Attachment strategies in Japanese urban middle-class couples: A cultural theme analysis of asymmetry in marital relationships

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Abstract
This study introduces a cultural theme analysis to assess within-culture variation in attachment, with special emphasis on asymmetry in Japanese marital roles. Thirty-nine young urban married Japanese couples were interviewed using a modification of the Adult Attachment Interview. The participants also described their marital experiences, viewed both from their own and from their spouse's perspective, and the ego resiliency of their child. Husbands' attachment strategies vis-à-vis their parents and their adherence to the marital asymmetry theme conjointly influenced their marital attachment security. The secure husband's strategy seemed to be enhanced by using his “motherly” wife as a secure base, thereby leading to higher marital attachment security. In contrast, the dismissing husband—when adhering to the marital asymmetry theme—appeared to further intensify deactivating strategies by downplaying the emotional significance of his motherly wife. Thus the marital asymmetry theme appears to have different psychological implications for Japanese husbands, depending on their attachment strategies (secure versus dismissive). Conceptual and methodological issues in the study of adult attachment from a cultural perspective are discussed.

Much remains to be learned about the ramifications of early attachment relationships. The degree to which early relationships influences subsequent relationships—or the “prototype” hypothesis (Freud, 1940)—is of particular interest (Bowlby, 1969). Although only modest support for this hypothesis has been obtained in North American samples (e.g., Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, & Pearson, 1992; Owens et al., 1995), the validity of the prototype conjecture may vary in different “cultures.”1 The purpose of this study is (a) to introduce a new conceptual framework for cultural research in psychology (referred to as cultural theme analysis), (b) to employ this framework to investigate attachment processes in young urban Japanese middle-class couples, and (c) to present preliminary evidence for measures germane to the study of attachment and marital relations in Japan.

Attachment and culture: A cultural theme analysis
Culture is often conceptualized by psychologists as an internally homogeneous and externally distinctive entity synonymous with

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1. The concept of “culture” is analytically fuzzy, unstable, and contested (e.g., Appadurai, 1996). Japanese “culture” is no exception (Ivy, 1995). Having made this point, we omit the quotation marks in the remainder of this paper.
the nation-state. Within-culture/nation variation is frequently neglected in favor of between-culture/nation differences, often phrased in global, ahistorical, and dichotomous terms (for an example of this common fallacy, see Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The view of culture as synonymous with the nation is also often used to explain—primarily after the fact—theoretically unanticipated national differences in infant attachment distributions. However, partly due to escalating doubts about the cultural autonomy of the nation-state in the face of intensifying globalization, the conjecture that nations embody a distinctive, stable, and homogeneous culture is coming under increasing criticism (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Gjerde & Onishi, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999). Even within the same culture, the daily experiences of different individuals vary, in part because culture is distributed: individuals know “quite different things and have had very different experiences” (Barth, 1993, p. 171).

Inspired by Barth’s (1993) ethnographic analysis, this study introduces cultural theme analysis to examine within-culture variation in relations between attachment strategies vis-à-vis parents and marital experiences. Barth described these themes (in his word, “concerns”) as “orientations that tend to be salient” but urged that we not “see their formulation as an end point in an effort to extract the essence of a Balinese culture ... as if they existed out of time and place as logical axioms”; instead, he suggested that these concerns “summarize recurring life experiences: they provide caveats, puzzles, and maxims of people who are trying to cope in a complex, unpredictable, and imperfectly known world” (p. 343).

Thus, we define a cultural theme as an intersubjectively shared concern of which people are generally aware but which nonetheless can be approached in multiple ways: embraced, negotiated, even dismissed. In Levy’s (1994) terminology, a theme may be “hypercognized,” by which he means that “there are a large number of culturally provided schemata for interpreting and dealing with it” (p. 219). Although people can be seen to live by a set of cultural themes that influence to various degrees how they think, feel, and act, the themes should not be reified or reduced to cultural essences, core cultural values, or uniform norms that impel people to act in specific ways. Rather, we argue, there is substantial individual variation in how a cultural theme is interpreted and acted on in the process of everyday life, partly because a theme exists within a context defined by other interpersonal and institutional pushes and pulls (Barth, 1989, 1993). Japanese, as “meaning-makers,” are therefore likely to construct quite divergent interpretations of a given cultural theme. In sum, by not reifying cultural themes as core values, our approach emphasizes personal agency at the expense of cultural determinism.

Viewing cultural themes as a precipitate of human experiences involves two steps: (a) identifying the most salient themes in people’s lives, and (b) discerning the psychological processes that give rise to within-culture variation in behavior associated with a specific theme. In this research, attachment strategies are proposed as one important source of such variation. As a theory of life-span personality development (Bowlby, 1988), attachment theory is particularly appropriate for studying the interplay of culture and personality. On one level, it is concerned with an assumed universal psychological process: the attachment control system as part of our evolutionary endowment for survival (Bowlby, 1969). On another level, individual differences in attachment organization entail the interplay between attachment and culturally salient modes of human relationships.

Marital asymmetry as a Japanese cultural theme

This study focuses on a Japanese cultural theme with particular relevance to family processes: marital asymmetry between the roles of husband and wife. According to Bowlby (1969), the child’s attachment behavior elicits complementary parental caregiving: the parent is the care provider, the child is the care receiver.

Attachment relationships between romantic partners in the “West” are typically believed
to be relatively symmetrical with each partner both providing and receiving care (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). In Japan, in contrast, the asymmetrical nature of parent-child relationships is commonly said to be reproduced as a cultural trope in marriage, with husbands adopting the role of care receivers and wives adopting the role of care providers (e.g., Tanaka, 1986). In the English-language literature, Vogel (1963) introduced this conjecture in his classical description of the new post–World War II Japanese middle-class. The theme of the husband’s childlike psychological powerlessness in the home and the wife’s complementary motherlike nurturance was further elaborated by Lebra (1984) in her seminal work on Japanese women (in particular, see Chapter 4, Postmarital Involvement). Lebra argued that the Japanese husband tends to expect his wife to amayakasu (indulge him in a motherly manner). The wife often calls the husband her “oldest son,” by which she means a person in need of constant attention and nurturance. Likewise, the husband often considers his wife a motherly person who allows him to amaeru (to be indulged or passively loved). 2 That is, many Japanese wives are believed to provide motherly care for their childlike husbands who appear helpless at home—sometimes apparently unable even to make their own cup of tea (e.g., Iwao, 1993). Summarizing Japanese scholarship illustrating how gender relations are predicated on the mother-child bond, Allison (1994) stated that “mother-son is the only gauge for female-male relations in Japan and even lovers and spouses will assume these mother-son roles” (p. 112).

