Returning to the issue of the role of the provider as discussed above, that same survey targeting the fathers of infants in Japan indicated that while the emphasis was placed on the provider role of a father, home finances were commonly selected as the reason for “anxiety for the future regarding childrearing and personal lifestyle.” 58.5 percent of Japanese fathers believed the “cost of future education expenses too high” and 52.8 percent deemed the “cost of raising children too high” (Benesse 2014b). The burden of being the main provider comes at great costs for Japanese fathers, and many of them are happier when their wives contribute to the household income.

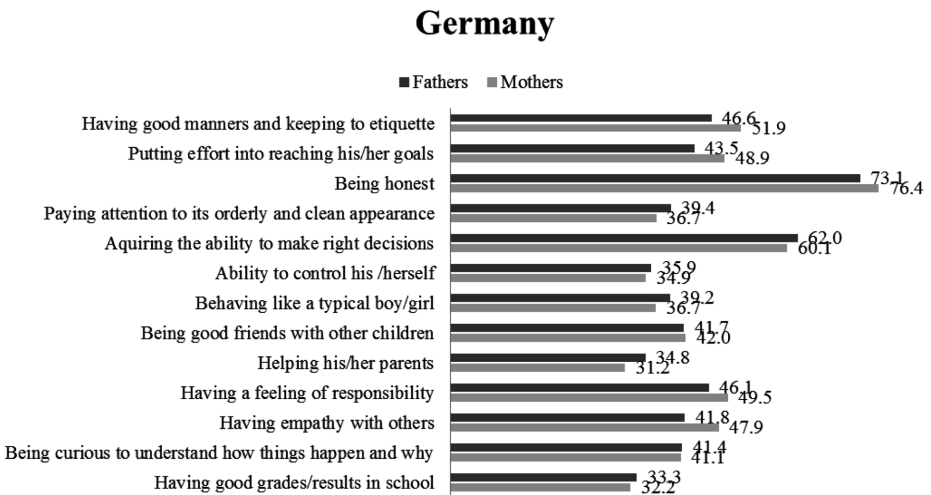
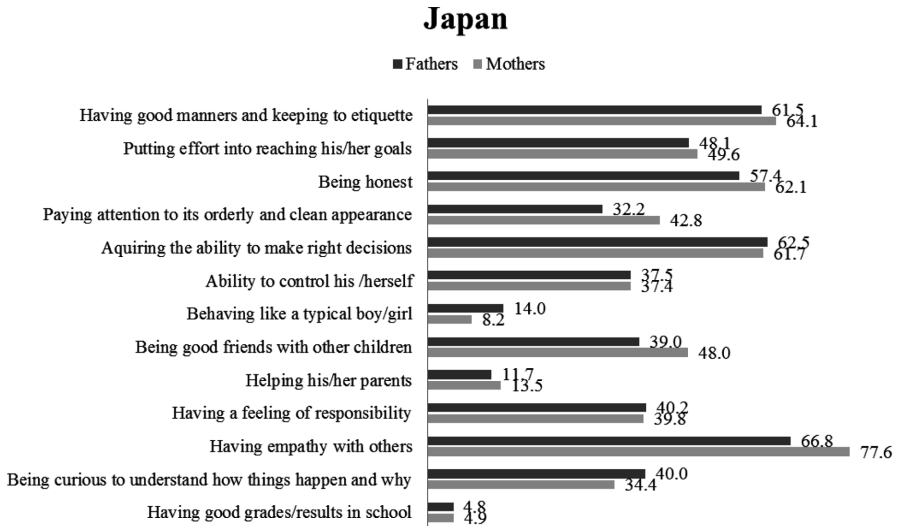
#### *Childrearing values: on children’s attitudes and manners*

Which behavior and values of their children do Japanese and German parents find particularly important and want to instill in their children? The traits upon which the highest levels of importance were placed were “being honest” in Germany and “having empathy with others” in Japan (see Figure 4 below) (multiple answers were possible).

