

# Chapter 5

## Parental Perceptions of the Child Rearing Network

## **1. Mother social interaction in child-rearing**

### **1. The Children's native language and cultural background**

In multicultural, multiethnic countries with a long history of child care such as the USA and Australia, child-care institutions strongly consider whether a child has a non-English speaking background or not. Although there are many significant factors in child-care, it is felt that the child's native language and cultural background are the most important.

Language is an issue involving the entire family. In the last chapter, we found that parents, who have lived in Japan for only a short period and are not proficient in Japanese or accustomed to the Japanese way of life, have difficulties dealing with child-rearing and communicating with preschool teachers.

### **2. The Relationship between parent Japanese proficiency and duration of residency based on the amount of social interaction with other parents and care-givers involved in child-rearing**

Even if born, raised in Japan, and fluent in Japanese, many Japanese mothers find child-rearing stressful and are reluctant to socialize with others during child-rearing. Regardless of nationality, one's personality, awareness of child-rearing and behavioral style are crucial elements in dealing with other parents during child-rearing.

Thus, six items concerning social and behavioral tendencies, with four levels of evaluation, were asked regarding the awareness of dealing with others involved in child-rearing. The measures were based on replies such as "I can easily join a group of parents who are talking together," "I feel rather stressed when interacting with other parents and children," "I easily become friendly with other people whom I do not know very well."

The calculated results of all six questions, called "*Interacting socially while dealing with others involved in child-rearing: (Active and affiliation tendency)*," were divided in equal ratios into two groups, high-scoring parents, and low-scoring parents.

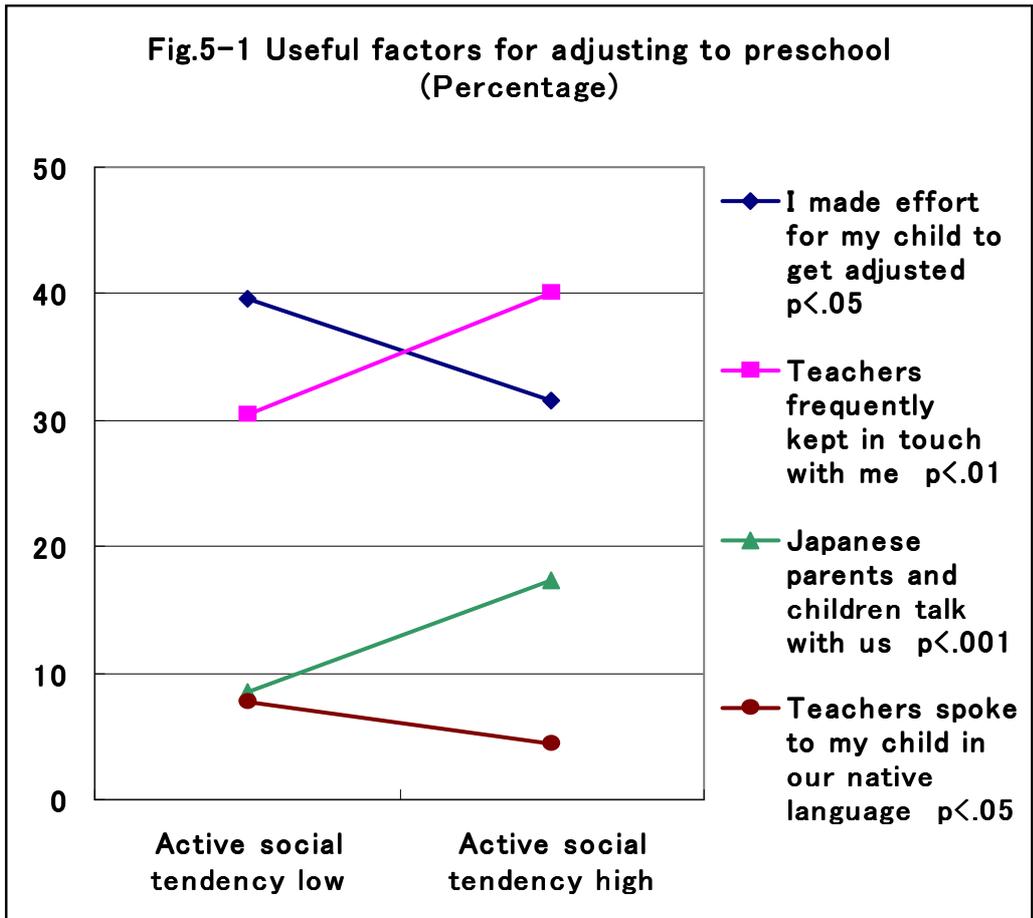
We examined the relationship between the degree of "Interacting socially while dealing with others involved in child-rearing," and parent Japanese proficiency and duration of residency by multiple regression analysis. The results showed that the greater the degree of interacting socially with other parents, the greater the parent Japanese proficiency.

### **3. Useful factors for getting adjusted to preschool (Fig. 5-1)**

We compared what mothers who interacted socially actively and those who did not gave as useful for getting accustomed to preschool.

Social active mothers appreciated the interaction of the people around them, and often commented, "I had close contact with the teacher" or "Japanese parents and children often talked with us." Less social active mothers, however, attributed to their effort and said "We were on our own," which indicates the necessity of more communication and special attention from preschool teachers.

