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AVOIDANT ADDRESSES IN JAPANESE FAMILIES
REFLECT FAMILY CONFLICTS

The study focused on Avoidant Addresses (AAs) in Japanese families and investigated the links between daily use of AAs in the family and family conflicts. The participants were 329 Japanese college students. They reported forms of address used daily among each of their family members. They also rated the frequency of conflicts among each of their family members. The results show that parent-child relationships with AAs experienced significantly higher frequency of parent-child conflicts than those without. The families with AAs also experienced a higher frequency of family conflicts than those without. Use of AAs might be unacceptable in Japanese families and reflect parent-child and family conflicts.

Key words: adolescence, Avoidant Addresses, family conflict, form of address, use of taboo words

The way that a person routinely addresses another person relates to the way that they usually behave toward each other. The words, titles or names used in addressing someone are referred to as forms of address. Linguists believe that the forms of address between a speaker and a listener reflect their personal relationship. The most famous linguistic theory is the *tu* and *vous* theory of Brown and Gilman (1960). In the Indo-European language family, the *tu* type is an intimate form of address, whereas the *vous* type is a respectful form of address. Higher-ranking people can call lower-ranking people using the *tu* type but not the other way around (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Therefore, the speaker's use of the *tu* or *vous* type reflects an intimate or respectful relationship with the listener (e.g. Huszcza, 2005). Peng (1974) also analyzed Japanese forms of address between two work colleagues and found that daily use of forms of address was mostly accepted by both the speaker and the listener. The daily use of forms also reflected their personal relationship (Peng). For example, a speaker's daily use

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of "brother" was accepted by both the speaker and the listener and reflected their brother-like personal relationship (Suzuki, 1987), even though they were not real brothers (Dickey, 1997; Luong, 1988; Koo, 1992; Griffin, 2010).

Anthropologists believe that daily use of forms of address mostly requires acceptance from not only the speaker and the listener, but also the other members in their group (e.g. Romney & Moore, 1998; Widmer, Romney & Boyd, 1999). For example, a person can frequently address a cousin as wife or husband in a particular cultural group because the group allows cross-cousin marriage (Lévi-Strauss, 1967/1969). On the other hand, a person cannot address a cousin as wife or husband in another cultural group, one that bans cross-cousin marriage (Lévi-Strauss). The speaker, the listener and the other members of the former group's members, but not the latter group, accepted a couple-like personal relationship between cousins. Accordingly, the speaker of the former group can address a cousin as wife or husband. Furthermore, French Caucasians used "black" to address African people before 1970, but avoided using "black" to address them after 1970 because the French community criticized the use of "black" because it can be regarded as an act of racial discrimination (Tin, 2008). This example suggests that the other group members' evaluation affects the speaker's use of forms of address. Therefore, daily use of forms of address mostly needs to be accepted not only by the speaker and the listener, but also the other members of their group. The use accepted by them can reflect not only the personal relationship between the speaker and the listener but also their group's evaluation of the relationship.

Lots of studies about forms of address focus on the use of forms accepted by the speaker, the listener and the other group members. On the other hand, several studies focus on the use of forms unaccepted by some or all of them. For example, Kapfere (1969) observed a factory worker group in central Africa and a member of the group addressed another member as *Buyantanche* (impatient). Even though the listener became angry and did not accept the use of *Buyantanche*, the speaker still continued to use the word. As a result, the listener quarreled with the speaker. Peng (1977) also observed communication between a professor and a university student in Japan. When the student addressed the professor as *Omae* (second-person pronoun of vulgar type), the professor stopped talking with the student because the professor did not accept the student's use of *Omae*. Brown and Gilman (1960) also reported that when a lower-ranking person addressed a high-ranking person using the *tu* type, they got into a fight. Furthermore, students who were called names, such as "midget" and "freckles," were more frequently physically attacked by the name callers (Crozier & Dimmock, 1999; Crozier & Skliopidou, 2002). These cases suggest that forms of address unaccepted by the speaker and/or listener could reflect their conflicts.