This gender asymmetry extends to the public domain. Based on an extensive analysis of gender and sexuality in Japan (including bar hostesses and other women paid for), Allison (1994) traced male sexuality to “two structures formed within the mother-child bond—the female being in charge (parentally) and the male being indulged (childishly)” (p. 171). Based on both her comprehensive fieldwork and literature review, she argued that few Japanese scholars would seriously contest the following three generalizations: “(1) male desire is inspired by an ideology of motherhood in Japan that structures mothers to be sacrificing caregivers and children to be care receivers often well into adulthood; (2) the model of mother-child relations becomes the culturally dominant model for gender—male as care receiver and female as caregiver; and (3) these two positions can become sexualized—sexually, males desire to receive care from and to be taken care of by females” (p. 172). (For further summary of gender ideology and gender relations in contemporary Japan, including the eroticizing of the mother-child bond, see Allison, 1994, 1996.)

Despite changing gender relations, asymmetry in marital relations remains a recurrent theme in anthropological writings, in the common-sense awareness of ordinary people, and in mass-media representations in Japan. Seen from the outside, housewives may appear dependent on their husbands for financial outcomes and therefore, it might be argued, they could feel like a daughter vis-à-vis their husbands. This conjecture, however, is inconsistent with contemporary scholarship on postwar middle-class Japanese marriages, which emphasize housewives’ increasing emotional detachment from their husbands, their control over household finances, their active involvement in community affairs, and

2. The translation into English of Doi’s (1971) Amae No Kozo as The Anatomy of Dependence can easily be misleading. A distinction has to be made between (a) dependence as an analytical construct, (b) dependence as an English-language term, and (c) dependence as a gloss of the Japanese term amaee (White, 1992). When “dependence” is conceptualized as a personality trait, it appears equivalent to the common English meaning of the term dependency. The Japanese emic conceptualization of amaee, however, does not refer to a personality trait but to a context-sensitive relationship. A Japanese husband who is “amaeru-ing” his wife does not necessarily have a dependent personality; he may act quite independently or assertively in other settings (e.g., at work). Emde’s (1992) conjecture that amaee is a more adequate construct to describe Japanese family relationships than attachment is highly speculative and without much empirical support (Gjerde, 2001). In Japan, secure attachment and amaee refer to very different behaviors, and “secure attachment is not just a North American invention or a Western ideal, but a widespread and preferred phenomenon” (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999, p. 728).
their concern for the education of their children. Japanese wives receive both assets and credentials from being housewives which are independent of their relationships with their husbands (e.g., Borovoy, 2000; LeBlanc, 1999; Vogel, 1963). In sum, this study examined the prototype hypothesis by exploring the interplay between current representations of attachment experiences and marital relations, with emphasis on marital role asymmetry conceptualized as a cultural theme.

The prototype hypothesis

Although the attachment system is considered to be universal, different attachment patterns (or conditional behavioral strategies) are hypothesized to develop “as a result of [the infant’s] interaction with his environment of evolutionary adaptedness, and especially of his interaction with the principal figure in that environment” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 179). As a child grows older, these conditional behavioral strategies increasingly entail representational processes (Main, 1991). The most common interview method used to evaluate adult attachment, the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996), assesses (primarily) three attachment strategies in terms of adults’ representations of parent-child relationships: secure, preoccupied, and dismissing. Testing the prototype hypothesis therefore involves an examination of how adults’ current representations of their attachment experiences influence their marital experiences.

Main (1990) distinguished between two conditional strategies. A primary secure strategy allows adults to flexibly deploy attention, openly process attachment-related information, and monitor (i.e., evaluate, qualify, or reflect on) their internal working models. In the AAI, this “free-to-evaluate” tendency is manifest in secure individuals’ ability to integrate both positive and negative experiences into a coherent, well-thought-out description of attachment relationships.

In response to unfavorable childhood experiences, secondary strategies evolve that either hyperactivate or deactivate the attachment system (Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gillies, & Fleming, 1993; Main, 1990). A hyperactivating strategy involves preoccupation with attachment relationships and is marked by incoherent discourse, including overly detailed or oscillatory evaluations of emotionally charged experiences and difficulty in maintaining an objective viewpoint on attachment relationships. In contrast, a deactivating strategy involves dismissal of attachment relationships and is marked by lack of attachment-related memories, generalized, often idealized descriptions of parents, and a general devaluation of attachment.

In this study, different attachment strategies are hypothesized to regulate how adults construct working models of current marital attachment. The spouse is typically an important attachment figure (Shaver et al., 1988). Although adult romantic attachment differs from child-parent attachment in the degree of reciprocity of attachment and caregiving, both involve the same set-goal and function: Under stressful conditions, individuals seek proximity to their primary attachment figure for comfort and security. Therefore, attachment security in marriage mainly concerns whether an adult’s current working models represent the spouse as psychologically available and the self as able to rely on the spouse for comfort and support.

The study of adult attachment in Japan: Conceptual and methodological issues

We interviewed Japanese couples using a culturally appropriate modification of the AAI. The application of Main and Goldwyn’s (1998) coding system of the AAI to Japanese transcripts, however, raises difficult and unsolved issues. Purely linguistic scales are likely to present particularly serious challenges. Relevant examples include scales for passive speech (passivity of discourse; a defining attribute of the Passively Preoccupied category) and scales for disoriented speech (lapses in the monitoring of discourse; a defining attribute of the Unresolved category). Moreover, Grice’s (1975) four maxims of Conversational Cooperation form the theoretical basis for determining the coherence of discourse (Hesse, 1999). Conversational cooperation,
however defined, may not take on identical forms in Japanese and English. Although a detailed discussion of Grice’s theory is beyond the scope of this paper, its cross-cultural applicability is contested (e.g., Keenan, 1976). With regard to Japanese, two issues deserve special attention. First, every utterance in Japanese requires a choice between honorific and nonhonorific expressions and the choice of different expressions is related in complex ways to speech context (Okamoto, 1999). Second, truthfulness (a component of Grice’s Quality maxim) is sometimes indicated in Japanese, but not in English, by prolonged silence (Maynard, 1997). Third, in the scoring of the AAI, the use of correct punctuation in the transcription is critical (Main, 1994). In transcripts that contain “run-on sentences” (a characteristic of angry preoccupying speech), commas are used to identify a brief pause between sentences, while periods indicate a full stop. In English, this convention does not seriously affect the readability of each sentence because words are separated by spaces. Written Japanese does not make use of word spaces (i.e., words are completely adjacent), and the use of commas within a sentence is essential, not necessarily for reflecting pauses, but for defining parts of speech (e.g., subject, object, adverb clause). Without these within-sentence commas, transcripts may be difficult to interpret, irrespective of the coherence of the speaker’s discourse style. In sum, it has yet to be decided whether Grice’s definition of conversational cooperation, as operationalized by Main and Goldwyn (1998), is applicable to the coding of Japanese AAls. Hence, we used Bartholomew’s (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) method to code the attachment interviews directly from audiotapes.

