

The man who doesn't raise his children shouldn't be called a "father"?:
The trends of discourse on fatherhood and father's dilemma in Japan

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I. Introduction

Japanese fatherhood has been characterized as preoccupation with work and alienation from family life, especially from relations with children. During the high economic growth period (1955-1973), Japanese 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995) has been constructed through 'salaryman' s' role as a salaried white-collar employee for the company and breadwinner of the family (Dasgupta 2000). Under the condition of lifetime-employment, salaryman fathers have worked very hard to show loyalty to their company and their competence (Vogel 1963). They were away from home until late at night not only because of overtime working but also socializing with bosses, colleagues and clients (Allison 1994).

Although their dedicated way of work has led Japan to achieve miraculous economic growth and brings materially-affluent life to their families, it has alienated Japanese fathers from family life (Ishii-Kuntz 1993). Due to absence from home for most of the day, salaryman fathers tend to have only guest status in the family, as may be discerned from the popular saying in the 1980s –"It's better that husbands are healthy and not at home" (Kersten, 1996). While the strongest bond in Western families is considered to be the one between husband and wife, the Japanese counterpart is the one between mother and children and the father stands away from family bond with his work (DeCoker 2000). According to international surveys in 1990s, Japanese fathers spend least amount of time with children (JAWE 1994).

However, recent political and economic situations have brought pressure on Japanese fathers to change. On the international level, rising global tide of improving women's status is encouraging Japanese state government to advance policies for the promotion of gender equality (Osawa 2000). Rising global free economic competition is eroding the practices of lifetime-employment and seniority-promotion that sustained male-dominant labor market (Yamada 2004). On the domestic level, father's involvement in family life is becoming more expected in order to stop birthrate declining and to disciple children properly (Ishii-Kuntz 2003, Taga 2005). These situations might have brought some changes in Japanese father's attitude and behavior.

This paper examines what kind of effect these changes have had on Japanese fatherhood, by using not only existing statistic data but also qualitative data which I collected through in-depth interviews with fathers. First, I provide a view of main discourses on fatherhood in the postwar Japan. Second, I show general image of

contemporary Japanese fathers, making brief review on statistics, and consider the reason for the gap between attitude and behavior. Third, I focus on diversity among Japanese fathers and illustrate what kind of dilemmas they go through and how they deal with them, using fathers' own accounts.

II . Postwar discourses on fatherhood and socio-economic background

Funabashi (1999) analytically divided fundamental parental responsibility into three roles, 1) "provider," supplying necessary economic resources for the growth of children, 2) "socializer," supporting children to learn social norms and good manners, 3) "carer," helping children by doing what children cannot do. We can understand the trends of Japan's postwar discourses on fatherhood along these lines.

A. Father as provider

One of the main factors that led Japanese people to regard "provider" as father's main role was that the number of employed-worker husbands and homemaker wives increased during the high economic growth period. In most families of farmers and self-employed workers, the wife is also a working staff for family business and plays a role of provider. In the nuclear family which consists of employed father, homemaker mother and underage children, however, the providing responsibility is placed only on the father. According to Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), "The Labour Force Survey," though male employed workers accounted for less than 50% of male workers until the middle of 1950s (when the high economic growth started), they increased to about three fourth (76%) by 1975 (just after the end of the economic growth). The rise of male employee's income level and sexist employment situations prompted young female workers to become housewives after they got married. Employment rates of women in their late twenties and early thirties hit the lowest point (42.6 % and 43.9% for each) in post-war history in 1975. According to former Prime Minister's office, "1972 Survey of Opinions on Women's Issues," more than 80% of respondents supported different familial responsibility between men and women, that is "husband works outside home, wife takes care of the home." Though many of wives who retired in 1970s reentered employment as their children grew, most of them were not able to become full-fledged providers because the job market generally supplied only low-paying part-time jobs for middle-aged women.