The forms of address unaccepted by group members also reflect group conflicts. For example, the use of *Buyantanche* caused a quarrel among the group members (Kapfere, 1969). The student addressed the professor as *Omae* at a time when most students were against the authority of the professors (Peng, 1977). Furthermore, the

use of *ty* (second-person pronoun without gender and honorifics) drew sharp criticism from observers in Poland (Huszcza, 2005). These findings were also consistent with a previous study on the use of taboo words (e.g. Durkheim, 1912/1915; Mbaya, 2002). Durkheim (1912/1915) observed several tribes in Africa and found that most speakers have to avoid addressing some listeners by their first name. In the Oromo tribe in Ethiopia, spouses have to avoid addressing each other by their first name (Mbaya, 2002). A wife's use of the first name toward her husband causes her to be physically punished by the other tribe members and sometime results in divorce (Mbaya, 2002). In several African tribes the speaker's use of the first name to a listener sometime reflects not only a speaker-listener conflict but also their group conflicts. These cases suggest that forms of address unaccepted by the other group members, such as *Buyantanche*, *Omae,* and first names, reflect group conflicts.

Although these studies suggest links between the use of unaccepted forms of address and relational or group conflicts, the definitions of the unaccepted forms are not consistent with each other. To provide a clear definition of unaccepted forms of address, I used the concept of Avoidant Addresses (AAs). AAs are conceptualized by Ervin-Tripp (1972), Griffin (2010), and Yokotani (2008). Ervin-Tripp (1972) defined several forms of address as "no-naming" and regarded the use of no-naming as an outcome of uncertainty about the personal relationship between a speaker and a listener. Griffin (2010) also regarded no-naming as address avoidance and suggested people who avoid addressing typically use address avoidance, second-person pronouns (e.g. you), or interjections (e.g. hey). Yokotani (2008) operationally defined AAs in three types: second-person pronoun, interjection and no address (e.g. address avoidance). These addresses did not reveal much about the personal relationship between a speaker and a listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1972). Hence, these addresses were used by speakers who were unsure about their personal relationships with the listener (e.g. Little & Gelles, 1975). For example, a speaker's use of "you," "Omae" (you in Japanese) and "ty" (you in Polish) to a listener cannot signal their personal relationships.

Yokotani (2008) applied AAs to Japanese families and found that a speaker's daily use of AAs represented that the speaker and/or the listener did not accept daily use of kinship terms, first names and nicknames. Speakers in a family usually use kinship terms (e.g. Suzuki, 1987), first names (Griffin, 2010) and nicknames (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998) to identify a listener from the family. The Japanese speakers also used these forms as usual (Suzuki, 1993; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011). Furthermore, their daily use of the forms was accepted by both the speaker and the listener (Suzuki, 1987) and represented their personal relationship (Peng, 1974). On the other hand, AAs was rarely used by Japanese speakers (Suzuki, 1993; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011) because AAs did not identify the listener and reveal personal relationships with the listener (Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Brown & Levinson, 1987). AAs also include neither kinship terms, first names nor nicknames. Furthermore, daily use of AAs cannot co-occur with daily use of these

forms of address, because the use of AAs avoids revealing personal relationships with the listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Little & Gelles, 1975), whereas the use of these forms reveals the relationships (Peng, 1974; Suzuki, 1987). Therefore, a speaker's daily use of AAs implied that the speaker rarely used these forms of address. Rare use of these forms implied that either or both of the speaker and the listener did not accept daily use of these forms. Therefore, daily use of AAs meant rare use of these forms and represented that either or both of the speaker and the listener did not accept daily use of these usual forms.

Yokotani (2008) also believed that daily use of AAs was not accepted by family members. Families were based on personal relationships (Edgar, 2004). Japanese family members always try to construct personal relationships with other family members (Suzuki, 1987). Japanese family members accept the daily use of kinship terms (e.g. Suzuki, 1987), first names (Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011) and nicknames (Suzuki, 1993) because these forms represent personal relationships with the listener. On the other hand, AAs did not represent personal relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Little & Gelles, 1975). A speaker's daily use of AAs in the family also reflected that the speakers were always unsure about the personal relationship with the listener (Griffin 2010). In other words, the daily use of AAs reflects that the speaker of the family has not constructed a personal relationship with the listener yet. Lack of a personal relationship is not accepted by Japanese family members, because they regard personal relationships as an essential part of their family (Suzuki, 1987). Because of the implications of AAs, the daily use of AAs cannot be accepted by family members.