Coding Japanese attachment interviews using the Q-sort method. In this study, the AAI was coded using Kobak et al.’s (1993) attachment Q-sort adapted for use in Japan. The macroanalytic Q-sort approach has gained widespread acceptance in assessing infant attachment (e.g., Strayer, Verissimo, Vaughn, & Howes, 1995). It is now also being adopted in adult attachment research (Klohnen & John, 1998; Kobak, 1989; Kobak et al., 1993; Onishi, Gjerde, & Block, 2001). With reference to Kobak’s Q-sort, Hesse (1999) stated: “the Q-sort system has yielded many impressive results” (p. 420). Q items are typically phrased broadly enough to allow coders to use their insider understanding of the social/cultural item meaning (Gjerde & Shimizu, 1995). For example, if Japanese coders are asked to use the following Q item, “The participant presents a coherent picture of his or her parents,” they are given the opportunity to rely on their own cultural and linguistic knowledge in evaluating the appropriate discourse features. In contrast, a microanalytic coding system does not provide the coders with a similar opportunity to apply their own cultural understanding of specific discourse features.

Overview of the present study
This research examined the potential applicability of attachment theory for understanding marital processes in Japan and to set the stage for further comparative cultural research in this domain. A cultural theme analysis was introduced to achieve this aim. A second major objective was to develop culturally sensitive methods to assess adult attachment in Japan and to present preliminary evidence for their validity. Given the lack of previous adult attachment research in Japan, this contribution must be viewed as preliminary and the results interpreted with substantial caution, especially with regard to the interpretation of gender differences. Our power to detect small to moderate effects is reduced by the relatively small sample size.

In addition, three facets of the prototype hypothesis were examined. First, attachment strategies based on representations of childhood experiences were expected to promote variation in the interpretations and manifestations of the marital asymmetry theme in married Japanese couples. Some Japanese may embrace this theme, others may remain indifferent, some even actively reject it; no simple one-to-one relation is expected between this cultural theme and marital behavior. That is, the subjective experience of attachment strategies (i.e., the current state of mind
with regard to attachment) and the intersubjectively shared theme of an asymmetrical marriage were expected, conjointly, to produce individual variation in marital experiences of Japanese couples.

Second, Japanese husbands frequently adopt the role of care receiver vis-à-vis both their mothers and their wives. In contrast, Japanese females frequently change from being care receivers in childhood to being care providers for their husbands. Husbands are therefore more likely than their wives to manifest continuity of attachment security across relationships. Given this culture-based gender difference in role continuity, we anticipated stronger evidence for the prototype hypothesis for Japanese husbands than for Japanese wives. That is, the correlation between current representations of attachment experiences and marital attachment was expected to be stronger for Japanese husbands than for Japanese wives.

Third, on average, it was expected that secure adults—able to construct coherent models of attachment—would have clear representations of secure marital attachment; preoccupied adults—prone to construct multiple inconsistent models—would have ambiguous and vague representations of both self and spouse; and dismissing adults—prone to construct defensive models downplaying the personal significance of attachment—would present themselves as compulsively self-reliant and their spouse as unworthy.

Figure 1 outlines the relations among the main constructs.

**Method**

**Participants**

Forty married couples were recruited from several community-based parenting workshops for young mothers in the Tokyo metropolitan area (mean age 35.1 years for the husbands, 32.4 years for the wives). The average length of marriage was seven years (SD = 2.5 years) and each couple had a preschool child (20 of the children were girls, 20 were boys; mean age 4.3 years). One couple did not complete all measures and was excluded. The analyses are therefore based on 39 couples. One of the husbands had obtained a doctoral degree, 32 had graduated from college, and six had a high-school degree. The education of the wives ranged from high school to college (high school = 7; vocational school = 8; two-year junior college = 11; four-year college = 12; master’s degree = 1). Thirty-two of the husbands were employed as white-collar workers in private companies (such males are typically referred to as...
salarymen in Japan), one was a university professor, three were self-employed, and three were civil servants. Three of the wives held part-time jobs, and the remaining 36 were—as are most Japanese women with small children—full-time homemakers.

**Measures**

**Assessment of attachment strategies based on representations of childhood experiences.** Attachment strategies were assessed using a modified version of Main’s Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George et al., 1996). The standard AAI asks the participants to describe their childhood relationships to each parent and to give specific memories in support of these descriptions. They are also asked about their experiences of being upset, ill, or hurt, as well as about specific incidents of parental separation, rejection, and threat of abandonment. Finally, they are asked to make overall evaluations of their childhood experiences with their parents, including why they believe their parents had behaved as they did, how their relationships with their parents had changed over time, and how childhood experiences had influenced their adult personality. The purpose is to evaluate the participants’ “current state of mind” regarding attachment by analyzing the coherence of discourse.

**Adapting the AAI for use with Japanese participants.** The adaptation of the AAI for use with Japanese participants proceeded in several steps. First, the standard AAI was translated into Japanese by the first author, who is native Japanese. This translation, here renamed the Japanese Attachment Interview (JAI; Onishi, 1996), was then used with two groups of Japanese to secure its applicability to Japanese participants.

Second, using the original unmodified Japanese translation, the first author interviewed 10 Japanese college students who attended a summer course in psychology at a major public university in California. Based on these interviews, the Japanese translation was modified to clarify specific questions (see below). Third, the first author used the modified protocol to interview four Japanese married couples in their early 30s to determine the appropriateness of the modified translation with this particular age group to be used in the main study. Following these interviews, conducted separately with husband and wife, each of the four young couples separately discussed the interview, parent-child interaction, and marital relationships in Japan with the first author.