In this way, the view which identified fatherhood as being provider had prevailed. According to Ishii-Kuntz's (1993) qualitative survey, which based on in-depth interviews with 20 Japanese couples in 1990, most couples identified fatherhood as being provider. Most part of child socialization and childcare duties are performed by mothers. What is interesting is that fathers did not feel guilty and mothers did not exhibit apparent complaint about these situations.

Even recent years, the influence of the view which identifies fatherhood as being provider is undiminished. Indeed it is exceptional that the discourse of “father as provider” is explicitly put in words. However, this fact is a proof of that the discourse is self-evident for many Japanese rather than that the discourse has lost its influence. We can confirm the influence of the discourse thorough some episodes, such as that a father who is out of employment can not confess the truth to his family members and sets off to parks or cafes with business suites every morning and comes back home in the evening, or that middle-aged men who are walking around residential districts during daylight on weekdays opt to be mistaken as suspicious persons (Tanaka 2005). It is socially taken for granted and even desired for fathers to go out to work and not to hang around home and neighborhood.

B. Father as socializer

While the discourse of “father as provider” is too self-evident to be explicitly put in words, there are some discourses that people eagerly put in words in a quest for desirable images of fathers. Despite the small variations, studies have concluded that there are two main streams in post-war fatherhood discourses which were explicitly put in words in Japan (Nakatani 1999, Nakata et al. 2001, Kodama 2001). They correspond to two of Funabashi’s fundamental parental roles, ‘socializer’ and ‘carer’ for each.

We can identify the discourse of “father as socializer” in as early as 1960s’ literature (Jidōkenkyūkai 1961). Before the end of WWII, father’s authority as a patriarch was defined by former Civil Code. After the defeat in the war, however, Occupying Americans guaranteed equality between men and women by promulgated New Constitution in 1946 and forfeited the legal basis of the father’s authority by amending the Civil Code. In addition, high economic growth prospered manufacturing and service industries and raised the percentage of employed workers who worked long hours a day away from their home place. Against these backgrounds, it was debated how to restore father’s ‘lost’ authority and how to let fathers get involved in socializing children.

In the middle of 1970s, the discourse of “father as socializer” held appeal for greater part of Japanese people (Jidōkenkyūkai 1972, 1976, Yoda and Ogawa 1975). The reason why the discourse attracted many people at that time has been argued variously (Kamitani 1998, Kuroyanagi 2000, Kodma 2001, Nakata et. al 2001) but could be summarized into the following four points. First, “father’s absence” became prominent. While the percentage of male employed workers was further ascending, the percentage of working women was hit the lowest point in the middle of 1970s. This brought people’s concern about the lack of fathers’ influence and ‘excessive’ mothers’ influence on children. Second, Western academic discourses which put a stress on the importance of “paternal” or “instrumental” role for socializing children and

maintaining social order (Parsons 1956, Mitcherlich 1963) were received popularity in Japanese academic circles. Third, through the recognition of “father’s absence” and father’s unique role for socializing children, people began to attribute increased number of juvenile delinquency to the lack of father’s authority and father’s lower involvement in child socialization. Fourth, the economic crisis which was brought by oil shock in 1973 reminded people of uncertainty about employment and prompted to seek complementary father’s roles other than the role of provider.

Since then, the discourse of “father as socializer” has attracted attention every time social anxiety grew. In 1980s, when the frequency of juvenile delinquency marked the third peak of the post war period, popular educational journals featured “father’s role” in socializing children one after another (Jidōkenkyūkai 1983, 1988). In 1990s, against the background of recession after the collapse of “bubble economy” and “increasing number of murderous juvenile crime” in the public mind, influential critics argued the importance of father’s unique role in the socialization of children. Books about fatherhood which takes father’s parenting abilities as essentially different from mother’s parenting abilities (Hayashi 1996, Masataka 2002) hit the best-seller list. It should be noted that, since 1990s, not only educators and educational publications, but also business leaders and popular business magazines (Prejidentosha 1997, Tōyōkeizaishinpōsha 2000) have enthusiastically argued about father’s role. For example, in 1998, *Keizaidantairengōkai* (Federation of Economic Organizations) submitted a report, in which they argued the importance of reviving functions of home education to develop creative human resources, and recommended fathers to actively participate in home education on the ground that fathers are in particular socially experienced (Keizaidantairengōkai 1996).