These mothers also felt it was helpful if "The teacher spoke their native language." The finding suggested that it is necessary for teachers to give special consideration for foreign mothers and that they hope for more of it.



N=828

**4. Parent perceptions of preschool life and child-rearing (Fig. 5-2)**

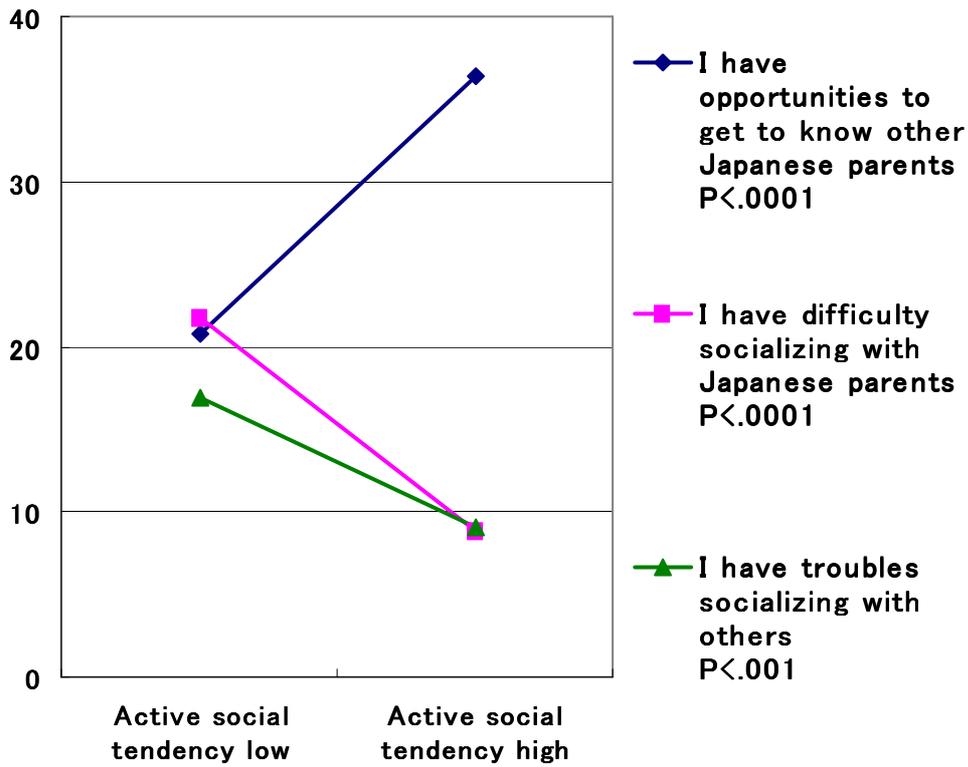
**Relationships with teachers (Fig. 5-3)**

We compared the pluses and minuses of having children attending preschool and the amount of communication with teachers between the social active and less active mothers.

Social active mothers tried to communicate with teachers, were willing to participate in all preschool activities, and joined parent associations.

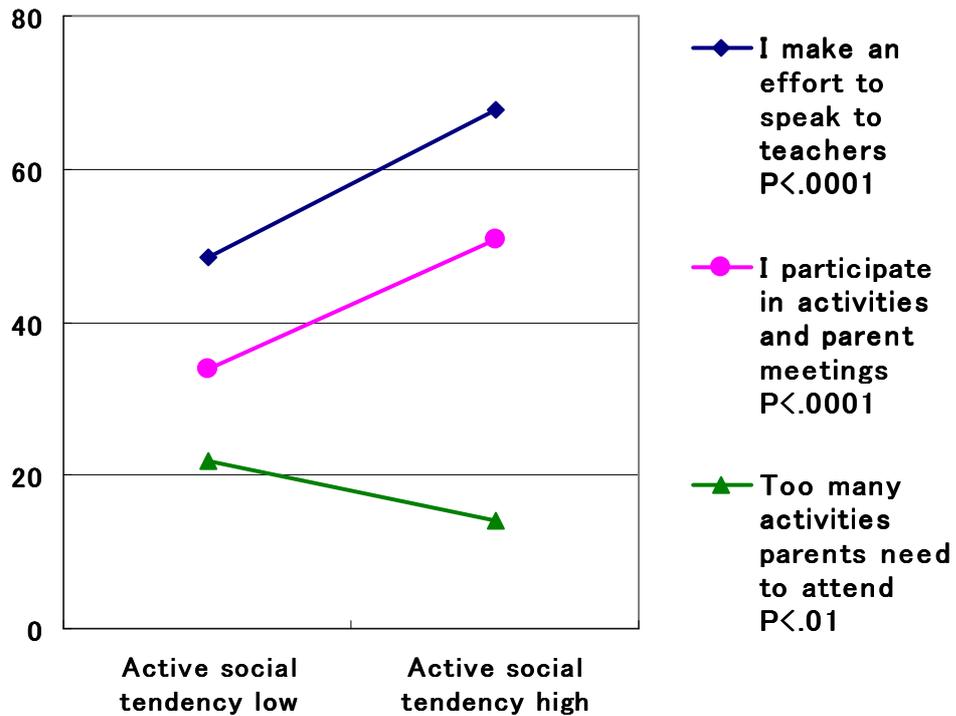
On the contrary, less social active mothers found it stressful to socialize with Japanese parents and participate in activities, and in some serious cases they had difficulty socializing with others.

