

# Chapter 7

## Profiles of the Parents

## 1. Characteristics of the children

### 1. Gender

52.8% of the children in this survey were boys and 47.2% were girls

### 2. Age

The average age of the children was 3.5 years old. As shown in the Summary (P.4), 3.0% of the total was less than one year, 9.5% were 1 year olds, 15.0% were 2 year olds, 19.8% were 3 year olds, 20.2% were 4 year olds, 23.5% were 5 year olds, 7.9% were 6 year olds, and 1.1% was 7 year olds. 60% of the total was children between the ages of 3 to 5.

### 3. Birth order

62.1% of the total was the eldest child, 28% were the second child and 9.9% were the third child. The children's average age by their birth order was 5.5 years old for the eldest child and 3.8 years old for the second child.

### 4. Number of children and other family members

The average number of children in each family was 1.73 persons (SD=0.08). The number of children from the 11 different nationalities was as follows:

Japanese: 1.74 children (SD=0.80)

Chinese: 1.52 children (SD=0.63)

Taiwanese: 1.81 children (SD=0.71)

South Korean: 1.94 children (SD=0.94)

North Korean: 2.28 children (SD=0.94)

Thailand : 1.74 children (SD=0.74)

Filipino : 1.96 children (SD=0.96)

Vietnamese: 1.82 children (SD=0.77)

Brazilian: 1.55 children (SD=0.77)

Peru: 1.57 children (SD=0.57)

USA: 1.83 children (SD=0.91)

Since all of the North Korean parents had lived in Japan for more than 20 years, we assumed that their data would be similar to that of the Japanese. However, we found out that the number of children was 2.28, which was the highest among all the countries. The Chinese had the lowest number of children with 1.52 children.

The average number of family members that they lived with was 3.85 people (SD=1.12) . Regarding the percentage of 3 generations living together, the highest was living with the husband's mother (4.5%).

### 5. Child duration of residency (Fig 7-1)

19.3% of the children had lived in Japan for 3 years, 18.1% for 5 years, 17.9% for 2 years, and 16.5% for 4 years. When we compare this distribution with the distribution of the children's ages, we see that they are similar.

**6. Children attending preschool and their class level (Fig 7-2)**

97.7% of the children attended preschool and 2.3% did not. Out of the children that did, 93.1% attended a day-care center and 6.9% attended a kindergarten.

Children between the ages of 3 to 5 years old attended either a day-care center or kindergarten. If we examine the percentage by age, we see that 16.9% of the 3 year olds went to day-care centers and 1.1% went to kindergartens, 18.8% of the 4 year olds went to day-care centers, 2.0% went to kindergartens, 20.4% of the 5 year olds went to day-care centers and 3.1% went to kindergartens. Figure 7-2 shows all of the years from day-care center to kindergarten for children between the ages of 3 to 5. We found a similar distribution for age.

Since 93.1% of the children attending preschool go to day-care centers and there are children who are less than 1 year old, the results of the questionnaire mainly indicate the circumstances at day-care centers.

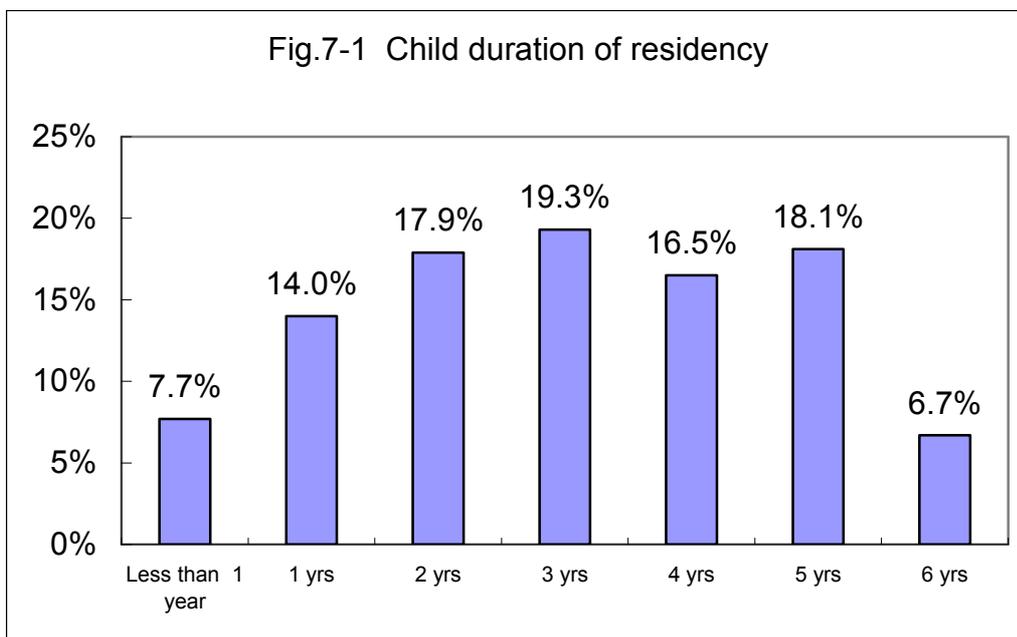
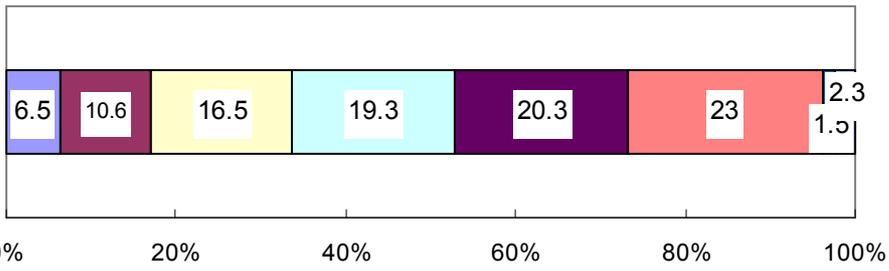