The pilot studies raised important issues regarding both the initial translation and the cultural appropriateness of specific JAI questions. Many Japanese phrases, when directly translated from English, did not accurately convey the intended meaning of the original questions. For example, the question regarding memories of “when you were separated from your parents (anata ga oya kara hanareta toki)” was not instantly comprehensible in Japanese. Some participants did not understand the question; others answered that it was not until they got married that they were separated from their parents. Thus for many Japanese participants, the phrase “separated from” meant “permanently leaving home and living independently” rather than denoting temporary physical separation. Accordingly, the phrase was changed to “when you and your parents were separated (anata to oya ga hanareta toki),” to capture the intended meaning of this question. In addition, the original AAI question “When you were upset as a child, what would you do?” was changed to “When something happened and you were upset as child, what would you do?” The adjective “upset” has several meanings in Japanese depending on context. The use of “upset” without reference to specific contexts proved confusing and participants asked what situations/contexts they were supposed to think about. Thus, the phrase “when something happened” was added in order to make certain they were permitted to talk about separation in any specific context. Such changes made the interview more clearly understandable and reduced the number of participant inquiries regarding the meaning of JAI questions.

**Coding the Japanese Attachment Interview.** The 42-item Family Attachment Q-sort (hereafter, the FAQ; see Onishi & Gjerde, 1996a) was developed to code the JAI. Initially, 40 items were selected from Kobak’s 100-item
Attachment Interview Q-sort (Kobak et al., 1993). Kobak defined the majority of these 40 items as most clearly representative of his two-dimensional attachment prototypes: secure versus insecure and deactivation versus hyperactivation. Two additional items were written to capture additional expressions of insecure attachment thought to be characteristic of Japanese family dynamics (e.g., “Is susceptible to the feelings and needs of other family members”). Some items were slightly rephrased to make them culturally more appropriate. The 42 items were then back-translated into English to ensure that the core item meaning remained unchanged. The final item pool reflects the defining criteria of attachment strategies as assessed by the JAI, including valuing of attachment, affect regulation, and correspondence between adjectives and specific memories. The 42 FAQ items were sorted into a forced seven-category rectangular distribution, ranging from most characteristic (7) to least characteristic (1).

A three-step prototype-matching approach (see Onishi et al., 2001, for a more detailed description of this method) was employed to develop continuous attachment scores for each attachment pattern. In step one, two psychologists used the FAQ item to provide definitions of prototypically secure, preoccupied, and dismissing attachment patterns. The first was a native speaker of Japanese; the second had lived in Japan for an extended period of time. The two experts showed high agreement (alphas for the three patterns ranged from .90 to .94). The two FAQs were therefore averaged to provide a single consensual prototype definition of each attachment pattern. The first was a native speaker of Japanese; the second had lived in Japan for an extended period of time. The experts showed high agreement (alphas for the three patterns ranged from .90 to .94). The two FAQs were therefore averaged to provide a single consensual prototype definition of each attachment pattern. Given these high alphas, inclusion of additional criterion definers would have yielded little incremental value. The two coders also provided highly differentiated Q-descriptions of the participants’ attachment strategies: The average within-rater correlation (our estimate of within-rater differentiation) for each of the two coders across all participants’ FAQs was as low as .06 and .09. Hence, the two coders were not only able to agree on individual cases; they also provided differentiated attachment descriptions.

In step two, two Japanese psychology students, blind to the purpose of the study, of other measures, and of the identity of the participants, used the FAQ to evaluate each participant’s audiotaped JAI interview. Prior to the coding process, both had received thorough training in attachment theory and the Q-sort technique. The meaning of each FAQ item was extensively discussed to calibrate the two coders’ interpretations. Eighteen audiotaped JAI interviews obtained during the pilot phase were used as training materials. The training aimed to achieve “differential accuracy” (Cronbach, 1955): Each coder was expected not only to differentiate among different participants’ attachment strategies, but also to achieve high agreement with the other coder for any given specific case. In order to be included in the main phase of the study, the FAQs of the two coders had to agree with the FAQs of the first author in at least 75% of the training cases (agreement criterion was set to $r = .70$). This criterion was achieved in 15 of the 18 cases for both coders. When the criterion was not reached, careful discussion of the case was conducted and the source of disagreement identified.

In step three, participants’ FAQs were correlated, separately, with each of the three FAQ attachment prototypes. For each participant, this process yielded three continuous FAQ prototype scores: secure, preoccupied, and dismissing. Each prototype score denotes the degree of matching or resem-
blance between a participant’s FAQ profile and a given attachment prototype. For example, a high correlation between an FAQ profile and the secure prototype definition means that the participant is relatively securely attached; a low or negative correlation means that the participant is relatively insecurely attached.

Assessment of marital relationships

The Japanese marital Q-sort (JMQ). Participants used the 42-item JMQ (Onishi & Gjerde, 1996b) to describe their marital relationships. The development of this measure proceeded in several steps. First, items judged culturally relevant were selected from Kobak’s Marital Q-sort (Kobak, 1989; Kobak & Hazan, 1991). Second, focus groups were conducted with five young Japanese mothers in Tokyo. Based on the focus group members’ discussions of their marital relationships and the Marital Q-sort, 30 of Kobak’s items were retained. Some items had to be slightly rephrased to increase their cultural appropriateness. Based on the focus group discussions, the first author developed 12 additional items with particular focus on child-centeredness and relationships with in-laws (e.g., “I am unable to think about our marriage without also giving much thought to our child[ren]”; “In disagreements with my in-laws, I can count on the support of my spouse”).

Two versions of the JMQ were developed: one for each participant’s description of his or her own feelings and behavior toward the spouse (the Self JMQ), the other for each participant’s inferences about the spouse’s feelings and behavior toward self (the Spouse JMQ). With the exception of references to the target person (self versus spouse), the content of the two JMQs was identical. Participants were asked to sort the 42 items into seven categories using a forced rectangular distribution, ranging from most (7) to least characteristic (1). Each participant completed both Q-sorts. Two JMQ a priori scales were created: (a) Marital Attachment Security, and (b) Adherence to the Marital Asymmetry Theme. Each scale contained items from both JMQs, as described below.

The marital attachment security scale. This scale measured working models of attachment behavior and feelings in marriage. Five items selected from the Spouse JMQ measure models of the spouse as psychologically available (e.g., “My spouse is available and dependable when I am distressed,” “My spouse is sensitive to subtle changes in my thoughts and feelings,” “Doing things for me makes my spouse feel happy and content”). Five items from the Self JMQ measure models of the self as able to rely on the spouse (e.g., “I am easily comforted by my spouse when I am worried,” “I feel most relaxed and comfortable when I am with my spouse [hotto suru],” “I consult with my spouse before making important decisions”). The two five-item sets were combined into one scale because, conceptually, attachment security requires both components (i.e., the psychological availability of the spouse and the ability of self to rely on the spouse) to operate simultaneously. The internal consistency (alpha) reliability for the 10-item scale was .84 for wives and .81 for husbands.3 Marital attachment security should not be confounded with attachment strategies, which is derived from the JAI.