More than 46 percent of fathers and mothers in both Germany and Japan selected “being honest,” “learning/acquiring the ability to make the right decisions,” and “having good manners and keeping to etiquette.” In the case of Japan however, “having empathy with others” was the response chosen by the highest percentage of both Japanese mothers and fathers, emphasizing their understanding of human relations to be very important for their children’s development.



**Figure 4:** Importance of certain values and manners for parents to instill in their children



In another already mentioned survey, fathers of infants in five cities in East Asia were asked about their “future expectations for children” (Benesse 2014b). The response with the highest percentage in all cities was “cherishing family members.” The responses that were ranked second and third in importance in Tokyo were “not causing inconvenience to others” and “placing importance on friendship,” both of which scored high marks, indicating an increased tendency to place emphasis on cooperation in all social relationships in comparison with other East Asian cities and in comparison to previous rounds of this same survey.

To summarize the above, we found (1) a common tendency for fathers and mothers in both Germany and Japan to place emphasis on “showing children love and affection” and “spending as much time with children as possible” with regard to their opinion of what good parents should do. (2) There was also a tendency for high support for “taking childcare leave to look after children” in the case of mothers and “supporting the family financially” in the case of fathers. The main difference was shown in the amount of time spent with children under the age of 3, with German fathers and mothers desiring to spend more time with their children than Japanese parents. The most common response to the amount of time that should be spent with children under the age of 3 was that the “amount of time is not significant” in the case of Japan – for both fathers and mothers. This was particularly true of Japanese working mothers, which indicates that the emphasis was not placed on the amount of time, but on the way in which the time spent together was used. Thus, Japanese parents value quality over quantity, countering the various existing time constraints with quality time spent with their children. And last but not least, (3) parents in both countries deem it important for their children to learn “having good manners and keeping to etiquette,” “being honest,” and “learning/acquiring the ability to make right decisions”. “Having empathy with others,” however, was the most important factor for Japanese parents, but not so for German parents.

## PARENTING AND PARENTAL LIFE SATISFACTION

### *Satisfaction with childrearing skills and knowledge*

A question asking parents to evaluate their level of satisfaction regarding their own childrearing skills and knowledge on a scale from 0 to 10 was posed only in the Japanese survey, not the German one. The percentage of Japanese fathers and mothers rating their satisfaction at 5 on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the most satisfied, was approximately 30 percent,

making it the most frequent. Approximately 40 percent of respondents rated their satisfaction level somewhere between 6 and 10. The main characteristic of parents who identified themselves as satisfied with their childrearing skills and knowledge was that they had older children (those with children between 3 and 5 years old selected higher satisfaction levels than mothers with children between 0 and 2), and for mothers alone the best predictor was that they had full-time jobs (mothers with full-time jobs selected higher satisfaction levels than mothers working part-time and mothers who were housewives).

*Factor analysis of parental images of “good fathers” and “good mothers”*

In order to understand the relationship between parents' ideal images of good parents with their overall life satisfaction, we begin by comparing the values about what it means to be a good father and mother among German and Japanese parents through conducting a factor analysis. This extracts the latent factor structure that underlies the ten question items of good father/mother. Through an exploratory factor analysis, three factors were identified for German as well as Japanese respondents (Table 2). Further, the factor structure was also identified by nationality and gender (Table 3), indicating that Japanese and German parents have common concepts of what constitutes a good father or mother. We named the three resulting factors “intimacy with child” (factor\_1), “working” (factor\_2), and “co-parenting” (factor\_3), both for fathers and mothers.