Yokotani's (2008) suggestion was supported by data. Yokotani (2008) surveyed 153 Japanese university students and found that the students who used or observed AAs in their family experienced or observed more severe family violence than those who did not. Yokotani & Hasegawa (2010a) surveyed 84 high school students and found that the students who used or observed AAs in their family reported more severe family dysfunction than those who did not. Yokotani & Hasegawa (2010b) also used semantic differential methods to investigate the meanings of AAs in Japanese parent-child relationships and couple relationships. The results show that AAs meant being more distant, arrogant and abnormal than the other forms of address. The researchers found that daily use of AAs could reflect a distant, arrogant and abnormal relationship in Japanese families (Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2010b).

Although these studies implied links between daily use of AAs and family conflicts, they did not show the links directly. This lack of direct links weakens these findings and makes it difficult to put them to practical use. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the links directly. I defined relational conflicts, including parent-child conflicts, as two persons in dispute with each other, based on Taylor's definition (2002). Margolin, Christensen, & Richard (1996) also reported that relational conflicts in the family were repeated day by day and positively correlated with each other. The results of Margolin et al. were also confirmed in

several other studies (e.g. Fauchier & Margolin, 2004; Forgatch, Patterson, Degarmo, & Beldavs, 2009; Patterson, 1982). These findings implied that the average of all relational conflicts in a family can represent family conflicts, because subscales of the average were consistent with each other and reliable across time (e.g. Fauchier & Margolin, 2004; Forgatch et al., 2009; Patterson, 1982). Following these implications, I defined family conflicts as the average of all relational conflicts within a family. I hypothesized that a parent-child relationship with AAs would experience more relational conflicts than those without. Families with AAs also would have more family conflicts than those without.

Method

Participants

The participants were 329 Japanese college students (94 from a national university; 64 from a teacher's college; 171 from a technical college); 276 were female, 52 were male, and one did not disclose sex. The mean age of participants was 20.0 years (*SD* 2.3 years).

Procedure

The present study was approved for ethical issues by two faculty members from Tohoku University. The questionnaire survey was conducted from April to July 2011. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymous. All participants completed the questionnaire by themselves.

Measures

Children's report about forms of address in their family. The participants indicated their most frequently used address for their father within the family. The most frequently used address reportedly reflects the daily relationship between the speaker and the listener (Peng, 1974). They selected the address from three choices: "*O-toh-san*" (father with polite prefix and suffix), "*Toh-san*" (father with polite suffix) or "Other". Both *Otohsan* and *Tohsan* are the most common in Japan (Suzuki, 1993; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011). If participants found an appropriate form of address among the choices, they circled it. If not, they circled "Other" and wrote down the form they used. When someone had many forms of address, they wrote down the ones used the most often. Similarly, the participants selected the address for their mother from three choices: "*O-kah-san*" (mother with polite prefix and suffix), "*Kah-san*" (mother with polite suffix), or "Other". Both *Okahsan* and *Kahsan* are the most common in Japan (Suzuki, 1993; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011). Similarly, they reported forms of address within their family. They used a seven-by-seven matrix (See appendix; e.g. Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2009). First, they wrote down the names of family members in the first row and column. Next, they filled out their forms of address. If they found

appropriate ones, they just selected them; if not, they wrote down the actual ones. If a questionnaire included any AA (Second-person pronoun, vulgar type: *Kisama*, *Omae*, *Ome*, *Temee*, *Onore*; Second-person pronoun, normal type: *Anata*, *Kimi*; Interjection for Address: *Ne*, *Oi*, *Chotto*; No address: I never address, I do not know, I forget, unknown; exception: if spouses use an interjection or second-person pronoun of normal type for their partner, neither form is regarded as AA because Japanese spouses sometime use both of them to identify their partners [e.g. Sakurai, 1984; Suzuki, 1993]), we categorized it in the group with AA. If not, we categorized it in the group without AA. Some participants did not provide some or any of the forms of address in their family, so they were excluded from several analyses. Therefore, the total number of the participants was slightly different for each analysis.

