Chapter Six: Re-regulation, Restructuring and Women in the Regular Workforce

6.0. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the idea that the complex trends associated with globalization are producing pressures for two kinds of, ostensibly contradictory, employment reforms. There are pressures for labour market deregulation, in order that the Japanese model might regain its former competitiveness in an increasingly globalized economy. There are also pressures for the re-regulation of labour to establish a principle of sexual equality at work. The latter pressures are exemplified by the passing of the EEOL, which has been instrumental in the restructuring of the Japanese workforce. Chapters Six and Seven examine the impact of restructuring upon women in the Japanese workforce, and contribute to the debate about the impact of globalization upon women by bringing in insights from the case of Japan.

Section 6.1 of this chapter records how, in according with hypothesis that localized patriarchal structures can be weakened through exposure to global scrutiny, global processes were instrumental in the promulgation of equal opportunities legislation, in the form of the 1986 EEOL and its 1999 revision. It shows how the Law, and its revisions, have played a part in changing social attitudes to women's paid employment, and to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Section 6.2 demonstrates how the EEOL illustrates the premise that dominant ideologies can lead a state and existing institutions to negotiate a compromise between encouraging change and maintaining current gender orders. The section argues that although the Law has proved relatively weak in correcting discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunity, it has been instrumental in formalising the secondary status of many women in the regular workforce, by encouraging companies to introduce a gendered dual-track employment system; and, to shift an increasing proportion of

their female employees into the non-regular workforce. As the rewards and conditions of the regular and non-regular workforces so different, I shall analyse the two workforces separately. Section 6.3 of this chapter describes how the restructured workforce is evolving, and how this is affecting the educational and career choices of Japanese women, before Chapter Seven discusses the growing and increasingly diverse non-regular workforce. Section 6.4 shows how social expectations about women's reproductive labour in Japan, continue to distinguish the experience of working women in Japan from those in other First World countries, particularly with regard to the use of childcare and the hiring of domestic workers.

6.1. The promulgation and immediate effects of the EEOL

The transformationalist thesis of globalization (see Chapter Two) sees globalization as a process, where the flow of ideologies, images and information across the globe, leads to reflexivity about, and consequent change in, national institutional practices (Appadurai, 1990, Giddens, 1990, Goldblatt et al, 1997, Scholte, 2000). Japanese society is particularly susceptible to reflexivity about national institutions: Takenaka and Chida note the phenomenon apparent among Japanese people of intense interest in foreign countries, and their concern about how Japan is seen by people from other countries (Takenaka and Chida, 1998). This has been attributed, by Nakatani (1987) among others, to the legacy of Japan's years of isolation from the West during the Edo period, and has the consequence that *gaiatsu* (foreign pressure) from the international community has proved to be effective in promoting reforms. One of the ideologies spread with globalization is that of equal rights for men and women (albeit that countries' formal or constitutional acceptance of this standard has not resulted in equal outcomes for men and women in any country). This section will examine the impacts of legal change, in the shape of the EEOL, its revisions and the revision of the

Labour Standards Law; the impact of exposure to 'foreign' legal or social concepts, exemplified by the introduction of sexual harassment as a legal and social concept.

The role of global processes in the promulgation and revision of the EEOL

International Women's Year (1975) and the United Nations Decade of Women (1976-1985) stimulated much popular and media debate in Japan, and impacted upon public opinion (National Institute of Employment and Vocational Research, 1988). In response to the Decade for Women, the Prime Minister became the Director of the Headquarters for the Promotion of Women's Issues, which in turn initiated an action programme with the goal of improving women's status at home and in the workplace (Tamura, 1999). According to Yamashita Yasuko, law professor and managing director of the Japanese Association of International Women's Rights,

> "The progress in women's issues [in Japan] cannot be discussed without taking internationalization into consideration." (Yamashita, 1993:83).

As Chapter Three made clear, the same point could be made about many countries[75]. In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a document consisting of a preamble and 30 articles defining discrimination and setting an agenda for national actions to rectify such discrimination. States, which sign the Convention commit themselves:
- "to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and

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[75] The UK Sex Discrimination Act, for example, was passed to ensure Britain's conformity with European Community law.

adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;

- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and

- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises. " (United Nations, 2001)

After pressure from female members of the National Diet, women's groups and journalists raising the issue in the media (Hayashi, 1996), the Japanese government became the 72nd signatory to CEDAW in 1980. In order to comply with CEDAW, the Japanese government needed to urgently enact legislation against employment discrimination (as most other industrialized countries had done by the mid-1970s) as well as revising the Nationality Act so that mixed heritage children of Japanese mothers (instead of just fathers) could inherit Japanese citizenship, and changing the school curriculum to make home economics compulsory for boys as well as girls. Although Japan could not ratify CEDAW without introducing new laws on employment equality, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law did not reach the Diet until 1984, and then only after intense discussion. In May 1982 a committee of labour representatives, academics, management representatives was formed to work on a report. The outcome of their deliberations was that Law No. 113. Respecting the Improvement of the Welfare of Women Workers Including the Guarantee of Equal Opportunity and Treatment Between Men and Women in Employment, generally known as the Equal Employment Opportunities Law (EEOL), was passed on 17 May 1985 and came into effect on 1 April 1986. The Law had the stated aim of eliminating sexual discrimination in opportunity and treatment in all forms of employment. The main points of the EEOL were as follows:

- Companies were to make voluntary 'endeavours' to treat women equally in recruitment, hiring, assignment and promotions.
- Prohibitions were attached to treating women differently from men with regard to vocational training, fringe benefits, retirement age and dismissals.

There is widespread agreement in academic circles that the EEOL was also passed partly in response to foreign criticism of the position of Japanese working women (Gelb, 1998). Previous legislation, which touched upon the rights of women in the workplace, was limited to the 1947 Japanese Constitution, which stated:

> "All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin. " (Art. 14, Constitution of Japan, 1947)

and, as referred to in Chapter Five, the 1947 Labour Standards Law. Both the Constitution and the LSL were imposed by the Occupation Forces (although they were largely supported by Japanese women). However, the Labour Standards Law's protective legislation for women was not supported by employers' organizations.

Although pressure to sign CEDAW had come from women's activists in Japan, some opponents of the EEOL played on the idea that it was imposed on Japan from outside, and portrayed the law as a form of Western cultural imperialism in order to discredit it. Most notably, the academic, Michiko Hasegawa in an article in the intellectual journal *Chou Koron*, lambasted the EEOL as un-Japanese and a threat to the 'cultural ecology' of Japanese society. Its passage would, she said, destroy traditional sex roles, demoralize housewives and encourage the kind of selfish individualism characteristic of Western society (Brinton, 1993). Opposition from employers' representatives took two main forms. Some argued that men and women were different and

should therefore be treated differently, while others argued that it was Japan's protective legislation, which was the cause of women's disadvantageous position in the workplace, and the key to sexual equality was less, rather than more, regulation. The Japan Federation of Employers' Associations (*Nikkeiren*) opposed the introduction of the new EEOL on the following grounds: women had no 'work consciousness; women were uninterested in long-term work; and if the female workforce were enlarged, then granting 'protections', such as maternity leave and limited overtime to a larger proportion of the workforce would prove costly to business (Kawashima, 1989 cited in Molony, 1995). These arguments were rather contradictory. For instance, if women were disinclined to stay in the workforce, then they would be unlikely to take advantage of maternity leave to stay in the workforce. However, as a result of these discussions, when the EEOL was promulgated, the Labour Standards Law was simultaneously revised. Restrictions on overtime were declared not to apply to women in managerial positions and in 14 jobs defined as requiring specialized knowledge or skill. In other words, women who were doing 'men's jobs' were expected to suffer the disadvantages of male 'core' workers.

The EEOL was revised and strengthened in 1997 (with revisions becoming effective from June 1999). The new law:

- Banned discrimination in recruitment, hiring, placement and promotion.

- Granted the government authority to arbitrate a dispute based on just one party's complaint.

- Required that the Ministry of Labour publish the names of companies that fail to comply with its administrative warnings.

- Required companies to take steps to prevent sexual harassment.

However, when the law was passed, all remaining sex-specific protective legislation, with the exception of maternity leave was deemed 'special treatment' and removed from the statute books.

The impact of the EEOL on attitudes to women's work and sexual harassment

Feminists have, on the whole, been unimpressed with Japan's equal opportunities laws, deriding them as *'honenuki'* (spineless). Campaigners on the left felt that the EEOL's emphasis on training and promotions meant that it was directed towards middle class or elite educated women. As far as blue-collar women were concerned, the removal of nightwork and overtime protection could, labour representatives and social reformers argued, force them out of their positions as regular workers (Roberts, 1994).

However, there is also some evidence that the discussions and publicity around the Law may have had a consciousness-raising effect on the general population. The proportion of people believing it was acceptable for a woman to continue working after giving birth rose from 16.1 per cent in 1987 to 32.5 per cent in 1995 (Araki, 1998). Though indirect and informal discrimination continued, only 17 per cent of companies excluded female job applicants in 1987 compared to 41 per cent in 1986; and 78.9 per cent of companies offered equal starting salaries to men and women in 1987 compared to 31.7 per cent in 1975 (Watabe-Dawson, 1997:48). It also seems likely the EEOL contributed to a climate of more pro-women legal judgements. The *Nihon Tekko Renmei* case was decided just after the EEOL came into effect in 1986. *Nihon Tekko Renmei* and its union had decided a scale of pay rates and bonues, differentiated according to gender. The court judged that this was null and void according to the Labour Standards Law (Arts. 4 and 13) and the Civil Code (Art. 90). Although these laws had been in existence since the 1940s, it seems (judging

from the way custom and practice had differed from the letter of the law until that point), that the EEOL was instrumental in making the courts enforce existing legislation.

The immediate revision of the EEOL also had immediate consciousness-raising effects. Like the signing of CEDAW, the revision of the EEOL, which stipulated that firms take steps to protect against sexual harassment was an interesting example of the impact of transnational activism in effecting change.

The profile of sexual harassment (*seku hara*)[76] in Japan had been raised, partly because of cases concerning Japanese companies abroad. This is a prime illustration of the way transnational networks can produce discursive change, i.e. it *labelled* an already existing practice and thereby facilitated discussion about, and resistance to, that practice. When the EEOL was revised therefore, this provided the opportunity to introduce legislation on the matter, and its inclusion in the Act appears to have been the direct result of joint action organized by Japanese and American women working together to organize a high profile campaign[77]. The subsequent publicity and the fact that women now could use the changing legal institutions, raised the profile of the issue. The profile of sexual harassment was further raised shortly after the law came into effect, when, in March 2000, "Knock" Yokoyama, the former governor of Osaka admitted a sexual harassment charge, brought against him under the new law, by a young campaign worker. The number of enquires about sexual harassment received by the Ministry of Labour has risen sharply, especially after it seemed there might be legal redress. In FY 1995 there were 968 enquires about sexual harassment to the Ministry of Labour's Prefectural Women's and Young Workers' Offices in 1995;

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[76] The obvious English etymology of the phrase is evidence of the role played by global networking in attaining discursive change.

[77] This case will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

1615 in FY 1996, 2534 in FY1997, 7019 in FY 1998 (Japan Labour Bulletin, August 1, 1999). In 1999, the Ministry of Labour received 9000 enquires regarding sexual harassment (International Reform Monitor, 2001)[78].

According to a survey of 2254 enterprises in June and July 1997 (response rate of 34.8 per cent) only 5.5 per cent of enterprises were implementing measures against sexual harassment, while another 14.3 per cent were planning or considering the implementation of such measures. The EEOL was revised on June 18 1997, and by October 1998, a Tokyo Metropolitan government survey of 3000 enterprises (effective response rate of 46.8 per cent) found that 20.5 per cent of enterprises with 300 or more regular employees measures in place to prevent sexual harassment and 19.5 per cent were considering such steps (Japan Labour Bulletin, Aug.1, 1999).

6.2. The persistence and impact of existing institutions

Previous work on the impact of globalization upon women has shown that existing institutions can interact with changes resulting from globalization to produce path-dependent changes (Pyle 1990; Beneria and Lind, 1995). This has certainly been the case in Japan, where

- The EEOL has been insufficiently strong to prevent or correct indirect and even quite overt sex discrimination.

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[78] Some women also take less formal paths of resistance. One respondent told me how she lost her job when she refused to apologize to a client over whom she had thrown a drink, when he attempted to put his hand up her skirt. Another respondent described how, when sharing a cab with her boss after an evening's eating and drinking with colleagues, he suggested that the taxi driver take them to a 'love hotel'. Despite her protestations, the cab driver started to drive towards the section of town where love hotels were situated, until she began hitting him over the head with her shoe, at which point he stopped the car.

- The repeal of sex-specific protective legislation, combined with the expectations about women's reproductive labour has made it more difficult for women to hold regular jobs.
- the EEOL has, ironically, facilitated a formal division on labour according to sex, in the context of a remodelled tripartite division of labour in the regular workforce.

Failure to correct for discrimination

The 1986 EEOL set out a procedure for the resolution of disputes. In the first instance, according to the law, employers shall 'endeavour to find an amicable settlement, by such means as referring the said complaint to a grievance machinery', composed of representatives of the employer and the employee body (Art. 13). If this fails, then the Director of the Prefectural Women's and Young Workers' Office, if approached by either the woman or the employer, is empowered to give necessary advice and mediation (Art.14). The Director in question is empowered to refer the dispute to the Equal Opportunity Mediation Commission (EOMC) but 'where only one of the parties concerned applies for mediation, the Director may make such a referral *only if the other party concerned agrees to the mediation'* (Art. 15, my italics).

In practice the mediation mechanism has proved to be less than effective. Between 1986 and 1996, 103 people brought cases against 11 companies. Of these Sumitomo Metal was the only one to be successfully mediated, as in the other cases either the Director of the Women's and Young Workers' Office decided not to pursue the case or the employers concerned did not agree to mediation (Working Women's Network,1996). In 1991, for example, female employees of Tokai Radio Company asked the Director of the local prefectural Women's and Young Workers' Office for referral to the EOMC, but the case did not progress because the company withheld consent for mediation. This particular problem for complainants should be

overcome with the 1997 changes to the EEOL. The mediation procedure can now be initiated by just one party, without the consent of the other (International Reform Monitor, 2001).

The EEOL has generally been interpreted as having no retrospective applicability. Not only can it not be used to compensate for discrimination that occurred before the law was passed (although this discrimination would have been unconstitutional), but women in subordinate positions today, because of sexist treatment in the past, have not been entitled to any correction of this. This in demonstrated in a court case filed in 1995 by 2 female employees of Sumitomo Electric. Ms Nishimura was hired by the company as a clerical worker in 1966, and Ms Shirafuji was hired by a local branch of Sumitomo Electric in 1969 to do clerical work. At the same time the headquarters of Sumitomo Electric hired 'special office workers', who were nearly all men, on a national basis. 'Special office workers' were given more training than clerical workers, higher wage raises and were groomed for management responsibility. Although that vast majority of clerical workers were women, between 1969 and 1977 male high school graduates were occasionally assigned to the same clerical work as women. However, these men were eventually all transferred to the special office work track, following their taking of a transfer test, which was not open to their female co-workers. The test was abolished after all the eligible male workers had passed it. The 5 male high school graduates who began work in the same year as Ms Shirafuji had all been promoted to the level of chief inspector in managerial work by 1991. Consequently Ms. Shirafuji was paid 180,000 yen per month less than her former co-workers and received 2.7 million yen less annually. (Working Women's International Network, 2000). The company argued in court that the male high school graduates were hired on a national basis, then they were eligible for promotion, while their female co-workers were not.

The plaintiffs requested that the system should have been changed at the time that, following a high profile court case, Sumitomo Electric reviewed its retirement system to establish a common retirement age for men and women. They argued that if the wage difference had been reviewed at this time, they would have received and extra 9.5 million yen and thus claimed this sum in compensation. However, they also argued that if the court did not accept this position, then the company should have reviewed its employment practices at the time the EEOL came into effect. (In 1987 the company established a formal dual track system where 'general office work' replaced 'clerical work' and 'professional work' replaced 'special office work). In the latter case, if the plaintiffs had been treated in the same way as their former male co-workers, they should, it was argued, have received back pay in compenzation to the value of 5.5 million yen. (Working Women's International Network Oct.20, 2000). On 31 August 2000, Osaka District Court judged that a recruiting system that did not allow women to be recruited from headquarters was in breach of Article 14 of the Constitution, which bans discrimination based on gender. However, it judged that in

> "....in the late 1960s, when there was a strong division of labour by gender in society and many enterprises used such a dual employment system, Sumitomo management did not violate social order and did not act illegally..." (Japan Times, Aug.1 2000).

There are numerous reports of persistent discrimination against women, particularly new graduates, particularly during the recession of the mid-1990s, during which "... female university graduates face[d] an employment environment so hostile it is commonly described as the 'Ice Age' (Sasaki, 1995:33). Among the complaints listed by new women graduates are not receiving responses to requests for company brochures, not being allowed to take some entrance examinations and being excluded by such conditions as only accepting students who lived with their parents, or who were

unmarried (Nakano: 1996). In 1996, 61.7 per cent of companies recruiting four year university graduates for the technological field hired only male graduates, compared to 37 per cent who hired both men and women. This compares to figures of 49.6 per cent and 48.2 per cent respectively in 1992 (Imada, 1996: 6). In fact, more than half of companies responding to 1995 research report carried out by a private think tank said that it was economic performance, rather than the law, which determined the number of women they employed (Nakajima, 1997).

One much-reported phenomenon that some young women have faced while looking for work is the discriminatory interview (*appaku mensetsu*). One interviewee mentioned the assumptions of the recruiter who interviewed her and asked about her future plans:

> "And then, actually, the funny thing is when [I had an] interview, I think it was with [B company] he asked me, "You're a woman. Why do you actually, you know, want to go to graduate school? What about if you get married?" And then I said, "Well, I can still do my graduate work, if I.....even though I'm married."..... And he said, "Yeah, but what about if you have kids? " And I said, "There are a lot of women doing graduate work and they all have kids, and they're still doing fine." And he said, "Oh, well, okay." (Laughs) So they actually, I guess, sometimes have stereotypes of women."

She went on to relate the story of her friend, who was also a job-seeker:

> "......my friend. She was having interview with...I forgot what company, but they asked her, like, what she thought of a woman's happiness was during the interview. Like, "Well, what do you think a...what do you think is woman's happiness?" And then she's like, "Well, is it related for the job?" And then they said, "No, but, well, what do you think it is, I mean," and she

said, "Well, I want to get married, and I want to have children, but it's not necessary for a woman's happiness, because it can be man's happiness too?" And, I don't know, that was just one question that she told me. She thought it was weird, that they actually, you know, they asked her in an interview {...}"

This practice has not gone unchallenged. In 1994 and 1995 approximately half of the complaints to the EEOL mediation bodies have concerned recruitment and hiring (Gelb, 1998:50). Young women have been resisting this form of discrimination by forming bodies such as the Association of Female Students Against Job Discrimination and by recording instances of and swapping information about company job discrimination in the *minikomi* (informal photocopied bulletin) *Girls Be Ambitious* and on websites. Furthermore, young female graduates who took jobs for which they were overqualified during the 'Ice Age' are not content to stay with an unchallenging job as a stopgap before marriage or childbirth:

> "According to one survey conducted this spring by a job information journal for women, one in three women who desire to change their jobs belongs to the "ice-age" generation of recruits." (Trends in Japan, 1997).

Since it was revised, the law has stipulated that the names of firms which constantly violate its provisions, will be publicised. Nonetheless, Tadashi Hanami, Research Director General, The Japan Institute of Labour, argues "the 1997 Amendment — providing for publication of names of companies violating its provisions, along with disclosure of the nature of their offences — might be better than nothing, but it is still far from what is really needed, namely, effective enforcement measures." (Hanami, 2000: 2).