**Table 2:** Promax rotated three-factor solution for good father and mother image, by nationality

		JPN 1	GER 1	JPN 2	GER 2	JPN 3	GER 3
<b>Items of good father image</b>							
<b>Factor 1</b>	Q11b: To show affection to the children	.636	.767				
	Q11a: To spend as much time as possible with the children	.624	.495				
<b>Factor 2</b>	Q11g: To sustain the family financially			.720	.772		
	Q11f: To concentrate on his work and leave childcare to his wife			.201	.439		
<b>Factor 3</b>	Q11h: To take care of the children equally as much as possible					.752	.473
	Q11i: To take childcare leave and to take over childcare					.383	.558
<b>Items of good mother image</b>							
<b>Factor 1</b>	Q11a: To spend as much time as possible with the children	.701	.639				
	Q11b: To show affection to the children	.583	.725				
<b>Factor 2</b>	Q11f: To concentrate on her work and leave childcare to her husband			.586	.561		
	Q11g: To sustain the family financially			.505	.696		
<b>Factor 3</b>	Q11h: To take care of the children equally as much as possible					.437	.475
	Q11d: Spouse's / partner's participation of childcare					.407	.582

Note: JPN: Japan; GER: Germany.

Table 3: Promax rotated three-factor solution for good father and mother image, by nationality and gender

		JPN/M	JPN/F	1 GER/M	GER/F	1 JPN/M	2 JPN/F	2 GER/M	2 GER/F	3 JPN/M	3 JPN/F	3 GER/M	3 GER/F
<b>Items of good father image</b>													
<b>Factor 1</b>	Q11b: To show affection to the children		.691	.574	.808	.657							
	Q11a: To spend as much time as possible with the children		.654	.607	.505	.565							
<b>Factor 2</b>	Q11g: To sustain the family financially					.696	.727	.777	.748				
	Q11f: To concentrate on his work and leave childcare to his wife					.201	.214	.429	.464				
<b>Factor 3</b>	Q11h: To take care of the children equally as much as possible									.721	.771	.592	.287
	Q11i: To take childcare leave and to take over childcare									.435	.341	.537	.610
<b>Items of good mother image</b>													
<b>Factor 1</b>	Q11a: To spend as much time as possible with the children		.738	.654	.734	.616							
	Q11b: To show affection to the children		.597	.570	.683	.676							
<b>Factor 2</b>	Q11f: To concentrate on her work and leave childcare to her husband					.655	.475	.669	.496				
	Q11g: To sustain the family financially					.435	.660	.609	.769				
<b>Factor 3</b>	Q11h: To take care of the children equally as much as possible									.376	.378	.728	.319
	Q11d: Spouse's / partner's participation of childcare									.334	.538	.311	.696

Note: JPN/M: Japanese male; JPN/F: Japanese female; GER/M: German male; GER/F: German female.

**Table 4:** Image of a good father and mother in Japan and Germany: means and standard deviations

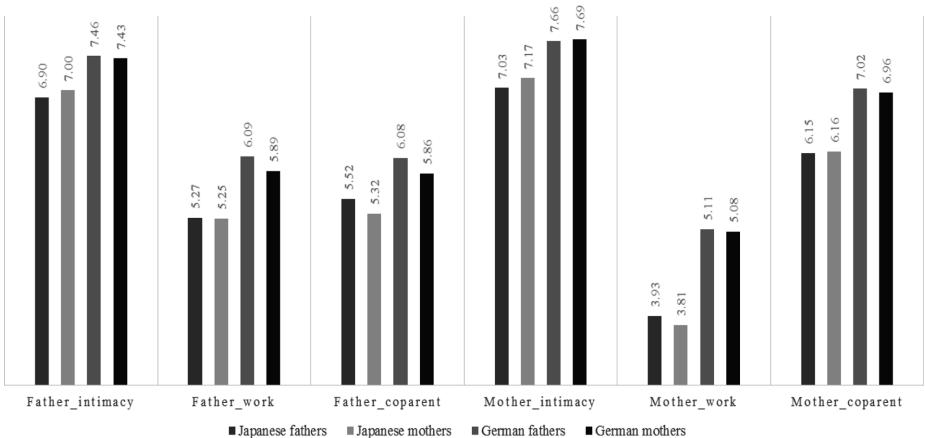
		Japanese						German					
		Fathers			Mothers			Fathers			Mothers		
		<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>n</i>
<b>Ideal Father/Mother</b>													
Good Father	Intimacy with child	6.90	0.98	1028	7.00	0.89	1098	7.46	0.75	1001	7.43	0.74	1046
	Work	5.27	0.92	1026	5.25	0.93	1095	6.09	1.17	952	5.89	1.21	1001
	Co-parent	5.52	1.12	1027	5.32	1.09	1097	6.08	1.23	954	5.86	1.20	1009
	Intimacy with child	7.03	0.92	1027	7.17	0.86	1103	7.66	0.66	993	7.69	0.62	1048
Good Mother	Work	3.93	1.04	1026	3.81	1.00	1100	5.11	1.37	958	5.08	1.35	1002
	Co-parent	6.15	0.98	1026	6.16	1.02	1102	7.02	0.91	989	6.96	0.96	1041

