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Child-rearing at a Residential Child Care Institution: Watching with Long Eyes

Springtime at a public junior high school

As a result of his single mother's financial and work-related struggles, three-year-old Masaru was placed in a residential child care institution, one of many Japanese facilities for children who for a variety of reasons cannot live with their families. Several months later, Masaru's mother married and brought him home to his new family. His mother, however, had mental health problems, and his new stepfather, a member of the Japanese mob, did not want him. Soon after he returned home, Masaru's stepfather began physically abusing him and also exposed him to adult criminality. Over time, Masaru developed serious behavioral problems, including fighting

with his peers. When he was eight years old, his mother sought help from a child guidance center. Such centers are accessible throughout Japan to provide services and referrals for a range of child-rearing and developmental issues. After consulting with staff members, Masaru's mother again decided to place him in a residential child care institution. He lived there for two years before reuniting with his family. Unfortunately, family problems persisted, and Masaru's mother again sought help. This time, Masaru, now age thirteen, was placed in the Children's Academy, a residential child care institution and primary site of our research.

When Sachiko first met Masaru, he was fourteen years old and had adapted well to the Children's Academy, school, and the community. Although he described himself as the "roughest" during elementary school, he commented, "I am not rough recently." Indeed, at the Children's Academy, he got along well with his peers and enjoyed outdoor play. He was relaxed, spoke frequently with his housemates, helped with chores, and enjoyed good relationships with his male child care workers whom he could "trust and rely [on]." Masaru also expressed fondness for the head of the institution because "he cares for everyone." At sports tournaments with other child care institutions, Masaru played with his housemates on a team and interacted well with people from other institutions. He was attending the neighborhood junior high school, and was very excited when selected as a starting member of his school's basketball club in a citywide tournament.

Although Masaru was unwilling to return home to live, he did maintain contact with his family. For example, at age fourteen, he enjoyed visiting his parents in the summer. Later that year, when his grandfather died, Masaru attended the family memorial. Although institution staff members were aware of and cautious about problems at his home, they helped Masaru keep ties with his family. Given its many problems, Masaru's home was not considered an ideal place for a child, but still, it was Masaru's home, and child care workers respected his desire to remain connected to his family.

Masaru was gaining in maturity, but also was described by his primary caregiver as sometimes clinging to him like a much younger child. At age fifteen, the institution head and child care workers discussed concerns about his life after graduating from junior high school, especially the negative influence of juvenile delinquents and adult mob members in the community. Masaru, however, went on

to enter and do well in high school, and even joined a sports club in the community. He created a place for himself within the Children's Academy, high school and community. Although Masaru experienced many challenges in his high school years, his caregivers viewed his positive development after placement within the supportive social context of the Children's Academy as reflecting his potential for further growth.

In this book, we explore the everyday lives and perspectives of maltreated Japanese children like Masaru[1] and their substitute caregivers. Masaru's experience of child maltreatment is by no means unique. Child maltreatment[2] is the physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect by the child's guardian or caregiver. It is a persistent, widespread problem appearing in places as diverse as urban Japan and the rural United States. Children who have been maltreated can develop a wide range of behavioral and emotional problems such as Masaru's initial aggressive behavior and his lasting insecurity expressed as clinginess to his favorite caregiver. How we understand and support children who have been maltreated, however, varies widely across cultural contexts. By stepping outside of the cultural context that we take for granted, to consider practices distinct from our own, new insights into our own practices and ways of understanding maltreated children and their families emerge.

In this chapter, we begin by introducing some key concepts and contexts to be elaborated throughout this book, using Masaru as an exemplar. Within Japan, many parents respond as did Masaru's mother to problems with child-rearing. When she realized her family was in trouble, she turned to professionals at the local child guidance center to whom she could reach out for help. The legal system and courts were not involved. Masaru's mother cooperated with staff at the child guidance center in making plans to place him in a government-regulated, residential child care institution, or *Jidou Yougo Shisetsu* (Jidou=child, Yougo=protective care, Shisetsu=institution).

Typical of Japanese child welfare, Masaru was not placed in an individual foster home, but in an institution where he was cared for with other children, and from which he attended the neighborhood public school. Every morning he joined his peers traveling together on foot in their distinctive school

[1] All names for people and places used in this book are pseudonyms.
[2] Defining maltreatment is especially complex when working within an international context, because definitions vary. The definition used here is consistent with the Japanese Child Maltreatment Prevention Law (see Chapter 10).

uniforms. Every afternoon, he joined in club activities at school. Returning home to the institution, Masaru lived in a small unit of ten boys and two caregivers within a larger unit of sixty-five children and twenty-four adults. In the larger institution, Masaru played on sports teams, interacted with boys and girls of varying ages, and developed stable relationships with his favorite adults, including the institution head. Masaru and his peers at the institution received medical care, counseling, and other services on site or in the local community, as needed. Masaru's ties with his family were not severed, and he continued to visit them and to participate with his relatives during major holidays and other important community events.