The repeal of protective legislation

According to Chizuko Ueno, perhaps the best-known of Japan's feminists,

> "...the government forced us to have either an equality law or a production law [sic]. I called it the masculinization of female work. It was of no interest at all. Actually the workman's law for Japanese men at the time was already destructive to family life. So we never supported it. Instead we demanded both equality and protection. We didn't want an equal opportunity law, we wanted an equal employment law." (Ueno, interview with Whipple, 1996:2).

Chapter Five details the reasons, including long working hours, combined with expectations about women's reproductive labour, that would have made it difficult for women to adopt the male work model, and indeed most women have not been able to do so. Nonetheless, they have lost some of the protections offered, at least formally, by the previous 'female model'.

The passage of the EEOL gave opponents of protective legislation the opportunity to revise the Labour Standards Law. Not only were legal protections for 'career women' immediately withdrawn, but many companies who had their own guidelines on the treatment of women workers, revised such guidelines 'downwards', so that they only met the minimum requirement of the Labour Standards Law. At T company maternity leave was changed from a paid to an unpaid leave of absence and bonuses were considerably reduced. Another example is the case of K company. Prior to 1986 the company's Maternal Protection Agreement was somewhat more generous than that strictly required by law. After the EEOL was passed, the company revised its regulations as follows:

- Menstrual protection: Before 1987 any person could take time off when necessary, but after the revisions only a person who 'has trouble working, and if she requests, can take time off ' (LSL Art. 38)

- During pregnancy: Overtime and weekend work were both prohibited before 1987, but after this time this was changed to 'if a women asks not to work overtime and /or weekends, then the company cannot force her to do so' (LSL art. 66.2).

- Reassignments during pregnancy: The company's former Maternal Standards Agreement had previously stated that, in general reassignments should not occur during pregnancy. Its post-1987 regulations merely stated that, if reassignment occurs, the company had to take the pregnancy into consideration by not assigning work more difficult than before.(LSL 65.3) (*Shosha ni hataraku josei*: 1989: 19).

The pressure group *Shosha ni hataraku josei* (Women Working in Trading Companies) argued further that reassignment of pregnant women used as a way to force them to leave.

The removal of overtime restrictions was no doubt of some use to some female managers and specialists – a journalist told me that she was hampered by her employers' refusal to let her work at night (albeit that this was during an interview some years after the EEOL came into effect). However, it seems unlikely that a person could combine the expectations of 'career track' work with, say, childcare responsibilities[79]. A *sogoshoku* pensions analyst told me about her work schedule:

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[79] Molony writes: "Daycare is widely available, subsidized in most locations, and high in quality. But the hours of the best programs usually range from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm or 6.00 pm, times that are inadequate for women on the fast track in their companies. Moreover, elementary schools and kindergartens pressure mothers to attend frequent school functions" (Molony, 1995: 295).

Respondent: "I work from 7.30 to 21.00-22.00 a day. How many hours I work per month I wonder"

Interviewer: "Do you work five days a week?"

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Do you do overtime for free?

Respondent: Most of them, yes.

It was of dubious benefit to the great majority of working women though, when remaining protective legislation was abolished. *Nikkeiren* had put great premium on the abolition of remaining protective legislation during the 1997 revision (Japan Labour Bulletin, 1 March 1997), although there was considerable debate in Japanese between those campaigners, who felt that legal restrictions gave employers an excuse to exclude women from certain jobs and those who felt that the working hours of Japanese men were inhumane and that protective legislation should be extended to cover men (Gordon, 1998). Evidence is mixed. On the one hand, employment of women increased immediately at Mazda Motors, Toyota Motor Corporations and Nissan motors increased when LSL restrictions on overtime were lifted. Furthermore the companies improved dormitories for single people, women's bathrooms and locker rooms (Japan Labour Bulletin). On the other hand, Working Women's Helpline run by Tokyo Josei Union reported that after nightwork was deregulated in April 1999 the number of telephone calls about overwork increased. Their records cited the following:

"Her boss gave work to her and asked her to work overtime. She had to work every day until 11 and work even consecutive holidays. She worked over 100 hours a month and became ill."

"After April she had to work until 11 and 12 and work on holidays. She became ill."

"Workers are not enough and lunch break is only 15 minutes. No paid leave. She worked more than 9 hours a day."

Working class women were particularly vulnerable. Through the postwar period, 20-30 per cent of blue-collar workers have been female (nearly twice rate of most Western countries (Brinton, 1993, cited in Robertson, 1998). Although blue-collar work accounts for a small and diminishing proportion of the workforce, Glenda Roberts has documented the desire of blue collar female workers to continue to work throughout their childbearing years until retirement, either because of economic necessity or a desire for financial and personal autonomy, in the face of a strong socio-cultural ideology of married women as full-time wives and mothers and the recruitment, promotion and retirement policies of their firm (Roberts, 1994). Women may have felt under extra pressure to leave work when they became pregnant not only because conditions were less favourable to them than before the legal revisions, but because of the widespread belief that night work is harmful to women's fertility. The National Confederation of Trade Unions (*Zenroren*), for example, opposed the relaxation on nightwork restrictions on the grounds that abnormal delivery was 40 per cent higher among women workers doing night shifts, before the revision, such as nurses and TV producers (*Zenroren*, 1997b). In the face of a strong social preference for mothers to work part-time or not at all, this is one additional factor to discourage them from continuing to pursue a full-time career.

The restructuring of the workforce

Although the EEOL was of limited retrospective applicability, it did have a major impact on employers' behaviour and hiring practices. The secondary position that women had filled in the regular workforce in the post-war model of Japan capitalism was formalized by the introduction of the 'dual track' system, and an increasing proportion of

women were employed in an increasingly feminized non-regular workforce.

The dual track system

Just two months before the EEOL became operational, *Nikkeiren* published a book, which strongly implied that women were not expected to have similar positions to men (Molony, 1995). The book noted that the EEOL only required that companies grant women an 'opportunity', not a guarantee, of employment. In other words, they did not have to actually employ women; merely include them in the recruitment, interview and testing process, although it added the caveat that if after 'several years' no women had been hired, then it might appear that the company was intentionally not hiring female employees (ibid: 85). In fact the Ministry of Labour specifically made firms aware that they could still discriminate when publishing an official notice which stated that it is not a violation 'to employ workers according to a system of separate numbers of men and women to be admitted, such as 70 men and 30 women in the same job classification or recruitment' (A Letter to Japanese Women Circle, 1994: 43). The revised EEOL has made it illegal to have gender quotas, but there is as yet, little evidence of the efficacy of this. This legal loophole enabled companies to negotiate a compromise between the ideal of sexual equality in the workplace and maintaining existing gender norms. Many large companies reacted to the enactment of the 1986 version of the EEOL by introducing a dual track employment system for their employees. The system generally consists of a "general clerical track" (*ippanshoku*) and a "managerial track" (*sogoshoku*). In addition, specialists are employed, either intermittently or on the *senmonshoku* (specialist track), having gained specialist skills at their own, rather than at company expense. Entrants to the *sogoshoku* are usually expected to do overtime and to be prepared to accept transfers. In 1990, 99 per cent of men were on the management track, compared to just 3.7 per cent of women (A

Letter from Japanese Women Circle, 1994: 40). The general clerical track is usually an almost exclusively female domain. The EEOL only applied to denying women, rather than men, job opportunities, therefore it continued to be legal to recruit or advertise for only women to fill certain (usually subordinate) positions. This was reflected in the EEOL's full title: Law Respecting the Improvement of the Welfare of Women Workers, including the Guarantee of Equal Opportunity and Treatment Between Men and Women in Employment, Law No. 45 of 1985, as amended. In the late 1990s, in approximately 52 per cent of Japanese companies with more than 5,000 employees, which introduced this dual-track system, the *ippanshoku* class was only for female employees (Kakuyama, 1997). Evidently this makes it more difficult for employees to complain about unequal treatment on the grounds of gender. In November 1992 Osaka Women's and Young Workers' Office decided that Sumitomo Mutual Life Assurance company's apparent failure to promote married women, while single women and married men could get promoted, did not constitute sex discrimination since there were no married men on the general clerical track with whom the women could be compared (A Letter from Japanese Women Circle, 1994). The revised EEOL forbids the practice of employing women only in certain positions, although it does permit 'positive action' to redress discrimination.

The growth of the non-regular workforce

As explained above, the EEOL does not address the question of sex-based occupational segregation. Because there is no basis for comparison between male and female workers, it is impossible for women in an entirely female part-time workforce to bring a case of sexual discrimination. Table 6.1 shows how the labour force has become increasingly diversified and flexibilized between 1986 and 1997.

Table 6.1 : Diversification of the labour force (1986-1997)

Year	Regular Workers	Non-Regular Workers			
		Total	Part-Time	Temporary	Other Non-Regular
1986	83.4	16.6	9.4	3.5	3.7
1997	76.8	23.2	12.9	6.2	4.2

Source: MITI, White Paper on International Trade, 1998 (all figures in percentages)

The proportion of part-time employment among female workers rose by 23.3 per cent of the female workforce between 1983 and 1996 (Figure 6.2). This total percentage change is not mirrored in any of the major industrialized countries, except France, where the proportion of the female workforce working part-time grew by 46.8 per cent, and Italy, which also had a larger percentage change, but it began from a far smaller base of only 9.4 thousand, compared to Japan's 29.2 thousand. As the size of the change in the female part-time work force in other advanced industrialized economies was not of the same order of magnitude as that of Japan, it is reasonable to assume that legal change in Japan played a large part in stimulating this rise. After the strengthened EEOL came into effect in 1999, some female regular workers appear to have been reclassified as non-regular. According to records kept by the *Tokyo Josei Union* (personal communication, December 1999), the majority of people calling the Working Women's Helpline were experiencing problems stemming from a change in their status from regular to non-regular employees.

The growth and characteristics of the female non-regular workforce will be examined in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Table 6.2: Part-time employment among female workers in major industrialized countries

Country	Total number of female part-time workers, thousands			
	1983	1990	1996	Percentage change
Japan	29.2	32.8	36	23.3
US	28.1	25.2	26.9	-4.3
UK	41.3	42.6	42.7	3.4
Germany	30.0	33.8	33.8	12.7
France	20.1	23.6	29.5	46.8
Italy	9.4	9.6	12.7	35.1
Canada	28.1	26.8	28.9	2.8
Sweden	45.9	40.4	39	-15.0

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, 1997

6.3 Women in the restructured regular workforce

This section discusses women's employment in the restructured regular workforce. It begins by examining whether the EEOL has had any evident impact upon women's participation and tenure in the regular workforce generally, and then examines the extent and nature of women's work in the different sections of the restructured regular workforce.

Women's participation in the regular workforce

The increasing participation in the non-regular workforce and the increasing proportion of part-time work in the labour force will be examined in more depth in Chapter Seven, but it will be shown to have been disproportionately large, compared to participation in the workforce overall. There has also been a rise in the proportion of regular employees who are female, albeit of a far smaller magnitude. As Figures 6.3 shows, the proportion of women in the regular

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workforce has also risen from 29.8 per cent of all regular employees to 36.1 per cent in 2000.

**Figure 6.3. Changes in the sex composition of the workforce of regular employees (1970s –2000)**

Year	Total	Male	Female	Female proportion of regular employees (percentage)
1970s ave.	30,230,000	20,820,000	9,410,000	31.1
1975	33,460,000	23,510,000	9,960,000	29.8
1980	35,860,000	24,760,000	11,090,000	30.9
1985	38,660,000	26,190,000	12,470,000	32.3
1990	43,160,000	28,360,000	14,800,000	34.3
1995	47,090,000	30,390,000	16,700,000	35.5
1998	47,500,000	30,420,000	17,070,000	35.9
1999	46,900,000	30,060,000	16,840,000	35.9
2000	46,840,000	29,950,000	16,890,000	36.1

Source: Statistical Survey Department, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, 2001.

Furthermore, as Figure 6.4 shows, women's tenure in the regular workforce has also increased from 3.9 years in 1965 to 7.6 years in 1994. However, as this information is represented graphically, it is easy to see that the passage of the EEOL in 1986 did not lead to any sharp discontinuity in a general secular trend of lengthening participation in the regular workforce.

Figure 6.4: Average Tenure of Female Workers in the Regular Workforce
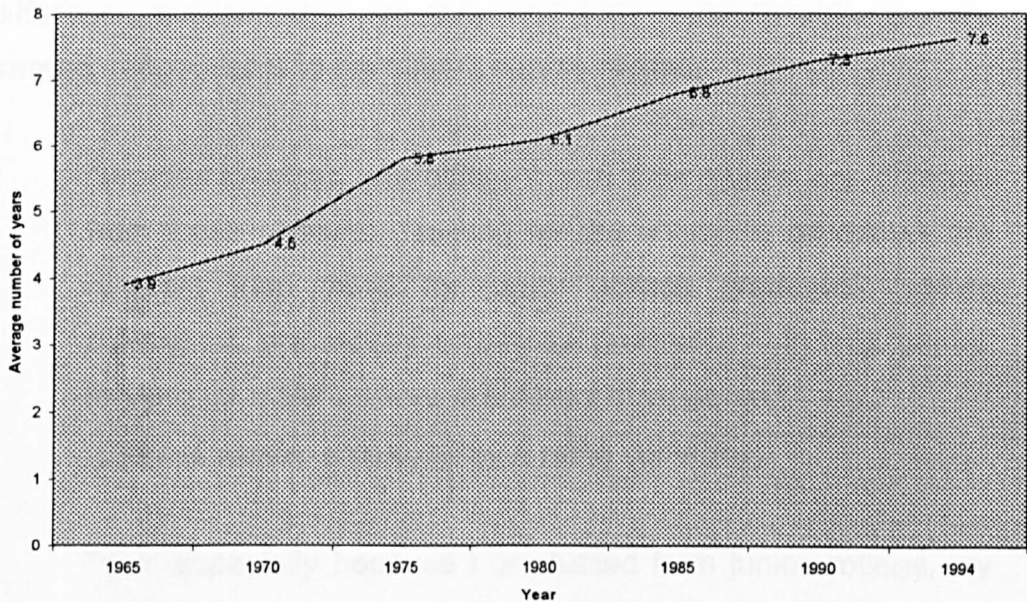
Source: Statistical Survey Department, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, 2001.

Japan, then, is not an exception to the general trend of the increased feminization of work, but it seems that this can more easily be attributed to the gradual social changes described in the previous chapter than to legislation which had the ostensible aim of increasing women's employment opportunities. Although the EEOL had little effect on the rates of participation and tenure of female regular workers, it did have a significant effect on the organization of work for those women. The following subsections will describe the variety of women's work in the restructured regular workforce.

Women and the *Sogoshoku*

One of the obstacles to women entering the management track is the different educational paths traditionally followed by men and women, which were described in Section 5.2. Graduation from four year universities is a usual requirement for entry into career track jobs.

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The result is that the majority of women entered non-career tracks more or less automatically, and that this can be rationalized on the grounds of different qualifications. When asked if there was any difference between the way they and their male co-workers were treated, respondents to my 1996/7 survey replied:

"Women's wages are different and their duties are different from those of men. Training for the university graduates are different from those for junior college graduates. Male colleagues are mostly university graduates. In this sense, training for male workers is different from women."
(Clerical worker employed by a radio company)

"Yes, especially because I graduated from junior college, my appointment, position, initiation and training were separate from those who graduated from a four year university. ...The time of training is totally different according to your academic background. For example, if you finished university, you'll get training right after you join the company, but if you are a junior college graduate, it takes 6-7 years before you can have training."
(33 year old employee of multinational corporation)

Even those who have a four-year degree often find themselves in positions for which they are overqualified. Between 1982 and 1992, the most common career destination of women graduates from four-year universities actually changed from professional jobs to clerical and related jobs. Although, among women engaged in professional jobs, on the other hand, those in technical jobs increased sharply (Imada, 1994:3), indicating that for some determined women, the EEOL might have had the positive effects of opening up more diverse job opportunities. Certainly recent trends suggest that women are increasingly equipping themselves to be eligible for such positions.

Figure 6.5 shows the rising numbers of female students at four year universities.

Figure 6.5: The number and proportion of female students attending four year universities, 1975-2000

Year	Total number of students attending four-year universities	Number of female students	Percentage of female students at four year universities
1975	1,734,082	368,258	21.2
1980	1,835,312	405,529	22.1
1985	1,848,698	434,401	23.5
1990	2,133,362	584,155	27.4
1995	2,546,649	821,893	32.3
2000	2,740,023	992,312	36.2

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology, 2001

Interestingly, Figure 6.6 shows a quite sharp discontinuity in the rate of increase in the proportion of female students attending four year universities around the time of the introduction of the EEOL and consequent introduction of the dual track employment system. It is not possible to definitively link the EEOL / dual track system with the changing rate of female participation in degree level education, without more supporting evidence. However, it is possible that young women and their parents' decision-making about further education was influenced either by a changing discourse around sexual equality in the workplace, or by the perception that, with legal change, it might be possible that a four-year degree could assist women in gaining career-track positions.

Figure 6.6: Percentage of Female Students at Four Year Universities
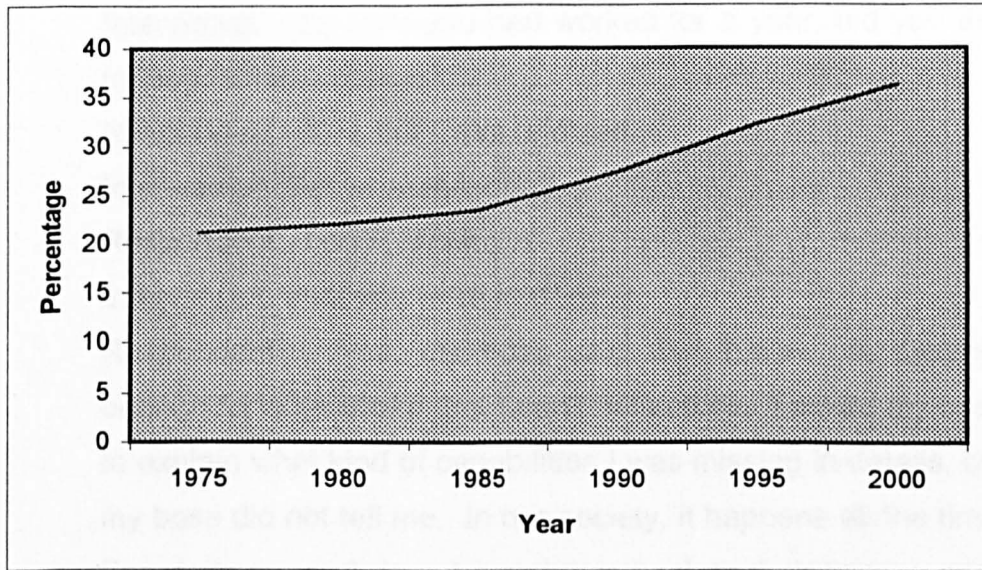
Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001

Nonetheless, the practice remains of women being automatically assigned to the *ippanshoku* regardless of their academic background. I had the following conversation, in 1999, with a woman who had a bachelor's degree from the United States:

> Interviewer: Since you graduated from university, didn't you want to get a *sogoshoku* position?
>
> Respondent: Yes. I wanted to. [... But] at my company, women cannot apply for *sogoshoku* unless they have work there for a year. So all women have to start at *jimu shoku* (clerical work) first.
>
> Interviewer: What about men?
>
> Respondent: *Sogoshoku.* I have never met any men working at *jimu shoku.* As far as I know, all men are working at *sogoshoku.*
>
> Interviewer: So women have a hope that they maybe able to move up to *sogoshoku* after a year.
>
> Respondent: Yes.

Later in the interview she continued

Interviewer: So after you had worked for a year, did you ask for *sogoshoku* position?

Respondent: Yes, but I was rejected.

Interviewer: For what reasons?

Respondent: I don't know.

Interviewer: Just you were told "no"?