*Comparison of good father and mother image by nationality and gender*

Whereas Table 3 shows the factor loadings for each item regarding the images of good fathers/mothers in Japan and Germany by gender, Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations of the factors. The score of each factor was calculated by adding the two items in each factor. Although Japanese and German parents have common ideals about father- and motherhood, they differ in the *degree* of expectations directed toward a good father/mother. The German factor scores are significantly higher than those for Japan in all cases.

Figure 5 below furthermore visually presents the significant differences between men and women on their ideal father/mother images in Japan

**Figure 5:** Visual comparison of good father and mother image by nationality and gender



and Germany. In Japan, there are significant differences between fathers and mothers regarding what importance they attribute to intimacy with the child for the father (men < women), the importance of co-parenting of the father (men > women), and the importance of intimacy with the child for mothers (men < women). In Germany, there is a significant difference for the importance attributed to fathers providing financially for the family (men > women) and for fathers contributing to co-parenting (men > women). However, there was no gender difference regarding the importance of mothers to work or to co-parent when evaluating them as good mothers, neither in Japan nor in Germany. This indicates that the most significant gender differences can be found regarding the values about what makes a good father, especially when it comes to fathers' co-parenting. It seems that men value fathers' co-parenting more than women, both in Japan and in Germany. This is in line with the results shown in the first part of this chapter, where fathers in both countries stated that they should spend more time with children than mothers believed they should. Furthermore, Japanese women seem to value fathers' intimacy with the child more than the men themselves. In Germany, men overall seem to value a fathers' role of working to sustain the family financially to a higher degree than women and more so than Japanese fathers do – despite the fact that German fathers overall work fewer hours than Japanese fathers.

*Relationship between images of good mothers and fathers with life satisfaction*

To better understand whether parents' values regarding ideal father- and motherhood influences their quality of life, we examined the relationship between images of good fathers and mothers and overall life satisfaction in Japan and in Germany, using multiple regression analysis. Given that the lifestyle of employed and non-employed fathers and mothers may be greatly different, we divided the participants into four groups: employed fathers, employed mothers, non-employed fathers and non-employed mothers. However, as only 2 percent of the Japanese fathers and 5.5 percent of German fathers in the sample are not employed, we excluded this group from the analysis altogether. After controlling for the influence of demographic factors (age, family structure, number of children, age of youngest child, and family income), we identified those variables representing images of good fathers and mothers to significantly affect parents' life satisfaction scores (except for the group of employed mothers in Germany). However, the specific factors regarding good fathers and mothers that influence life satisfaction differed by employment status, gender, and between Japan and Germany (see Table 5).

Table 5: Regression analysis: effects of good father and mother images on life satisfaction