The marital asymmetry theme scale. This scale measures the degree to which the participants adhere to the marital asymmetry theme. The scale for wives assessed the degree to which they viewed their husbands as “childlike” and psychologically dependent on them; the scale for husbands assessed the degree to which they viewed their wives as “mother-like” and themselves as psychologically dependent on their wives.

Accordingly, the wives were asked to rate the applicability to themselves of the following two statements: (a) “I sometimes feel my husband is like a big child to me,” and (b) “My spouse is psychologically dependent (amaeru) on me.”

In contrast, the husbands were asked to rate these two statements: (a) “I sometimes feel my

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3. The Marital Attachment Security scale is available on request from the authors. The items for the Marital Asymmetry scale are included in the text.
Table 1. *Family Attachment Q-sort (FAQ)* a items most and least characteristic of the three attachment prototypes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secure attachment prototype (alpha = .94)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most characteristic FAQ items</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Responses maintain focus on interview questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents an objective and well-thought-out picture of attachment relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrates specific memories with more general abstractions</td>
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<td>Presents a consistent picture of parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explicitly acknowledges lapses in answering interview questions</td>
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<td>Is credible and easy to believe</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Least characteristic FAQ items</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is currently preoccupied with negative experiences with parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacillates between positive and negative feelings toward parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seems detached or uninfluenced by childhood experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devalues attachment relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject persistently does not remember specific events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes few efforts to search for memories relevant to interview topics</td>
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<tr>
<th>Preoccupied attachment prototype (alpha = .92)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Most characteristic FAQ items</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expresses dissatisfaction with parental availability</td>
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<td>Is conflicted or confused about parents</td>
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<td>Is currently preoccupied with negative experiences with parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacillates between positive and negative feelings toward parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Currently openly expresses anger toward parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject is caught up with analyzing parental shortcomings</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Least characteristic FAQ items</strong></td>
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<td>Responses maintain focus on interview questions</td>
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<td>Seems detached or uninfluenced by childhood experiences</td>
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<td>Presents an objective and well-thought-out picture of attachment relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devalues attachment relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents self as invulnerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presents a consistent pictures of parents</td>
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<th>Dismissing attachment prototype (alpha = .90)</th>
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<td><strong>Most characteristic FAQ items</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses are superficial and require further probes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devalues attachment relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems detached or uninfluenced by childhood experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes few efforts to search for memories relevant to interview topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depicts parents as perfect or wonderful without convincing rater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denies any setbacks, negative effects or hurt from parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Least characteristic FAQ items</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly acknowledges lapses in answering interview questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is able to discuss the influence of “relationships on relationships”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)
wife is almost like a mother to me,” and “I am psychologically dependent (amaeru) on my wife.” This choice of items was based both on the literature reviewed in the Introduction and on the focus group interviews.

This scale may appear to measure only one half of the asymmetry theme: (a) the wife’s view of her husband as childlike, and (b) the husband’s view of his wife as mother-like. The other half (i.e., the wife’s view of herself as mother-like and husband’s view of himself as childlike) was not included. This choice, also based on both literature review and focus group discussions, reflects how this theme typically operates in everyday Japanese discourse. Japanese wives tend to say, “My husband is like my oldest son,” but seldom say, “I am like a mother to him.” Similarly, Japanese husbands tend to say, “My wife is like a mother to me,” but seldom say, “I am like a big child.” Hence, items measuring the “other half” of the asymmetry theme were not included (inter-item correlations = .53 for the wife scale and .59 for the husband scale).

Parental assessment of the child’s ego resiliency

Measuring the child’s ego resiliency. The child’s level of ego resiliency was evaluated, using the California Child Q-sort (CCQ). Ego resiliency refers to a resourceful and flexible engagement with the world, intellectual competence, and interpersonal adjustment. Each parent responded separately, using a 4-point scale, to the 13 most and 13 least characteristic items of the prototypical description of ego resiliency (Block & Block, 1980). After reversing the values for the 13 least characteristic items, the 26 responses were summed. The alpha reliability for the sum score was .85 for maternal descriptions and .83 for paternal descriptions. Based on previous research of both children and adolescents (e.g., Arend, Gove, & Sroufe, 1979; Kobak & Scery, 1988), the child’s level of ego resiliency was expected to be positively related to secure parental attachment and negatively related to insecure parental attachment, especially dismissing parental attachment.

Procedure

The first author (a native speaker of Japanese) visited each couple’s home on weekends to conduct the JAI interviews. Husbands and wives were interviewed separately. While one spouse was being interviewed, the other went to a separate room or played outside with the child. The order of the interviews was counterbalanced. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audi-taped. After the interviews, each participant received detailed instructions on how to complete the two JMQs and the Ego Resilien-cy scale. Husbands and wives were instructed to complete the three tasks separately, not to consult with each other, and to mail their Q-sorts separately to the first author. The order of the tasks was counterbalanced for different couples. Each couple was provided with two stamped envelopes, one for the wife’s Q-sort, the other for the husband’s Q-sort. Each couple received 5000 yen (about US $45) for their participation.

Results

Relations among the FAQ prototype scores

The correlation of the secure prototype scores was −.50 with preoccupied, −.65 with
dismissing; the correlation between preoccupied and dismissing was \(-.29\). Variances for the three FAQ prototype scores were not significantly different between wives and husbands. Compared to husbands, wives received significantly higher preoccupied prototype scores than husbands \((t = 3.28, p < .001)\). This gender difference has precedent in American samples (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). All mean comparisons used \(t\)-tests for independent samples, not paired \(t\)-tests, because the former is considered more conservative (Glass & Hopkins, 1984).