Fig. 7-2 Child class level



- Day-care center, less than 1 year class
- Day-care center, 1 year class
- Day-care center, 2 year class
- Kindergarten nensho, 3 year class
- Kindergarten nencho, 4 year class
- Kindergarten nencho, 5 year class
- Elementary school
- Unidentified

## **2. Parent Characteristics**

### **1. Parent Age**

Figure 7-3 shows the age of the parents. The age group with the highest percentage was 37 years old for fathers and 30 years old for mothers, followed by the 32 years old age group. The average age for fathers was 37.1 years old and 33.4 years old for mothers. As a whole, there was not a big difference compared to the Japanese parents, but it is notable that 6.6% of the fathers were more than 50 years old.

### **2. Parent relationship to the children**

As was mentioned in the Summary, the relationship of those surveyed to the children was that 83.2% were mothers, 16.0% were fathers, and 0.8% was relatives. There were many families where the parents were of different nationalities, and there were cases in which the mothers were Japanese and fathers were of a different nationality so the questionnaires were distributed to the mothers.

### **3. Parent nationality (Summary Table 1-3)**

The nationalities shown in the “Summary” are the main 11 nationalities together with the other nationalities that parents are from. The parents’ are from more than 65 nationalities in Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, Europe, Africa and the Americas. The nationalities the highest percentage in order were Chinese (28.5%), South Korean (15.8%), Japanese (14.7%), Filipino(10.2%), Taiwanese (3.2%), Brazilian (3.2%), Thailand (2.5%), Peru (2.0%), North Korean (2.0%), Vietnamese (2.0%), the USA (1.5%), and others (16.9%). 6.4% were families in which both the parents were Japanese, but this includes cases in which both parents had acquired Japanese nationality after coming to Japan or those in which one of them was a native Japanese and the other acquired Japanese nationality after marriage. Although the parent may have Japanese nationality, there were cases where some completed the questionnaire in Chinese, and some were descendants of Chinese parents who had been stranded in Japan during the war, so Japanese is not their native language.

#### **1) Cross-cultural marriages and parent nationality**

36.1% of the fathers were Japanese, and 29.7% of their spouses were a different nationality. 22.5% of the mothers were Japanese, and 16.1% of their spouses were a different nationality. As a result, the total percentage of cross-cultural marriages between the Japanese and non-Japanese was 45.8%. When the fathers were Japanese, 10.4% of the wives were Chinese, 9.2% Filipinos, 6.4% Japanese, 3.6% South Korean, 2.4% Thailand, and 2.4% Taiwanese. When the mothers were Japanese, 6.4% of the husbands were Japanese, 3.8% Chinese, 2.2% U.S.A, and 2.0% South Korean.

#### **2) Mono-cultural marriages**

The highest percentage for families in which both parents were the same nationality, was Chinese (18.5%), followed by South Korean (11.6%) and Japanese (6.4%).

#### **4. Parent working status**

##### **1) Parent working status (Table7-2)**

As it was shown in Table7-2, 45.5% of the parents surveyed were full-time workers, 43.3% were part-time workers, and 11.3% were housewives/husbands. Comparing the mothers and fathers, more fathers worked full-time, more mothers worked part-time and there were more housewives than househusbands. When we look at their duration of residency, we see that the percentages of the fathers and mothers working full-time increased as the number of years they had lived in Japan increased. The percentage of part-time workers was constant for the mothers, staying in the 40% to 50% range throughout all the years, but the percentage of the fathers working part-time decreased as their years in Japan increased.

##### **2) Parent occupation (Table7-3, 4)**

The parent occupations are shown in Table7-3, 4. When examining these Tables, keep in mind if the parents surveyed are mothers, the spouses are the “fathers,” and vice versa. If we compare the occupations of the mother with their duration of residency, we find that the percentage of them working as self-employed workers, company workers, sales or service employees increased along with their duration of residency. On the other hand, the longer they had been in Japan, the less they had been technicians, laborers, researchers, students, housewives or unemployed. For the fathers, the longer they had lived in Japan, the greater the number of company employees and the fewer the number of them having their own profession, being a student or researcher, unemployed or househusband. Compared with the mothers, a higher percentage of the fathers worked as company employees, although their duration of residency was shorter, and a higher percentage were students or researchers if their duration of residency was less than 3 years.

#### **5. Language environment (Summary, Table7-3, 4)**

The languages used at home and the Japanese proficiency of the parents are shown in the Summary. Almost 80% of the parents felt that they have a good command of Japanese, and the longer they had lived in Japan, the more Japanese they use. Also, more Japanese was spoken in homes in which the parents were of different nationalities compared to those who were married to a person from the same nationality. Table 7-1 shows the percentages of which languages the questionnaires were completed in.

#### **6. Parent Duration of Residency (Table 7-5, 6)**

Excluding those who had lived in Japan for more than 20 years, the average duration of residency was 7.4 years (SD3.83 years.) Parent duration of residency is also discussed in the Summary (P.6). When asked how many more years they expected to live in Japan, 39.8% replied “forever,” while 10.8% replied “a few more years” and 49.4% answered “undecided.” Those that answered “a few more years,” estimated they would be staying for an average of another 4.6 years. By nationality, Thai parents replied 9.5 years, the Filipinos 8.0 years, Chinese 6.6 years, Japanese

6.3 years, Taiwanese 6.0 years, Brazilian 3.8 years, the USA 3.4 years and South Korean 3.0 years.