**Fig.5-2 Parent perceptions of child daily preschool life (Percentage)**



N=828

**Fig.5-3 Communicating methods between parents and teachers (Percentage)**



N=828

## **5. Child social interaction and adjustment to preschool (Fig. 5-4, Fig. 5-5)**

For every parent, whether their child can get along well with other children is a main concern. In the last chapter, “Socialization of the children”, we were able to see from the comments made how the parents felt towards their children and their relationship with other parents.

Likewise, in our preliminary research of Japanese mothers, “getting along with other children” was ranked as their second most concern. Due to many families having fewer children these days, opportunities for parents to meet other parents are limited, so they are usually with the same few parents. As a result, when their children have trouble getting along with other children, this usually develops into a problem of getting along with the parents as well.

From this perspective, we examined the interaction tendencies of the mothers, their children’s relationship with other children, how much they became accustomed to their preschool, if their children were very well adjusted to their preschool, and if they got along with Japanese friends and friends from their native country.

It is also found that socially active mothers were not very concerned about “whether their children were getting along with other children” or “being bullied”.

## **6. Concerns that their children cannot get along with other children**

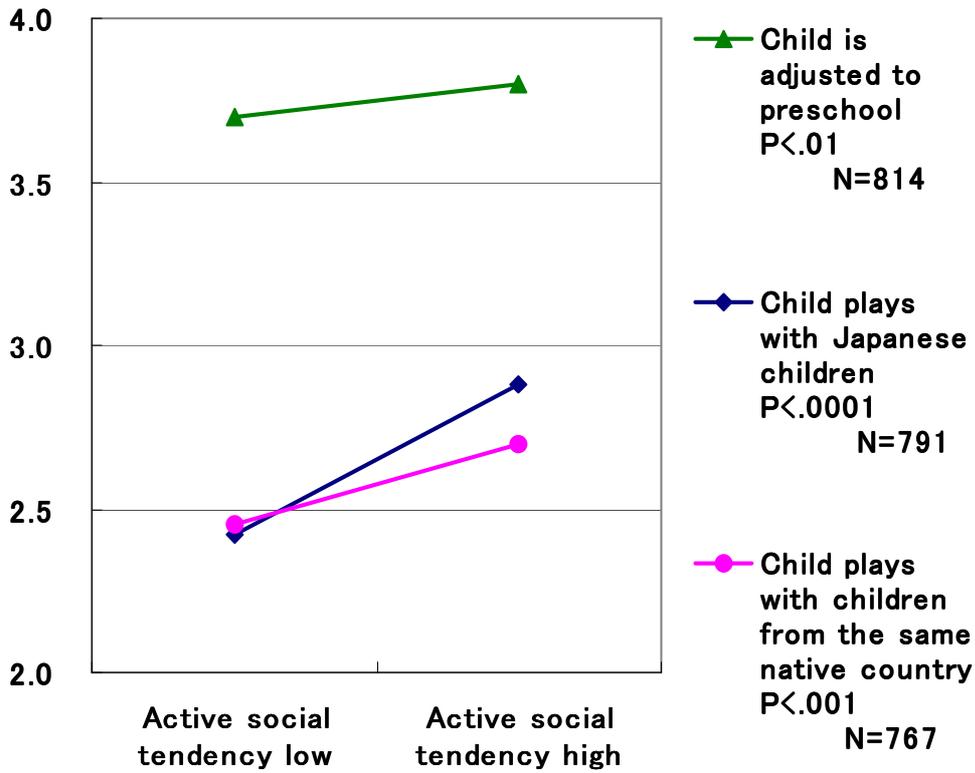
In the free comments on children and socializing, we saw that there were some common concerns among the parents.

Many were concerned that their children’s Japanese proficiency was not good enough and that they might be left out of the group. The next most concern was that their children were being discriminated against because of being foreigners. Many of the parents thought that their children were introverted, and thus it took time for them to make friends or get accustomed to preschool.