**Descriptive statistics for the JMQ scale scores**

Wives scored slightly higher than husbands did on the Marital Attachment Security scale (for wives, \(M = 5.18; SD = 1.02\); for husbands, \(M = 4.63; SD = 1.09; t = 2.32, p < .051, r_{pb} = .26\), range of scores: 7 to 1). Although this mean difference is quite small, it may suggest that women are slightly more comfortable with relationship closeness and less likely to see relationships as secondary. This phenomenon has previously been observed also in attachment research (Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994). The wives, on average, also scored higher on the Marital Asymmetry Theme scale than their husbands (for wives, \(M = 4.45; SD = 1.70\); for husbands, \(M = 2.97; SD = 1.70; t = 4.07, p < .001, r_{pb} = .42\), range of scores: 7 to 1). We speculate that it may be easier for wives to admit that their husbands are dependent on them than it is for husbands to admit their dependence on their wives. Furthermore, marital attachment security was negatively related to adherence to marital asymmetry theme for wives \((r = -.39, p < .01)\). In contrast, husbands’ marital attachment security was positively related to their adherence to marital asymmetry theme \((r = .35, p < .05)\).

**Relations between attachment strategies and the quality of marital relationships**

Table 2 reports the relations between the three FAQ prototype scores and the two JMQ a priori scales, separately for each sex. No significant correlation was observed between attachment strategies and marital relationships for wives. For husbands, in contrast, Secure Attachment Strategies correlated positively \((r = .38, p < .05)\) with the Marital Attachment Security, and negatively with Dismissing Attachment Strategies \((r = .34, p < .05)\). Preoccupied Attachment Strategies were unrelated to JMQ scales for both sexes. Correlations between attachment strategies and the Marital Asymmetry Theme were low and insignificant for both sexes. In sum, these findings suggest that the secure husband had working models of his spouse as psychologically available and of himself as able to rely on his spouse. In contrast, the dismissing husband had working models of his spouse as psychologically unavailable and of himself as unlikely to rely on his spouse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Experiences and Child Ego Resiliency</th>
<th>Wives</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital attachment security</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital asymmetry theme</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child ego resiliency</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \(N = 39\) for both wives and husbands.

*p < .05. **p < .01.*
Relations between parental attachment strategies and the child’s ego resiliency

Table 2 also reports the relations between the three FAQ prototype scores and the Ego Resiliency of the child. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Waters, Wippman, Sroufe, 1979), secure maternal attachment strategies were positively associated with the child’s Ego Resiliency and dismissing maternal attachment strategies was negatively associated with the child’s Ego Resiliency. These results bolster the validity of the family attachment (FAQ) prototype scores.

Relations among attachment strategies, marital attachment security, and adherence to the marital asymmetry theme

Multiple regression analyses were performed separately for husbands and wives to examine how interactions between attachment strategy (i.e., their current representations of attachment vis-à-vis parents) and adherence to the marital asymmetry theme predicted their marital attachment security. For each of the three attachment strategies, the regression terms were entered hierarchically in the following order: step 1, Adherence to the marital asymmetry theme; step 2, Attachment strategy; and step 3, their interaction term. Attachment strategy (or the most distant variable) was entered on the second step in order to determine its developmental importance—that is, the extent to which it explained variance in marital security over and above the theoretically more proximal marital asymmetry theme (see Sroufe, Egeland, & Kreutzer, 1990, for further examples of how removing the influence of proximal predictors reveals the developmental influence of early experience). Tables 3 and 4 show $R^2$, overall $F$ for each model, and $F$ for incremental variance using Model 1 error terms (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) for both husbands and wives. Significant interactions between these two variables were obtained only for the husbands (see Table 3), but for completeness we also include the results for wives in Table 4. Although the full model was statically significant for the dismissing pattern, the increment in

<table>
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<th>Table 3. Regression analyses of attachment strategies and marital asymmetry theme on husbands’ marital attachment security</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F_{overall}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F_{increment}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F_{overall}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F_{increment}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F_{overall}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F_{increment}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 39$ for both wives and husbands. $+p < .06, *p < .05, **p < .01.$
variance explained associated with any of the three interaction terms did not approximate statistical significance. We note that only for husbands did attachment strategies explain variance over and above the asymmetry theme.

The overall model for the secure attachment strategy was statistically significant \( (F_{\text{overall}} = 5.25, p < .01) \). As reported in Figure 2, husbands’ secure strategy and adherence to the marital asymmetry theme jointly enhanced their marital attachment security. The main effects of attachment strategy and the marital symmetry theme were both significant at the .05 level. The interaction effect \( (F_{\text{increment}} = 3.75) \) was significant at the .06 level.

As reported in Figure 3, the overall model including the dismissing pattern was also significant for husbands \( (F_{\text{overall}} = 6.01, p < .01) \). The interaction, also statistically significant, was in the opposite direction to the secure pattern: husbands’ deactivating strategy and adherence to the marital asymmetry theme jointly lowered their marital attachment security \( (F_{\text{increment}} = 6.76, p < .05) \). Thus, for husbands, the psychological meaning of marital asymmetry appears to vary for secure and dismissing attachment strategies. The regression model for the preoccupied strategy was not significant.

### Table 4. Regression analyses of attachment strategies and marital asymmetry theme on wives’ marital attachment security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step 1: Asymmetry theme</th>
<th>Step 2: Attachment strategy</th>
<th>Step 3: Attachment strategy by asymmetry theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F_{\text{overall}} )</td>
<td>6.55** ( (df = 1, 37) )</td>
<td>4.04* ( (df = 2, 36) )</td>
<td>2.63 ( (df = 3, 35) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F_{\text{increment}} )</td>
<td>1.45 ( (df = 1, 36) )</td>
<td>0.02 ( (df = 1, 35) )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F_{\text{overall}} )</td>
<td>6.55** ( (df = 1, 37) )</td>
<td>3.60* ( (df = 2, 36) )</td>
<td>2.42 ( (df = 3, 35) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F_{\text{increment}} )</td>
<td>.71 ( (df = 1, 36) )</td>
<td>.22 ( (df = 1, 35) )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F_{\text{overall}} )</td>
<td>6.55** ( (df = 1, 37) )</td>
<td>3.35* ( (df = 2, 36) )</td>
<td>2.93* ( (df = 3, 35) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F_{\text{increment}} )</td>
<td>.28 ( (df = 1, 36) )</td>
<td>1.92 ( (df = 1, 35) )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** \( N = 39 \) for both wives and husbands.

\(+p < .06, *p < .05, **p < .01.\)

The overarching purpose of this research was to present a new conceptual framework for the analysis of attachment and culture. Toward this aim, a cultural theme analysis was introduced with the purpose of illustrating how attachment may be studied in different cultural contexts by specifying, a priori, one culturally salient theme germane to attachment-related behavior. Further research on Japan, whether related to attachment or not, might benefit from trying to identify other salient themes in the lives of the Japanese. Barth’s (1993) description of Balinese concerns, their implications, and status, might provide one model for this endeavor.