As we can see from Table 7-5, the number of respondents replying “forever” increased and those replying “for a few more years” decreased as their years of residency increased. Reasons for living in Japan were “I got married” (32.2%), “to work” (25.5%), “to take care of my family” (13.3%), “I was born here” (11.1%) and “to study”(5.9%). When Table 7-6 was examined to find out if there were any differences in the rankings by residency in Japan, 82.6% of those who had lived in Japan for more than 20 years replied, “I was born here,” which was very different than those who had lived in Japan for less than 20 years.

The ranking for foreign parents who had lived in Japan for less than 20 years was “to work,” “I got married,” “to take care of my family,” and “to study” for residency of less than 3 years, but for residency of 3~10 years and 10~20 years, the ranking was “I got married,” “to work,” “to take care of my family” and “to study.” From this, it can be said that the main reason for those who had lived in Japan for more than 3 years was that they had gotten married.

## **7. Parent duration of residency and their Japanese proficiency**

In order to analyze the results in this research, we divided the parent duration of residency into 4 groups: 0~3 years, 3~10 years, 10~20 years and more than 20 years. According to whether the foreign parents are proficient in Japanese or not, we can assume that the way they deal with the problems they face and the degree of concern they feel in Japan differs. This is one way to analyze the replies of the multicultural families. As Japanese proficiency and years of residency may differ, there may be parents who are good in Japanese although they have lived in Japan for only a short time, but usually proficiency increases as years of residency increases. If parents understand more about the Japanese system as residency increases, duration of residency can also be used as a way to analyze replies. We examined years of residency and their Japanese proficiency using the  $\chi^2$  formula. It showed that a significant standard that was below 0.01%, as parents felt that the shorter the residency, the lower their Japanese proficiency ( $\chi^2(9) = 570.30, p < .0001$ )

Fig. 7-3 Parent age distribution

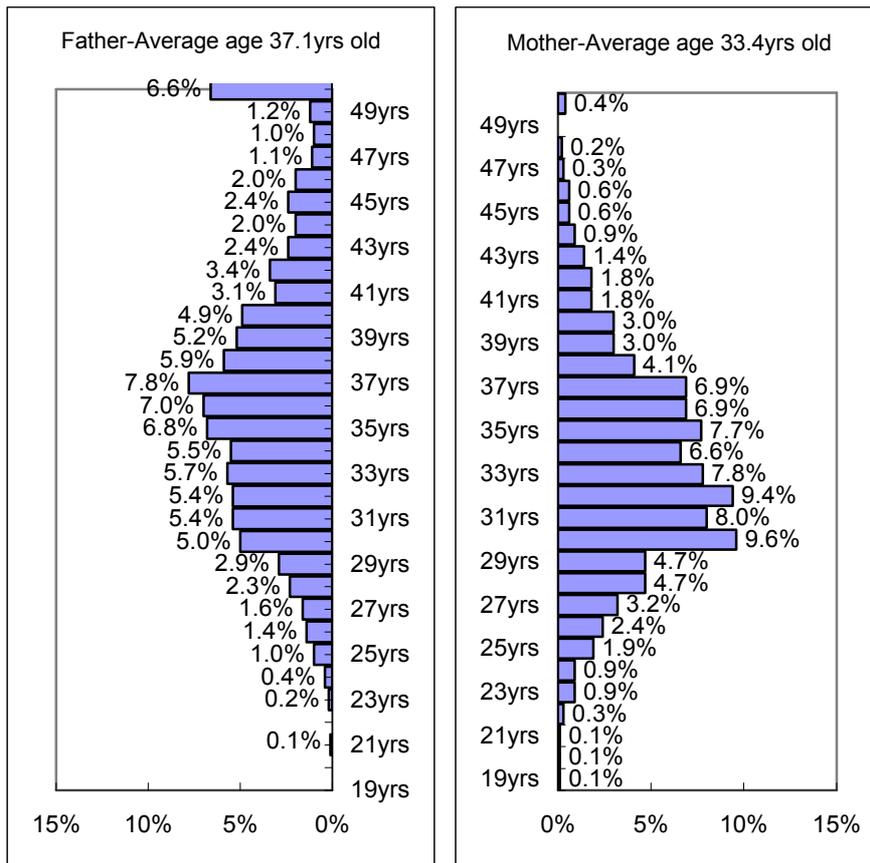


Table 7-1 Languages used for the questionnaires

Language Used	Number of Peop	%
Japanese	575	29
Chinese	552	28
Japanese with <i>kana</i>	211	11
Korean	174	8.7
Tagalog	159	7.9
English	126	6.3
Portuguese	67	3.3
Spanish	48	2.4
Vietnamese	46	2.3
Thai	34	1.7
Cambodian	9	0.4
Laotian	1	0
Total	2002	100

Table 7-2 Respondent working status

	Mothers				Fathers				Total
	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	
Full-time	30.5%	36.1%	41.8%	43.1%	66.7%	81.8%	92.1%	91.3%	45.5%
Part-time	41.6%	50.4%	49.5%	47.7%	25.6%	16.1%	7.9%	4.3%	43.3%
Unemployed or housewife	27.9%	13.5%	8.7%	9.2%	7.7%	2.1%	0.0%	4.3%	11.3%