We explore the lives of Masaru and other children living in child care institutions in urban Japan from a cultural developmental perspective (e.g., Rogoff, 2003; Shweder, et al., 2006). We view human development as shaped within particular socio-cultural-historical contexts. In this book, we consider the concrete patterns of everyday socialization practices, the local beliefs that support these practices, and how socialization beliefs and practices are experienced in the everyday lives of adults and children in contemporary, urban Japan. Our focus is on the dialectical processes of socialization and acquisition that comprise development. In brief, socialization is the process by which others (adults, older children, peers) structure the social environment and display patterned meanings for the child (e.g., Miller & Sperry, 1987; Wentworth, 1980). Through this process, children acquire the beliefs, values, skills, and perspectives of their culture necessary to become contributing members of the group. The goals and strategies of socialization are instantiated in everyday activities, informal routines, special events and more formalized behaviors and rituals of a culture (Gauvain & Parke, 2010). For example, child care workers made arrangements for Masaru to attend the funeral and vigil for his grandfather, which provided him with an opportunity to learn the meaning of Buddhist rituals, thereby communicating respect for enduring family relations. The value of family was further underscored by care workers' communications with Masaru's mother and other children's parents, who typically were not only allowed but expected to visit their children at the institution and take them for outings and even home for weekends and major holidays. Parents also were allowed to have input into major decisions such as where their children should attend high school (regular, special education, technical, etc.). Although Masaru's mother struggled and he needed protection from his stepfather, Masaru did belong to a family with roots in the past and extending into the future.

Acquisition is the active process through which children interpret, respond to, and ultimately embrace, reject, or elaborate on the social patterns to which they are exposed (e.g., Miller & Sperry, 1987; Wentworth, 1980). For example, Masaru embraced a value of family continuity, actively seeking to attend family events and learn about Buddhist rituals. On the other hand, he also turned away from the antisocial beliefs and actions modeled and encouraged by his stepfather by avoiding physical aggression and involvement with juvenile delinquents in the community.

Socialization and acquisition are complex processes, especially for many children who have experienced maltreatment and disrupted relationships with their parents. Masaru and other children at the child care institution experienced many struggles, as did their substitute caregivers in rearing them. During our research, care workers expressed frustration, especially when children's misbehavior resulted in suspensions from school, involved the police, or created problems within the institution. The institution head and most workers, however, were firm in their belief that to be effective they must watch children with "long eyes." To watch with long eyes (*nagai me de miru*) means to consider the long-term potential for individuals to develop. Caregivers were challenged by the aggressive behaviors of some adolescents. Although more restrictive placements were available for adolescents with behavioral and criminal problems, the adults felt that with patient care, these children would adjust socially and emotionally by developing relationships with adults and their peers. It was necessary to affectionately watch over Masaru with long eyes to consider not just Masaru's inital aggressive or other problematic behavior, but his potential for development. Similarly, staff at the child guidance center focused not only on parents' immediate problems, but also considered how, for example, the way in which they responded might impact their long-term relationship with Masaru's mother and their ability to help her vulnerable family as future problems emerged.

To understand socialization and acquisition, it is necessary to consider the broader cultural context in which these processes are embedded. For example, Masaru's care workers supported his family relationships, an important goal when Japanese children are placed in institutions (Hiramoto, 2000). Ohshiro (2005) observes that some children who live in institutions feel anxious and abandoned by their parents, and these feelings can lead to emotional and behavioral problems. Children who maintain or develop positive relationships with their parents while they are in institutional care are thought to show more positive psychological adjustment (Ohshiro,

2005). The efforts of the Japanese government, as well as each institution, to keep and strengthen family ties of children in institutional care may, in part, reflect a strong cultural emphasis placed on family continuity, including with ancestors. The vast majority of Japanese people participate in some form of ancestral ritual at the summer festival of the dead (*obon*) or in the home, and visit Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples at the New Year. For the Japanese, ancestor veneration is about family continuity and about care for those who are no longer among the living. Some Japanese even believe that their ancestors watch over and protect the living family members (Ama, 2005; Traphagan, 2005). Thus, the loss of family for maltreated children would represent not only the loss of specific relationships with parents, but would disrupt a culturally significant sense of continuity with previous and future generations.

