

*Akiko USUDA, Showa Women's University, Japan*

## **“Comparative Study of Australian and Japanese Teenagers: How Do They Perceive Their Parents' Employment?”**

### **Key words**

Teenagers, parents' employment, mothers' employment, family

### **Abstract**

This is a comparative study of Japanese teenagers and Australian counterparts regarding perception of their parents' employment. The Australian researcher, Barbara Pocock conducted an interview on 93 teenagers regarding parents' employment in three areas of Sydney and Adelaide; 48 students in the wealthy area, 32 students in the low income area and 13 students in the countryside (2006). By imitating her work, I interviewed 72 teenagers in three areas in Tokyo; 29 students in the wealthy Setagaya-ward, 23 students in the low-income Taito-ward and 20 students in the countryside, Akiruno City. Then, these two results were compared in this study.

Similarity was that teenagers in both countries stay-at-home mothers tended to be appreciated having around them and daily cooking. Some Australian students told their full-time mothers were depressed by housework and child rearing, but such a remark was not heard from Japanese counterparts.

However, Australian teenagers were more likely to report negative spillover originated from their parents' employment that is quarreling or getting in a bad mood at home. The largest difference was that only a few Japanese teenagers referred positive spillover (their parents' joy gained from employment), while Australian counterparts often did. Another difference was that Japanese teenagers with their part-time working mothers often showed respect because of coping paid and unpaid work. However, this was tended to be perceived as a pitiful thing by the Australian teenagers. Many urban teenagers in Tokyo were busy with attending crammer school, sports clubs and learning cultural activities. Therefore, they were keen to have dinner which their mothers actually made. In this study as long as Japanese teenagers had dinner with their families, they tended to like their mothers.

Interestingly enough, Australian parents are likely to express guilt that they cannot have enough time with their children, while such apologizing or guilt was not heard from my interview. In order to ameliorate Australian parents' guilt, they compensate through “time” or “money” or sometimes both.

Regarding fathers, although many Japanese respondents respected their fathers as

breadwinners, they were less likely to want more time to communicate with them. Japanese fathers' long working hours would be the main reason of lack of communication. In addition, Japanese teenagers reported that their fathers do not talk to them at home. However, Australian fathers were reported to try to communicate with them, for example talking by mobile phone. Therefore Australian boys tended to want more time with their fathers, while this tendency was not found among Japanese boys.

In conclusion, both positive and negative spillover of parents' employment seems to be greater in Australia than in Japan. Secondly Australian fathers seemed to be more communicative with their children. At least according to my interview, many Japanese families seemed to be mother-centred and fathers were overshadowed in the families. Finally, Australian parents seemed to have the closer relationship with their teenage children than the Japanese counterparts.

### **USUDA, Akiko**

USUDA Akiko is a researcher at Institutes for Project Learning, Showa Women's University.

She received her doctorate in Social Science from the University of New South Wales, and her supervisor was Professor Bettina Cass. She also gained Master of Letters from the University of Sydney. Her recent publication include: "Comparative study of Teenagers' Perception of Their Mothers' Employment between Setagaya-ward and Taito-ward in Tokyo" *Reports of Institutes for Project Learning, Showa Women's University* (March, 2014): "Before and After School Care in Australia" *Journal Gakudo Hoiku(After-school Care)* No.4 (forthcoming, 2014): "Qualifications of Before and After School Care Workers in Australia" in Sachiko Matsumura and Kenji Nonaka (eds.) *Gakudouhoiku shidouin no Kokusai Hikaku Comparative Study of Qualifications of After School Workers (a tentative title)* Chuo Houki (forthcoming, 2014): "Scrutiny of Youth Community Services in Australia: Focused on the Cases in Willoughby City, New South Wales", *Journal of Urban Social Studies* (2011): *Husbands' Inconsistencies and Resistance: Japanese Husbands' Views on Employment of married Women* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010). Her current research interests are parenting, child care, adolescents and women's employment. She is also a volunteer worker of Kawasaki city as a helper of new mothers. She lives in Kawasaki with her husband and two daughters.