Table 7-3 Respondent occupation

	Mothers				Fathers				Total
	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	
Self-employed	2.7%	8.6%	15.0%	17.7%	0.0%	11.6%	20.2%	27.3%	11.4%
Company worker	18.1%	31.8%	34.3%	37.6%	22.0%	41.1%	37.1%	50.0%	32.8%
Government employee	2.0%	0.8%	1.9%	1.6%	2.4%	2.1%	1.1%	0.0%	1.6%
Sales or services	10.1%	15.6%	15.8%	14.5%	4.9%	8.2%	5.6%	0.0%	13.6%
Technician or laborer	13.4%	16.0%	10.0%	9.7%	14.6%	17.1%	13.5%	9.1%	13.7%
Teacher	4.0%	2.2%	4.4%	5.4%	7.3%	6.2%	12.4%	4.5%	4.2%
Has own profession	4.7%	7.1%	7.5%	5.4%	7.3%	2.7%	5.6%	4.5%	6.2%
Student or researcher	16.8%	4.1%	3.0%	0.0%	36.6%	8.9%	3.4%	0.0%	5.4%
Unemployed or housewife (or husband)	28.2%	13.7%	8.0%	8.1%	4.9%	2.1%	1.1%	4.5%	11.4%

Table 7-4 Spouse occupation

	Mothers				Fathers				Total
	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	
Self-employed	7.7%	15.4%	22.9%	31.8%	5.1%	7.1%	15.7%	8.7%	16.7%
Company worker	38.1%	51.9%	48.4%	42.0%	17.9%	44.0%	41.0%	56.5%	46.8%
Government employee	4.5%	1.2%	2.6%	3.4%	2.6%	2.8%	2.4%	4.3%	2.3%
Sales or services	3.9%	3.9%	3.5%	4.5%	15.4%	7.1%	9.6%	13.0%	5.0%
Technician or laborer	16.1%	15.9%	9.7%	5.1%	7.7%	11.3%	8.4%	8.7%	12.7%
Teacher	0.6%	0.9%	2.6%	4.0%	5.1%	2.8%	2.4%	0.0%	2.0%
Has own profession	2.6%	5.3%	5.3%	4.5%	12.8%	5.7%	7.2%	0.0%	5.1%
Student or researcher	23.9%	3.9%	2.6%	2.3%	7.7%	4.3%	1.2%	0.0%	5.1%
Unemployed or housewife (or husband)	2.6%	1.5%	2.3%	2.3%	25.6%	14.9%	12.0%	8.7%	4.2%

Table 7-5 Years expected to stay in Japan

	Few More Yrs	Forever	Undecided
less than 3 yrs	33.5% (2.72yrs, SD1.81)	17.2%	49.3%
3 - 10yrs	10.3% (5.61yrs,SD6.88)	36.2%	53.5%
10 - 20yrs	4.7% (7.2yrs, SD8.24)	42.9%	52.4%
over 20yrs	4.6% (4.13yrs, SD3.61)	70.2%	25.2%
Total	10.8% (4.64yrs,	39.8%	25.2%

Table 7-6 Reasons for residing in Japan

	less than 3 yrs	3 - 10yrs	10 - 20yrs	over 20yrs	Total
To work	29.0%	28.6%	33.4%	11.0%	27.5%
To study	16.9%	6.2%	3.2%	0.0%	5.9%
Marriage	21.3%	39.2%	38.1%	2.8%	32.2%
To take care of family	20.8%	15.5%	10.7%	0.0%	13.3%
Born here	1.4%	0.6%	0.9%	82.6%	11.1%
Descendant of ancestors that were left behind in Japan	1.9%	3.4%	3.9%	0.5%	2.9%
Others	8.7%	6.4%	9.9%	3.2%	7.1%

## 1. Comments according to duration of residency

In order for us to get comments from parents with various cultural and language backgrounds, we asked them to comment freely in their native languages about raising children in Japan. We translated the comments and chose some, which are listed below.

### 1. The comments (Fig 7-4)

The comments were arranged according to the content and calculated. The following comments were the most mentioned. There were 614 comments in all

- Frustration with the adult attitudes towards child-care (such as letting children play wildly) and the Japanese child-care system (too many activities for us to participate in) (13.1%)
- I am unsatisfied and concerned about Japanese discipline and educational theories. (12.6%)
- I would like Japanese to better understand foreigners and aid us more (9.9%)
- I hope to teach my child my native language and culture. They do not have opportunities to learn it, and even if they are already familiar with it, it is possible that they may forget it. (9.3%)
- I would like to put more effort into childhood education and discipline (8.8%)
- I am concerned about my child's future in Japanese society (7.8%)
- I want racial discrimination and bullying to cease (7.5%)
- I am concerned that my child will be or already is being bullied (7.0%)
- I feel that Japanese society has a low awareness of child rearing (6.9%)
- I have no one to help me with raising my child in Japan (6.4%)
- Japan has good nursing, health and medication programs (6.4%)

### 2. The change in amount of contents according to the residential duration.

As presented in Chapters 2 to 7, duration of residency determines the parent concerns regarding preschool, child rearing, and information networks. Therefore, as we can assume that the contents of write-in comments will also differ according to length of residency, we created three categories: 1) issues that increase as the parent length of residency increases, 2) issues that decrease as the parent length of residency increases and 3) issues that reappear when parents have resided for three to ten years in Japan.