The discourse of “father as socializer” has close relations with the discourse of “father as provider,” because, in the former discourse, father’s authority and his unique ability for socializing children are assumed to be based on the experiences through jobs. According to aforementioned Ishii-Kuntz’s (1993) study, father’s role as a provider is the main source to assert his authority to children. However, there is also a discrepancy between these two discourses. While the discourse of “father as provider” allows fathers to be absorbed in their job and away from home, the discourse of “father as socializer” expects fathers to come back home and exemplify social norms directly to children. In Ishii-Kuntz’s study, fathers are apt to be absent from home not only because of work constraints but also father’s willingness to keep masculine breadwinner image. For this reason, mothers were able to display factious authoritarian images of fathers to their children and use that imaginary father to discipline children. If father’s authority is constructed and maintained by father’s devotion to work and his distance from family, fathers are likely to face dilemma when they try to play a role of ideal provider and ideal socializer at the same time.

C. Father as carer

Within another type of main discourses on fatherhood, it is assumed that father's parenting abilities are not very different from mothers'. Fathers are expected to be holistically involved in parenting, including baby care and pre-birth arrangement. In conformity to some researchers' manner (Yazawa et. al 2003), I will call this type of discourse "father as carer." The discourse began to get into circulation around 1990. The pervasion of the discourse would be attributed to three kinds of actor, that is, wives, the government and fathers themselves.

First, increasing number of women's labor force participation, especially in their childbearing years, awakened expectations for fathers to get more involved in childcare duties. Although the employment rate of women in their early thirties was 43.9% in 1975, it rose dramatically in less than 30 years and went up to 60.3% in 2003. It is conceivable that the rise of the proportion of wives who keep working and are economically independent strengthens their influence on husbands and prompts husbands to help them with childcare.

Second, the state government, which takes the view that men's greater participation in childcare would reduce the burden on women and encourage them to bear more children, started to prompt fathers to share childcare responsibility. Even after promulgating the Childcare Leave Law in 1991, the government has strengthened the measures for promoting father's involvement in childcare. What drew people's attention most was a poster and TV advertisement campaign by former Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1999, in which popular TV star cradled his child and said, "A man who doesn't raise his children can't be called a father."

Third, some men, rethinking their way of life and seeking liberation from 'traditional' male role-expectation, began to be willing to get involved in household duties including childcare. Though some advocacy groups have taken these actions since about 1980 (Otoko no Kosodate wo Kangaeru Kai 1978, Ikujiren 1989), these practices became more prominent, against the background of economic anxiety after the collapse of "bubble economy" and media attention to *Menzu-ribu* (men's liberation) movement (Menzusenta 1996, Taga 2005).

Although some feminist scholars call the discourse of "father as carer" as "gender equal discourse" (Nakata 2001), it is not always true. On the one hand, the discourse of "father as carer" seems to promote the father to get involved in childcare duties more equally with his wife. The discourse does not assume essentially different abilities of childcare between father and mother, except for only a part of biological functions such as breast-feeding, and expects the father to actively get involved into childcare. In that regard, it is very different from the discourse of "father as socializer," which put emphasis on father-children relationship on 'front stage' and can let father escape from unspectacular but essential aspects of childcare, and press childcare responsibility on mother (Nakatani 1999).