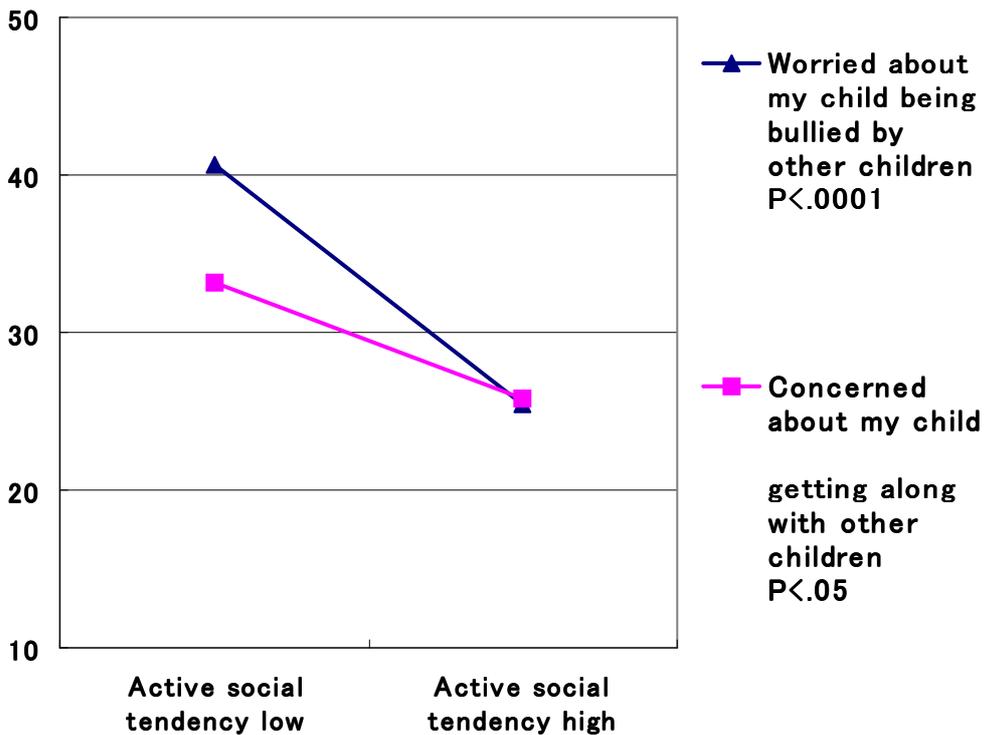
When the parents have a busy work life, they feel it is a burden to have social relationships with other families, as can be seen in the following comment, “If I didn’t participate in preschool activities, my child would become isolated, so I participate in them, but it is a burden for some parents.” There were other comments such as “since I don’t have many friends, I worry that my child will not be able to make friends,” and “Japanese parents are careful not to bother others, but they are also not so friendly, so it is difficult to become friends with them.”

Association with other parents through child rearing is affected by parent personality traits, so when considering improvement in the social relations of multi-cultural parents and children, it is urgently important to have community psychological counseling facilities available.

**Fig.5-4 Child socialization and adjustment to preschool (Mean)**



**Fig.5-5 Child relationships with friends (Percentage)**



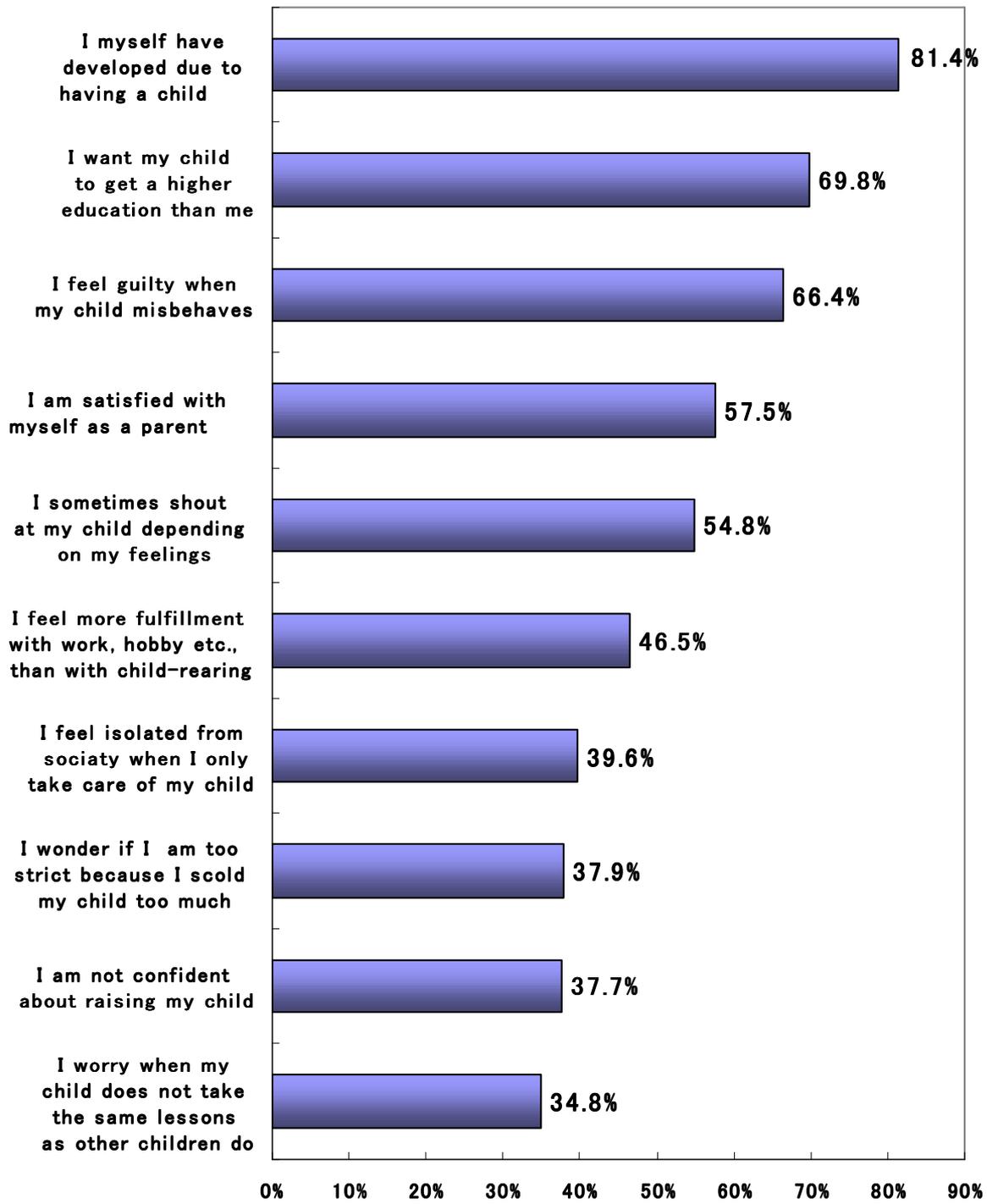
## 2. Parent perceptions of child-rearing life