#### 1) Issues that increase as parent length of residency increases (Fig 7-5)

- Frustration concerning Japanese discipline and views of education
- Concerns about child's future in Japanese society
- Need for education on international understanding and history
- Racial discrimination and bullying
- Japanese nationality and one's place in Japanese society

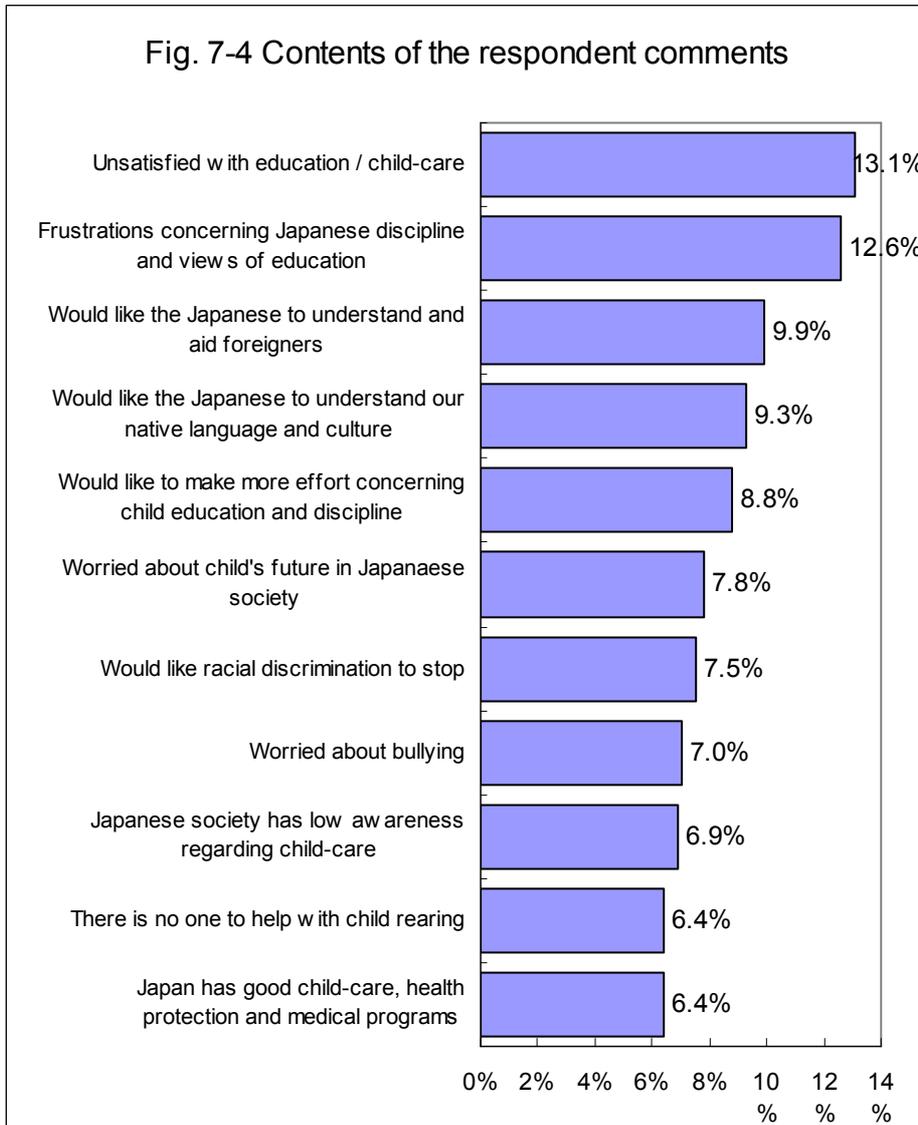
#### 2) Issues that decrease as the parent length of residency increases (Fig 7-6)

- Requests for more information concerning child-rearing
- Lack of time to take care of child
- Socializing with Japanese parents
- Concerns of parent Japanese proficiency
- Hope for their child's Japanese to improve

- Hope for Japanese to better understand and aid foreigners

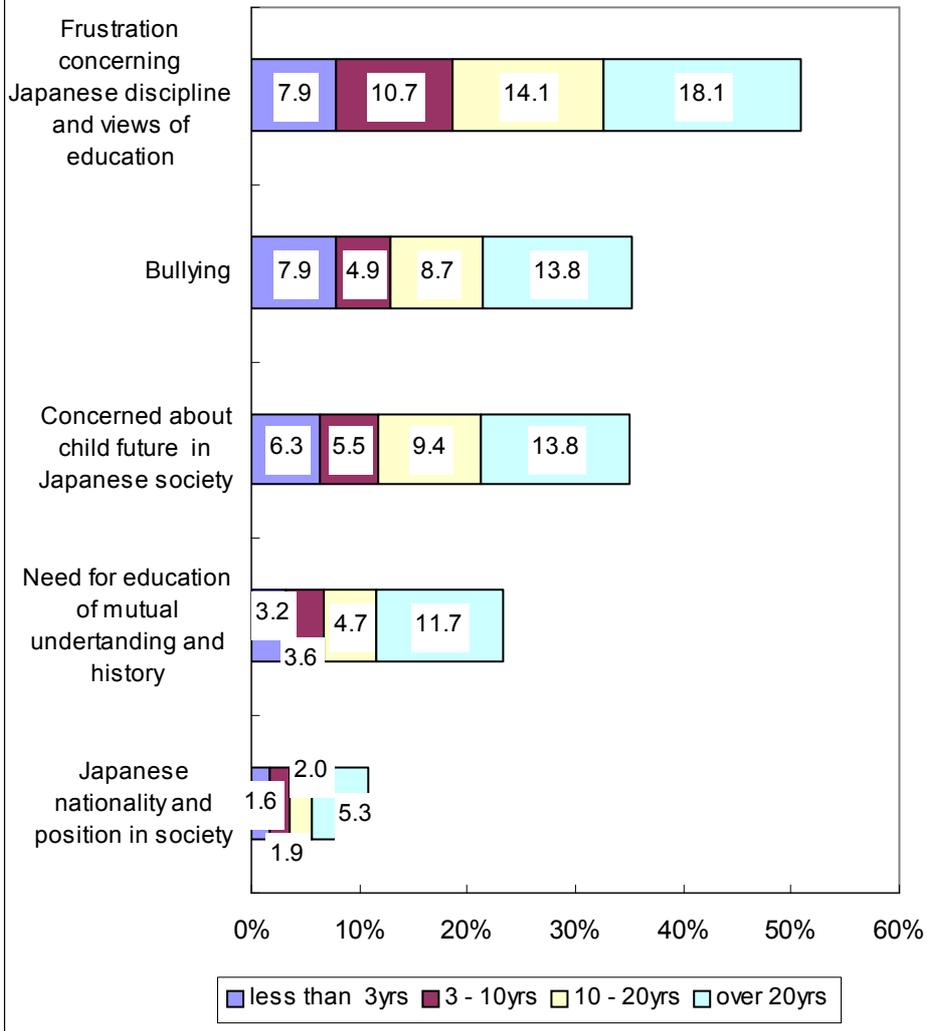
3) Issues that increase during 3 to 10 years residency then later decrease (Fig. 7-7)