On the other hand, however, the discourse of “father as carer” has possibilities to impose a double-burden only to fathers. The discourse of “father as carer” does not always expect mothers to take active responsibility of the provider. Even within the discourse of “father as carer,” mothers are allowed to escape from the responsibility of the provider. While the saying “the man who doesn’t raise his children can’t be called a ‘father’” is on everybody’s lips, it has not been questioned that the woman who doesn’t provide for her child could be called a mother. There is a tendency that more young women stand up for marital relationships in which the wife can ‘skim off’ the gender division of household duties, for example, “mother puts a priority on childcare over other activities while father balances work and childcare” (Funabashi 2000) or “wife balances housework and leisure activities while husband balances paid-work and housework” (Koseishō 1998) .

Off course, these are not an actual situation but women’s wish. In reality, many wives bear the double-burden of work and housework without getting sufficient help with housework from their husbands. According to MIC, “2001 Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities,” average total time of the day that wives spend on paid-working, housework and childcare is 9 hours 58 minutes, which is 15 minutes longer than the counterpart of husbands. In addition, taking account of current Japan’s employment situation, as being described in detail at the later part of this paper, it would not be reasonable to expect women in general to provide as much income as men in general. However, it would be noteworthy that expecting fathers to take childcare responsibility does not always prompt mothers to take a job, and that increasing requirements on fathers’ childcare responsibility without reducing their providing responsibility could crack fathers under strain.

III. Father’s attitude and performance concerning parenting

A. Fathers’ attitude to parenting

Under the situation in which three different types of discourse on fatherhood are tangled, findings from attitude surveys provide ‘new father’ images, which are very different from stereotyped images of Japanese fathers that are provided in the first section. According to former Prime Minister’s Office, “2000 Opinion Poll on Gender Equality,” Japanese men seem to have strong wish for involvement in family life and parenting. To the question “what is the ideal way of men’s life?,” larger number of men at the age of 20-49 replied “balancing work and family life” rather than replying “give preference to work.” The number of men who agree to the idea of father’s taking childcare leave exceeded those who disagree to the idea, and more than three fourths of men in their twenties and thirties agree to the idea. In addition, more than 90% of men agree to the idea that men should be involved in childcare, socialization and education of children. More than 40% of men in their thirties and forties agree to the idea that

men should be actively involved in those parenting duties. As far as young fathers are concerned, they have relatively strong wish for attending parenting. According to surveys with fathers in their 30s and 40s, conducted in Tokyo in 2001, 77% of respondents replied that fathers had better get involved in childcare as much as work (Yazawa et.al 2003).

B. Father's performance of parenting

Contrary to attitude surveys, findings from surveys on father's actual performance are more likely to provide stereotyped images of Japanese fathers. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), "FY2004 Basic Survey on Employment Management Practice on Female Workers," while 70.6 % of female workers take childcare leave for childbirth, only 0.56% of male workers take childcare leave for wife's childbirth, in spite that more than half the men agree to the idea of father's taking childcare leave.

Regardless of child's age, the amount of time the father spends with his child is much shorter than the mother. According to aforementioned 2001 Survey by MIC, fathers who have small children under 6 years old spend on childcare only 36 minutes in a day while mothers spend 2 hours 34 minutes on average. Even so, the amount of time that fathers spend with his child has become more than double compared to the result of 1996 corresponding survey. There is the same tendency in the case of fathers who have older children. According to the same survey, fathers who have a child at the age of 10-14 spend 2 hours and 35 minutes with his child in a week while mothers 4 hours 1 minute.

Compared to major foreign countries, it is Japan's characteristics that the father spends less time with his children. According to a comparative survey that was conducted with parents who have a child at the age of 0-12 in Japan, Korea, Thailand, USA, France and Sweden in 2005, Japanese fathers spend only 3.1 hours in a day with his child. This is the second lowest score only to Korea (2.8 hours) of six countries (NWECC 2006).