### 1. Perceptions of child-rearing life (Fig. 5-6)

Parents replied to eighteen items on how they felt towards raising their child in Japan, on a scale of 1 (not true) to 4 (very true). Figure 5-6 shows the results of the replies that were, “very true and rather true.” The most selected was “I myself have developed due to having a child” (81.4%). Following this, other replies were “I want my child to get a higher education than me” (69.8%), “I feel guilty when my child misbehaves (66.4%),” and “I am satisfied with myself as a parent” (57.5%). Two out of the main four replies were those that the parents evaluated positively. Summarizing the ten most selected items, many parents feel positive about themselves, but they also have high expectations for their child’s academic future and have a strong, positive attitude towards education and are anxious about it.

Consistent with the free comments, many parents strongly felt that the Japanese education and preschool system needed to be improved compared with those of their native countries.

**Fig. 5-6 Parent perceptions of child-rearing life  
(very true +rather true)**



N=2,002

## **2. The ten main selected items according to parent nationality (Table 5-1, 5-2)**

Concerning the item “I myself have developed due to having a child”, the ranking differed among nationalities. Chinese, South Korean, Japanese, Brazilian and American chose it as their first ranked, while those of Thai and Peruvian ranked it second, and those of Vietnamese ranked it fourth.

The item “I want my child to get a higher education than me” came in second in the overall rating, and approximately 90% of the parents of Thai, Vietnamese, and Peruvian chose it as their top ranking. Over 80% of Taiwanese, Chinese and North Korean parents chose “I feel guilty when my child misbehaves” as their second.

Although the number of parents of each nationality differed, there was a great disparity among the Brazilian, Peruvian, American and Filipino parents.

Table 5-1 Parent perceptions by nationality (10 most selected)

Overall rating N=1,836 (number of parents)	Chinese 549	Taiwanese 64	South Korean 314	North Korean 40	Japanese 287	Filipino 189
1. I myself have developed due to having a child	①89.8	①93.8	①89.8	①97.5	①92.0	②67.7
2. I want my child to get a higher education than me	③77.4	③65.6	③65.9	③55.0	③71.1	①77.2
3. I feel guilty when my child misbehaves	②83.2	②87.5	②79.6	②85.0	②74.2	④47.1
4. I am satisfied with myself as a parent	⑦55.0	⑦59.4	⑥51.6	⑤40.0	⑦53.3	①77.2
5. I sometimes shout at my child due to my mood	④65.8	④64.1	④57.3	⑤40.0	④66.9	③60.8
6. I feel satisfied with work, hobby etc., more than with child care	⑥60.3	⑧56.3	⑤56.1	④52.5	⑥54.0	⑩19.0
7. I feel isolated from society when I only take care of my child	⑤64.8	⑨53.1	⑨37.9	⑩22.5	⑤54.4	⑮5.8
8. I wonder if I am too strict because I scold my child too much	⑩45.9	⑥60.9	⑦43.9	⑨32.5	⑨45.3	⑧28.0
9. I am confident about raising my child	⑨48.1	⑤62.5	⑧40.1	⑥35.0	⑧48.4	⑬12.2
10. I worry when my child does not take the same lessons as other children do	⑧51.9	⑬28.1	⑪36.0	⑫12.5	⑩38.7	⑨23.8

Table 5-2 Parent perceptions by nationality (10 most selected)

Overall rating N=1,836 (number of parents)	Brazilian 65	Thai 50	Vietnamese 36	Peruvian 33	American 29	Others 180
1. I myself have developed due to having a child	①96.9	②82.0	④63.9	②78.8	①89.7	①81.7
2. I want my child to get a higher education than me	②87.7	①90.0	①88.9	①84.8	②69.0	②73.3
3. I feel guilty when my child misbehaves	⑧44.6	④72.0	③72.2	⑤39.4	⑤31.0	④49.4
4. I am satisfied with myself as a parent	③86.2	④72.0	②80.6	③75.8	①89.7	③72.2
5. I sometimes shout at my child due to my mood	⑬24.6	③78.0	⑥47.2	⑤39.4	④37.9	⑥36.7
6. I feel satisfied with work, hobby etc., more than with child care	⑤66.2	⑩28.0	⑫16.7	⑥27.3	③48.3	⑤41.1
7. I feel isolated from society when I only take care of my child	⑪32.3	⑪22.0	⑬13.9	⑩12.1	⑥20.7	⑩22.8
8. I wonder if I am too strict because I scold my child too much	⑥50.8	⑦40.0	⑧36.1	⑦24.2	⑨10.3	⑨24.4
9. I am confident about raising my child	④67.7	⑨32.0	⑩33.3	⑦24.2	⑦17.2	⑦26.1
10. I worry when my child does not take the same lessons as other children do	⑫27.7	⑥44.0	⑤58.3	⑧21.2	⑩6.9	⑪17.2

% (number)

### 3. Mother child-rearing anxieties

#### 1. Expectations and concerns for their children

When raising children, mothers feel a sense of satisfaction along with a sense of expectation and concern regarding their children's future.