Children's perception of family conflicts in their family. The participants read the following sentence: "Conflict is defined as a dispute situation. For example, when one person disagrees with another person, one shouts and curses at the other." After they read the sentence, they rated their conflicts with their parents between 0 (never) and 10 (frequently). Similarly, they also reported their family members' experience of conflicts with each other in a seven-by-seven matrix. Some participants did not show some or any of the conflicts in their family, so they were excluded from several analyses.

Statistical Analysis

Point biserial correlation was used to analyze the correlations between the participants' sex and any other variables. Pearson's correlation was used to analyze the other correlations. The Man-Whitney test was used to test for differences between the two groups, because the distribution of one of the groups was not regarded as normal.

Results

Six participants addressed their father daily with AAs (*Ne*; $n = 1$, *Omae*; $n = 1$, *Chotto*; $n = 1$, no address; $n = 3$). On the other hand, no father addressed them with AAs. Therefore, the six participants were a father-child relationship with AAs and the other 287 participants were without AAs. Similarly, three participants addressed their mother daily with AAs (*Ne*; $n = 3$). On the other hand, one mother addressed them with AAs. Therefore, four participants were a mother-child relationship with AAs and the other 289 participants were without AAs. Twenty-six participants also reported that at least one family member addressed another member daily with AAs. Therefore, 26 families were regarded as families with AAs. The other 268 were regarded as families without AAs. The rate of families with AAs was similar to previous studies (Yokotani, 2008; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2010a).

The participants reported the frequency of their disputes with their father. This frequency was positively correlated with the frequency of their father's disputes

Table 1. Correlations among Father-Mother, Father-Child, and Mother-Child conflicts

	2	3
1. Father-Mother conflicts	0.50 [a] **	0.35 [b] **
2. Father-Child conflicts		0.30 [c] **
3. Mother-Child conflicts		

Notes: [a] n = 295; [b] n = 283; [c] n = 291; ** p < 0.01

with them ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 303$). Therefore, I regarded the averages of the two disputes as father-child conflicts. The average of the father-child conflicts was 1.5 ($SD = 1.5$). Similarly, the frequency of their disputes with their mother was positively correlated with the frequency of their mother's disputes with them ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 303$). The average of the two disputes was regarded as mother-child conflicts. The average of the mother-child conflicts was 2.3 ($SD = 1.8$). I also calculated father-mother conflicts, because the frequency of the father's disputes with the mother was positively correlated with the mother's disputes with the father ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$, $n = 296$). The average of the father-mother conflicts was 2.6 ($SD = 2.0$). Table 1 shows significant positive correlations among father-child, mother-child and father-mother conflicts. I also calculated the averages of all relational conflicts in the families. The average of the family conflicts was 1.8 ($SD = 1.6$).

I also investigated correlations between participants' traits (sex and age) and the other variables. Neither sex nor age was significantly correlated with father-mother (sex $r = 0.02$, *n.s.*, $n = 295$; age $r = 0.02$, *n.s.*, $n = 296$), father-child (sex $r = 0.04$, *n.s.*, $n = 301$; age $r = -0.04$, *n.s.*, $n = 302$), mother-child (sex $r = -0.01$, *n.s.*, $n = 301$; age $r = 0.09$, *n.s.*, $n = 301$) and family conflicts (sex $r = 0.02$, *n.s.*, $n = 300$; age $r = 0.06$, *n.s.*, $n = 301$). Furthermore, there was no significant bias for sex and age between groups with and without AAs, including father-mother relationships (sex $r = -0.04$, *n.s.*, $n = 317$; age $r = -0.03$, *n.s.*, $n = 318$), father-child relationships (sex $r = 0.03$, *n.s.*, $n = 315$; age $r = -0.05$, *n.s.*, $n = 316$), mother-child relationships (sex $r = 0.01$, *n.s.*, $n = 313$; age $r = -0.02$, *n.s.*, $n = 314$) and families (sex $r = -0.03$, *n.s.*, $n = 317$; age $r = -0.05$, *n.s.*, $n = 318$). Therefore, participants' traits might not affect the linkages between conflicts and AAs in their family.