DV = Life Satisfaction	Employed fathers			Employed mothers			Unemployed mothers		
	German (n=896)			German (n=598)			Japanese (n=717)		
	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
<b>Demographic Variables</b>									
Age	-.054	.014	-.128 **	.011	.011	.043	-.004	.027	-.009
Family Structure (1 = single parent/ 2 = two parents)	2.279	.559	.125 **	.624	.301	.081 *	.460	.426	.056
Number of children	.035	.084	.013	.085	.086	.039	.008	.156	.003
Age of the youngest child	-.041	.037	-.036	-.037	.035	-.042	-.041	.074	-.031
Family income (1 = low/ 2 = medium/ 3 = high)	.810	.121	.206 **	-.164	.112	-.054	.753	.205	.187 **
<b>Good Father</b>									
Good father_Intimacy with child	.023	.091	.011	.275	.101	.124 **	-.183	.176	-.068
Good father_Work	-.260	.074	-.109 **	-.005	.057	-.003	-.207	.132	-.080
Good father_Co-parent	-.087	.068	-.045	.050	.058	.037	-.333	.127	-.155 **
<b>Good Mother</b>									
Good mother_Intimacy with child	.189	.096	.081 *	.242	.115	.095 *	.287	.180	.103
Good mother_Work	-.097	.067	-.046	-.178	.049	-.151 **	-.193	.125	-.082
Good mother_Co-parent	.045	.076	.020	.075	.076	.042	-.121	.142	-.049
R <sup>2</sup>	.101 **			.084 **			.105 **		
				.117 **			.131 **		

Note: \*\* p < .01; \* p < .05.

For Japanese employed fathers, two parenting ideals had a significant impact on their life satisfaction: namely (1) believing that good fathers are those that are the main breadwinners ("Good father\_work"), and (2) believing that good mothers are those that have intimacy with their children ("Good mother\_intimacy") ( $\beta = -.109, p < .01$ ;  $\beta = .081, p < .05$ ). Employed fathers who think a good father should value work had lower life satisfaction. It might be that with the increase of working mothers over time in Japanese society, if fathers only value their own work but are less supportive of working mothers, it might negatively affect the work-life balance of the family and therefore add to lowering fathers' life satisfaction. On the other hand, those fathers who thought a good mother should spend more time with and show more affection to her children had higher life satisfaction.

In the case of employed fathers in Germany, the variables "Good father\_intimacy with child," "Good mother\_intimacy," and "Good mother\_work" are significantly related to the overall life satisfaction of parents ( $\beta = .124, p < .01$ ;  $\beta = .095, p < .05$ ;  $\beta = -.151, p < .01$ ). The findings imply that in Germany those fathers who value intimacy with their child(ren) gain from this attitude in terms of higher life satisfaction. As for their views on ideal mothering, those fathers who thought a good mother should work had lower life satisfaction; while those fathers who thought a good mother should spend more time with and show more affection to her children had higher life satisfaction, just as found in the case of Japan.

For Japanese employed mothers, the variable "Good father\_co-parent" was the only factor (besides the demographic variables) significantly related to their overall life satisfaction ( $\beta = -.155, p < .01$ ). The finding suggests that the understanding of a good father as someone who contributes to co-parenting has a *negative* influence on the overall life satisfaction of Japanese working mothers, in other words: the more working mothers think that a good father should participate in parenting, the lower their life satisfaction. This is perhaps related to the unchanged long working hours of fathers in Japanese society, which causes a severe gap between ideal and real parenting lifestyles and it is this gap that results in lower life satisfaction. In the case of employed mothers in Germany, their values about what constitutes good parents seem to have no influence on their overall life satisfaction.

For Japanese non-employed mothers, "Good father\_co-parent" and "Good mother\_work" are significantly related to overall life satisfaction ( $\beta = -.095, p < .05$ ;  $\beta = -.100, p < .01$ ). This implies that believing a good father should co-parent and that a good mother should be employed has a *negative* influence on the life satisfaction of Japanese non-working mothers. The more importance a mother attributes to fathers' co-parenting and



the more she values outside employment for mothers, the lower her life satisfaction. Perhaps this reflects the two large gaps existing between the ideal and real lifestyle for Japanese women. Although during the last decade, since the mid 2000's, more Japanese women hope to maintain their own lifestyle and continue to work after childbirth (as mentioned above), many of them have to give up their careers to be a housewife during the early phase of parenthood – and their husbands cannot share much in the role of childrearing due to the long working hours and commuting times common in Japan.