Understanding socialization and acquisition also requires consideration of developmental goals, in other words, that which is considered to be appropriate, desirable, and mature within particular sociocultural contexts. An important developmental goal of the adults who participated in our research was for children to find their *Ibasho*.[3] In brief, Ibasho is a place where one feels safe, at ease, accepted, and able to freely express oneself. According to Japanese folk psychology, Ibasho is necessary for healthy development and well-being throughout the life span. Ibasho is created through empathetic and mutually accepting relationships, the opportunity to contribute to others' well-being, and the performance of clear roles within the group. One consequence of child maltreatment is that the child experiences an absence of Ibasho.

Although adults cited Ibasho creation as a developmental goal, they also recognized that Ibasho cannot be given to another; it must be actively created by the individual. Adults can provide the context, but ultimately, it is the child who must create Ibasho. Masaru created his Ibasho at the institution as he developed trusting relationships with peers and adults, especially his male care worker who, he felt, understood him. There also were places where he could choose activities he found enjoyable and through which he could express himself, especially playing sports on the playground and at the gym. There was a safe and relaxing atmosphere in the boys' house, and Masaru was given opportunities to make positive contributions. He had

[3] We have chosen to retain some Japanese words used by our participants because their meanings, as well as people's associated experiences, are deeply embedded in Japanese culture. These words are difficult to translate because they encompass a range of meanings entangled in Japanese scripts for appropriate interpersonal behavior and desirable relationships (LeVine, 2001).

valued social roles to perform as a contributing member of his teams and household. He found his Ibasho.

In describing their own roles in children's development, adults in our research underscored children's active acquisition and autonomy. Their preferred socialization practices were largely indirect. They created a context for children's development, and they *mimamoru*(ed) them. In brief, to mimamoru a child is to watch over that child with affection and protection. When adults mimamoru children, they carefully observe them and identify their needs. The goal is not to "teach" children directly, or even to quickly intervene to correct misbehavior, but to arrange children's social and physical ecologies so that, over time, children will have the opportunity to think and learn "naturally." Before Masaru entered the Children's Academy at age thirteen, he had many difficulties in his interpersonal relationships. He frequently fought with other boys at school, which alienated him from his peers. At home, he had frequent conflicts with his mother. When he was placed in the Children's Academy, care workers recognized his aggressiveness, but patiently mimamoru(ed) him. They focused on developing relationships with him through showing acceptance, trustworthiness, and care. They also provided opportunities for Masaru to contribute to his new house through chores, and to use his athletic talents for the benefit of the sports team. Over time, Masaru did develop relationships, voluntarily abide by norms of appropriate behavior, and find roles through which he could contribute. When discussing his physical aggression as a younger boy, Masaru concluded, "I don't want to fight now.… Because I would be scolded by the child guidance center staff. I don't want to."

Although the focus of this book is on socialization and acquisition within the context of a child care institution, schools and the community also are central contexts in which these children develop. Residents of child care institutions attend local public schools, and membership in a class or a school club is an important aspect of identity development for Japanese children (Tender, 1999). Institution staff and educators view themselves as co-rearing children, and thus there is overlap and consistency in their roles. Both groups of adults view promoting children's social-emotional well-being, supporting their Ibasho creation, and mimamoru(ing) them as central to their professional roles.

Children living in child care institutions also participate in community activities, for example, through sports clubs and shopping. Ideally, all Japanese adults mimamoru all children in their communities, those who live in institutions as well as those who live at home with their families. For example, in urban areas, young children who attend private schools

commonly commute to school on trains. If they become lost or lose their passes, they are routinely directed by adult commuters. Similarly, during after-school hours, adults in local penny candy shops (*dagashiya*) communicate with youth, including from the Children's Academy, who stop by after-school hours.[4]

HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

A major theme articulated by adult participants in our research is the primacy of interpersonal relationships for psychological functioning and well-being. Thus, it is fitting to acknowledge that this book owes its existence to a set of long-term relationships: between the authors, and between Sachiko and colleagues in Japan. At the time we began our research, Sachiko had known an administrator at the Children's Academy for more than five years and enjoyed a good relationship with her. This administrator provided introductions to study participants at the Children's Academy, which smoothed Sachiko's way. Sachiko maintained this relationship and developed others including with the social worker, institution head, and a care worker for the boys, all of whom were especially insightful and articulate. She also built and maintained relationships with a number of children that spanned several years. Informal conversations, shared meals, and social events over the years have proven to be invaluable contexts for exploring and understanding socialization and acquisition at the Children's Academy.

Sachiko and Wendy have known each other for nearly a decade. Sachiko arrived at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign at the turn of the century as a PhD student and stayed through a two-year-long postdoctoral fellowship. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Sociology from Kwansei Gakuin University in Hyogo, followed by a Master's degree in Social Administration from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Sachiko is a Japanese citizen and before coming to the United States was employed as a counselor, including with the Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse in Osaka, Japan. In April 2010, she returned to Japan to assume a faculty position at Tokyo Gakugei University.