The second major aim was to develop and employ culturally sensitive measures for use in attachment research in Japan, both with regard to current representations of attachment-related childhood experiences and the quality of...
marital relationships. Consistent with expectations, limited evidence for the prototype hypothesis emerged for husbands, but not for wives. Furthermore, within-culture variation in marital experiences of Japanese husbands emerged as a function of the interplay between (secure and dismissing) attachment strategies and adherence to the marital asymmetry theme. Similar results were not obtained for wives. Although these preliminary results appear promising, further research using these measures is necessary to determine their validity. The need for replication is recognized.

The conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of these data are restricted by the small sample size. First, a sample of 39 participants has limited statistical power and can only detect large effects. Precise comparisons cannot be obtained when the error bands associated with individual estimates are large and the risk for Type I errors (false positive results) is highly present. In sum, the gender-related results obtained in this research must be interpreted with caution.

Another reason for presenting these data relates to our view of scientific inquiry. In the process of protecting against Type I errors, we may be committing Type II (false negative) errors. In a study with little statistical power, like the current one, concern about avoiding false negative findings is warranted. This argument, in our view, is particularly justified in the early phases of a research program. A too strong concern for only Type I errors may eliminate, prematurely, potentially fruitful research directions. Furthermore, overemphasis on single studies should be avoided and a more cumulative view of science adopted (e.g., Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1989). With these caveats in mind, we discuss the implications of our findings.

Japanese husbands and adherence to the asymmetry theme

As anticipated, attachment strategies based on representations of childhood experiences were
significantly associated with marital attachment security for husbands. This finding suggests that attachment strategies evolving out of childhood operate in marital relationships as “rules” for processing attachment-related information and thus for constructing current models of marital attachment. The marital asymmetry theme encourages Japanese husbands to adopt the role of care receivers vis-à-vis both their mothers and their wives, and this theme encourages Japanese wives to change from being care receivers in childhood to caregivers in marriage. Thus, the husband role may promote a more direct continuity between childhood and marital attachment.

This conjecture is consistent with the finding that relations between husbands’ JAI-measured attachment strategies and marital attachment security varied in accordance with their degree of adherence to the marital asymmetry theme. The husbands’ JAI-measured attachment strategies were not linearly related to marital asymmetry. It was the interaction between attachment strategies and adherence to this cultural theme that was associated with their marital attachment security. This finding suggests that Japanese husbands attach different psychological meanings to a wife’s “motherly” care as a function of their childhood attachment strategies.

Husbands who were secure with respect to childhood attachment reported higher marital attachment security as a function of strong adherence to marital asymmetry. A motherly wife may therefore represent a source of comfort, warmth, and compassion for these men—their safe haven. Japanese men often admit that their success depends on their wife (uchii no kaa-chan, literally “the mother of my house,” Tanaka, 1986). Thus, stronger adherence to the asymmetry theme may further enhance the secure husband’s ability to turn to his wife for “motherly” support and use her as a secure base from which to explore soto, the world outside of the home, the world of work, in particular.

In contrast, husbands who were dismissing with respect to childhood attachment reported...
lower marital attachment security as a function of strong adherence to marital asymmetry. In interpreting this interaction, one must clarify the meaning of adherence to the asymmetry theme in dismissing husbands. First, a dismissing husband may keep his attachment system deactivated by resorting to the culturally idealized script of “wife as mother” without genuinely appraising his wife’s actual behavior. In general, it is hypothesized that the idealization of attachment figures serves to direct attention away from relevant attachment information (i.e., to deactivate the attachment system). Second, it is possible that the wife of a dismissing husband actually behaves in a motherly manner, and the dismissing husband acknowledges this behavior in his description of his wife. Nevertheless, the dismissing husband may still keep his attachment system deactivated by minimizing the impact on himself of his wife’s nurturing behavior. Either way, dismissing husbands may attempt to avoid environments that violate the two central premises of the deactivating strategy: “restricting access to attachment information” and “minimizing the personal significance of the relevance of attachment information” (Dozier & Kobak, 1992, p. 1479). Hence, their adherence to the asymmetry theme might motivate them to further employ deactivating strategies in order to turn attention away from or actively downplay the emotional significance of their motherly wife.

In sum, depending on attachment strategies, the marital asymmetry theme is associated with different psychological implications for Japanese husbands’ marital attachment security. In response to this theme, a secure husband may use the motherly wife as a secure base, leading to high marital attachment security. In contrast, a dismissing husband may become increasingly avoidant and detached when, if ever, he becomes aware of this theme or is in the presence of a motherly wife.

Japanese wives and adherence to the asymmetry theme

Although wives’ adherence to the asymmetry theme was higher than their husbands’ adherence, the wives’ endorsement of this theme was negatively related to marital attachment security. These results raise the possibility that although a Japanese wife may view her husband as her oldest son and provide him with daily motherly care, her caregiving behavior does not involve affectionate, attachment-related concerns. Thus, Japanese wives may not attach the same psychological significance to the cultural theme of asymmetrical marriage as their husbands.

Attachment strategies: Singular versus multiple models

We hypothesized that attachment strategies—based on current representations of experiences vis-à-vis parents—influence how spouses consciously appraise models of their current marital relationships. In contrast to the results obtained for secure and dismissing husbands, however, the attachment strategies of preoccupied husbands were unrelated to marital attachment. Individuals with secure strategies are viewed as able to monitor and construct a singular model of a given relationship (e.g., marriage). In contrast, individuals with insecure strategies tend to distort attachment information and to develop multiple and incompatible models of the same relationship or figure (Bowlby, 1973). Below, the different results obtained for preoccupied and dismissing patterns are discussed in terms of the hypothesis that individuals with hyperactivating strategies construct multiple models differently than individuals with deactivating strategies.

Preoccupied individuals oscillate rapidly between different viewpoints, as a result of their personal conflict and indecisiveness (Main & Goldwyn, 1998). This hyperactivating strategy entails multiple models that contain “conflicting propositional viewpoints” (e.g., I fear my mother will leave me/I hope my mother will leave me; Main, 1991). Although preoccupied individuals have access to attachment information, they may possess conflicting viewpoints on attachment relationships, and thus have difficulties holding their own representations firmly in mind. The propensity to become overwhelmed by
multiple viewpoints may result in a failure to present an unambiguous appraisal of the marital relationship, as illustrated in this study by the absence of relations between attachment strategies and marital attachment. Attempts to integrate inherently incompatible viewpoints “is doomed to failure and may lead to cognitive breakdown” (Bowlby, 1973, p. 318).