Respondent: Well, my boss said that I was not capable enough for *sogoshoku*, but I don't believe so. I asked my boss to explain what kind of capabilities I was missing in details, but my boss did not tell me. In our society, it happens all the time. People in general do not say things back to their bosses once their decisions are made. We are supposed to accept whatever their orders are. So I guess he was annoyed by me for asking for the reasons.

Another woman, working for A company, which deals with the provision of education and sporting facilities, explained the situation whereby some women, who had shown exceptional commitment to their general track position were offered the chance to advance to the *sogoshoku*, but made it clear that this was the exception rather than the rule:

Interviewer: Is the condition of recruitment the same between men and women?

Respondent: Well, the recruitment was for both men and women, but when we were placed, there was a division by university or by the year of university (4 years or 2 years) or by general track and career track.

Interviewer: How about you?

Respondent: I was at general track and...

Interviewer: Were you at two-year college?

Respondent: No, I graduated from [a] four year university, but I chose general track and my coworkers, male coworkers were at career track from the beginning.

Interviewer:...How did you boss explain about the discrimination?

Respondent: (Silence) I think there was not any particular explanation. I think I asked whether women could work at career track and he said that person who had training were given chances.

She went on that she was injured at the time of her recruitment and did not apply for the career track, because she initially wanted work which was not too taxing. Unlike the previous company there were examples of women being promoted from one track to the other, but in seemed that they needed to have demonstrated exceptional loyalty to the company before this could happen.

Respondent: But later I realized something was wrong

(She explained that all the career track members but one were men.)

Respondent: ...There was a woman who worked at career track. She was at general track at the beginning and after she had a training in Tokyo....and after she returned, she worked at career track. After the case, I asked it there something wrong, and they said they have changed the system a little bit....for women who worked for a long time, they asked whether they wanted to change from the general track to career track but the condition was for more than five years...Only women who were at general track and worked for more than five years were asked whether they wanted to shift or not and two came to work at career track but after that there was not such a revision at all."

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A woman who had succeeded in entering the management track wrote that she worked from 9.30 a.m. to 15.25 p.m. seven days a week (*sic)* and disliked the amount of overtime she had to do. However she still believed that she had no possibility of promotion, explaining:

> "I'm the only member of the management staff among the women... Trends are changing, but Japan is still a male-centred society. Women have to make an effort. I don't think it's possible to get a higher position in this company. Equal pay is only a façade. There is inequality in Japanese companies."

Some women, like the example above, have managed to succeed in gaining the prized *sogoshoku* jobs with large companies, and receive the benefits that accompany them. One respondent had taken an MBA in the United States, then worked for a company in the US for a further five years, becoming fluent in English and gaining a further qualification as a pensions analyst. At the time of interview, in 1999, she was working in the *sogoshoku* of a prestigious Japanese company and was earning 12 million yen. However, as the following extract shows, her situation was exceptional:

> Interviewer: Is the condition of career track workers the same between men and women?
> Respondent: "I think the same.
> Interviewer : "How many women are there in the career track?
> Respondent: About one per cent.
> Interviewer: How about the general track?
> Respondent: It is ... the opposite. About ninety-nine per cent are women.

The practice of requiring women to make exceptional efforts before they are offered the same positions as men fits in well with the theory of statistical discrimination: the extra qualification and effort required

of aspiring female managers are perhaps used by managers as a proxy for willingness to establish a permanent career. However, it is difficult for a woman to make the decision at the start of her career about whether or not she will be able to continue to shoulder the work burden of a 'salaryman'. Certainly there has been an increase in reports of women suffering from the symptoms of overwork: a phenomenon known as 'complete exhaustion syndrome' or 'superwoman syndrome' (Asakura, 1998).

Female *sogoshoku* workers, in some instances, have even heavier work burdens than their *salaryman* colleagues. They are not only required to demonstrate as much commitment of male *sogoshoku* workers, without the support of wives carrying out reproductive work at home, but are sometimes also asked to perform the same subordinate tasks as women in the *ippanshoku*. Japan Insight, a website maintained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explains:

> "Women in career track positions are asked to perform some of the tasks that women in auxiliary positions are doing, such as preparing tea and serving their bosses and male colleagues, making photo copies, answering phone calls for other members of the office. Some companies with such grievances argue that they ask women in career track positions to perform them so that they can maintain greater harmony among all the female workers in the office. The problem here is that they try to encourage women to continue performing the tasks prescribed by the inferior positions female workers occupied in the past and do not try to re-evaluate and change the old practices based upon prejudice."
>
> (Japan Insight, 2001a).

One former OL[80] who was invited to 'try out' a management position has written:

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[80] OL is the common abbreviation for 'Office Lady', a term which appear to refer to female office workers in the whole range of administrative positions.

"I was good at it and I loved it.... But then I discovered the reality of male-dominated Japan: that a woman in management is considered an 'uppity girl'. If I offered the smallest opinion I would be dismissed as a woman [*onna no kuse ni*]" (*Ryuugaku taikenki*, 1992: 6, cited in Kelsky, 2001: 92).

It is very difficult to combine the expectations of a *sogoshoku* worker with any domestic responsibilities, and, women workers are unsure they will be rewarded for the sacrifices they make. This does not mean that women carry out work that is of the same status as that of men. While firms have been increasingly prepared to recruit skilled and qualified women, evidence seems to suggest the existence of a 'glass ceiling', that is, even for women who enter the management or technical jobs track, prospects of promotion are limited. The proportion of firms recruiting female college graduates almost doubled between 1984 and 1995 (from 33.2 per cent to 69.7 per cent or 56.3 per cent for white collar and technical jobs respectively, and the proportion of female team leaders has risen from 4.0 per cent to 7.3 per cent, the proportion of female section heads has grown only incrementally from 1.1 per cent to 1.3 per cent. This indicates that the upper echelons of the regular workforce have not been significantly feminised (Figure 6.7).

It is perhaps not surprising that the high drop out rate of women from the *sogoshoku* has become a topic of concern in Japan (White Paper on Labour, 1996). Almost 70 percent of female graduates from the prestigious Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, who took professional-level jobs in 1986 left their original employers (Takahashi, 1998). This does not however mean that women who have left the *sogoshoku* have necessarily given up their career ambitions. Renshaw (1999) cites many case histories of women who started work as a company employee, then left and began their own businesses as the 'glass ceiling' became all too visible. In fact 23 per cent of Japanese

businesses are owned by women (ibid:158) and 87 per cent of women entrepreneurs had worked for a company before starting their own business (ibid:166).

Figure 6.7. Impact of the 1985 Equal Employment Opportunity Act (active 1986) (All figures in percentages)

	1984	1995
Firms recruiting ...	Female college graduates 33.2	Female white collar workers 69.7 Female technical workers 56.3
Women in upper management positions *Bucho* (Department Head) *Kacho* (Section Head) *Kakaricho* (Team Leader)	 1.1 1.5 4.0	 1.3 2.8 7.3

Source: Japan Economic Institute, 1998: 8

Women and the *ippanshoku*

The majority of women tend to choose the general track as they are aware of the demands of *sogoshoku* work, and know that transfer between tracks is difficult (Asakura, 1998). Some women appear to have either been offered inducements, or put under pressure, not to apply for the career track. Some employers offer a sort of dowry: a lump-sum payment to women who opt for the *ippanshoku* and then eventually leave (Brinton, 1993). This allows companies to retain the numerical flexibility of the previous system. A thirty-one year old bank worker reported:

> "When I was in a pre-executive position, due to a merger with another bank, the bank forced me to write an oath to the effect

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that I didn't hope to have an executive position. But I passed the exam, and recovered the position."

Many companies continue to assume that women in the *ippanshoku* will follow the model of short-term regular work, followed by marriage, childbirth and non-regular marriage. This assumption is reflected in the attitudes displayed to those who do not follow this pattern:
A 32 year old receptionist said,

> "Very often the staff (especially men) tell me I should marry early and mention about my age. I feel it's mean to say "Why don't you marry for your age?"(*sic*) .... I am tired of that."

A 27 year old clerical worker had a similar experience:

> "My (male) colleagues ask me why I don't get married, or if not, they think about why I'm not getting married. It doesn't force me to retire, but I think my junior colleagues feel 'sorry' for me about not getting married."

Some women are allowed to change tracks following a promotion test. However, again, it is they, rather than their employers, who are expected to show initiative, and this can lead to resentment. The *ippanshoku* worker in her twenties told me this:

> "....Training, only men are allowed to take the training. Women are staying at their offices. And women have to take paid leaves....do you know paid holidays (*yukyu kyuka*)? I had to take paid holidays and then I could learn something or do whatever I wanted. Even though the train[ing] was related to my professional field, I had to take paid leave and pay for the training. Men can go out when their schedule allows and when the training is accepted in their work, they can go to the training as part of their work...This strange system exists and I really don't like that. It won't help building my career."

Ogasawara (1998) writes that the exclusion of OLs ('Office Ladies') from career advancement can in some ways liberate them from office authority. She writes about how OLs use gossip, withholding of giving Valentine's chocolates (see Section 5.3) and even total non-co-operation with the requests of male co-workers in order to manipulate the behaviour of their male co-workers. Ironically, this behaviour reinforces management stereotypes of women as emotional, irrational and lacking in commitment to work, and provides a further excuse not to promote women or give them responsibility.

A recent legal decision has challenged the assumption that once women have accepted a position in the clerical track, they must accept a traditionally female career. In January 2001, the Tokyo High Court ruled against the Shiba Credit Association (*Shiba Shinkin*) in a case that lasted more than 13 years from filing to final decision. Thirteen women workers filed a suit against *Shiba Shinkin* for discrimination in promotion. The company's defence was that the women had not been promoted because of a lack of ability. When the company lost the case in Tokyo District Court, they appealed to Tokyo High Court, who found that the company had, even though operating a supposedly objective promotion test system – discriminated against women. Even though there had been a test, ostensibly to decide promotion, special measures were taken to promote men who failed the exam. Significantly, it also ordered that the company should promote the women to section chief and pay them compenzation (New Japan Women's Association, 2001).

Innovations in the tracking system

There have been adjustments to the tracking system. Firms have realized the advantages of using the full capacities of women, and, in the wake of the publicity around the dropout rate of female workers from the *sogoshoku*, have taking into account that women continue to charged with responsibility for reproductive labour after marriage, and

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therefore cannot be automatically expected to be as flexible in job transfers as *sogoshoku* workers.

The *gyomushoku*

One innovation in the tracking system is that some companies have introduced an intermediate track, the *gyomushoku* (business operations job) track (Japan Institute of Labour, 1999). This track does not require automatic long-distance transfers, which allows women to take some of the opportunities of a career track. A pensions analyst I interviewed in 1999 explained the situation at her workplace:

> "The difference between career track, semi-career track, and general track.... They are full-time workers. Career track are required to be transferred all over the world. They have to be a position of managing people as well. Semi-career track have [a] transfer system, but it is limited [to] within [a] commutable area. The job responsibility mainly covers office work. [The] general track doesn't have transfer and do office work."

Comprehensive management track

In 1992, the electronics company Sony abolished its clerical track completely, allowing all employees to apply for management jobs. It recruits around 1,700 new entrants annually, of whom 800 were women in 1992. All employees who have worked for the company for three or more years can apply for new positions which are advertised internally (Nikkei Business, 1992).

The *senmonshoku*

Nikkeiren has advocated an increasing role for specialists in the Japanese employment system. Specialists are seen as adding

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flexibility to the Japanese model of capitalism, by being employed on short–term contracts and being paid according to merit rather than seniority. The career strategies of young women too are being shaped by the realization that within the constraints of the existing institutions of Japanese employment and so many have been active in preparing themselves to become *senmonka* (specialists, who follow the *senmonshoku* – or specialist track). Shinotsuka (1994) noted that, even in 1994 a greater proportion of women (13.8 per cent) than men (11.3 per cent) worked as specialists. This appears to be becoming an increasingly popular career destination. Sixty-two per cent of women in their thirties answered that they felt the most desirable way to work was to become an expert in a certain field, compared to 12.1 per cent who thought the most desirable way to work was to work for the same company for a long time and obtain a managerial position. Respondents gave the impression that women were aware of job discrimination (By the end of November 1999, 77.3 per cent of final year male students at four year universities had received informal job offers compared to 68.8 per cent of female students, while at the 90 per cent female junior colleges only 46.8 per cent of students had received job offers (Nikkei Weekly, January 24, 2000) and felt that this was one way to ensure career success. Women, especially those at junior colleges are more likely than men to consider that skills and specialisms are more important than the university one attends and one's degree (National Survey on Lifestyle Preferences, 1997). However, the requisite training is usually at the worker's own expense, rather than at the company's expense, as with the traditional employment system. An increasingly common phenomenon is that of *duburu sukuru* (double school), where undergraduates take vocational certificates at the same time that they are doing their bachelor's or associate degrees. In a focus group session, a university lecturer noted,

> "Girls...my students are very eager to get licences and so they go to another vocational school as they study at university, because they think that girls are disadvantaged... Girls have to

have some weapon, so they take some course, such as bookkeeping, or they become a specialist in real estate."

Another woman commented,

> "I know a young woman... and on her name card there is a lot of qualifications (*katagaki*). She said, "With these certificates, I'm just... I'm on the starting line with boys."

Female students interviewed by Lee-Cunin (2002) gave the following opinions, which seemed to indicate that certification was a desired route to career success:

> "I want a job that lets me use a certificate related to economics because I want to be active in society as a woman."

> "I would like to get office work in accounting as the job itself will improve my ability. I would become an office lady if I can't get better work or improve myself."

> "My ideal job is being a teacher, or a chartered or tax accountant but in reality my job will be an office lady."

However, specialist work too is being re-regulated. One notable feature of the re-regulation of employment has been the expansion of the 'discretionary work scheme'. Legally, if the hours worked exceed a daily or weekly maximum, then employers are formally obliged to pay an overtime premium of 25 per cent. However, Article 32-02 Paragraph 4 of the current Labour Standards Law, which was introduced in 1982, allows written agreement between employee and employee representative which stipulates that payment is to be made for a certain length of time, regardless of how long the task specified in that agreement actually took. Initially this applied only to six types of jobs, largely in the media, design or research. From 1 April 2000

seven other 'specialist' jobs, such as certified public accountant were added to the list. The Japan Federation of Employers' Associations (*Nikkeiren*) is campaigning for the list to be further expanded to cover jobs such as planning of business strategy, sales, finance and public relations. A woman I interviewed in 1996, who worked as an advertising copywriter complained.

> " I have no time. Sometimes I can't control my time. My time schedule is controlled by other people, by clients. There is no limit to how long I work. I have to work overtime at short notice often. The payment for the job is one payment for one day. So some jobs I do one hour and others I work three days for one job. The price is the same. I get paid according to my idea. Sometimes I can get it a good idea very easily and quickly, but sometimes I can't, so the payment is the same."

The image and reality of working for a foreign firm

The formal tracking system that operates in large Japanese companies helps to institutionalize the secondary labour force status of most women, in comparison with most men. However, there is nothing uniquely Japanese about employing women predominantly in jobs of lower status than those of the men who work beside them. This is demonstrated by the experience of Japanese women working for foreign companies in Japan.

The transnationality index in Japan is lower that of other advanced industrialized countries (see Section 4.4). However, even the minor presence of a foreign firm in a market can be influential in introducing changes in the organization of work (Yashiro, 1998). The entry of foreign firms into the Japanese market appears to provide slightly more attractive opportunities for high-achieving women who intend to continue working, than has been the case in Japanese companies. About 60 per cent of third year university students of both sexes express an interest working for foreign companies and their affiliates

in Japan, commonly believing that they offer chances for employees to improve their skills and to reach their full potential (White Paper on the National Lifestyle, FY 1999). Certainly this is a common impression held by Japanese female students seeking employment. A marketing specialist, around thirty years of age, working for a foreign company in Japan told me:

"In my company we don't have much difference between females and males. More likely, your educational background. Sometimes we have a difference between males and females. ... Japanese bosses - they think they can do better, you know. They think that a male the same age can do better than me. But as far as the foreigners are concerned, I don't think there is any difference. For foreign bosses – they have no...I don't think they judge me because I'm female. For Japanese bosses, probably they judge me because I am female. I have to treat them very well. I have to be very nice all the time. That happens. Since I moved to [X company]. [X company] was acquired about 5 years ago to [Y company] and I was one of the people who came from X to Y and they were very shocked the first time they saw me, because I was very young. I was like 25 years old, a very young girl coming to take over their business. So at that time they didn't like me at all. Because they think, you know, that if somebody comes to take over their business, they should be male, older. So when I was one of the people who was chosen to come into X... "

Foreign-affiliate firms (*gaishikei*) do appear to be more ready than Japanese firms to hire female employees. In the mid-1990s, 70 per cent of Japanese staff at the security company Lehmann Brothers were female, while McCann Eriksson Hakuhoudo, a foreign-affilitated advertising company, 106 Japanese women were employed compared to only 6 Japanese men (Kelsky, 2001). Although Kelsky does not state the precise levels at which these women were

employed, she says that they generally occupied higher positions of authority than they would in Japanese firms. Kelsky suggests that the reason for this overrepresentation of female employees at foreign affiliate firms is attributable to women being more likely than men to be proficient in English (as they are far more likely to have studied overseas), and because, for educated men, taking a job with a foreign-affiliated corporation, implies a risky and unknown future, instead of the job security and age-related pay and promotions he is still likely to benefit from in a large Japanese corporations. Employing women therefore is foreign companies' only way of accessing highly-educated employees. I would add to these reasons, that women are more likely than men to have achieved job-related certification and skills.

Higuchi (1993: 176) noted that the rate of retention of female university graduates between 5 and 10 years was 75.7 per cent in foreign-affiliated companies, compared to only 57.9 per cent in Japanese companies. However company documents provided to me by the union at Showa Shell, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, demonstrate that, while women's tenure in the company is far longer than the average for Japanese companies, women are nonetheless greatly over-represented in the lower employment grades.

As the following anecdote shows, some Western employers may also be inclined to exploit stereotypes of Japanese women as passive and undemanding workers, in order to save on their wages bill:

> "Actually I had one interview with an American person and ... he offered me 150,000 yen for doing secretarial work for a month... I asked him if I could get a little bit more, because it was ... noon till ten or five to ten at night or something like that. The time was really bad. So I asked him if I could get more, and he said, "Well, women in Japan are not supposed to ask for money... Actually the average pay the women are getting is

110,000 yen in Japan, so I'm really surprised that you asked for more and you're a Japanese woman." So I guess I gave him a bad impression of me." (Part-time worker, early 20s, describing search for full time work).

Kelsky describes deeply-embedded gender norms within *gaisheki* themselves, noting the reliance of young monolingual white male traders working on *gaisheki* stock brokerages in Tokyo, who are completely dependent on bilingual secretaries who contact and negotiate with clients and rival firms, filter market information, interpret at meetings, handle complex paperwork, and facilitate cultural adjustment– all for a secretarial wage. Kelsky (2001: 208) quotes a bilingual legal assistant employed in a foreign affiliate law firm, who says,

> "At this firm all the lawyers are white men, and all the assistants are Japanese women. It's the official policy. The partners don't want any Japanese males here. They say Japanese women are easier to control... It pisses me off, but what can you do? Aren't all law firms sexist?"

6. 4. Participation in the regular workforce and the characteristics of women's reproductive labour

The strength of the assumption in Japan that women, or at least other family members, will be responsible for all reproductive work continues to differentiate Japan from other First World countries. Japan has no developed network of paid babysitters comparable to that of the US or UK. The previous chapter also described the demands nursery schools place upon working mothers (Allinson, 1996).