- Frustrations concerning the child-care and educational system
- Hope for child to learn their native language and culture
- Japan has good nursing, health and medical systems



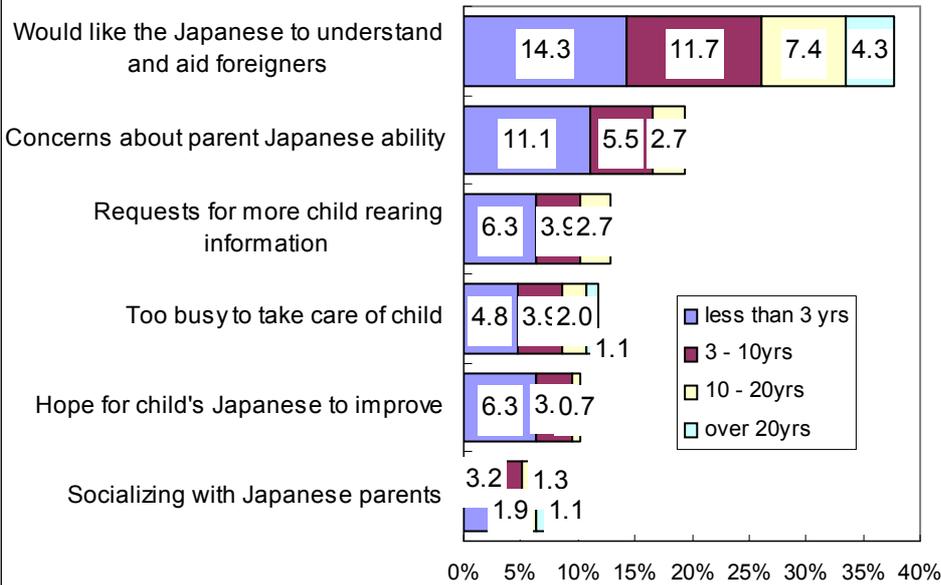
**Fig. 7-5 Parent comments according to duration of residency**

(Comments that increased in proportion to duration of residency)



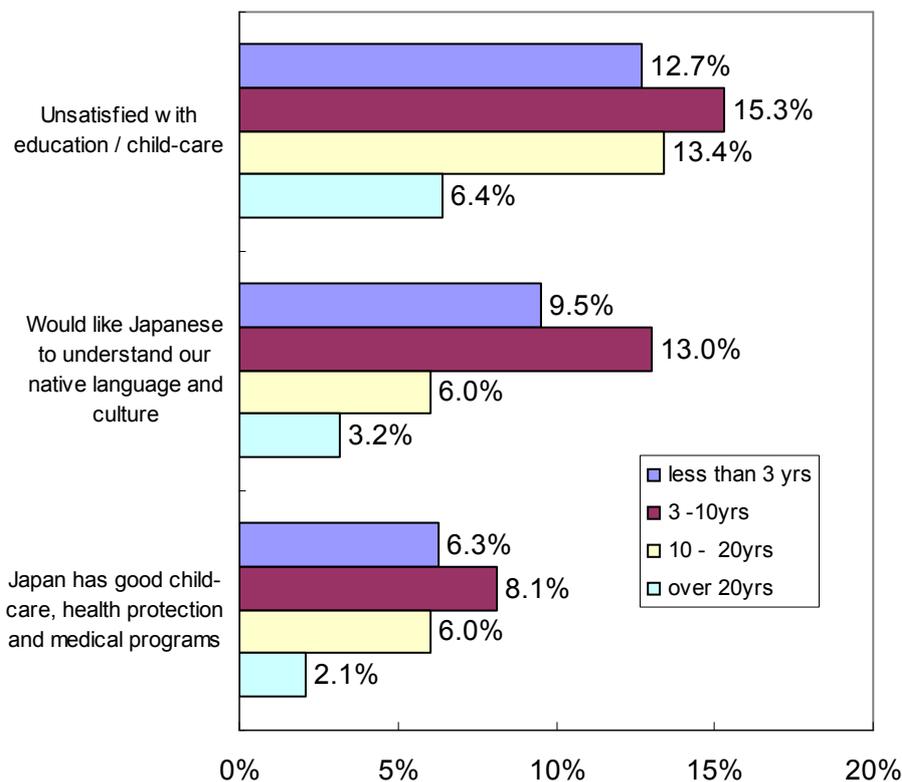
**Fig. 7-6 Parents comments according to duration of residency**