In this research, the findings showed that positive items such as "I want my child to get a higher education than me" and such concerns as "I feel concerned if my child does not take the same private lessons as other children do" and "I wonder if I am forcing my child to take private lessons or practice thing he/she is not interested in" were strongly interrelated.

We compared the parents who replied negatively, "a little true or not true at all", concerning items such as "I feel more fulfillment with my work, hobby, circle of friends, sports, religion, etc, than with child-rearing", "I myself have developed due to having a child" and "I am satisfied with myself as a parent," and those that replied positively "very true" and "rather true". We then examined the child rearing anxieties that mothers who are insecure have concerning child rearing.

#### 2. Child-rearing concerns (Fig. 5-7)

The items of child rearing were divided into 5 parental categories based on the point of view of mothers who are insecure about child rearing. The first category is "*Negative treatment*". Examples would be hitting their children without meaning to, scolding their child due to their feelings or scolding them too much.

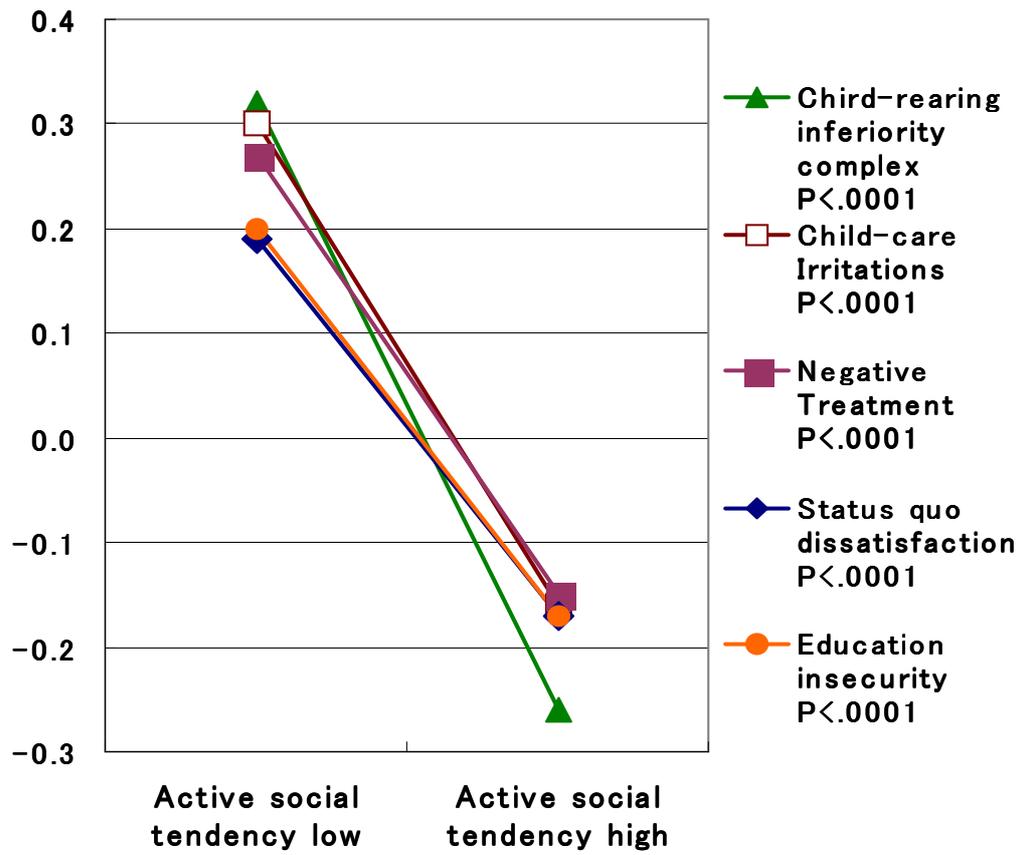
The next category is "*Education anxiety*" such as worrying whether or not they are forcing their child to take private lessons and expecting a better education. The third category concerns the "*Child-rearing inferiority complex*". The fourth category is parents who feel "*Status quo dissatisfaction*" such as being unsatisfied with themselves or with the fact that they spend all of their time with their child and feel isolated from society.

For the fifth category, "*Child-care irritants*," concerns parents who feel irritated since they think it is a burden to raise children and feel a great sense of unease or terror. It can be said that mothers in this group need special psychological counseling.

It is true that for many parents, raising their child in Japan where the culture is different from theirs can be difficult and confusing. This is especially true for parents who are poor in communicating socially with others involved in child raising, and their concerns were significantly greater than those who are good at it.

In our study, it became evident that mother personality traits greatly affect child-rearing concerns, and we also saw that regardless of nationality, many of the mothers who felt it was a burden to socialize with other parents and children had become pessimistic about child rearing. This implies that since both teachers and parents with children attending preschool lead very busy lives, that additional assistance such as a social child care support system is necessary for mothers who are greatly concerned about child rearing.