Not only amount of time to spend with children, but also the types of childcare activities to engage are different between Japanese mothers and fathers. According to MHLW, "First Profile Survey on New-Born Children in the 21st Century," we can see that most part of 'care' duties for baby are performed by mothers. Although fathers who "always" take a bath with their child or play with their child at home account for more than half, fathers who "always" change diapers or take their child outside the home account for only about 10 %. Fathers who "seldom" or "never" help their child have meals or put their child in bed account for about half. It is worth noting that the patterns of Japanese father's childcare performance are not very much dependant on mother's job situation (non-working, taking childcare leave and working) (Naikakufu 2003).

According to aforementioned 2000 survey by former PMO, Japanese fathers and mothers tend to perform different roles for parenting. As for “providing income,” 72% of respondents reply “mainly father,” and as for “preparing meals,” 88% of respondents reply “mainly mother.” As for “child discipline,” though about half the respondents reply “both father and mother,” almost the rest of respondents reply “mainly mother” and only 4% of the respondents reply “mainly father.” In this way, generally in Japan, fathers mainly perform the role of “provider” and mothers perform the greater part of the role of “socialization” and most part of the role of “childcare.”

IV. Background of contradiction between attitude and behavior

A. Long working hours

Though greater part of Japanese fathers wish for balancing between work and parenting, they actually take only a small part of parenting. Why is there a discrepancy between father’s attitude and behavior?

As findings from many surveys show, main factor that prevent fathers from performing parenting is long working hours. For example, according to former UFJ Research Institute, “The Survey Research on Child Support,” 72.5% of father and 58.6% of mother choose “too busy with work” as the primary reason why the father cannot get involved in parenting sufficiently (Kōseirōdōshō 2003). According to MIC, “Labour Force Survey,” the male workers’ average working hours represent a gradual reverse U-shape curve that peaks in age group 30-39. About quarter the male workers in these brackets are working for 60 hours or more a week. This means that male workers with small children tend to have longer working hours than those in other age brackets (Naikakufu 2005). The reason why male workers in their thirties tend to work longer is described as that companies have promoted early retirement and restrained newly-employment in order to cut labor cost, and increased the workload of mid-career employees (Kumasawa 2003).

Indeed, the reduction of working hours does not always give raise to fathers’ active involvement in parenting. It is undeniable that why fathers do not get involved in parenting is partly because of a weak sense of responsibility on parenting (Kōseirōdōshō 2003).

However, the findings of some surveys show that for the shorter hours fathers work, for the longer hours fathers take part in parenting. According to aforementioned MIC’s 2001 survey, while mother’s parenting time is decreasing 2 hours 43 minutes, 2 hours 16 minutes and 2 hours in the order corresponding to weekdays, Saturday and Sunday, father’s parenting time is increasing 25 minutes, 58 minutes and 1 hour 12 minutes in the same order.

According to aforementioned survey on new-born children by MHLW, although the patterns of involvement in childcare duties are not very different by working hour

brackets among fathers who work less than 60 hours a week, fathers who work for 60 hours or more a week are involved in childcare duties much less than those in other working hour brackets. In a similar way, Matsuda (2002), who analyzed survey data with mothers who have a preschool child, found that although the patterns of involvement in childcare duties were not very different among fathers who come back home before 9 p.m., the fathers who come back home after 9 p.m. were involved in childcare duties much less than those in other bracket of the come-home time. It seems to be reliable that the reduction of working hours is not always a sufficient condition but a prerequisite for the promotion of father's involvement in parenting.

B. Economic Reason

Under current working conditions in Japan, however, the birth of a child is more likely to increase father's responsibility as a provider and make fathers work harder than ever. Though not only mothers but also fathers are allowed to take childcare leave by law, fathers hardly ever exercise their rights as mentioned before. That is not only because taking childcare leave is considered unmasculine, but also because it is a reasonable choice in terms of maintaining family budget.