Women living in three generation households, however, are somewhat less burdened than other married working women[81]. Thirty eight per cent of Japanese working women using state childcare found that housework was a heavy or very heavy burden; a figure which dropped to only 24 per cent of those living in three generation households and 14 per cent where the mother-in-law had the main responsibility for cooking (Stockman et al, 1995:114). A teacher I interviewed was very enthusiastic about her work, teaching children with disabilities. She was a civil servant and thus able to take several months maternity leave, but she said that it would have been quite impossible for her to return to work without the help of her mother-in-law, who acted as a full-time baby sitter.

Nakamura and Ueda (1999) found that living with one's mother was a statistically significant positive factor in determining the likelihood of married women continuing to work after childbirth. In terms of child are, 23% of married couples with children under six lived in three-generation households and 77% two-generation households; the percentage of these households in which both partners worked was 54% and 33% respectively (Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, 2000). However, as Japan becomes increasingly urbanised and family size decreases there are fewer sons and daughters able or willing to accommodate an elderly parent (Ochiai, 1997).

Feminist theorists have observed that the potentially 'freeing' aspect that globalization has had upon an elite class of First World women, in that they have been able to pursue cosmopolitan professional careers, has been facilitated by the emergence of a class of female overseas contract workers carrying out personal services, such as domestic labour for this cosmopolitan elite (Chang and Ling, 2000).

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[81] At least this is the case in those three-generation households, where parents or in-laws are sufficiently young and able bodied not to require care themselves.

Although this has been a notable feature of other East Asian economies, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, it is not at all characteristic of Japan, although the flow of female migrant workers in other sectors of the workforce has increased. No female undocumented workers have been found to be working as maids or providers of childcare since 1991, compared to 45,229 hostesses, 18, 562 factory workers, 63,791 prostitutes, 8817 dishwashers and 14898 waitresses (Sellek, 2001: 53). There is pressure on women to show that they can 'cope' with housework and childcare, even if they hold jobs.

A questionnaire respondent wrote:

> "There are many talented housewives and others who want to go out and work around me. But their present situation is such that, because of their husbands' disapproval, they have no choice but to give up their dreams. The situation gets worse as a woman gets married, gives birth to a child and becomes a mother. It's still difficult for women to do whatever they want in this society. *Because people take it for granted that the woman working outside should be able to manage her work at home perfectly, it's important for them to manage things efficiently.* I studied abroad for a month with my child. My husband had opposed the idea very strongly and it took me more than six months to persuade him. When I came back, people said that I was a bad wife because I did what I wanted to. On the other hand, my husband's stock rose and he was seen as a sympathetic husband. It wasn't fair."

6.5. Conclusion

In Japan, as elsewhere, neo-liberal globalization is presented by political elites as an inevitable process, to which national states must react, by reforming their domestic institutions.

The globalization of Japanese production, increased global regulation of women's rights, and increased flows of information, have exposed Japan's institutions to global scrutiny, and increased reflexivity about appropriate gender roles in Japan. Japanese women's rights campaigners have helped to construct, and have been assisted in their cause by, the development of a global standard concerning equal treatment of men and women in the workplace, and international organizations concerned with labour conditions. This is helping them to put pressure on the Japanese government to reduce the more obvious aspects of sexual discrimination in employment practices, via legislation such as the 1999 version of the Equal Employment Opportunities Law. The publicity surrounding the passage of this law and its 1986 predecessor has raised the consciousness of the Japanese public generally about women's labour rights. However, as most women are constrained by the expectation that they carry out reproductive work in the household as well, it is difficult for them to insist on entry to the same positions as their male colleagues – unless they have the help of a family member who will carry out reproductive work in their place. For a minority of highly skilled specialists, professionals, and totally dedicated *sogoshoku* employees, legal changes and restructuring may have some positive benefits, despite frequent violations of the spirit of the law.

Dominant ideologies can lead to the state and existing institutions to negotiate a compromise between encouraging change and maintaining the current gender order. This has in fact been the result of the way the EEOL has been implemented. According to Hanami Tadashi, Chairman of the Central Labour Standards Council, companies are increasingly dividing workers into two discrete groups: core workers and

> "...a large number of peripheral workers who can readily be displaced... It is obvious that women and immigrant workers

are expected to constitute the latter group. The gist of the problem is that laws such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Law fit in perfectly with this design." (Osawa, 1998: 160).

Although some companies are taking steps to recruit skilled and qualified women, by introducing new employment track, what the EEOL has hastened overall, is the institutionalization of a gender-based dual economy, where educated women continue to work in less-skilled jobs than their male counterparts, then leave the workplace to raise children. They then re-enter the workforce as non-regular workers under conditions, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven:
Deregulation, Restructuring and Women Working in Non-Regular Positions

7.0. Introduction

One of the most significant effects of workforce restructuring in response to globalization in Japan is the increased use of 'non-regular' workers, that is workers who do not have the same security of tenure or regular salary and other benefits that are enjoyed by full-time 'regular' employees. These non-regular workers include part-time, temporary and agency workers, as well as home-workers, and are overwhelmingly female.[82]

In Chapter Three, the following observations were made about globalization and gender:

- States respond to the challenges of globalization by marketization and the adoption of neo-liberal policies. These policies have impacts, which increase the reproductive work of women.

- There has been a 'feminization of labour'. A higher proportion of the workforce is female and rising proportion of jobs available have those characteristics associated with female employment: relatively low pay; little job security and short-tenure; being part-time, temporary or home-based.

This chapter will show how these outcomes of globalization are particularly relevant to situation in Japan, and thereby meet the thesis aims of :

- Contributing to the debate about the impact of globalization upon women by bringing in insights from the case of Japan into the wider academic discourse.

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[82] An important exception is the class of day labourer, who wait on certain streets in large cities in the hope of being taken on by the day to carry out casual manual work. I am grateful to Peter Matanle for this point.

- Examining the impact of restructuring upon women's employment in Japan.

This analysis will be restricted to non-regular workers in the formal, rather than informal[83], economy. Although analyses of the impact of globalization upon women in the Third World often focus on the articulation of women's work in the formal and informal economies; and the growth of informal work in the context of globalization (Gills, 2001, Carr and Chen, 2001), a far higher proportion of Japan's economic activity is formally recorded than in Third World countries (although as the last chapter made clear, some sexual and service work is carried out by undocumented migrant workers). Even in comparison with other industrialized countries, Japan appears to be rather adept at recording employment. It is one of only seven countries in the world to include homeworking in its statistics on employment and production (ILO, 2002). Frey and Schneider (2000) attribute the small size of the informal economy in Japan, to Japan's relatively low public sector spending, compared to other First World nations. Low public spending is reflected in lower taxation, and therefore in a reduced incentive for workers to take on work to gain untaxable income.

The previous chapter described how an important outcome of the regulation of work was the employment of women in non-regular jobs. The growth of non-regular work has also been stimulated by the deregulation of employment as part of Japan's general move towards *laissez-faire* economic reforms. Section 7.1 describes how government deregulation and marketization of the economy, is predicated upon the assumption that women's reproductive work will render unnecessary increased state provision of welfare. It also shows how the continuation of Japanese norms about women's reproductive work is decisive in women's increased entry into non-

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[83] The informal economy encompasses all the productive work, which goes unrecorded in a country's GDP.

regular work.   Section 7.2 explains how globalization has increased companies' motivation to reduce costs and increase workforce flexibility, while Section 7.3 will show how the flexiblization of employment is facilitated by state deregulation of non-regular work.   To show what impact this has on the women who constitute the vast majority of non-regular workers, the characteristics of important categories of non-regular work will be examined, looking particularly at the experiences of part-time, dispatched workers and homeworkers, in Section 7.4.

7.1. Deregulation and women's reproductive work

Deregulation has played an important part in the increase of women's reproductive work.   As seen in Chapter Four, Japan had begun the process of marketization and deregulation, in the 1990s, under pressure from Clinton administration to facilitate the entry of foreign firms in Japan, and under pressure from the global economy to reduce production and transaction costs.   With the formation of the second Hashimoto administration in 1990, a second period of deregulation, or what Keidanren termed the reform of "traditional systems in the areas of administration, finance, and the economy to secure further economic development in harmony with the international community"(Toyoda, 1997).   The six specified targets of reform were the administration, the financial system, the fiscal, economic and social security structures, and education. In his address to the Council for Gender Equality[84], Prime Minister Hashimoto announced:

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[84] In 1994 the Council for Gender Equality (CGE) was set up within the Prime Minister's Office. The CGE is charged with producing recommendations for how Japanese society can achieve the state of *danjo kyoudou sankaku*. This term has been translated officially as 'gender equality' in English versions of official government documents. In contrast to the more commonly used Japanese term for gender equality (*danjou byoudou*), this term has the sense of 'joint participation by men and women'. In other words, "the term seemed to allow for a recognition that equality did not have to mean identity, that women could take a role in society just as important as men's without necessarily adopting masculine lifestyles." (Osawa, 2000:6). The view of equality as 'women participating in society, but in a way

"The kind of [Japanese] society I aim to create though the six reforms in preparation for the coming twenty-first century is one in which each and every citizen has a dream and objectives for the future and is able to fully display their creativity and spirit of challenge. This society that generates values to be shared with people throughout the world, when viewed from the perspective of men and women, is essentially a gender-equal society. The realization of this kind of society is the urgent demand of these times in which we grapple with rapid changes taking place in the socio-economic environment – *the ageing population*, the low birth rate, and the *maturation and internationalization of the economy* – in our quest for a prosperous and vigorous nations. Realization of this goal will be the key to Japan's future. For that reason, it is my belief that building a gender-equal society can be considered a form of social reform and that gender equality will be one of the pillars of 'reform and creation' in every field of society." (Speech to the Council for Gender Equality, 16 June 1997, in Osawa, 2000:3).

Upon initial examination, the administrative reforms did not obviously promote gender equality, because they had the potential to increase the burden of women's reproductive work. In particular the move towards a more *laissez-faire* economic policy is having harsh consequences for social welfare, as a gap has appeared between government spending requirements and government revenue. Taxes and economic stagnation have lowered Japan's revenue from 60,000 billion yen in 1990 to a predicted 46,8000 billion yen in the fiscal year beginning April 2002 (Financial Times, 14 June 2002: 12 a). The tax burden in Japan as a proportion of national income is the lowest in the G7 countries (at 22.9 per cent compared to 26.5 per cent in the US, 40 per cent in the UK, 31 per cent in Germany and 40 per cent in France

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different than men' is implied in other Japanese government policies and pronouncements of the 1990s, as this chapter shows.

(Financial Times, 14 June 2002: 12b). As noted in Chapter Four, Japan's spending on welfare was already by the standards of advanced industrial economies rather low and women's reproductive work is expected to fill the gaps in state provided welfare.

The previous two chapters have discussed the expectation that mothers will provide the largest proportion of care for children in Japan. There is not only social, but also legal, pressure for families to compensate for any shortfalls in state-provided care for the elderly. Even though three-generation co-residence has been decreasing with the move towards the nuclearization of the Japanese family, in 1999, 23 per cent of married couples with children under six lived in three-generation households (Gender Equality Bureau, 2002). The improvements in living conditions of the Japanese people since the end of the Second World War has been accompanied by a remarkable rise in life expectancy[85]. This rise in life expectancy means that there are many elderly Japanese will need care for a decade or more, and as infirmity tends to increase with age, the intensity of this care will be greater than in the past. The result of this is that there has been a remarkable increase in public spending on care for the elderly, which is predicted to rise still further.[86]

Day care for the elderly, while not totally free, is heavily subsidized through taxation. Rises in costs therefore have important implications for those who pay taxes. Tax and social security contributions from firms account for 13.8 per cent of Japan's national income: a proportion which, if current trends continue, is set to increase to 20 per cent by 2025 according to the Health and Welfare Ministry (Japan Insight, 2002). The Japanese government has come under pressure to reduce these costs from the business lobby.

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[85] Life expectancy at birth had risen to 77.5 years for men and 84.6 years for women by 2000 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2000).

[86] In the next 20 years, it is estimated that the number of paid jobs involving care for the elderly will grow from current levels of 300,000-500,000 people to about one million people (Japan Insight, 2001d).

Nikkeiren, for example, commissioned a study, which showed that large Japanese firms paid the equivalent of US $10,000 per employee per year in welfare costs (ibid).

The Japanese government had instituted the Ten-Year Strategy to Promote Health Care and Welfare for the Elderly (commonly known as the Gold Plan) in 1989 (before the administrative reforms). However, the total amount of money budgeted by local governments for the health and welfare of elderly persons was, as of the end of 1993, more than that envisaged in the original Gold Plan. This plan was therefore revised in 1994 under the name New Gold Plan. The New Gold Plan stressed the increasing role of family members in providing care to elderly relatives. However, while government discourse might have played role in encouraging women to undertake the traditional role of providing care for the elderly, continued shortfalls in publicly provided welfare have meant that there continued to be a 'care gap'. The Japanese government has removed local authorities' responsibility to produce the service infrastructure to care for elderly people, and has encouraged a market-based system, as part of the government's more general moves towards marketization. Although this was still to be publicly funded many local authorities continue to lack short stay and day services for the elderly (Yoshida, 2002).

In 1995, the *Child Care and Family Leave Care Law* came into effect, entitling workers to a full year of leave after a child's birth and up to three months to care for infirm family members. While the provisions of the Law are theoretically open to both men and women, in reality, it is almost exclusively women who use this provision. Between 1 April 1995 and 31 March 1996, only 0.6 per cent of male workers took child care leave following the birth of a child (Sato, 2000: 3). The implications of this expectation of care from family members is reflected in the statement by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare:

"In order for workers to lead a fulfilling career life through their lifetime amid the ageing of the population and the declining birth rate, *it has become extremely important to create an environment where they can make good use of their abilities and experiences while combining work with childcare and the nursing of family members.* (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2001, my italics).

It is then evident from this pronouncement and changes in legislation that the 'joint participation' of men and women in society is differentiated according to gender. Non-regular work allows firms to make use of women's 'abilities and experiences', while also leaving women sufficient time to be unpaid carers of Japan's growing elderly population. Women's unpaid care of the elderly represents a considerable saving in public expenditure. The annual per capita assessed value of unpaid elderly and nursing care accounts for 21.5 per cent of women's unpaid work (Fukami, 1999: 8), and has a replacement value of 1.475 billion yen (Economic Planning Agency, 1998).

The restructuring and 'flexibilising' of the Japanese workforce are presented as the answer to the twin challenges of aged society and economic globalization in Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's policy speech to the 136th Session of the National Diet,

"Reform is Japan's most pressing need today. When I was first elected to the Diet back in 1963, there were only 153 people 100 [years old] or older nationwide. Today, there are over 6,000. In the same period, the number of babies born every year has plummeted from 1.65 million to about 1.20 million. By the start of the next century, one in five Japanese will be 65 or older, and this will soon be one in four. *We are clearly becoming an aged society. With this outlook and the unprecedented speed at which the Japanese society is aging, it is imperative that we overhaul those social arrangements* premised upon

a life span of twoscore and ten [sic] to suit our new expected life span of fourscore. At the same time, *there are also many changes that must be made, like it or not, in all aspects of Japanese society to cope with the collapse of Cold War structures, the borderless-action of the economy, Japan's enhanced global status, and other international changes."* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996).

Caregiving for the elderly is one of the most frequently given reasons for women to quit work after child rearing (Japan Insight, 2002), but it does not seem, as yet, seem to be a major reason for taking on part-time work. The supply of women willing to accept part-time work is increasing for other reasons associated with shortfalls in welfare funding though. The most frequently cited principal reason for taking a job given by part-time workers in a survey carried out by the Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life[87] was 'to supplement living expenses' (see Figure 7.1). This was followed by 'to pay for children's education and mortgage', cited by around 14 per cent of part-time workers. Women's perceived need to pay for their children's education costs can also be attributed to shortfalls in state funding for secondary schools[88] and the increasing marketization of university funding.[89]

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[87] Although the ostensible purpose of this research group is to study 'part-time' work, the study respondents are classified according to whether they are regular (*shain*) or (*hishain*) non regular. Possibly this conflation reflects the usage of the term *paato* in Japan to refer to employees who do not receive the benefits of regular employees, regardless of the hours worked.

[88] Although 96 per cent of the relevant age group go to secondary school, only about one third qualify to attend state academic schools. The remainder attend, in roughly equal proportions state vocational or private academic schools. As vocational schools tend to have relatively low status, the consumer led private sector provides academic education at a price (Benjamin and James, 1993).

[89] The main source of funding for private universities and junior colleges is tuition and other fees. Private funding is also playing an increasingly part in the funding of state universities. In FY 1971 transfers from the general budget accounted for 83.5 per cent of the Special Account for National Educational Institutions, which provides for the operation of national educational institutions including universities. By 1995 this had fallen to 62 per cent. Universities have increasingly been raising revenue from commissioned research and rising

Figure 7.1: What is your reason for working? Most important reason

	Regular public sector	Regular private sector	Non-regular public sector	Non-regular private sector	Total
To earn living expenses	70 (44.0%)	197 (49.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	267 (15.6%)
It is proper to work	40 (25.2%)	46 (11.6%)	43 (9.3%)	47 (6.7%)	176 (10.3%)
I want to be economically independent	17 (10.7%)	48 (12.1%)	18 (3.9%)	26 (3.7%)	109 (6.4%)
To improve myself and get a feeling of satisfaction	11 (6.9%)	17 (4.3%)	45 (9.8%)	55 (7.9%)	128 (7.5%)
I want links with society and other people	8 (5.0%)	12 (3.0%)	46 (10.0%)	30 (4.3%)	96 (5.6%)
To pay for children's education and the mortgage	5 (3.1%)	17 (4.3%)	65 (14.1%)	95 (13.7%)	182 (10.6%)
To supplement living expenses	5 (3.1%)	36 (9.1%)	180 (39.1%)	404 (58.1%)	625 (36.5%)
Money for shopping, travel etc.	0 (0.0%)	10 (2.5%)	27 (5.9%)	19 (2.7%)	56 (3.3%)
I want to pursue studies/hobbies	1 (0.6%)	8 (2.0%)	30 (6.5%)	15 (2.2%)	54 (3.2%)
Other	2 (1.3%)	5 (1.3%)	6 (1.3%)	4 (0.6%)	17 (1.0%)
TOTAL	159 (100.0%)	396 (100.0%)	460 (100.0%)	695 (100.0%)	1710 (100.0%)

Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

The Japanese government is facilitating reform through deregulation, and marketization of the economy. It is evident from government pronouncements that women's reproductive labour is expected to cover the subsequent shortfall in the provision of state-funded welfare for the elderly. Caring for the elderly though, does not, *as yet,* seem to be a major reason for women working in non-regular positions. According to the reasons that women themselves give, the potential supply of non-regular workers is partially determined by women's continued responsibility for childcare and

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student tuition fees as "due to the severe budgetary constraints facing the Government". (Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture , 1995).

housework, combined with their perceived need to contribute to household expenditure, particularly expenditure on their children's education (Figure 7.1). The costs of education are rising as the Japanese education system becomes increasingly marketized.

7.2. The increased demand for non-regular workers

The previous section has examined why the supply of women ready to accept part-time employment is increasing. This section will examine why globalization is leading to an increased demand among firms for non-regular employees. It will then look at how government policy has facilitated firms' hiring of non-regular workers.

Globalization and the demand for a larger non-regular workforce

Companies receive a number of benefits by hiring non-regular or peripheral workers, including part-time and contract workers. The non-regular workforce provides companies with greater flexibility in responding to market requirements. In addition, the hiring of non-regular workers is often cheaper for companies as wages, fringe benefits and legal protection of non-regular workers are often less than those of regular workers. The gradual growth of Japan's part-time labour force has been traced in Chapter Five, but as economic globalization has progressed, the rate of growth of non-regular work has intensified, as, in common with firms in many other First World countries, Japanese companies have attempted to reduce the costs and increase the flexibility of labour. This process was accelerated by the East Asian economic crisis of 1997. In 1998, Japanese manufacturers were suffering badly from the after-effects of the East Asian financial crisis.[90].