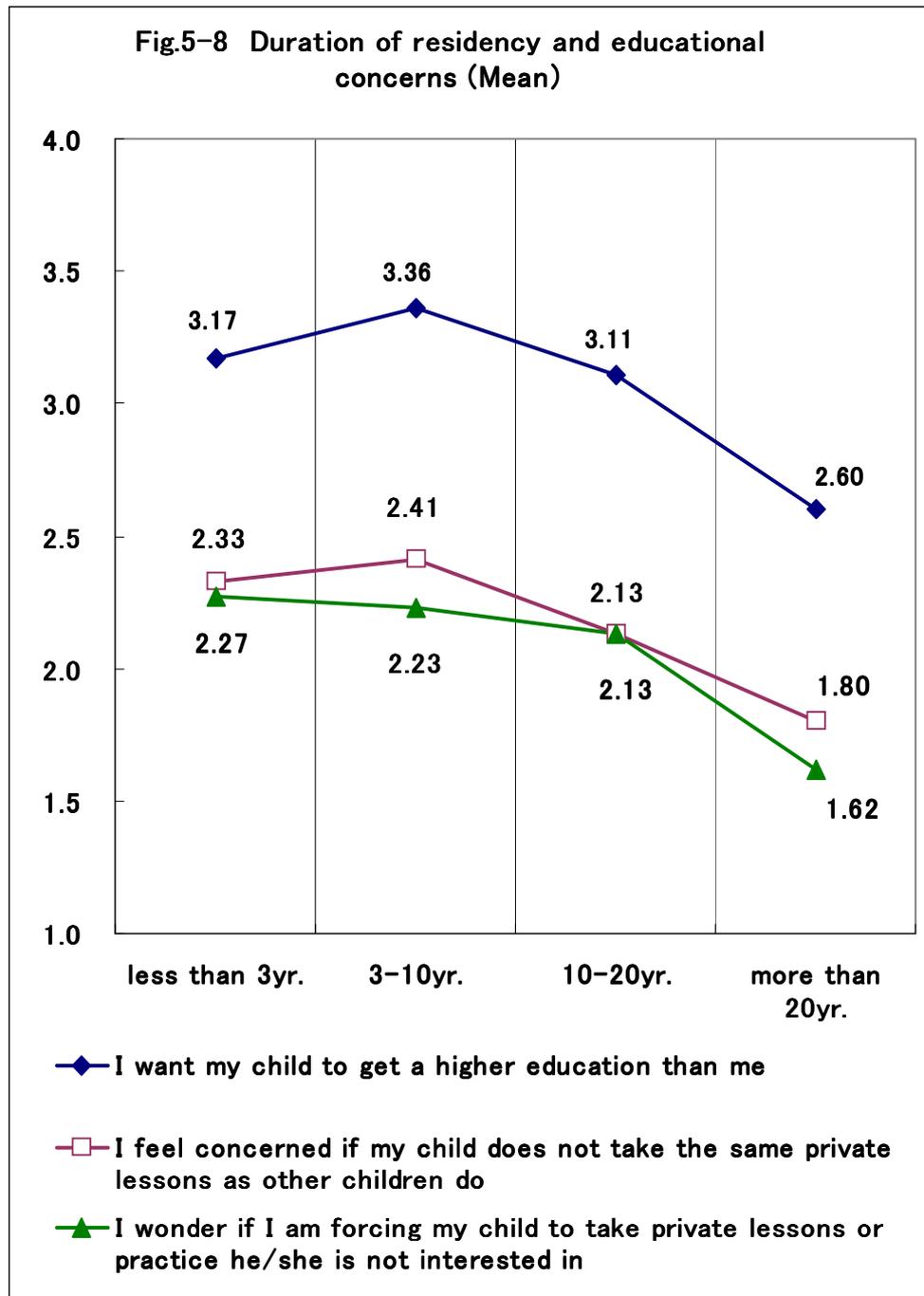
**Fig.5-7 Child-rearing Anxieties (Mean)**



### 3. Duration of residency and educational concerns (Fig 5-8)

We also compared items such as “I want my child to get a higher education than me”, “I feel concerned if my child does not take the same private lessons as other children do” and “I wonder if I forcing my child to take private lessons or practice things he/she is not interested in,” with duration of residency. As shown in Figure 5-8, the longer the parents have lived in Japan, the less they are concerned. However, “I want my child to get a higher education than me” and “I feel concerned if my child does not take the same private lessons as other children do” were the highest ranked among parents who have lived in Japan for 3 to 10 years.