Greater part of married female workers is "irregular employees" such as part-timers and temporary workers. According to the 2004 average score of Labour Force Survey by MIC, while the proportion of female regular employees is extremely lower than male counterpart (female 30%, male 70%), the proportion of female part-timer (female 78%, male 22%) and the proportion of female temporary workers (female 57%, male 33%) are extremely higher than each male counterpart. Most of irregular employees are in unstable employment on low wages and are not allowed to take childcare leave. Even so they continue to work after the birth of children by bearing the expenses of childcare-service or baby-sitting, there is lower possibility to get back the expenses by a rise in salary in the future. If her family can manage to live by husband's single salary, it is reasonable choice for most female non-regular workers to quit her job on the occasion of childbirth and devote themselves to childcare duties, except for the case that someone helps with childcare free of charge.

Couples whose wife is a regular employee are under similar conditions, too. There is a great disproportion in wage between men and women even among regular employees. The amount of average wage per one hour for normal working hours of female regular employees is only 68.8% of that of male counterpart in 2004 (Naikakufu 2005). The principal factor that brings wage gap between men and women is an extreme gap in job class between men and women. The proportion of men in managerial positions of private sector in 2004 is 89.0% at the lower managerial level, 95.0% at the middle managerial level and 97.3% at the higher managerial level (Naikakufu 2005). In most companies, regular employees are by regulations allowed to take childcare leave. However, the amount of financial compensation for childcare leave is 40% of basic wage

for ten months at most. If either husband or wife takes childcare leave under these conditions, it is reasonable for most couples that not the husband but the wife takes childcare leave in order to keep household income as high as possible. For couples who can live a decent life by husband's salary and whose wife is unlikely to get reasonable advance in wages and promotion, it would also be reasonable that the wife quits her job on the occasion of child birth. In this way, about 70% of female workers retired on the occasion of the birth of their first child (Naikakufu 2005).

Wife's retirement or her taking childcare leave brings temporary or permanent reduction of family income and imposes heavier responsibility as a provider on the husband. In this way, fathers with small children tend to work harder than ever before not only to comply with employers' wishes but also for family circumstances. In contrast to wish for father's involvement in parenting not only by the wife but the husband himself, the birth of a child binds the father to work. Ironically, the life stage when the wife most eagerly wants her husband to come back earlier is the life stage when the husband less likely to come home earlier.

V. Diverse fatherhood and fathers' dilemma

A. Emergence of diverse fatherhoods

Although general trends of father's attitudes and behaviors are as described above, Japanese fathers are never a homogenous group. Even within the same social stratification, the patterns of father's parental attitudes and behaviors are various.

One of the typical examples which exemplify diversity of contemporary Japanese fatherhood is three types of father's attitudes on the balance between work and parenting provided by Yazawa et. al (2003). In a questionnaire survey conducted to middle-class fathers in Tokyo in 2001, they made questions on ideal father's and mother's attitude to the balance between work and parenting separately. They offered three options for each questionnaire, that is, "give preference to work over parenting," "get engaged in work and parenting equally," and "give preference to parenting over work." Although crossing three options of each question leads to nine categories, 93% of respondent were applied to three categories, that is, "gender role" type (the father gives preference to work; the mother gives preference to childcare), "double standard" type (the father balances work and childcare; the mother gives preference to childcare), and "egalitarian" type (both the father and the mother balance work and childcare).

What is particularly interesting in their findings is that fathers' spending more time with a child does not always bring more sense of satisfaction to fathers. The point is that the degree of fathers' satisfaction is affected by how they interpret their actual performance. For example, the "double standard" type tends to feel lack of time to be involved in childcare more than other two types, even though they spend actually no less time with a child than other types. The "gender role" type has more confidence in

child discipline and enthusiasm for parenting than other two types, even though they in fact spend not as much time with a child as other two types. The reason is assumed as follows. The “double standard” type feels lack of time to be involved in childcare because they cannot be involved in childcare as much as his wife for work constraints or other reasons. However, “gender role” type can avoid a feeling of guilt for the lack of involvement in childcare by being realistic about current situation under which he is obliged to take responsibility mainly on work.

We can confirm similar pictures in findings from my on-going interview research with Japanese male employees since 2004. I will provide some cases corresponding to each type mentioned above.