I used the Man-Whitney test to compare the father-child conflicts between father-child relationships with and without AAs. Table 2 shows that father-child relationships with AAs experienced a significantly higher frequency of father-child conflicts than those without. Similarly, mother-child relationships with AAs experienced a significantly higher frequency of mother-child conflicts than those without (Table 2). Families with AAs also experienced a significantly higher frequency of family conflicts than those without (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of conflicts between groups with and without Avoidant Addresses (AAs)

	Group with AAs		Group without AAs		U	d
	Average	SD	Average	SD		
	Father-Child relationship with AAs		Father-Child relationship without AAs			
Father-Child conflicts	4.6[a]	3.2	1.5[d]	1.4	1362.5*	1.9
	Mother-Child relationship with AAs		Mother-Child relationship without AAs			
Mother-Child conflicts	4.0[b]	1.8	2.2[e]	1.8	991.5*	0.9
	Family with AAs		Family without AAs			
Family conflicts	2.3[c]	1.6	1.8[f]	1.5	4323.5*	0.3

Notes: AAs: Avoidant Addresses; [a] n = 6; [b] n = 4; [c] n = 26; [d] n = 287; [e] n = 288; [f] n = 268; * p < 0.05

Discussion

Avoidant Addresses and parent-child conflicts

The present study investigated the links between AAs and relational conflicts in Japanese families from the perspective of adolescents. As hypothesized, father-child relationships with AAs experienced a higher frequency of father-child conflicts than those without. Mother-child relationships with AAs also experienced a higher frequency of mother-child conflicts than those without. These findings statistically corroborate previous findings about forms of address unaccepted by the speaker and the listener, and relational conflicts (Brown & Gilman, 1960; Kapfere, 1969; McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Peng, 1977). The findings also extend previous studies about AAs (Yokotani, 2008; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2009, 2010a, 2010b) to parent-child relationships. Furthermore, children's use of forms unaccepted by their father can reflect the children's anxious traits in interpersonal situations (Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011). The daily experience of undesirable nicknames also reflected being a victim of bullying (Crozier & Dimmock, 1999) and sometimes had a long-term effect on mental health (Crozier & Skliopidou, 2002). Therefore, daily use of forms of address unaccepted by the listener or the speaker might reflect relational conflicts and af-

fect the listener's or the speaker's individual mental health (Crozier & Skliopidou, 2002; Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2011). The direct links between AAs and parent-child conflict also help to study family conflicts from the perspective of both sociolinguistics and family psychology. The present findings about AAs were limited only to parent-child relationships, so it is still unclear whether other family relationships (e.g. sibling and couple) with AAs reflect their relational conflicts. Investigation of these relationships requires further study. The present findings also suggest differences of conflicts between father-child (effect size 1.9) and mother-child relationships (0.9) with AAs. The differences might derive from semantic differences among AAs. The children used *Omae* (13%) and no address (50%) among the father-child relationships with AAs, whereas they used only *Ne* (100%) among the mother-child relationships with AAs. One study suggested that children's use of *Omae* and no address to parents represented more distant, arrogant and abnormal meanings than *Ne* (Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2010b). Therefore, a father-child relationship with AAs that includes *Omae* and no address might reflect more distant, arrogant and abnormal relationships than mother-child relationships with AAs that include only *Ne*. These semantic differences might affect the different conflicts in father-child and mother-child relationships because distant, arrogant and abnormal relationships can easily cause conflicts (e.g. Margolin et al., 1996). To investigate the links between semantic differences of forms of address and family relationships, future research should investigate the links between individual forms of address and the relationship between the speaker and the listener, like one previous study about the link between couple nicknames and couple relationships (Keltner et al., 1998).