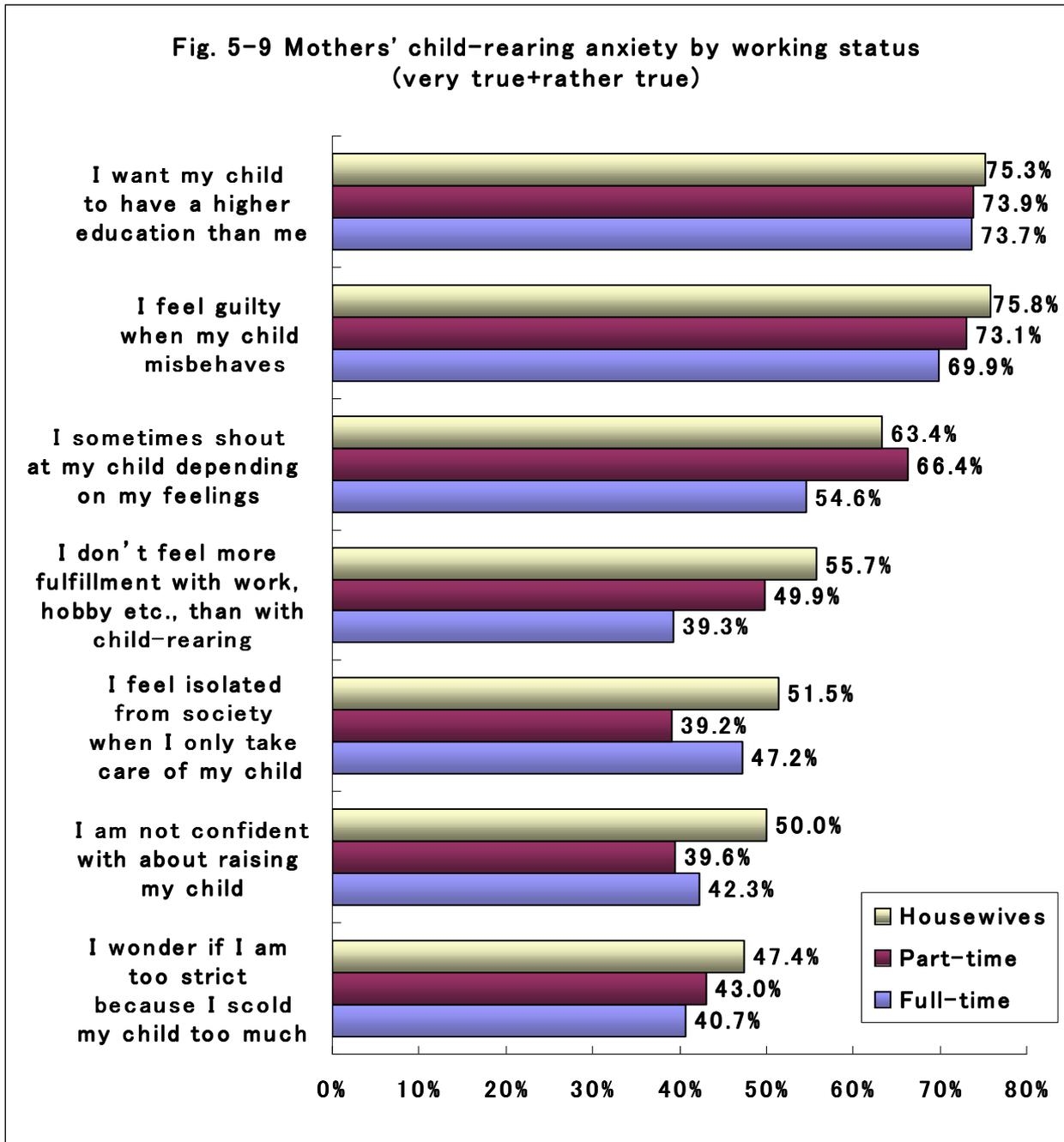
Breaking this down by nationality, we see that a significant number of parents were from Brazil, Thailand, Peru and Vietnam. It is assumed that this has to do with the high levels of “*Education anxiety*” in Table 5-2.



#### 4. Working status and child-rearing concerns (Fig. 5-9)

The main items in this section were child discipline, education, dissatisfaction with present life, and guilty feelings about scolding their child. When we examined these by working status, there were no differences regarding “I want my child to have a higher education than me.” In general, the housewives were more concerned about all the factors, whereas a significant number of the part-time workers said that their main concern was that “I sometimes shout at my child depending to my feelings.”

It was particularly noticeable that many working mothers remarked, “Since I am exhausted because of my job and housework, I get angry with my child and I later regret it.”



## Column: International comparison of mother child-rearing concerns

Of the total parents, a majority of the parents in this survey were Chinese. The questionnaire was conducted with Chinese mothers residing in China<sup>1</sup>, Chinese mothers residing in Japan<sup>2</sup>, and Japanese mothers residing in Japan<sup>3</sup>. A comparison of the mothers is shown in Figure 5-10.

The replies were calculated on a scale of 1 (not true) to 4 (very true), as shown in Figure 5-10. Chinese mothers residing in China ranked "Expectations for their child's education" first (3.59). Second, they selected "It's my fault when my child misbehaves." Chinese mothers residing in Japan also ranked them first and second. The boxed numbers are the replies with the highest percentage in that particular group.

One factor may be that Chinese mothers in their thirties were unable to get an education due to the Cultural Revolution while they were students. Moreover, the social background of their parents and relatives may be creating high expectations for their "only child" as a valuable human resource in the present free-market economy.

The Japanese mothers' main concern was "I sometimes shout at my child depending on the mood I am in" and ranked fourth, "I sometimes hit my child without meaning to," and fifth, "I wonder if I am too strict because I scold my child too much."

The results for the Chinese mothers residing in Japan, were similar to those of the Chinese mothers residing in China, up to the fifth ranked. They also had the same concerns as those which the Japanese mothers ranked high, while Chinese mothers residing in Japan were somewhere in between.

### Footnotes:

1. Yamaoka, T. 2000 Survey on child-rearing anxiety and child-rearing information in China N=455
2. Chinese mothers residing in Japan ; Including Chinese parents or mothers with Japanese nationality who responded using a Chinese questionnaire N=565
3. Yamaoka, T. 2000 Survey on child-rearing anxieties and child information (in Japan) N=1,704 (See page a summary of "Survey of Japanese mothers")

**Fig.5-10 International comparison of mothers' child-rearing anxieties (Mean)**