B. The “double standard” type

Mr. Shimoda (pseudonym, the same shall apply thereafter) is a managing director of a family-run small sign maker with eight employees in Fukuoka. He is in his early thirties and living with his homemaker wife and a 9-month-old daughter. Since the collapse of “bubble economy” in early 1990s, the amount of his work has dramatically increased. The reduction of clients’ budget and price-cutting competition have led him to make good products more quickly but less expensively.

On weekdays, he works in a factory, supervising his subordinates and producing signboard or something by himself from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. After employed workers go back home, he stays alone at the office and does deskwork such as drawing the plan for products and making the estimate, considering how quickly and how less expensively to make products. He returns home about at 8 p.m. at the earliest and sometimes after midnight.

However, if the baby daughter is awake when he comes back, he always gives her a bath and bottle-feeds her, and takes her outside home when she cries at night. On weekends, he makes an effort to do the washing and the cleaning, too.

Work/family conflict? Yes, I’m confronted with it. Both work and family life are important. So I want to make every possible effort for both, but work constraints inhibit doing so. Now the baby has grown and wife became a little better-balanced than before, but she was mentally unstable just after the birth. I have been under strain and exhausted.

Though he takes himself as “traditional type” and embraces the idea that husband takes breadwinner responsibility and wife takes housekeeping responsibility, he is making an effort to help wife with housework and childcare. The reason is that he had seen his mother had been inflicted with taking all the housework and childcare responsibilities since his childhood, and which prompted him to help his wife reduce

the burden of domestic duties.

C. The “gender role” type

In the situation that the father is obliged to work long hours but the mother has more time to spend with a child, it is reasonable that the father does not make an effort to spend as much time with a child as mother but approves gender division of parental responsibilities in order to reduce mental conflict. In general, fathers who correspond to the “gender role” type are satisfied with the relationship with children and their wives do not exhibit dissatisfaction with that, though fathers leave most part of childcare duties to wives (Ishii-Kuntz 1993). For fathers who approve that gender division, “well-balanced relation between work and parenting” means rather just “thinking both work and parenting equally important” than “allocating equal time to work and parenting” or “sharing work and parental responsibilities with the wife equally.”

Mr. Nakahara, who is in his early forties and a mid-level executive of a cell-phone company, lives in Yokohama with a homemaker wife and 23-month-old daughter. He leaves home about at 7 a.m. and comes home after 11 p.m. everyday on weekdays.

Author: Coming back after 11 p.m., you have little chance to take care of a child, don't you?

Nakahara: It's difficult to do that on weekdays. Only on weekends and holidays.

Author: Do you think you keep balance between work and family life?

Nakahara: It is desirable for me to get involved in work and family life at the rate of six-to-four. I think I can do that almost that way.

Author: Are you sure that you take time four out of ten to family life, or?

Nakahara: No, I don't mean time.

D. The “egalitarian” type

Compared to the “double standard” type, fathers who corresponds to the “egalitarian” type are less likely to feel guilty for or dissatisfied with lower involvement in childcare. It is more like that the distress of “egalitarian” fathers is related to how to juggle work and childcare duties.

Mr. Tsuchida, who is in his late thirties, is a math teacher for a private high school in Fukuoka. His wife also works for a Fukuoka branch of one of the Japan's largest insurance company. Everyday on weekdays, he leaves home with 2-year-old and 4-year old daughters about at 7 a.m. and put them at a childcare center on the way to the workplace. In the evening, his wife goes to pick up daughters on the way home. Even after giving lectures, he has a lot to do, such as marking, counseling, coaching club activities, getting in touch with parents, and so on. When he does not have to stay at the school late, however, he comes back home by 6:30 p.m. and does housework and

childcare with wife, and then works until late at home. He often has to attend meetings which are held inside or outside of school in the evening, and sometimes has to go out even in the midnight if students commit acts of delinquency. He talks about difficulties on juggling work and childcare as follows:

As both wife and I have a job, we sometimes can't help but escape from childcare to work with each other. For example, when both of us come back home exhausted and kids say "poo-poo" or "hungry," both of us sometimes pretend not to hear anything, wishing the other partner to take the first action. It always happens to us that we come home frustrated by work, release our anger on kids, and then feel awkward with each other.