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[90] As Chapter Four noted, Japanese multinationals have significant investments in South East Asian. Japanese companies supplying intermediate goods to such companies initially received fewer orders in the crisis, and then suffered, as the depreciation of local currencies

During this time, the number of general workers fell by 0.8 per cent compared to 1997, while the number of part-time workers increased by 4.2 per cent (Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare, 1998).[91]

Figure 7.2: Reasons cited by establishments for hiring non-regular workers

Reasons for hiring choice	Total workers	Dispatch workers	Part-time workers
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0
Regular workers could not be found	21.5	16.0	20.3
To better meet personnel needs given the changing business environment	21.5	16.0	20.3
To control personnel costs	46.1	35.9	52.3
To meet needs associated with long business hours	17.0	3.1	19.7
To meet personnel needs on a daily or weekly basis	29.1	15.7	34.4
To meet temporary or seasonal demand	20.1	12.1	15.8
To handle specialized work	22.5	37.8	9.5
To secure personnel with proven abilities and skills	13.2	22.9	6.5
To re-employ senior citizens	10.2	2.0	5.2
To re-employ women who left the work to raise children	5.6	1.4	6.0
Others	12.5	5.7	7.4

All values are given as percentages. Multiple responses to each question were possible.
Sources: General Survey on the Diversification of Working Status, Ministry of Labour, 1999 and, Japan Institute of Labour, 1999: 24

Statements in the Ministry of Labour's *General Survey on the Diversification of Working Status* (1996) clearly indicate that companies' primary goals in taking on non-regular workers are the desire to reduce costs and attain flexibility (Figure 7.2).   When companies were asked why non-regular workers were hired, the most popular reasons given were to control personnel costs (46.1 per cent), to meet personnel costs on a daily or weekly

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ultimately led to a rising onshore production.   In the first half of 1998, the number of bankruptcies reached 10, 173 (Albach, 1998).

[91] This is in contrast to the oil crisis of the 1970s, when most jobs lost during the oil crisis of the 1970s were part-time (see Chapter Five).

basis (29.1 per cent), to meet personnel costs given the changing business environment (21.5 per cent).

There is another possible reason for the growth in the non-regular workforce. As manufacturing jobs are increasingly 'exported' to low wage economies, while new jobs in First World countries are increasingly concentrated in the service sector (see Section 2.1). There have indeed been changes in the industrial structure of Japan. Like many other industrial countries, Japan has seen a growth in employment in the tertiary sector (even after the collapse of the Bubble economy) from fewer than 10 million employees in 1985 to more than 14 million in 1998 (Labour Force Survey, 1999). The retail and service sectors, by their very nature, tend to have a higher share of part-time employment has contributed to this trend. However, according to Houseman and Osaka (1998: 246), only 6 per cent of the increases of part-time employment can be accounted for by changes in the industrial composition of employment, while 92 per cent can be attributed to increases in the rate of part-time employment within industries.

To the Japanese way of thinking, the Japanese style of (regular) employment offers 'three treasures': lifetime employment, payment according to seniority and enterprise unionism. Although some firms laid off regular workers during the current recession, reluctance to lay off or fire regular workers is strong in Japanese culture. When forced to lay off workers, large firms often attempt to find new positions at different companies, usually those further down the *keiretsu* chain for workers they can no longer employ (see Chapter Four). Public response and media coverage following the collapse of Yamaichi Securities Company, Japan's oldest and fourth-largest brokerage, and the resulting mass redundancies in 1997, demonstrate that job security is still a strong component of the Japanese concept of employment, at least for men. Non-regular work for married women, on the other hand, is far more acceptable socially, as it can be rationalized in terms of the compatibility of

work and family life. In 1998, 39 per cent of Japanese people agreed or somewhat agreed with the sentiment that "Women working full time will have a negative impact on their families" (NHK, 1998).

In many firms then, the non-regular workforce is entirely female. One 47-year-old interviewee was a homeworker. She worked for a company, which produced practice tests for schoolchildren. She marked English papers and returned them to the company, which then redistributed the corrected tests to pupils. She told me,

> "There are almost no men – we have about 2000 people in the Osaka area, but only a few men. This job is not good for men, because the salary is low. It's a woman's job [....] My current job is very good for women, because I need to work only two days per week and I don't have to work longer hours, so I can use the rest of my time as I like. Only women can do this....... Only married women can do this."

The deregulation of the airline and banking industries

The cases of the airline and banking industries provide two clear examples of how globalization has led to the restructuring of the workforce, and how restructuring has particular implications for female employees. The airline industry has been progressively deregulated since 1986. Reforms have included permitting Japanese airlines to compete against each other; allowing ANA to enter international markets; permitting code-sharing with US airlines; and allowing discount tickets to be bought through legitimate channels. This shift from national protected business to one of international alliances competing with other alliances both globally and locally has led to a substantial worsening of conditions for the overwhelmingly female workforce of flight attendants in Japan.

In 1994 Japan Airlines announced a reorganization of personnel. All regular workers would be assigned to international flights, while temporary workers

on short-term contracts, earning approximately half the wages of regular workers, would work on domestic flights. Consequently many female regular workers, who had domestic or childcare responsibilities, left work, rather than be reassigned to international flights (Nakura, 1997, *JAL* Cabin Attendants' Union, 1995). Meanwhile, the annual working hours of regular workers increased from 840 to 900 hours. Uchida Taeko (1998:7), a flight attendant and activist in the aviation industry labour union also claimed that as contract employees are paid by the hour, they tend to report to work even when unwell and that Japan Airlines was taking on a higher proportion of attendants from Singapore, Hong Kong, Germany and Britain as women from these countries, who could be hired for up to 75 per cent less than their Japanese counterparts. Unlike most private companies where there is a clear division between full-timers and others, contract workers can be upgraded to the status of full-timers, but this depends partly on the evaluations of their full-time colleagues, with obvious implications for workforce solidarity.

With the impact of 'Big Bang', the substantially deregulation of Japan's financial markets which came into effect on 11 March 1998, Japan's banking and financial services industry has become subject to increased foreign penetration from the likes of *Merrill Lynch* and *Citibank* (*BusinessWeek*, June 1997). Big Bang has also made Japanese capital markets far more liberal. The result is that the Japanese financial sector is far more vulnerable to international flows. The speed with which foreign institutions entered Japan became a matter of political concern, particularly to Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa (Rowley, 1998). Japan's banks, including Asahi Bank, Chuo Trust Banking, Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank, Fuji Bank, Industrial Bank of Japan (IBJ), Long Term Credit Bank of Japan (LTCB), Mitsui Trust and Banking, Sumitomo Bank, Tokai Bank and Yasuda Bank have acted defensively by forming mergers. The post-war system of cross-shareholding of banks and other firms, which facilitated long-term planning and stability (see Chapter Three), is also rapidly declining (*ibid*). It had been generally believed in the postwar period that banks could not fail. However, in 1997, the government showed its commitment to a more *laissez*

faire banking system, when it failed to rescue Hokkaido Takushoku Bank, Yamaichi Securities, Sanyo Securities and Tokuyo City Bank.

Japan's domestic banks have been responding to increased competition, integration into the world economy, and growing insecurity by attempting to reduce costs and increase the flexibility of their workforce so that they might respond more quickly to fluctuations in the international economic environment. This has impacted heavily upon women working in banking. One of the disadvantages for employers of hiring short-term or part-time workers, rather than regular workers is that there are certain fixed costs associated with recruiting, such as the costs of recruitment, hiring and training. Many banks, security companies, (as well as major trading and manufacturing firms) took steps overcome this disadvantage, by setting up their own agencies in the 1980s. A list of such firms and their subsidiaries is found in Table 7.3. Female regular employees are encouraged to register with the firm's subsidiary agency when they leave upon childbirth or marriage. In this way, experienced and skilled workers continue to work for the same firm, but no longer benefit from the *nenko* system, and employers and replace female regular with non-regular workers (Nakura 1997). Recently, most major banks and general trading companies have stopped hiring regular clerical workers, most of whom were women. Part-time and agency workers are filling their places (Kuroiwa, 2001). One respondent described the situation of acquaintances, who were differentiated from full-time workers, despite carrying out the same job:

> "It's a part of restructuring. I have three, four or five friends, um ... at least three or four friends, who are working at a bank (...) part-time for almost ten years or more than that, but you can't see who is a part-timers and who is not. {...} And my friend said she is a little bit depressed because she knows better than the new, I mean, full-time worker[s] and still she is paid [less[... I mean, very low [wages] and she is treated as, of course, [a] part-timer so her {...} is quite unstable," (English Discussion Society focus group, 1999).

One securities firm did not even wait for women to resign, announcing that all
female regular employees would be seconded to a worker dispatching
company[92] and that the firm would from then on only recruit dispatched
women workers (Sakai, 1999).

Table 7.3: Subsidiary firms running worker dispatching businesses, founded by main city banks, Japan, September 1990

Name of bank	Name of subsidiary firms (worker dispatching agency)	Date of foundation of subsidiary	Number of dispatched workers
Daiichi-Kangin	Daiichi-Kangin Office Service	May 1985	4000
Taiyo-Kobe-Mitsui	Taiyo-Kobe-Mitsui Operation Service Taiyo-Kobe-Mitsui Business Service Taiyo-Kobe-Mitsui Office Service	Nov. 1972 Jan 1985 Jan 1985	5000 (total for three subsidiaries)
Fuji	Fuji Career Bureau	May 1983	7000
Mitsubishi	Daimond Staff Services	Feb 1985	4700
Kyowa	Kyowa Career Bureau	Oct 1987	1800
Sanwa	Sanwa Staff Service	Mar 1988	1300
Sumitomo	Izumi Office Service	July 1982	3700
Daiwa	Daiwa Office Service	July 1985	1700
Tokai	Tokai Career Service	July 1986	2500
Takugin	Takugin Career Service	May 1979	2200
Saitama	Saigin Business Agency	Aug 1984	2300

Source: Nikkin (financial trade paper), 14 September 1991, cited in Goka, 1998

Women have not only been highly concentrated in the non-regular sector; but
their concentration within it is increasing. As Table 7.4 shows, the proportion
of women in non-regular employment was 38.6 per cent while that of men
was 13.1 per cent in 1994. By 2000 the proportion of women had increased
to 46.9 per cent, while the proportion of men had decreased to 11.7 per cent.
Of 27 million female workers in 1999, 10.1 million were working part-time,
compared to 23 million and 6.6 million respectively in 1983 (Annual Report on
the Labour Force Survey, 1999).

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[92] A worker dispatching company (*hakenkaisha*) is an agency supplying temporary workers to
other firms.

Table 7.4: The Sexual Division of Regular and Non-Regular Employment

	Total	Regular	Non-Regular				
			Total	Dispatched Worker	Part-Time Worker	Contract Staff	Other
Total	100	77.2	22.8	0.7	13.7	4.4	4.1
Female	100	61.4	38.6	1.2	28.6	5.1	3.7
Male	100	86.9	13.1	0.4	4.4	3.9	4.3

All values are given in percentages.
Source: Diversified Types of Employment, Ministry of Labour (1994) in Office for Gender Equality (1997)

Japanese employers' organization had been keen to increase the non-regular proportion of the workforce[93], but the rise in *effective* demand for non-regular workers was encouraged and facilitated by government policy.

7.3. Government policy and the increased demand for female non-regular workers

The previous chapter described the impact of the EEOL and its revisions upon regular workers, and also the way it acted as an incentive for employers to increasingly employ women as non-regular workers. The employment of non-regular workers was further facilitated by the legalization of 'dispatched work'.

The Worker Dispatching Law

The progressive deregulation of worker dispatching activities is part of the Japanese government's overall deregulation policy, which aims to activate the external labour market (International Reform Monitor, 2001). The growth of a particular sub-category of non-regular work, that of dispatched work, has also been facilitated by legal change. The 1947 *Employment Security Law*

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[93] In 1995, for example, *Nikkeiren* published a report entitled *Japanese Management for a New Age* in which the goal was set to reduce full-time workers to 70 per cent of the workforce (Sakai, 1999).

prohibited private employment agencies from supplying companies with temporary workers to ensure employment security of workers and to break the hold of criminal gangs *(yakuza)* on the supply of casual manual labourers. The limited legalization of worker supply agencies (known as *hakenkaisha*, or 'dispatching' companies) in 1986 was therefore controversial, although an illicit worker dispatch industry had flourished since the late 1970s, supplying mostly white-collar female workers. This type of service grew rapidly, and the number of dispatched workers increased from 145,000 to 654,000 between 1986 and 1992 (Araki, 1994:1), and by FY1999 this number had increased to 1.07 million dispatched workers (*Japan Times*, April 4, 2001).

By 1994 there were 2,300 temporary employment agencies which supplied mostly workers for basic computer operating, filing and general office work, accounting and finance (Hulme, 1996). The *Worker Dispatch Law* originally limited worker dispatching to a very limited range of specialist activities , such such legal services, accountancy and acting, which were, by their nature, only required for specified limited time periods. The list of activities which can be carried out by dispatched workers has gradually been expanded until in 1990, the proportion of professions for which fee-charging agencies could legitimately supply workers accounted for 18 per cent of the workforce. Revisions in the Worker Dispatching Law effective from 1 April 1997 listed only six classes of occupation were listed which could <u>not</u> be carried out by dispatched workers:

- Clerical workers, within one year of school graduation
- Sales work, within one year of school graduation
- Service workers, with the exception of housekeepers, barbers, hairdressers, kimono dressing helpers, laundering and cleaning technicians, cooks, bartenders, waiters and waitresses at formal restaurants, models, and demonstrators of retail goods
- Security guards
- Agriculture, forestry and fishery workers

- Transport and communication workers, with the exception of bus tour conductors

After these revisions came into effect, the jobs of 40 per cent of Japanese employees could be carried out by dispatched workers (Morito, 1999). With a revision of the *Employment Security Law*, which came into effect at the end of 1999, the procedures by which worker-dispatching agencies can gain necessary operating licence have also been eased.

Japanese companies then, have, in line with companies elsewhere responded to the challenges of globalization by the feminization of employment and an increase in part-time, temporary and home-based work, predominantly carried out by women. The employment of non-regular workers has been encouraged and facilitated by legal change. Evidence from other countries (see Chapter Three) suggests that this work will tend to be characterized by less favourable conditions that those prevailing in the shrinking regular workforce. The next section will the characteristics of such non-regular work in Japan, concentrating particularly on the cases of female part-time and dispatched workers[94], with the aim of clarifying whether this is the case in Japan.

7. 4. The characteristics of non-regular work

Few regular workers seem to envy the lot of non-regular workers. Seventy-seven point three per cent of non-regular public sector workers and 46.2 per cent of non-regular private sector workers wanted to work as regular workers (Table 7.5), while only 10.1 per cent of regular private sector workers and 10.3 per cent of regular public sector workers wished to work as non-regular workers (Table 7.6).

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[94] Japanese people refer to workers sent from agencies to carry out temporary work as 'dispatched workers' (*hakensha*).

Table 7.5. I want to work as a regular, not an non-regular worker

	Regular public sector	Regular private sector	Non-regular public sector	Non-regular private sector	Total
Yes	71 (80.7%)	220 (90.2%)	650 (77.3%)	230 (46.2%)	1171 (70.1%)
No	17 (19.3%)	24 (9.8%)	191 (22.7%)	268 (53.8%)	500 (29.9%)
Total	88 (100.0%)	244 (100.0%)	841 (100.0%)	498 (100.0%)	1671(100.0%)

Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

Table 7.6: I want to work as an non-regular, not a regular worker

	Regular public sector	Regular private sector	Non-regular public sector	Non-regular private sector	Total
Yes	11 (10.1%)	26 (10.3%)	166 (28.1%)	202 (55.0%)	405 (30.8%)
No	98 (89.9%)	226 (89.7%)	423 (71.8%)	165 (45.0%)	912 (69.2%)
Total	109 (100.0%)	252 (100.0%)	589 (100.0%)	367 (100.0%)	1317 (100.0%)

Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

This section examines why non-regular work seems to be viewed so unfavourably. It looks at the formal and informal segregation of non-regular workers from their regular counterparts, and the wages non-regular workers can expect to receive. It also looks at the age and gender profile of non-regular workers, shows how non-regular work is changing, and why, in spite of its apparent disadvantages, women tend to be concentrated in the non-regular workforce.

Part-time work

The largest category of non-regular work is that of part-time work. Part-time work is generally paid by the hour, and does not have the guarantee of job security that has been expected from employment in the regular workforce. Most *paato* work in manufacturing or retail. Very few Japanese women are members of what is known, in Japanese English as the *parlite* – or part-time elite, of consultants, researchers, or programmers *et cetera* (Molony, 1995). Most part-time work, therefore, tends to be low-paid, relative to regular work.

Formally and informally differentiated from regular workers

The International Labour Organization (1997) cite as one of the benefits of part-time work for employees, the idea that it can make it easier for workers to enter or leave the labour market. However, in Japan, the opportunities to use part-time work as a stepping stone to establishing a career seem to be very few. Although there has been an expansion in the tasks allocated to part-time workers, generally regular and non-regular workers have very different career paths. Most companies do not allow staff to transfer from non-regular to regular status. The 57 year old consumer credit worker quoted above answered the question, "Have you ever considered taking a full-time job with the company?" by saying,

> " Regardless of whether I want to do a full-time job or not, there is no system like that. I can't transfer from a part-time worker basis to a full-time worker basis."

Only 2.0 per cent of non-regular workers in the public sector and 2.9 per cent of non-regular workers in the private sector claimed to derive job satisfaction from 'possibilities of promotion" (Female regular workers also showed little anticipation of promotion, with only 6.0 per cent in the public sector and 4.0 per cent in the private sector gaining satisfaction from the possibility of advancement, Table 7.7). When asked about her chances of promotion, a 45-year-old worker at a childcare centre, wrote the response,

> "Not applicable because I'm a part-timer."

Table 7.7: What kind of satisfaction do you get from your job?

	Regular public sector	Regular private sector	Non-regular public sector	Non-regular private sector
Possibility of working long-term	8.5	6.1	4.6	6.3
Working environment	6.8	5.9	6.2	6.3
Wages for the amount of work	7.3	5.3	5.0	5.6
Authority in charge	6.8	5.5	4.1	5.2
Relations with co-workers	7.2	6.8	7.0	7.3
Chances for education	6.3	4.6	3.3	4.5
It is worthwhile	6.4	5.5	5.6	5.9
Working hours	7.5	6.7	7.0	7.3
The amount of work	6.8	5.9	5.9	6.3
Arrangement of flexibility	6.2	5.4	5.3	6.1
Good relations with superiors	6.3	5.6	6.0	6.3
Possibilities of promotion	6.0	4.0	2.0	2.9
Future prospects of company	5.7	4.6	4.5	5.2
Total	87.9	71.9	66.5	75.2

All figure in percentages
Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

Part-time workers (and other non-regular workers) do not enjoy the same legal rights and work benefits as regular workers. Labour protection and maternity protection in Labour Standards Law apply solely to regular employees and there have been a increasing number of cases where employment contracts have been cancelled when a worker takes maternity or child-care leave. Regular (51.1 per cent) and non-regular workers (61.3 per cent) in the public sector agree that regular workers can more easily take time off under various holiday systems. Thirty-one point one per cent of non-regular private sector workers agreed, while 24.3 per cent disagreed and 44.6 per cent were unsure. Only regular private sector workers dissented, with 25.6 per cent saying 'yes', 36.6 per cent unsure and 37.9 per cent saying 'no' (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8. Regular workers can more easily take time off under various holiday systems

	Regular public sector	Regular private sector	Non-regular public sector	Non-regular private sector	Total
Yes	71 (51.1%)	79 (25.6%)	543 (61.3%)	178 (31.1%)	871 (45.7%)
Cannot say which	48 (34.5%)	113 (36.6%)	250 (28.2%)	255 (44.6%)	666 (34.9%)
No	20 (14.4%)	117 (37.9%)	93 (10.5%)	139 (24.3%)	369 (19.4%)
Total	139 (100.0%)	309 (100.0%)	886 (100.0%)	572 (100.0%)	1906 (100.0%)

Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

This is exemplified by the case of Matsushita Electrical, where 71 part-timers over the age of fifty were dismissed in 2001, to solve the company's problems of over- production of magnetic-heads for discs. The part-time workers were sufficiently skilled as to instruct new full-time employees and many had worked for the company for more than ten years. The employer said to part-timers when he dismissed them, "Those whose children have grown up should retire or those who have taken more paid leave should retire first." (Zenroren, 2001a). In the case of Matsushita Electric, workers set up their own union to protest against the dimissals, as the union at their workplace did not permit part-time workers to join. Lack of union protection had been one of the factors, which exacerbated the relatively unstable and poorly rewarded character of peripheral workers (see Chapter Five). This does not mean that all non-regular workers are happy with the situation of exclusion from trade unions. A 43 year-old worker at a childcare centre explained that she was not a trade union member, but would like to be because:

"...I [could] join activities to improve working conditions."