(Comments that decreased in proportion to duration of residency)



**Fig. 7-7 Parent comments according to duration of residency**

(comments that increased during 3~10 yrs of residence)



## 2. Parents free comments

### Hopes and present status for education in regard to their native language and culture

“I do not have any problems with my child attending Japanese school in the future since we live in Japan, but I think it would be appropriate for her to attend North Korean schools in Japan in order for her to learn her native language and culture. However, since governmental aid is not adequately provided, it is difficult for us economically” (day-care center 4 yrs girl / mother 33 yrs / North Korean / 33 yrs)

“I want to teach my child Korean ways and manners, but the influence of other children is too great and it is very difficult concerning the way they speak, their attitudes and many other factors” (day-care center 5 yrs girl / mother 40 yrs / South Korean / 5yrs)

“I want my child to learn Japanese as soon as possible, so I would like the day-care centers to teach them easy Japanese reading and writing. I also want them to teach English, since it is the international language” (day-care center 5 yrs boy / father 39 yrs / Myanmar / 5 yrs)

“I want my child to get along with others. It is important for them to learn through playing with others. I try to teach Chinese to my child and hope she will understand Chinese culture” (day-care center 2 yrs, girl / father 31 yrs / Chinese / 3 yrs) ]

“My child Japanese is improving as he gets older. I want to improve my Japanese in order to have better communication with my child in the future. However, I feel it is embarrassing if my child cannot speak Chinese even though he is Chinese” (day-care center 4 yrs boy / Mother 31 yrs / Chinese / 8 yrs)

### Language Concerns

“The most difficult experience for me was going to the hospital when my child was sick. I also did not understand Japanese the day when I gave birth to my child” (day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother 31 yrs / South Korean / 13 yrs)

“My biggest concern is that when my child is trying to do well like another children in her studies, I will not be able to help her since I don't understand Japanese well” (day-care center 5 yrs girl / mother 28 yrs / Japanese / 3 yrs)

“My Japanese ability is poor and my child doesn't speak Chinese, so it is difficult for us to communicate. Because of this, I feel we don't have a warm relationship so I would like her to learn a little bit of Chinese and Japanese at the same time” (day-care center 1 yrs girl / father 29 yrs / Chinese / 8 yrs)

“I worked before coming to Japan, but then got married and moved here. I have been unable to improve my Japanese since I am too busy with raising my child and housework. Since I still do not have much free time, I try to study during the weekends, but it has been difficult. When my

child has grown up and is on his own, I want to work, but will Japanese society accept a foreign housewife?” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / mother 31 yrs / 13yrs)

“My son is very kind and obeys me. He has many friends and I also have many Japanese friends. My only concern is that when he wants me to explain something in Japanese to him, I am unable to do so” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / mother 25 yrs / Filipino / 3 yrs)

### **Comments about preschool**

“Since he began attending a day-care center, my son has made many friends and he is not as shy as he used to be. I think he is more active and seems happier than before” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / mother 30 yrs / South Korean / 8 yrs)

“I am impressed by the way Japanese seriously think about children. I am relieved by the fact that the teachers at the day-care center take such good care of my child. Thank you.” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / mother 42 yrs / Thai / 9yrs)

“I appreciate it if the teachers take good care of my child. My child has the most problems during the winter time” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / mother 32 yrs / Japanese / 12 yrs)

“There are some teachers that are unfriendly and do not even smile. Should I say something to the teachers? Also, I feel that they do not take care of the children after six o’clock and they do not give my child any snacks” (day-care center 2 yrs boy /mother)

“The day-care center is where my child spends most of her play time. I worry that she is being bullied since she is a foreigner and is left all alone. I would like the teachers to pay more attention to the foreign children” (day-care center 3 yrs girl / father)

“Even when I am at the day-care center, I use Chinese when speaking to my daughter. The reason for this is to get her accustomed to a Chinese environment and to learn Chinese. Also, the other Japanese children and parents can also get used to foreigners this way” (day-care center 4 yrs girl / mother 35 yrs / Chinese / 5 yrs)

### **Child-rearing Comments**

“Since I do not know anyone, it is difficult for me to get information concerning child-rearing and other interests. I try to go to the city hall, but it is located far away and it is difficult for me to get there. I feel lost since it is difficult to raise a child by myself” (day-care center 4 yrs girl / mother 31 yrs / South Korean / 9 yrs)

“It is difficult to make friends outside the day-care center. There are not many children who go outdoors to play, and parents also seem to avoid socializing” (day-care center 2 yrs girl / mother 31 yrs / South Korean / 6 yrs)

“Too much freedom. In Japan, mothers mainly take care of the children. However in Vietnam, both parents raise their children, and possibly the fathers do more than the mothers” (day-care center

5 yrs girl / mother 36 yrs / Vietnamese/ 10 yrs)

“My Japanese husband is not interested in helping to raise our child. I do not have anyone I can consult with, and the relatives on my husband’s side are also very unfriendly. Because of this, I must be strong and feel it is not unusual for child abuse to occur. Raising a child in Japan is horrible. (day-care center 5 yrs boy / mother 38 yrs / North Korean / 38 yrs)

“It is always the most difficult with an eldest child since everything is new. It has been easier with the other 2 since I just need to repeat what I did with my first child” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / father 38 yrs / Peruvian / 10 yrs)

“My second child frequently gets sick so I am unable to have a stable job. It would be very helpful if the kindergarten would take care of my child even when she has a temperature, but the kindergarten will not do that” (day-care center 1 yrs boy /mother 31 yrs / Filipino / 10yrs)