For workers who are allowed to work with a certain degree of their own discretion, it is possible to reduce amount of work and allocate more time and energy to childcare. However, making a choice of this way is a kind of challenge to their own masculine identity and likely to make them face with a difficulty because the world of work has been defined as men's world (Ishii-Kuntz 1993). Under the collapse of Japanese employment style (lifetime-employment and seniority-promotion/payment) and the rise of pay-for-performance system, Japanese men are increasingly geared up for working, in order to embody hegemonic masculinity and benefit from male dominant labor market.

Nevertheless, some fathers manage to juggle work and family life and consider the problem philosophically. Mr. Sonoda, in his late thirties, is a chief researcher in a governmental affiliated think-tank. He lives in Tokyo with a wife who is a cabin attendant for international airline, a 10-year-old daughter and 1-month-old son. When wife was on board and stayed abroad, he used to take daughter to and from childcare center and took care of her by himself. He talks recent change of his mind as follows:

When I was a single, I lived a life centering on doing research on favorite subject, but after getting married and having a child, I can't do that any more. I used to feel that I sacrifice myself for my family, because devoting time and energy for family life brings disadvantages for my career prospect under the condition of escalating free-competition. Recently, however, I came to feel grateful to my family that makes me feel the significance of my existence other than job and don't want to do good research at the sacrifice of family life any more. Now I would rather think that the people who can find the significance of one's existence only in job are miserable. The reason I have decided to have the second baby 10 years after the first one was born is the change of mind like that. If you think rationally, you can't make a decision of having children, but rearing children brings you great happiness. Even so, job is still now important for me. Using limited time and

energy, I will make an effort to do the best job.

VI. Conclusion

Compared to other countries, Japanese fathers spend less time with their children and more likely to leave parental duties to wives except for providing income. However, recent political and economic situations require Japanese fathers to rethink their way of life. While the responsibility as a main provider is still being put on fathers, the expectations for fathers to be directly involved in child socialization and childcare are raised. These changes bring conflicts concerning parental responsibility to Japanese fathers. Reactions to the conflicts are various. Some fathers justify insufficient involvement in childcare by affirming gender division of parental responsibilities and thinking that quality matters than quantity in father's parenting. Some fathers make an effort to be "super-dad," taking responsibility as a sole provider and, at the same time, getting involved in childcare and housework as much as possible. Some fathers try to build egalitarian relationship with his wife, making an effort to juggle work and family, or/and struggling with social trend that opts to judge ideal manhood by career prospect.

Whether Japanese fathers become more egalitarian and family-involved, or more authoritarian and absent at home remains in the balance. On the one hand, recent state policy and employment situation seem to encourage Japanese fathers to strike more balance between work and family life. The state government aims to raise birthrate and improve women's social status, and is actively advancing policies to promote father's involvement in parenting. After this century started, the government set up a goal that 10% of men take childcare leave for wife's childbirth and required companies to make action plan for supporting employees' parenting by law. Increasing employment instability under expansion of free economic competition might prompt women to keep working after marriage in order to reduce economic risks and it might prompt fathers to participate in household and childcare duties more than ever.

On the other hand, however, there is a possibility that "traditional" fatherhood comes back to the front. Since around this century started, the voices from conservative intellectuals and politicians who lament individualization and collapse of "traditional" family has become louder and backlash to feminism and gender equal policy has become prominent (Hayashi 2005, Nishio and Yagi 2005). Increasing employment instability might make fathers cling to a job in order to take responsibility as a provider, and pull them away from family life. The way Japanese fatherhood to go is to be under observation.

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