At the time of Sachiko's arrival at the University of Illinois, Wendy was a professor of social work serving as PhD program director. Wendy received her Bachelor's degree from Reed College in Psychology, and PhD from the

[4] Note that this ideal of frequent interactions between children and adults in their communities is decreasing in contemporary Japanese cities. In urban settings, for example, many local shops have been replaced by convenience stores and large shopping malls where interactions between cashiers and customers are limited.

University of Chicago, where she focused on cultural developmental science. Sachiko was especially interested in learning about social work in the United States as this field was newly expanding in Japan. Wendy, whose work focuses on socialization within culturally diverse and vulnerable families, became equally interested in learning about social work in Japan. Over the years, this close international collaboration has become a major strength of our joint research. Sachiko's insider understanding of Japanese culture provided a necessary context for identifying relevant questions, and interpreting participants' responses. Wendy's outsider status illuminated for systematic study constructs that often are taken for granted by cultural insiders, including Ibasho and mimamoru.

As with any collaboration, ours has not been without its challenges. Over the years, we have become aware that our intellectual styles differ, along deep and likely cultural lines. If not acknowledged and addressed, such differences have the potential to derail cross-cultural collaborations, as each collaborator may feel increasingly frustrated and misunderstood. Such differences in intellectual styles, which may be especially apparent during the process of analysis and writing, also are a type of data that can enrich understanding of the research topic. Although as a qualitative researcher Wendy is used to working inductively, she prefers a rhetorical style in which each element of the argument is explicitly marked, and followed by evidence. Sachiko's intellectual and rhetorical style is more indirect, providing the reader with rich details that may or may not be followed by a conclusion. This style parallels the Japanese socialization practices we studied: practices that are largely indirect, allowing others to learn rather than teaching them. In this book, we struggled to blend our intellectual and rhetorical styles: allowing readers to learn, but also providing signposts along the way. For example, Masaru's case at the beginning of this chapter is more reflective of Sachiko's indirect style of introducing the Children's Academy, and the topic sentences and following statement of the book's aim, of Wendy's more direct rhetoric.

There are, of course, many reasons to persevere with challenging cross-cultural collaborations. From a U.S. perspective, Wendy found study of the Japanese case particularly important. There is an extensive developmental literature in English that describes Japanese socialization practices (e.g., Ben-Ari, 1996; Shimizu & LeVine, 2001; Shwalb, Nakazawa & Shwalb, 2005). For example, *mimamori* (noun form of mimamoru) is ecologically focused and developmentally sensitive. It aims to create supportive ecologies around children, and varies depending on context and children's development (see Chapter 2). In addition, Japanese socialization practices focus on emotions

and relationships. When educating and disciplining children, Japanese adults emphasize children's feelings and the development of strong emotional ties between children and their adult caregivers (e.g., Azuma, 1994). These practices are reflected in the ways in which child welfare services are provided to support maltreated children's development and well-being.

While U.S. child welfare practitioners and scholars may espouse a developmental-ecological perspective on the care of maltreated children, or the importance of emotional well-being and relationships, a discontinuity too often exists between such advocacy and actual practice (e.g., Barth, 2007). Many U.S. interventions for maltreated children are not adequately tailored to children's changing developmental needs (e.g., Berrick, et al., 1998), do not reflect established research findings from developmental science regarding the centrality of relationships to children's healthy development (e.g., Haight, Kagle & Black, 2003), and fail to intervene in the multiple family, peer and school contexts necessary for recovery from maltreatment.

Yet, focusing greater attention on the emotional well-being and relationships of U.S. children with maltreatment histories is critical. Between 30 and 50 percent of U.S. children in foster care exhibit significant behavioral or emotional problems. These problems can include feeling an absence of belonging. Many also experience significant problems in diverse ecological settings including foster home, school, and community (Clausen, et al., 1998; Hartnett & Bruhn, 2005). Adults reared in foster care have significantly higher risks of depression, lower levels of marital happiness, less intimate relationships with their own children, and a higher incidence of social isolation than adults from the general population (Cook-Fong, 2000). Clearly, new practice models are needed. In this book, we will explore the strengths and limitations of a Japanese model of responding to child maltreatment to stimulate thinking about how we may better support the development of abused and neglected children.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

We will describe a five-year-long program of research exploring the developmental contexts, developmental goals, socialization practices, and participants' experiences within two urban Japanese child care institutions and the schools attended by resident children. Chapter 2 elaborates the contexts and concepts at the heart of this book. We focus on the development of children as shaped within child care institutions within the particular social-cultural-historical context of twenty-first century Japan. We first describe the developmental context of the child care institutions, both the specific