A 39 year old worker at a consumer credit company said that if she were able to join a trade union, then she would because,

"I want a wage rise (*laughs*) . My contract is renewed every two months, so I would like a longer term contract than this. I don't get any fringe benefits like unemployment benefit and I don't get any health benefits, because I am a part-timer. Nor a pension. "

As well as this formal differentiation, where part-time workers do not have the same legal rights, terms of employment and access to trade unions as their full-time counterparts, there is also a degree of informal segregation.

Some full-time workers in the survey conducted by the Part-Time Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life appeared to show a degree of hostility to non-regular workers: 35.7 per cent of regular workers felt that regular workers tackled their jobs more positively than their non-regular colleagues (Table 7.9).

Table 7.9: Regular workers tackle their jobs more positively

	Regular public sector	Regular private sector	Non-regular public sector	Non-regular private sector	Total
Yes	50 (35.7%)	111 (35.7%)	150 (16.9%)	88(15.5%)	399 (20.9%)
Cannot say which	81 (57.9%)	180 (57.9%)	572 (64.6%)	369 (64.9%)	1202 (63.1%)
No	9 (6.4%)	20 (6.4%)	164 (18.5%)	112 (19.7%)	305 (16.0%)
Total	140 (100.0%)	311 (100.0%)	886 (100.0%)	569 (100.0%)	1906 (100.0%)

Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

These attitudes might well reflect a lingering prejudice against working mothers (see Chapter Five), even when only working part-time. The website *Japan Insight* contains this information about the way even part-time female workers with children are sometimes seen:

Less qualified women who hold auxiliary jobs and mothers who work part-time ... are sometimes confronted with the old question: "Is the job so important and worth doing ?" or "Is it worth continuing to work at a job that one cannot even expect to build a serious career on at the expense of rearing her children by staying home ?"

In many cases, when they lack highly professional skills, young mothers who work as employees outside their family receive little encouragement or help from their neighbours."

<div align="right">(Japan Insight, 2001c)</div>

Part-time workers are also aware that the differentiation between their status and those in the regular workforce, is at least partially determined by their gender. For example a 40-year-old worker for a social and educational association responded to the question,

"Was there a difference between the way you were recruited and the way your male co-workers were recruited?"

with the reply,

"I can't answer because I'm a part-timer. "

Pay

The average hourly wage of female part-timers in 2001 was 886 yen, which was only 68.4 per cent of the average wage for female workers or 44.25 per cent of that of male workers (Kuroiwa, 2001: 4). Furthermore, part-timers workers are far less likely to be eligible to receive a bonus or other fringe benefits. It is doubtful whether women working part-time could earn enough to live an independent life. According to a survey of 2319 working women (excluding dispatched workers) conducted by the *Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life*, no non-regular workers gave as their most important reason for working ' to earn living expenses' compared to 44.0 per cent of regular public sector workers and 49.7 per cent of regular private sector workers (Table 7.1).

That does not mean that the wages they earned were unimportant to household income: 39.1 per cent of non-regular workers employed in the public sector and 58.1 per cent employed in the private sector were working to supplement living expenses and 14.1 per cent and 13.7 per cent

respectively were working to pay for their children's education or for their mortgage (Table 7.1).

Not only do non-regular workers seem dissatisfied with the money they receive for their work (79.4 per cent of non-regular workers in the public sector and 57.1 per cent in the private sector felt that their wages were 'rather low' or 'too low'), but there appears to be considerable support among their full-time colleagues for the idea that part-timers' pay is unsatisfactory: 54.6 per cent of full-time public sector workers and 34.7 per cent of full-time private sector workers felt that part-timers' pay was 'too low' or 'rather low', compared to just 2.9 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively who felt that part-timers' pay was 'rather high' (No respondents felt is was 'too high') (Table 7.10).

Table 7.10: What do you think of the wage rate of part-timers and non-regular workers, compared to regular workers doing the same job?

	FT public sector	FT private sector	Non-regular public	Non-regular private	TOTAL
Too low	50 (36.4%)	66 (18.9%)	629 (63.7%)	241 (37.4%)	986 (51.7%)
Rather low	25 (18.2%)	55 (15.8%)	155 (15.7%)	127 (19.7%)	362 (19.0%)
Appropria te	11 (8.0%)	66 (18.9%)	87 (8.8%)	116 (18.0%)	280 (14.7%)
Rather high	4 (2.9%)	13 (3.7%)	7 (0.7%)	8 (1.2%)	32 (1.7%)
Too high	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.3%)	3 (0.2%)
Don't know	47 (34.3%)	149 (42.7%)	108 (10.9%)	151 (23.4%)	455 (23.9%)
TOTAL	137 (100.0%)	349 (100.0%)	987 (100/0%)	645 (100.0%)	1906 (100.0%)

Source: Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999

There is however some evidence that the average wages of part-time workers are increasing at a faster rate than those of regular non-managerial workers. The average hourly wages of part-timers in manufacturing and services rose by 54.3 per cent and 54.2 per cent respectively between 1984 and 2000, while the average annual contractual wages of non-managerial regular

employees rose by only 33.3 per cent in the same period (see Figures 7.11 and 7.12).

Figure 7.11: Hourly Earnings of Female Part-Time Workers
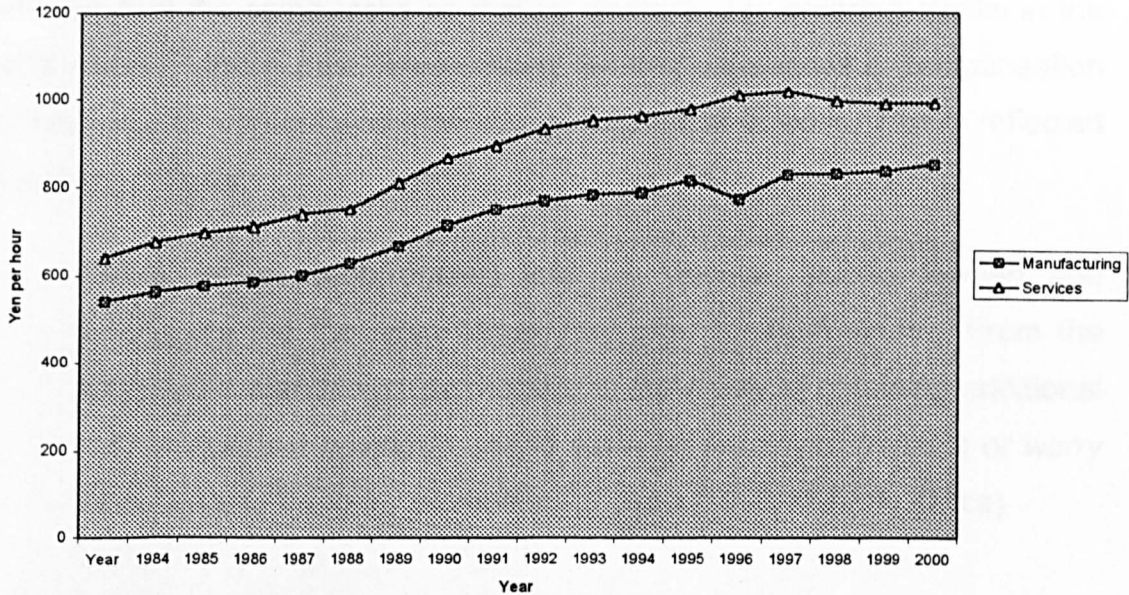
Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Jun. 20, 2001

Figure 7.12: Contractual Cash Earnings of Regular Non-Managerial Employees
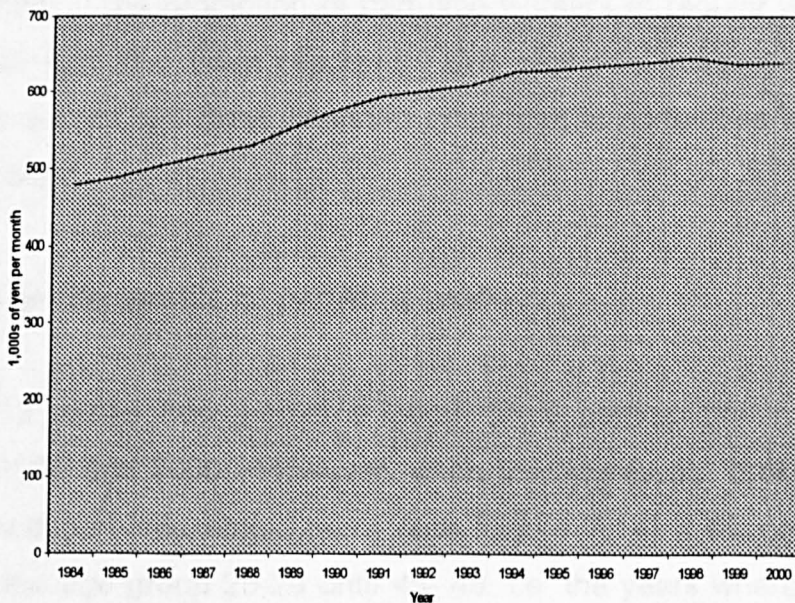
Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2001

Increased diversification in the part-time workforce

The rise in the wages of part-time workers could be partially attributable to the emergence of a class of workers known as *kikan ga paato* (key part-timers); long-tenure part-time employees, who have been increasingly trusted with some of the same tasks as regular workers, e.g. ordering stocks in the retail sector. In the past, it was widely felt that differences in compensation for non-regular workers would be cause resentment at work. This is reflected in Iwao's analysis:

> "What makes [non-regular] jobs so popular among women and employers are the advantages they offer for both sides. From the employer's standpoint, part-time jobs are a way of obtaining additional workers *without having to spend more on employee benefits or worry about people vying for promotion...*." Iwao (1993:173)(my italics)

However in recent years there has been increased acceptance of the idea of merit-based pay. Takeishi (2000) investigated 16 companies in the retail sector and found that 7 had 'drastically' revised their pay and promotions structure for non-regular workers. A supermarket had introduced incentives in the form of bonuses based on store, department and individual performance. The promotion of part-time workers to regular workers in the retail trade has also been reported. One women's apparel retail store in Takeishi's survey had even extended promotion opportunities to non-regular workers (ibid).

Age and gender profile of part-time workers

Figure 7.13 shows how women's labour force participation has increased between 1980 and 2000. However, when the figures are broken down into full-time and part-time employment (see Figure 7.14) it becomes apparent that from the age group 25-29 until 45- 49, i.e. the years where one is most likely to be caring for children, or perhaps undertaking other family or elder

care, the proportion of women part-time rises. Indeed the proportion of part-time workers surpasses full-time workers in the age group 40-49. Conversely, the proportion of women working full-time begins to fall after the age group 20-24, and does not significantly rise again. One interviewee used the Japanese English phrase *'paato no obachan',* literally, 'auntie part-timer', indicating part-time work has a very specific gender and age profile. It is interesting to note that when part-time work is carried out by students (of either sex) it is customarily referred to as *arubaito* (from the German work 'Arbeit') rather than *paato* work.

Figure 7.13: Labour Force Participation by Sex
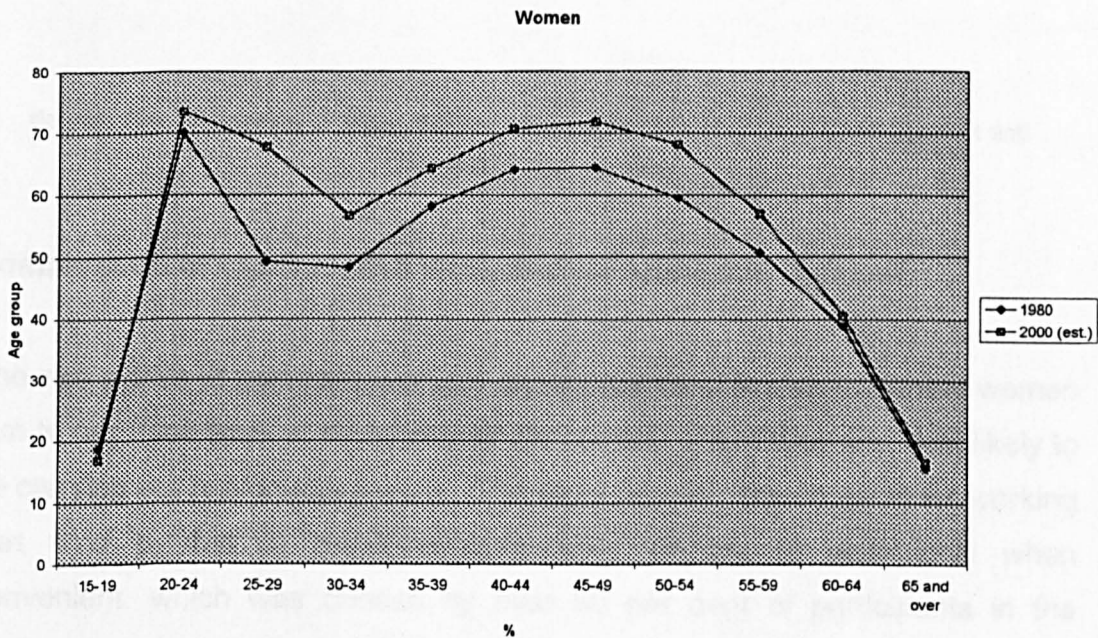
Women

Figure 7.14 Female labour force participation rate by age

(Note) Labour participation rate and rates of regular staff and part-timers are results of the Employment Status Survey, 1992
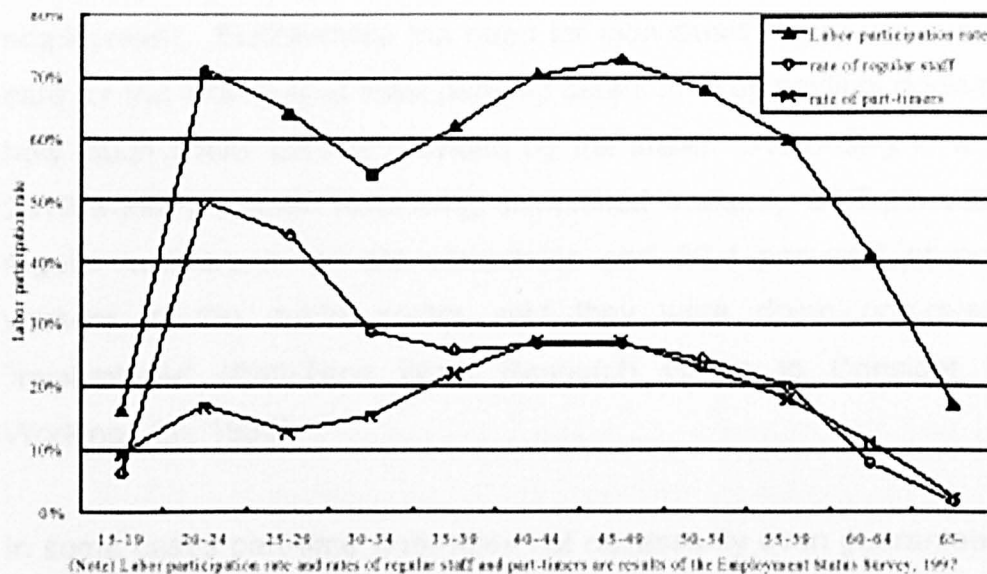
Source: Time Use Survey in Japan, Statistics Bureau and Statistics Center, Management and
Coordination Agency, 1999

Combination of reproductive work and part-time employment

The age profile of part-time workers shown above indicates that most women turn to part-time work at times in their life course, where they are most likely to be carrying out reproductive work. The most popular reason given for working part time by female part-time workers is wishing to work only when convenient, which was chosen by over 60 per cent of participants in the Ministry of Labour's "Comprehensive research on the actual conditions of part-time employees". However the second most common answer chose by nearly 45 per cent of female part-time employees between 30 and 39 was "cannot work full-time due to housework and childcare" (Figure 7.1). Part-time employment can indeed help workers to balance work and family life (ILO, 1997). However there a couple of important caveats which make it difficult to judge the extent to taking a part-time job for this reason is really a free 'choice'. Firstly, people might have assumed the responsibility for reproductive work because they are aware that they have limited

opportunities for paid work. Sakai (1999) makes the point that the work available to women depends on age: twenty-five is the usual limit for regular employment. Furthermore the need for individuals to provide childcare and care for the elderly is at least partially determined by political decisions about how much social care is provided by the state. According to a survey of 2319 working women (excluding dispatched workers), 34.5 per cent of non-regular workers in private companies and 56.4 per cent of non-regular workers in the public sector said they were doing non-regular work 'involuntarily' (Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider Women's Working Life, 1999).

In some cases part-time work does not necessarily even guarantee flexibility to organize one's domestic work, as working hours can be the same as those of full-time workers (see Section 5.3), or can lack flexibility. A part-time worker also explained to me the difficulty she had in determining her own working hours.

> "In the beginning it was only four hours a week, so there was no difficulty with the children. The only one difficulty was during the weekend, there is no...it is not certain that I will be able to get days off in the weekend..."

This is somewhat ironic. Workers who are often working in non-regular jobs because of childcare responsibilities do not have the same flexibility to take time off to supervise children as their full-time colleagues.

Dispatched work

Another form of regular work, which is becoming increasingly important in Japan is that of 'dispatched' work. There has been a boom in the agency workers business, with the number of dispatched workers doubling from 1,140,000 in 1992 to 2,040,000 in 1997 (Rengo White Paper 1999: 77).

Formally and informally differentiated from regular workers

Like *paato* workers, dispatched workers are formally and informally segregation from regular workers. One interviewee who used to work as a dispatched worker gave an example of her isolation from regular workers:

"What I didn't like was that.....although there were several dispatched workers, all .... the whole group were [called] *Haken-san* (Ms Temp).....I mean, we didn't say *'Seishain-san'* (Ms Regular Worker).... It wasn't discrimination but.....for example... sometimes in Japanese companies there are sweets. A customer comes and brings sweets as a present. In the office they would hand them round, but when they got to a *haken-san*, they would skip you. It's unbelievable isn't it?.... That's really dreadful, isn't it?"

(34 year old former dispatched worker)

It is possible that this can be attributed to fear of being replaced by dispatched workers. Certainly, this was a fear at the time the law was passed. When the Worker Dispatching Law was voted on by the Social Labour Committee of the House of Councillors in May 1985, the Committee also resolved that the Government should pay attention to harmonizing the worker dispatching business with Japanese customs of employment, and take measures to ensure that dispatched workers would not replace regular workers (Goka, 1998).

A 31 year-old dispatched worker at a multinational accounting firm though, was less distressed by not being part of a cohesive group at work. She wrote on a questionnaire about whether or not she socialized with her co-workers

"I don't expect them to socialize and I don't want to do it."