“My mother-in-law lives with us and she teaches me everything I need to know” (day-care center 2 yrs boy / mother 38 yrs / Filipino / 6yrs)

### **Problems of differences in discipline and education**

“In my native country, children are usually educated from an early age, so I worry that when my child goes back to China, she will be behind in her studies” (day-care center 3 yrs, girl / mother, 32 yrs / Chinese / 6 yrs)

“The entire Japanese society is more interested in material matters so their minds are not as rich as in non-material matters” (day-care center 5 yrs, boy/father 35yrs old / China / 13 yrs)

“I think many of the disciplinary actions are carried out to make things easier for parents and teachers. I do not think that it is important for the children to be able to do everything on their own” (kindergarten, boy / mother, 35 yrs old / Chinese / 9 yrs)

“The Japanese way of child-rearing is different from the way I was brought up in the Philippines. Now that I am living in Japan, is it necessary for me to endure these differences?” (day-care center 5 yrs, boy / mother, 33 yrs / Filipino / 9 yrs)

“I have the impression that child-rearing is an obligation for Japanese, and that they feel it is necessary for them to take care of their children until they are adults. After they are grown up, the children should be free to do whatever they want since it is their life. That may be true, but the parent and child relationship should never grow weak. Many Japanese children stop communicating with their parents once they are adults. I have seen many Chinese children become this way after being brought up in Japan. I cannot believe that they do not want to converse with their parents and I do not want my child to turn that way. Environment is the most important factor in child-rearing, so I will take my son back to China in the near future” (day-care center 5 yrs girl / mother 32 yrs / Japanese / 15 yrs)

### **Better multi-cultural understanding**

“I want my family and relatives to know more about the Thai language and customs. I wish our relatives would be more kindhearted” (day-care center 5 yrs girl / father 34 yrs / Thai / 6 yrs)

“Since it is difficult for parents to teach their children that racial discrimination is wrong, so I strongly want the government or schools to do so” (day-care center 3 yrs girl / mother 29 yrs / Japanese / 10 yrs)

“Attending Japanese preschools is very difficult for Christian foreigners. We are forced to participate in celebrations such as the star festival(tanabata) or the festival to drive out evil spirits(mamemaki)” (day-care center 4 yrs boy / mother 36 yrs / Brazilian / 9 yrs)

“I feel that Japan has a great education system, but there is still too much discrimination. There are many mothers who do not want their children to play with foreign children” (day-care center 5 yrs boy / mother 35 yrs / Brazilian / 2 yrs)

“I wish that all of the notices from the day-care centers could be translated into English so that I could understand them. I do not want Japanese to discriminate against foreigners” (day-care center 3 yrs boy / mother 36 yrs / Filipinos / 4 yrs)

“Although my son is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Japanese, I want my child to be proud she is Japanese (I am a foreigner no matter where I am). I feel that there are many Japanese who are unable to be proud. A Peruvian mother would teach a world-wide view, that God will provide us with the courage to face all difficulties and that you can enjoy life by having the heart to trust others and by having friends” (day-care center 3 yrs girl / mother 39 yrs / Peruvian / 11 yrs)

Day-care center or Kindergarten, class level, gender, relationship of the person replying, age, nationality, and residential duration are shown in parenthesis.

## **Column: Free comments in eleven languages**

The questionnaire was translated into eleven languages Japanese (in two ways: standard Japanese and Japanese with furigana, a reading aid) Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Portuguese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Laotian, and English. Thus parents could fill it out in their native language. The questionnaire was translated from either the Japanese or English versions into the other languages, and the free comments in the foreign languages were translated into Japanese.

Reading these free comments, some are in the original languages and some have been translated, yet we have the impression that parents have few opportunities to express what they really think. How do they regard child-rearing? What do they think of Japan? They might have opportunities to exchange opinions with their families or friends from the same country, however, they might not have chances to express their honest opinions of Japanese society in their native language. The comments on child-rearing, Japanese society and the Japanese way of discipline and education reflect strong feelings based on their native cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It seems that each parent has expressed his or her experiences and thoughts in the free comments.

### **1. Free comments as an opportunity to talk about one's own personal situation:**

Many parents emphasized in the free comments what they had answered in the multiple-choice items. Also, many of them referred to "child-rearing concerns." These answers are not mere repetition, but detailed descriptions of their lives. For example, one parent made the following comment: "My child will speak only Japanese when he has grown up. I worry about this because I'm not fluent in Japanese. How am I going to communicate with my own child?" It appears that this parent wants to find her identity as a parent by sharing her native language with her child. The free comments show the depth of each problem in various parent situations, even being limited to the issue of native language education.

### **2. Free comments as an opportunity to be part of Japanese society**

It was expected that many parents surveyed would feel part of Japanese society as they replied what they wanted to say in their native language. The relationship is different from the one they have with their family or people from the same countries; it is a relationship with the society in which they are in now. If stating their opinions freely helped parents to become part of Japanese society, more and more opportunities like this are needed.

### **3. The necessity for everyone, Japanese or foreigners, to have opportunities to express their opinions in their native language:**

Multi-cultural child-rearing problems can be divided into two kinds: problems that are caused by cultural and linguistic differences, and problems that are the same as the ones that plague contemporary Japanese parents living in the same society. It is important for us to regard multi-cultural parent problems as our problems, and to strive for solutions, as Japanese culture is one of the elements of a "multi-culture." In order to do this, we need opportunities for everyone, Japanese or foreigner, to exchange opinions freely and multi-lingual.