Although the present study found correlative links between AAs and relational conflicts, the study did not show causal links between AAs and relational conflicts. One previous study implied that AAs might cause relational conflicts (e.g. Kapfere, 1969). Another previous study also implied that relational conflicts might cause AAs (e.g. Peng, 1977). Furthermore, individual traits might intervene in the links. For example, children's aggressive traits might cause family members to fail in their personal relationships with them (Forgatch et al., 2009; Patterson, 1982), which might result in daily use of AAs. Their aggressive traits might also cause parent-child conflicts (Forgatch et al., 2009; Patterson, 1982). To investigate the causal links between AAs and relational conflicts, longitudinal design is required, including children's personal traits. The longitudinal findings can help to predict either or both of AAs and parent-child conflicts.

Avoidant Addresses and family conflicts

The present study also found links between daily use of AAs and family conflicts. The findings extended previous research on the use of taboo words (e.g. Durkheim, 1912/1915; Mbaya, 2002) to contemporary Japanese families. The use of forms of address unaccepted by group members reflected group conflicts (e.g. Mbaya, 2002). Similarly, daily use of AAs reflected family conflicts. The findings

were also consistent with previous research suggesting that daily use of AAs reflects family dysfunction (Yokotani & Hasegawa, 2010a) and violence (Yokotani, 2008). Therefore, the previous and present findings imply that daily use of AAs in Japanese families might function similarly to taboo words, so AAs might reflect family dysfunction, violence and conflicts. Since the previous and present findings about AAs were based on Japanese families, it is still unclear whether the findings could also apply to families in other cultures. However, AAs are partially derived from the Indo-European language family (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Griffin, 2010; Little & Gelles, 1975), so AAs could well be applicable in the Americas, Europe and India. Furthermore, East European countries (Huszcza, 2005) and Asian countries such as Korea (Koo, 1992) and Vietnam (Luong, 1988) require speakers to change forms of address skillfully according to various social situations. Therefore, these countries might have taboo forms of address like AAs in Japan (Yokotani, 2008). To investigate the applicability of AAs, future research should include families from various cultures. Such a study could help understand family conflicts on the sociolinguistic level.

The present study showed links between AAs and family conflicts. However, the study did not show causal links between them. Mbaya (2002) reported one case in which the use of unaccepted forms of address by other group members might cause group conflicts. On the other hand, Tin (2008) and Peng (1977) implied that group conflicts might cause group members to use unaccepted forms of address. Furthermore, individual perception might bias the links. For example, children with paranoid perception might report AAs and relational conflicts more frequently, regardless of their actual forms of address and family environments. To eliminate individual bias, future studies should include both child and parent perspectives.

Conclusion

I investigated the links between AAs and relational/group conflicts in Japanese families, utilizing previous studies in linguistics and anthropology. Father-child relationships, mother-child relationships and families with AAs experienced conflicts more frequently than those without. The conflicts in families reportedly affected maladaptation of members of the family (e.g. Fauchier & Margolin, 2004; Forgatch et al., 2009; Patterson, 1982). Daily use of AAs might reflect and predict conflicts in Japanese families. The reflection and prediction of Japanese family conflicts could help reduce the risks of maladaptation and increase the chances of adaptation of family members.

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same as those in another article, "How young adults address their parents reflects their perception of parenting." Yokotani, K. (2012). *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 15 (4), 284-289, but the conceptualization and data analysis were completely different.

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Appendix (4 by 4 version)

If you have other family members besides your father, mother and yourself, please write them in both the upper and left blank columns. Next, please fill in the nicknames for everyone. If you find appropriate nicknames in a column, please circle them. If you do not, please circle 'other' and write down the actual nicknames. If someone has many nicknames, please enter the ones used the most often.

Speaker \ Listener	Father	Mother	Me	( )
Father		First name other ( )	First name other ( )	First name other ( )
Mother	Dad Other ( )		First name other ( )	First name other ( )
I	Father Dad other ( )	Mother Mom other ( )		First name other ( )
( )	Father Dad other ( )	Mother Mom other ( )	First name other ( )	