Similarly, a focus group participant found that having a status that meant she was not a true 'member' of the company could be quite liberating, at least in the short term:

"...still at that time people were paid about 700 yen for regular part time job[s], but I got 1200 per hour, so that was very good. So I enjoyed it very much and I had no responsibilities whatsoever. And I was like a guest. (*Laughter from the rest of the group*) So that was good. But now, thinking back, if I had to work as a... that kind of worker, then I wouldn't continue to do that more than one year, so... That would be too bad, because I...Maybe if I stayed there for more than one year I would have felt isolated from other workers. And I would have noticed many discrimination against me, but I stayed there only six months. They treated me very well."

However, in some cases, in contrast to the situation of part-time workers, work as a dispatched worker can lead to entry into the regular workforce. Revisions to the worker dispatching legislation, which came into effect at the end of 1999, prohibit a client company from receiving a dispatched worker in the same position in the workplace for more than one year; this also applies to the dispatching agencies. If a company wishes to continue to employ a worker after that time, it must employ them directly. Yoshikazu Hashiguchi, head of the marketing headquarters at Manpower Co. Japan says 'Foreign-affiliated firms show a particularly high level of interest." (Japan Times April 4, 2001). Three quarters of workers placed by the agency *Girl Friday* with foreign firms became permanent, suggesting that these firms are using agencies as a way of 'checking out' workers, rather than risking immediately taking on the responsibilities associated with employing full-timers in Japan. However only one per cent of employees of *Tempstaff*, whose customers are predominantly Japanese, are retained in this way (Hulme, 1996).

Pay

In contrast to the trends in the wages of part-timers, the job of a dispatched worker, is becoming less well-rewarded. A survey conducted by the

Dispatching Network found that the 1706 yen average hourly wage in 1994 had decreased to 1660 yen in 1998 (Sakai, 1999). There are additional hidden costs. Dispatched workers are expected to have skills, such as computer proficiency or the ability to speak English, which must be gained at their own expense. Agencies charge applicants an 'acceptance fee', when they are chosen for a position. Few dispatched workers receive social insurance of any kind, which means that employees of 'general worker dispatching enterprises', which tend to supply computer operators, clerks and so on, do not receive pay or benefits between assignments. The employees of 'special worker dispatching agencies' which focus on providing highly-skilled professionals who, for example, design computer systems, or machinery continue to be paid between assignments. In addition, most are not reimbursed for travel expenses (which is standard practice for employees in Japan). Being dispatched to a distant location therefore involves considerable expense for them. Although Japan has been criticized for not signing the ILO *Convention on Dispatched Work* (Goka, 1998), Japanese domestic courts have begun to establish some minimum rights for dispatched workers with regard to pay. In November 1999, Nagano District Court judged that temporary workers doing the same work as regular workers were entitled to 80 per cent of the pay of regular workers, and were entitled to the same standards of bonus and pensions. It remains to be seen to what extent this judgement will be used as a precedent for dealing with the treatment of other non-regular workers.

'Deskilling' of the dispatched work sector

The falling wages of dispatched workers can also be attributed to the changing nature of dispatched work. As the list of jobs dispatched workers may do has expanded, dispatched workers have increasingly been recruited for less-skilled jobs. (Wages do vary considerably between different types of dispatched work. In 1993, the highest average daily wage was 18,824 yen for interpretation, translation and shorthand, while the lowest was 5,562 yen

for cleaning service for buildings. The wage commonly paid for filing or classification of papers was 8,818 yen (Goka, 1998). Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that the law was merely regularising what had been common practice for a long time.

One former dispatched worker said:

"...if they can't find [an] appropriate person within the company, then they can hire the temporary workers as skilled labour. But in reality they hire the workers without skills, without, you know, special skills. I mean, workers as a clerk. But if they call them clerk, it's illegal, so they call them 'operator' or.. different names [...] When I worked as an assistant [...] in the document my position was 'Operator for English documents' or something. I was just an assistant, doing nothing particular." (31 year old former dispatch worker).

It is of course difficult for vulnerable employees to complain about this practice. For instance, workers formally allocated to specific secretarial work can find upon arrival at a firm that they are to work in warehousing (Kondo, Takahashi and Ito, 1999).

Age and gender profile of dispatched workers

The profile of workers of dispatching companies is a little different from that of a 'typical' non-regular worker. There is often a limit of 35 years for registering as a dispatched worker, and dispatching companies often exhibit a preference for young and attractive women (Sakai, 1999). Client companies often ask the supplying agencies for photographs or for interviews. One company ranked their employees' appearance in three categories. When the information later appeared on the internet, a lawsuit was brought against the company. A thirty-two year old former dispatched worker complained about seemingly being selected according to characteristics other than her skills, as follows:

"...[E]ven if you have both computer and English skills...it's hard to get a job. But I.. I think it's really a stupid thing, because ... why...you know, I've already registered in this agency, and before the registration it takes about two or three hours, you know, you know, because I have to have an interview with the um with the manager or personnel of the agency ...[Y]ou have to take exams on computers. You have to [...] show your skill of computers. So you have to take exams ..tests, computer tests or English tests or have interview with that person. So it's...you have to have ...to do these kinds of things already. So they know how skilful you are already....but still you can't get a job. Several months later I got a quite good job in a pharmaceutical company [...] but at the time, I was selected out of more than 10 people from different agencies [...] I was lucky at that time, but other ... in other times, I was failed, you know. I failed to be selected and other person was selected. It's [a] kind of thing [that] happen[s] every day for everyone. And every time I ask the people in agency, "What was wrong with me? Why I wasn't be selected?" But always time, they say, "Oh there nothing wrong with you. *It's just a, you know, chemistry." (Laughs) Or the...or if you are good for you know, ...if you will go well with the atmosphere of the company or something. Or if the personnel or the people who you are working for like you or not. It depends on these things [...] (Laughs)*"

Furthermore, in the context of the 'Ice Age' of employment for female university graduates (see Chapter Six), many young women are signing up for dispatched work in the hope of regular work, which they could previously have expect to find anyway with little difficulty.

" There are widespread complaints by female students who say that since it will be hard for them to get regular jobs after graduation, they have no choice but to find temporary employment." (Goka, 1998).

Homeworking

Part-time and dispatched workers are not the only non-regular workers in Japan. Women are over-represented in almost all areas of non-regular work. including homeworking.

In many countries, it is difficult to carry out research on homeworking, because of its hidden nature, and, often, the uncertain legal status of such work. Japan is unusual in its recording and regulation of homeworking (*naishoku*). Following a campaign by homeworkers in 1959 (when some homeworkers were poisoned after using the adhesive benzine) the Japanese Government recognized the sector in the Industrial Homework Act of 1970, which regulated the conditions of such workers. Committees were established in each prefecture, which set the wage rates of homeworkers in each province and labour inspectors who monitor whether these rates are observed (ILO, 2002). Furthermore, the *Kanai Soren* union of homeworkers in shoe and boot making was successful in winning free medical examinations and subsidized unemployment insurance for industrial homeworkers.[95]

In spite of what is, compared to homeworking in other countries, a relatively high degree of regulation, homeworking is even more poorly-paid than other forms of non-regular work. The hourly average wage of homeworkers is 478 yen (on top of necessary expenses). When wage rates are disaggregated by gender, men receive 865 yen per hours and women 452 yen (Zenroren, 2001b). In addition the Industrial Homeworking Act (in contravention of the recommendations of the draft ILO Convention on Homeworking) classifies homeworkers as self-employed, which means that they are eligible to pay a higher tax rate than employees.

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[95] Unusually for homeworking, the shoe industry in Japan is dominated by men (Women in Informal Employment, no date.)

According to a Ministry of Labour survey in 1995, there were 657,300 homeworkers. Ninety-three point four per cent of them were not classified as the primary earner in the household (i.e. were probably married women), 5.6 per cent were professional male homeworkers and 1.0 per cent side workers with another primary occupation (Zenroren, 2001b).

Counter-intuitively, and very differently to the case in the UK (Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit, 1999), homeworkers in Japan are rather well-organized. There are community based associations of homeworkers who act as subcontractors. They are responsible for quality control and for negotiating contracts with employers, and often have small offices, with a van for delivery of the work to homeworkers (WIEGO, no date). One such example are the Homeworkers' Friendship Associations in Kyoto, Japan, which provide a network of support for homeworkers. This support includes providing training and finding work for homeworkers, delivering and collecting work, quality control and collective bargaining over rates of pay (Tate, 2000).

Homeworking in Japan is becoming increasingly diversified, to include industrial homeworkers in relatively 'new' industries, such as the women who put together circuit boards at home, to teleworkers. I interviewed one homeworker who worked for a company which set practice tests in mathematics, Japanese, English, science, social science, in order to improve their exam performance. She marked the tests and then returned them to the company who distributed them to the children. Like other non-regular workers how paid work choices were constrained by responsibility for child-rearing. She explained:

> "I took this job because I had two children so I couldn't go outside. I couldn't find a job outside."

As she liked the job she had continued doing it even after her children had grown up, and used her wages to send 'pocket money' to her child at university. She found satisfaction from social activities with other homeworkers for the same company. She said she was,

" ....[n]ot isolated: Sometimes we meet at Christmas and go hiking or go shopping or go to a restaurant – one or two times a month (laughs) – it's good for relaxing and getting rid of frustration.. get rid of stress."

However, in line with the suggestion in Chapter Five that non-regular work may have retarded change and to have institutionalized women's 'dual burden' of productive and reproductive work, she added:

"I worked three or fours days a week before I got married. I quit when I got married. Returning to work was difficult, because I have to do everything. My husband doesn't help. *I don't work* (sic) so I do the housework ."

7.5. Conclusion

Japanese firms have attempted restructure their workforces in order to cut costs and increase flexibility, in the face of globalization. This is especially notable in the airline and banking sectors where the impact of globalization has been particularly marked. The goal of restructuring is being supported by Japanese government. An non-regular or part-time workforce help the government to achieve its joint goals of :

- keeping public spending on social services to a minimum, as it increases adopts a more neo-liberal, Anglo-American model of economic governance (see Chapter Four); and

- making use of the skills and experience of Japanese women in the workplace.

The increasing desire of women to work, combined with government encouragement for women to combine caring and reproductive work with outside employment has meant that there is a pool of women available to meet the increasing demand for 'non-regular' workers. With the passage of the EEOL, there is an additional incentive for employers to take on women as non-regular workers, as occupational sexual segregation means that employers are not obliged to provide them with the same pay and fringe benefits as male regular workers.

The image of a non-regular worker is generally very 'gendered'. *Paato* and homeworkers are expected to be married women, with family responsibilities, and consequently there is little pressure to pay them wages to cover the costs of reproduction. There is some evidence that dispatched workers too are expected to be young, attractive and have a personality that fits in with firm's expectations.

The regular and non-regular workforces in Japan are strictly differentiated. Non-regular workers can expect to receive lower wages, fewer fringe benefits and less legal protection than their full-time regular co-workers; and to be excluded from trade union membership. There is also anecdotal emphasis that they are to some extent excluded from the workplace community.

The position of non-regular workers though is not static. As the non-regular workforce has grown, so it has diversified. In the retail sector particularly, part-time workers are increasingly being graded and offered a range of responsibilities dependent on their abilities and the length of their tenure. The range of positions open to dispatched workers is also growing, although the corollary of this is a fall in the average wages of such workers. In some cases, dispatched work can lead to regular job opportunities. In the main though, an increasing number of women are being concentrated in a secondary labour market, with few of the benefits that 'core' workers have enjoyed in the postwar Japanese model of employment.

Chapter Eight:
Globalization and Women's Activism in Japan

8. 0. Introduction

As Chapter Four shows, Japan has played a pro-active role in the globalization of production (Hasegawa and Hook, 1998 Hook 2001, Hatch and Yamamura, 1996). This strategy has had significant reciprocal dynamics, in the shape of the 'hollowing out' of Japanese production (Hasegawa and Hook, 1998: Eades, Gill and Befu, 2001) and of pressure on companies within Japan to reduce the cost of production (Ohmae, 1995). Companies therefore are attempting to reduce the costs of labour in the Japanese workforce, by increasing the segmentation of the Japanese workforce (Chapters Five and Seven). Although equal opportunities legislation, passed to meet UN commitments has been passed, companies have generally restructured their labour forces in ways that institutionalize the secondary status of many female regular employees (see Chapter Six). Non-regular employment, in the form of part-time and temporary contract work has expanded, with the new jobs largely filled by women, who are increasingly entering the workforce, but under conditions very different to those typically enjoyed by male regular employees (see Chapter Seven). This has been facilitated by government deregulation of employment in Japan (Araki, 1994; 1998, 1999). However the government and corporations are not the only actors in the Japanese, or any other, political economy. We need also to consider organized actors outside the state and business.

Cox (1999) defines civil society as autonomous group action, distinct from both corporate power and the state. Cox further points out that there has been a revival of civil society as a response to globalization, such as the French strikes of 1995 and the South Korean protests of 1997, and the growth of NGOs in Japan and other Asian countries, which often build links and mutual aid relationships with similar organizations in other countries. A difference can be made between bottom-up action, in which civil society acts as a conduit for those disadvantaged by globalization to mount protests and propose alternatives, and 'top-down' activity where states and corporate interests can try to co-opt civil society and encourage actors towards

conformity (Cox, 1999). Chapters Six and Seven have largely described the latter process of globalization, while this chapter will describe the former.

An obvious example of the effectiveness of the action of civil society in shaping the institutions of a society is that of the Japanese trade union movement in the period following the Second World War. Workers took industrial action resulting in them achieving the lifetime employment and other benefits so strongly associated with the regular workforce in Japan (Inoue, 1999, see also Chapter Four). Japan has an active and long-standing feminist movement. However, it has seldom achieved the formal institutional recognition of the male-dominated trade union. Japanese women workers have however taken action to improve their conditions of work. Previous chapters have recorded women continuing to work despite pressure from managers and co-workers to leave; women part-timers organising themselves into unions; women bringing court cases against companies which practise discrimination in recruitment and promotion; and women who carry out infrapolitical resistance against higher status male employees. This chapter will explicitly focus on women's activism in order to meet the thesis aim of describing the actions women are taking individually and collectively to resist or campaign for change in their working environment and the laws and practices regulating it.

Historical institutionalism predicts that the strategies of actors will be shaped by institutions, and that actors will adapt their strategies to accommodate changes in those institutions (Section 2.3). This has certainly been the case in Japan. Feminist labour activists in Japan have adapted their strategies to the existing national and international institutions, and changed their strategies as the processes of globalization have altered the relative power of these institutions. Chapter Three referred to the thesis that globalization has facilitated the development of a global women's movement by:

- Increasing the salience of non-state identities
- Opening up opportunities for effective political activity at a local level

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- Raising the international profile of women's rights

- Allowing activists to use international law and organize transnationally.

Globalization has impacted upon women's activism in Japan, as this chapter will illustrate. However it will also show how the institutions of Japanese governance impact upon the strategies pursued by supporters of Japanese women workers. These institutions include a political party and trade union system, which is constituted in such a way that women are effectively excluded, and a homosocial normative order, which dictates that activism is usually structured along gender lines.

Although Japanese feminists campaign around a multiplicity of issues[97], the focus of this thesis is women workers in Japan, so I shall therefore concentrate on feminist activities in support of women's labour rights. Sections 8.1 and 8.2 examine the lack of influence that women labour activists have traditionally had in party and trade union politics, and how changes in these institutions are affecting the way women engage with them. Section 8.3 looks at the alternative way campaigners for women's labour rights actually do organize: through active networking, using Women's Centres, and publishing *minikomi*. Section 8.4 goes on to examine the way women's groups are increasingly directing action at international bodies, and sharing information and activities with activists overseas.

8. 1. Women in electoral politics

This section will show how the institutions of Japanese politics have been difficult for women to penetrate, therefore encouraging extra-parliamentary activism. However, as explained in Chapter Three, one of the ironies of democratic representation and globalization is that, just as the power of the

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[97] Issues that were particularly salient when I was in Japan in 1999/2000 were supporting Korean 'comfort women' and campaigning for married couples to be able to keep their pre-marital surnames.

nation state is declining (Held, 1995), the proportion of liberal democracies and the number of female parliamentary representatives is increasing (Walby, 2001). This has been the case in Japan, as Figure 8.1 shows.

Another observation commonly made about globalization is that governance has become more multi-layered as policies are increasingly formulated at a sub-state or suprastate level (Strange, 1995). Women activists in Japan have, in recent years, concentrated their activities at the local state level, or, as shown in Section 8.3, at the transnational level.

Political representation

In Japan's first post-war election a record number of female deputies were elected: 39 out of a total of 464. However this number has never been equalled and, has in any case been attributed to the very specific circumstances prevailing at the time: women had just attained suffrage amid great publicity and many voters believed that they were obliged to vote for one male and one female candidates; women were more closely associated with peace than men; and voters could not tell from the names on the ballot paper which candidates were male and which female (Ogai, 2001). The majority of the female candidates represented the left or centre-left. Ten of the 39 women deputies in elected in 1946 were members of the Social Democratic Party. However, when the Japanese political system was reformed, in 1947, changing from large to medium-sized electoral districts, this disadvantaged the SDP and the Japan Communist Party, and consequently female left-wingers lost their seats.

The Liberal Democratic Party's political priority, and undoubted success was Japan's economic growth. With this end in mind, its election tactics consisted predominantly of establishing strong inks with the corporate elite, an elite which, for reasons discussed in this thesis, women were largely excluded. Ideologically also, the LDP did not appear keen to encourage female candidates and for one period of ten years had no female deputies at all.

Even within centre left parties, however, there were institutional reasons why women were less likely than men to be selected. With the exception of Doi Takako, who Japan's first female political party leader in 1986, female SPD candidates were only successful if they had the support of trade unions. Women account for only 28 per cent of trade unionists in Japan (Miura, 2001) and with the decline of union membership in the 1970s, the number of Diet seats fell, so there were fewer seats available. Ironically, the decline in political influence of trade unions may also have negatively affected the proportion of women standing. In the past unions used to undertake to support unsuccessful candidates, whom they sponsored, until the next election. Now this is less and less frequent, so only those who are either financially secure, or very sure of winning, can afford to stand. This disproportionately disadvantages women, who are less likely to be able to garner electoral funds and less likely to be elected.

The contribution of social norms may also play a part in excluding women from parliamentary power. Voters are, at first blush, apparently reluctant to vote for women. In the general election of 25 June, 2000, only 17 per cent of women who stood for election were returned, compared to 37 per cent for men (Mikanagi, 2001: 212). However, this does raise the question, as in the UK, of the extent to which women are allowed to contest winnable seats. Furthermore, Komatsu (2002, personal communication) attributes women's lack of electoral success to insufficient resources, adding:

> "In Japan, we say it needs 3 'ban' to win the election: they are Kaban (money), Kanban (publicity), or [being] well-known, Jiban (many supporters in the constituency). "

The judicial arm of government is also male-dominated. The conservative way that labour laws have been interpreted in test cases (see Chapter Six) might also be partly attributed to the total absence of female judges in the Supreme Court.

As well as the institutional factors working against women, Mikanagi (2001) attributes the lack of representation of women's interests in the formal political

sphere to the characteristics of those interested in feminist politics. Particularly she decries the influence of radical feminism in Japan - a brand of feminism, she claims, that has encouraged Japanese feminists to keep a distance from the 'patriarchal state'. Campaigning for equal labour rights, in the 1950s to the 1970s, appeared to have a lower profile than anti-nuclear and environmental women's movement, according to Eto (2001) because, as Japanese women's labour market participation at this time was less than in Europe and the US, and therefore Japanese women were less conscious of the gender-based division of paid labour than their Western counterparts.

A variety of women's groups have, however, been active in lobbying the government. In particular the administrative reforms of the mid-1980s, discussed in Chapter Seven, where the Nakasone government cut education, welfare and environmental spending, excited the anger of women's groups. Cuts in decreased spending for day care centres and school lunches, which increased the reproductive work done by women, were particularly controversial (Iwamoto, 2001). In 1981 cutbacks were introduced in public service provision, and in 1982 a group of women who have been forced to leave their jobs or give up social activities because of increased caring obligations held a symposium to publicize this issue in Tokyo (Eto, 2001).