In the case of German unemployed mothers, their parenting ideals about “Good mother\_work” and “Good mother\_co-parent” show a significant relationship to their overall life satisfaction ( $r = -.11$ ;  $r = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Those mothers who think a good mother should co-parent with her partner display higher levels of life satisfaction. Yet those unemployed mothers who believe a “good mother” to ideally be employed, are less satisfied with their life than others, hinting at the possibility that the status of being non-employed is not voluntary.

## CONCLUSION

Different results were found when comparing German and Japanese parents regarding the relationship between life satisfaction and their values about good parents, depending on employment status and gender. For German fathers, those who value intimacy with their child(ren) as part of an ideal father image, reported higher life satisfaction. As for Japanese fathers, those who think a good father should concentrate on work and sustain the family financially had lower life satisfaction, hinting at the pressures resulting from the economic necessity to work and to function as the breadwinner for their family. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Japanese fathers tend to return home from work late. This makes it difficult for them to interact with their children on weekdays, which can be assumed to prevent them from maintaining a suitable work-life balance. The divergence in childrearing ideals and everyday practice of Japanese fathers is a good example of a culture that does not translate into conduct (LaRossa 2012; Olbrich 2018). It is certain that Japanese workplace practices continue to be hindering factors for a change in conduct. What remains unanswered is the question how much of an effort Japanese fathers make to increase their share in childrearing. If a better work-life balance is actively sought for, in the long run, even changes in corporate culture might be possible. Fathers' fears of financial problems, on the other hand, may keep them from challenging the rigid traditionalism inherent to common workplace practices.

The life satisfaction levels of German mothers in the survey are not related to their values about what it means to be a good father. Furthermore, the life satisfaction of German working mothers is related neither to their ideals about good fathers nor mothers. However, among German non-employed women, those who think a good mother should work had lower life satisfaction, whereas those who value co-parenting with spouses/partners reported higher satisfaction. This is another example where discrepancies between the real and the ideal state cause dissatisfaction. Among employed women in Japan, valuing fathers' co-parenting as well as valuing intimacy with their child resulted in lower life satisfaction. Even among dual-earner couples in Japan, mothers take on a greater share of housework and childrearing than the fathers, owing to the fathers' long working hours, leading mothers to assume the burden of both housework and childrearing in addition to their own work. We argue that the life satisfaction of working mothers might increase if their spouses or partners spent more time with the children. For a more detailed account of the effect of housework and childrearing involvement on the satisfaction of parents, consult Fankhauser, Holthus, and Hundsdoerfer (2018) in this volume. Among Japanese non-employed mothers, the belief that a good mother should ideally be employed, was connected to lower life satisfaction, as was the case for non-working mothers in Germany. This again, is probably due to the discrepancy between a mother's wish to join the labor force and her inability to fulfill it.

The results of this analysis describe the features in attitude and behavioral patterns regarding childrearing among individuals in Germany and Japan with young children. One common element was apparent, as we found German and Japanese parents sharing several values when it comes to children's upbringing and education. The following items were selected by German and Japanese parents alike as the most important factors regarding children's upbringing and education: "Being honest," "learning/acquiring the ability to make the right decisions," and "having good manners and keeping etiquette." Additionally, "having empathy with others" was valued highest in Japan. Another common element is that parents in both nations placed emphasis on showing their children love and affection and spending as much time with them as possible in their role as parents. On the other hand, we also observed differences between the parents of both nations. With regard to raising children under the age of 3 years old, Japanese parents did not place so much importance on the amount of time spent with children, whereas German parents valued the amount much more. It also became clear that the expectations of German mothers and fathers concerning the ideal amount of time their spouses should spend

on childrearing are more similar to each other than those between Japanese parents. The results concerning the relationship between life satisfaction and the images respondents had of themselves as good parents also suggest that maintaining a good balance between work and childrearing has a positive effect on life satisfaction of both Japanese fathers and working mothers. Parents' values, as well as the ability or inability to live by them, are significant contributive factors to understanding the differences and similarities between mothers' and fathers' lived realities and their differences in life satisfaction.

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