In contrast, dismissing individuals segregate and exclude attachment information from further processing in order to keep their attachment system deactivated. Although dismissing individuals also construct multiple models, their models are contradictory in content, not in propositional viewpoint (e.g., I believe my mother is loving/I believe my mother is rejecting; Main, 1991). They remain unaware of these contradictions by diverting attention away from unfavorable models of attachment (e.g., a model of rejecting mother through idealization). Dismissing individuals are therefore able to present, at least temporarily, a viewpoint of successful defensive models. They typically regard themselves as invulnerable and others as unworthy of respect, as indicated in this study by the negative correlation between their deactivating strategies and marital attachment security. Their defensive solution, however, does not imply they have a singular model: Their presentation of self as invulnerable is an element of their multiple-model construction.

We argue that it is the establishment of “firm” propositional viewpoints, however self-deceiving and potentially fragile, which distinguishes dismissing from preoccupied individuals. Dismissing individuals are able to convey a distinctive model of their marital relationship, however restricted their thoughts may be. In contrast, preoccupied individuals do not possess this ability. To interpret these conscious representations of marital attachment, one must consider metarepresentational attachment strategies for constructing current working models (e.g., Main, 1991). We suggest that the absence of significant relations between attachment strategies and marital attachment for preoccupied individuals may result from their tendency to construct multiple models in terms of conflicting viewpoints.

Caveats and conclusions

Although preferable at this time, the Q-sort method (as any method) has limitations. Analysis of written transcripts, using more detailed coding systems, such as the one being developed by Main and Goldwyn (1998), is needed to differentiate between subcategories (e.g., passive versus angry preoccupation) or to identify “unresolved/disorganized,” “cannot classify,” and “earned secure” participants (Hesse, 1999). However, as this and other studies suggest (e.g., Dozier & Kobak, 1992; Kobak et al., 1993), the Q-sort method appears sufficiently accurate to differentiate among the main three attachment categories: secure, preoccupied, and dismissing.

This study used interviews to assess attachment strategies based on representations of childhood experiences and self-reports to measure current working models of marital attachment. Attachment interviews, such as the AAI (or its Japanese adaptation, the JAI), are assumed to access unconscious processes by providing “opportunities for a speaker to contradict, or fail to support, earlier or succeeding statements” (Main, 1995, p. 437). In contrast, attachment analyses of romantic attachment have paid little attention to the coherence of discourse; instead they have focused on feelings and behaviors “of which a person is aware and which the person can describe fairly accurately” (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998, p. 28). However, as Hesse (1999) noted, “individuals may have more ‘conscious’ access to their current approach to relating to romantic partners” (p. 423). Current research indicates moderate convergence of the two methods when the same relationship is being compared, although the degree of convergence depends on the instruments being used and the attachment pattern being measured (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998; Onishi et al., 2001).

Although relations between maternal attachment and child resiliency were in the expected direction, the use of assessors other than the parents would have strengthened the
findings. Ideally, independent assessors, such as nursery school teachers, should have evaluated the child in the mother’s absence. Nonetheless, the direction of the findings are consistent with previous research of both infants and adolescents (e.g., Bowlby, 1988; Kobak & Scery, 1988; Waters et al., 1979). Although we cannot exclude that secure mothers may be more likely (and dismissing mother less likely) to view their children as ego resilient, it would seem unlikely that the level of child resiliency can fully explain the coherent narrative of the secure mothers.

In designing this study, we were well aware of a narrative characteristic thought to characterize Japanese: The distinction between *tatemae* (public façade, or how things are supposed to be) and *honne* (genuine values and motives, or how things really are; e.g., Azuma, 1986). The participants in this study, however, talked freely and openly about attachment issues, including painful and difficult topics seldom discussed in Japan (e.g., parental physical and sexual abuse). The interest and openness manifested by our male participants are contrary to cultural stereotypes. Because JAI questions were asked in a structured and matter-of-fact manner, they may have abated the need to maintain *tatemae*. Furthermore, the fact that the participants were required to recall specific personal memories may also have promoted *honne*. The need to maintain *tatemae* may also be less important to the generation studied in this research than to previous generations. The distinction between *honne* and *tatemae* may also have been overemphasized by Japanologists.

This study is the first to have examined the prototype hypothesis in Japan. It is also the first to have included attachment-related information for Japanese males. Previous research on Japanese family relations have suffered from overemphasis on the mother-child relationship, partly because middle-class Japanese fathers are considered by many to be either unavailable, uninterested in child-rearing, or generally detached from family affairs (see Wagatsuma’s, 1977, description of Japan as “father-absent”). However, as Gjerde and Shimizu (1995) showed, despite fathers’ lower average parenting involvement as compared to mothers, individual differences in paternal involvement were still related to Japanese children’s psychological characteristics. The current study provides additional evidence for the value of including both parents in research on Japanese families.

Our participants were young middle-class Tokyo urbanites. We cannot exclude that quite different results might have emerged in samples of blue-collar workers, small merchants, farmers, elderly, handicapped, or groups living on the margins of Japanese society, such as Ainus, Burakumins, Okinawans, Koreans, day workers, Southeast Asian female entertainers, Filipino women married to Japanese farmers, and Nikkeijin (i.e., individuals of Japanese descent who have returned, mostly from Brazil, after generations abroad), for whom the marital asymmetry may not be a salient theme. This theme has mostly been discussed with regard to middle-class Japanese and the results should not be uncritically generalized to Japanese in general. Finally, to our knowledge, the asymmetry theme surfaced after World War II with the emergence of the new middle class. It should therefore not be reified as an enduring and ahistorical attribute of Japanese gender relations. Descriptions of Japanese cultural characteristics typically fail to emphasize their historicity but view them as attributes that have persisted in Japan for an unspecified period independent of changing historical circumstances (Sugimoto, 1997). We do not subscribe to this ahistorical perspective.

The results may need to be replicated using Main and Goldwyn’s (1998) coding procedure. However, its application will require close collaboration between Japanese psychologists trained to score the AAI and bilingual Japanese discourse analysts. Although such work is underway, it is too early to predict when and how the conceptual and methodological problems raised by the AAI coding system for use in Japanese will be fully resolved. Adequate solution to these issues is nonetheless necessary to lay the foundation for a scientifically sound research on adult attachment in Japan.
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