Some Japanese women have also been disproportionately affected by changes in agricultural policy in the wake of globalization. Women now constitute over half of the formal agricultural labour force (Gender Equality Bureau, 2000), and, probably account for a considerably higher proportion, once the informal labour of family members, such as farmer's wives, is taken into consideration. The liberalization of US agricultural imports caused a backlash against the LDP as did the party's decision to open the rice market to foreign competition (Ogai, 2001; Iwamoto, 2001).

Electoral and parliamentary institutions in Japan have generally been male-dominated, and, perhaps as a result of this, have tended to pursue policies which work to the detriment of female workers. Institutions and social norms are however dynamic. Historical institutionalists accept the role of ideas in

politics and acknowledge the introduction of new ideas can alter the basic and strategic preferences of actors (Hall and Taylor, 1998). This phenomenon was observed through the introduction of new ideas through the intervention of the United Nations, and its associated conventions and conferences, which were followed by an upsurge in feminist activities in Japan, and an increased awareness of issues of gender equality in the general population. The increased representation of women in the Diet and local assemblies (Figures 8.2 and 8.3) is a sign that Japanese voters are more willing to accept female politicians. Women's rights activists are taking advantage of this by increasingly attempting to enter formal political institutions.

The high profile and positive image of Doi Takako, the first Japanese female political party leader (1996-1991) and Ogata Sadako, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1991-2000), has led to popular enthusiasm for female politicians. This has recently been shown in the widespread accusations of gender bias, following the sacking of Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko.

In the wake to the anti-LDP backlash the SDP gained 21 seats in the Lower House in 1989, of which women held 7 (with 6 of the women winning a seat for the first time. The image of sleaze and corruption, and the scandal caused by the LDP Prime Minister's extra-marital affair had led the SPD to deliberately choose female candidates, which it dubbed 'Madonnas'. The subsequent electoral success of these candidates became known as the 'Madonna Boom'. This success was not welcomed by all though, and some popular newspapers ran headlines such as 'Ritual of the Witches' and 'These Women Will Ruin Japan' (Iwao, 1993: 238).

Women have gradually increased their representation in both the Diet and local assemblies, as shown in Figures 8.1 and 8.2. Furthermore there are signs of representatives making positive efforts to recruit more women. In February 1992 the Feminists Assemblymen's (sic) Federation, whose membership is made up of 65 female and 5 male national and local

government representatives, resolved to campaign for a membership quotas of 30 per cent for women in each prefectural assembly (Iwao, 1993).

Women's traditional marginalization from electoral politics, can give them the freedom to act more independently, once they gain a seat in Parliament. As Tripp commented, when referring to female political actors in Uganda,

> "Because women have been more marginalized politically than virtually any other sector of society, they have had more to gain and less to lose by altering the status quo" (Tripp, 2000: 7).

Moriya Yuko, the founder of a school for female politicians, claims, ""Women do not feel restrained to ask questions in the assembly. This stimulates their male colleagues to ask more questions. Thus a more open style of decision making is being implemented rather than the elitist "over-dinner-and-drinks" sort of decision-making style." (Foreign Press Center, 2001). Certainly, Ms Doi was criticized by male politicians for her blunt 'unfeminine' style; and Tanaka Makiko, the foreign minister, who lost her job in a high profile sacking on 29 January 2002, was fantastically popular with the general public for her outspoken and flamboyant style. However, within the political class itself, behaving in a manner different from male colleagues can also lead to a backlash. In the week before her sacking Ms Tanaka was reported to have had tears in her eyes following a meeting, prompting Mr Koizumi to remark, "When women cry, men cannot compete with them." The prime minister's remarks enraged female MPs, 18 of whom handed over a letter demanding a retraction of the statement. (Mainichi, 30 January 2002).

Figure 8.1: Women Diet Members, Jan 1988 – March 2001
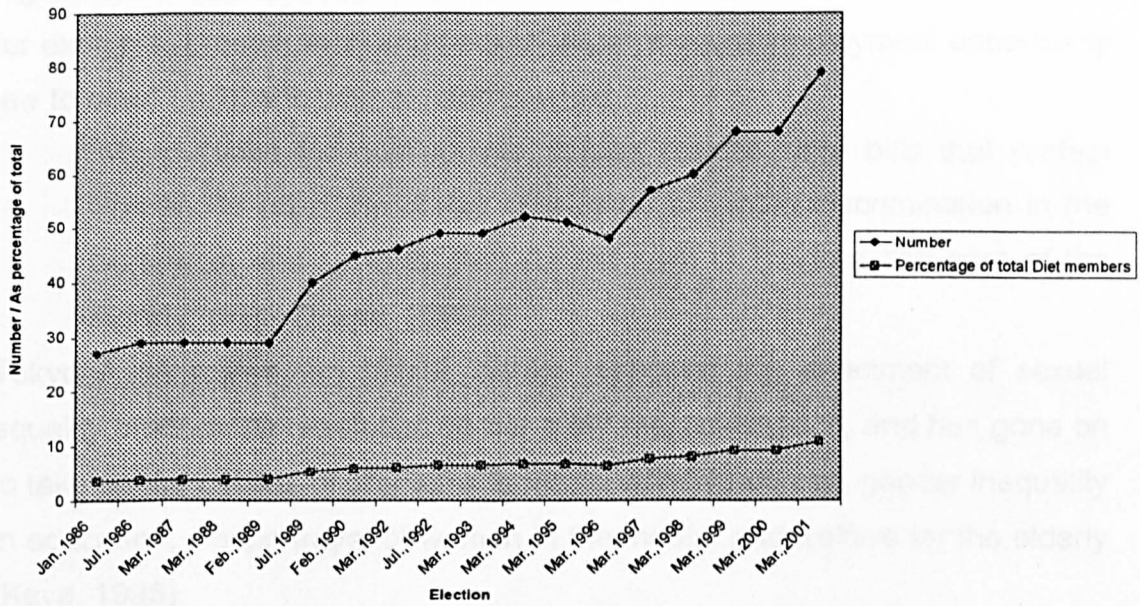
Source: White Paper on Gender Equality, 2001

Figure 8.2: Number of Female Local Assembly Members
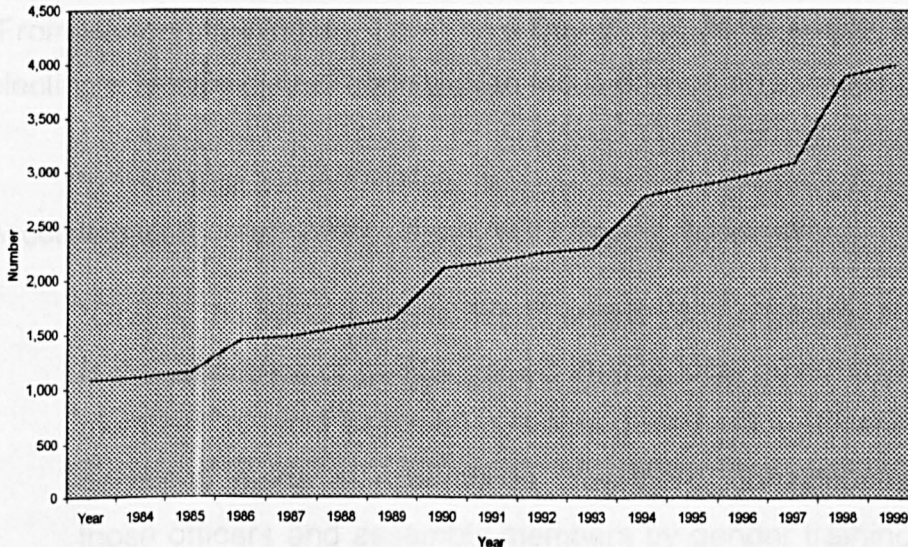
A 1991 study by the Centre for the American Women and Politics at Rutgers University found that regardless of party or ideology female politicians tend to have a different agenda to men (Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda, 1995: 373). Women in the Japanese assemblies do seem to be perceived as being allied

to a feminist agenda. In 1992 the National Federation of Feminist Legislators was established as a non-partisan national network of 130 male and female legislators with an interest in feminist concerns. Senator Nakanishi Tamako, for example, promulgated and backed Japan's equal employment opportunity law to open up jobs to women, and claimed:

> "My purpose for coming into politics was to write bills that protect women, to raise the status of women, eliminate discrimination in the workplace and so forth. And for the care of children and care of the elderly."(PBS Online, 2002b).

Tokyo Assemblywomen Mitsui Mariko proposed the enactment of sexual equality ombudman regulation' in her 1987 maiden speech, and has gone on to take up the causes of problems faced by working women, gender inequality in education, the portrayal of women in the media, and welfare for the elderly (Kaya, 1995).

There are nearly thirty extraparliamentary women's groups, which aim to put women's issues on the Japanese political agenda. Most of them are activist groups. Some support specific candidates, while others aim to raise the profile of women's issues. *Onna kara Onnatachi e: Ichinichi Juen no Kai* (From Woman to Women: Ten-Yen a Day group), for example, has the goal of electing a female district councillor to focus on women's issues (Khor, 1999)

According to *Women 2000: Japan NGO Report,* however:

> "One of the serious obstacles to create (*sic*) a gender equality society is the ignorance of gender issues among local government officers and members of local assemblies. Local government officers have to obey decisions made at assemblies. Therefore, consciousness raising of those officers and assembly members by gender training is important. Consciousness of the civil society itself which elects those assembly members should also be raised." (Japan NGO Alternative Report, 1999: 67)

However, according to the theory of institutional dynamism, one of the catalysts for institutions to become dynamic is that changes in the socio-economic context or political balance of power produce a new situation where old institutions begin to serve different ends as new actors gain a foothold within them (Thelan and Steinmo, 1992, see Chapter Two). This has certainly been the case in Japan, where local governments have come to be champions of initiatives towards gender equality, as, supported by women's networks, feminist deputies gain representation.

In June 1999, the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society came into effect. Like the EEOL, the Basic Law was the indirect outcome of Japan's participation in UN initiatives, and Chapter Four of the law states the intention of "[a]dopting and absorbing international standards in Japan" (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, 2000). The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women called for governments to develop plans of action for gender equality. The Japanese Council for Gender Equality submitted its report, "Vision of Gender Equality -Creating New Values for the 21st Century" to the Prime Minister on 30 July 1996. This was followed by a new national plan of action entitled "National Plan for Gender Equality toward year 2000" on December 13, 1996.

The aim of the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society was to clarify basic concepts pertaining to formation of a gender-equal society and indicate the direction these should take. Under the Law, the central government, local governments and Japanese citizens are required to make efforts toward the achievement of a gender-equal society in all areas. Under the auspices of the Act, In Tokyo the local government can request private companies to report on the status of their implementation of gender equality . Gifu prefecture has conducted research on the sexual division of labour in the workplace and in the home, and Fukui City has concentrated on improving women's political participation.

The diffusion of power to local assemblies, has resulted in the entirely pragmatic decision by feminist activists to intentionally target local

government. Strategies include joining advisory committees or attempting to aid the election of candidates who will champion feminist causes. Moriya Yuko worked for 20 years after university graduation, and in that time came to feel that women would be empowered if they entered the decision-making fields from which they were largely excluded. In 1993, she resigned from her job with a research and planning forms and launched the 'Society for Discussing Women and Politics'. However, she was further radicalized by her participation in the World Conference on women in Beijing, where she was 'stimulated by the energy of assembly women from the West and elsewhere' (Foreign Press Center, 2001).

In 1996 Moriya set up the 'World Women's Conference Network, Kansai' to promote international exchange among women, and founded a school for aspiring female politicians. This non-profit making organization (NPO) based in Osaka is run by Fifty Net, which aims to achieve a situation where fifty per cent of councillors are women. Two hundred women applied for the initial 30 places to learn about policy-making, the workings of parliament and know-how regarding elections from lectures by politicians and women's activists. Seventy-four were accepted, and by 2001, 25 graduates of the course had become councillors.

Nonetheless, in 2000, the United Nations Gender Empowerment measure, which records women's participation in political and economic decision-making, still ranked Japan only 41st out of 70 countries judged to have 'high human development' (United Nations Development Programme, 2000) . And ironically, just as women are organising to take advantage of changes in political awareness in Japan, which might permit women to formal political power, opponents of neo-liberal economic globalization are arguing that concentrating on conventional electoral politics is futile, where the main parties accept the discipline of global capital (Falk, 1997b).

8.2. Women in trade union politics

An obvious avenue to campaign for women's labour rights is through the trade union movement. However, women account for only 28 per cent of the membership of Japanese trade unions. Chapter Four explained how, after the deflation of the 1940s unions moved from including all non-managerial employees to a membership limited to those whose job security was assured. The corollary of this is that as non-regular forms of employment have increased, the proportion of labour which is unionized has fallen from around a peak of 34.4 per cent in 1975 to an all time low of 22.2 per cent in 1999 (*Nikkei Keizai Shimbun*, Dec 24, 1999).

Some unions have recently made an effort to recruit non-regular workers. Part-timers account for 24.3 per cent of the membership of the Japan Federation of Commercial Workers' Union (*Shougyou Rouren*) and 17.4 per cent of the National Union of General Workers (*Zenkoku Ippan*) respectively. However, other unions, even in highly-feminized sectors recruit few part-timers. Only 5.0 per cent of members of the Japanese Federation of Textile, Garment, Chemical, Food and Allied Industries Workers' Union (*Zensen*) are part-time workers. Rates of unionization of dispatched workers are even lower (Miura, 2001).

One response to the lack of female representation in mainstream unions has been the formation of small, predominantly female, unions. For example, Seventy-one part-time workers, employed by the magnetic-head section of Matsushita in Kumamoto were laid off in 1996, following Matsushita's shifting of magnetic-head production to Malaysia and Philippines. The trade union at their workplace did not permit part-timers to join, so the workers formed their own union, which entered collective bargaining with the company and demanded a withdrawal of their notices of dismissal (Zenroren, 1996).

Tokyo Josei Union was established in March 1995. It has 18 committee members and charges a membership fee of 2000 yen per month. Between its establishment and July 1999, the union has recorded 3,383 consultations from women, mainly concerned with restructuring, and change of status from regular to non-regular status. The union operates by recording women's complaints on their Working Women's Helpline. They then encourage the complainant join the union and to fill out an application form for 'collective bargaining' with the company. According to the union most collective bargaining actions are completed within six months. In the period covered, *Tokyo Josei Union* had dealt with almost 200 cases, of which the majority were resolved by compensation and continued employment (*Tokyo Josei Union* Newsletter, 1999).

8.3. Japanese feminist movements

Extent and nature of group membership

The preceding sections have demonstrated the reasons why formal politics has been a largely male preserve. Women, who are politically active, tend to be politically active in a realm outside the male formal polity.

The fact that Japanese cultural norms often structure activism and political participation along gender lines, means that women's social and political life is often organized around women's organizations, which provide an autonomous basis on which to challenge women's exclusion, and to challenge the existing political hegemony. Passy (2000) claims that networks fill a vital gap between structure and agency in that they *socialize* and build individual identities; *recruit* individuals who are sensitive to a particular political issue, and allow them the chance to participate; and *shape individuals' preferences* before they decide to join the movement.

Although this chapter emphasizes the importance of outside influences, networks and the use of foreign institutions to put pressure upon the Japanese government, Japan has a long-standing indigenous women movements. Just after the 1880s a popular rights movements stimulated strikes by female workers. The 1920s saw the emergence of an active women suffrage movement, that succeeded in getting a Bill passed in the House of Representatives that gave women the vote in 1930., but the House of Peers session ended before it could be ratified and, with the Manchuria Incident in 1931, and subsequent events, it became indefinitely postponed (Iwao, 1993). During the Second World War, women's activist groups were either banned or co-opted: the women of the Greater Japan Women's Patriotic Association (*Dai Nippon Aikoku Fujin Kai*), for example were active in supporting Japan's war effort (Fujieda, 1995). The Occupation Forces were keen to encourage women's emancipation and particularly a new women's movement, associated with progressive, labour-related policies emerged. Its connections

with the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) however caused disquiet in SCAP, and the administration tried to revive the old community groups association with the Patriotic Association, and 'rehabilitate' its leaders after some cursory 're-education' (Matsui, 1996: 24). This seems to be a clear example of attempts at top-down organization of civil society. There were therefore two major strands to the women's movement in the immediate post-war period. The JCP Central Conference on Working Women movement clung to the Marxian idea that the oppression of women would be solved with the achievement of a socialist society, and thus concentrated on organising women into trade unions, rather than analysing or protesting against the more complex conditions of women in post war Japan (Tanaka, 1995). The rump of the Central Conference on Working Women is however still active today, particularly in campaigning for part-time workers' rights (Zenroren, 1997a). There was also a more conservative network of women who organize non-challenging cultural activities, such as taking language or cookery classes. The latter were supported by women's centres called Fujin Kaikan, usually built by public organizations and operated by local women's groups. By 1960s there were more than 100 private and state *Fujin Kaikan*.

There was little high profile activism around women's labour rights until the 1970s, when the *uuman ribu* (women's lib movement) burst into public consciousness on 21 October, 1970, when *uuman ribu* marched in the streets of Tokyo carrying placards, with such slogans protesting about a range of issues. Placards read, "Mother, are you really happy with your married life?", "A Housewife and a Prostitute are Raccoons in the Same Den." (Tanaka, 1995). The majority of the *uuman ribu* activists were disillusioned young female workers and students who had been active in the New Left, anti-Vietnam War movements, and had been dissatisfied by the cognitive dissonance of male activists who rejected authority, yet permitted female activists only such stereotyped roles as typing. Some *uuman ribu* activists experimented with collectives for women and children, consciousness-raising groups and staging high profile 'zapping' activities, such as targeting individual men at their places of work. Several of the *uuman ribu* activists participate in the feminist movement even today. However, their high profile

activities, such as marching in pink helmets, demanding the legalization of the contraceptive pill, while attracting significant media coverage, were often ridiculed and attracted little public sympathy.

Nonetheless *uuman ribu* did reflect a growing interest in women's issues at the time. This had been occasioned by the following:

- Economic growth leading to women's greater participation in the workforce (see Chapter Five). An increasing number of women therefore were bearing the double load of paid employment and household chores (Tanaka, 1995). A number of academics, such as Komatsu Makiko, became interested in the problem of women in the labour force, and of sexual discrimination in the workplace.

- The establishment of academic women's studies. Female academics that had studied in US or Europe returned to Japan and introduced women's studies in the Japanese Academy. Japan fujinmondai kowakai member, Inoue Teruko member introduced the ideas discussed in "Women's Studies" in the US as '*Joseigaku*'. Iwao and Hara wrote a book called "*Joseigaku nyuumon*" (Introduction to Women's Studies) (Komatsu, 2002: personal communication).

The groups which emerged in the second half of the 1970s, and were more likely to be lawyers, Diet members, labour movement activists and members of political parties. They were more directly focussed on 'working within the system' and influencing government policies and actions (Tanaka, 1995). They were lent more legitimacy in the eyes of the public and among elites when the UN International Women's Year forced the Japanese government act on the problem of sex discrimination. In 1975 the Japanese government set up the Headquarters for the Planning and Promotion of Policies related to women. Fifty-two NGO groups came to make up the Liaison group for the Implementation of the Resolution from the International Women's Year Conference on Japan (*Kokusai Fujin-nen Renraku-kai*).

Chapter Three cited the case of Russian groups who intentionally use the language of international organizations to gain legitimacy for their own struggles (Sperling, Ferree and Risman, 2001). The UN is extremely well regarded in Japan, and therefore campaigning using UN documents, protesting at UN conferences have proved to be effective strategies for women's groups with little formal influence at the domestic level (a strategy referred to in Chapter One as a 'boomerang' strategy, Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Attending the UN Women's Conferences has also proved to be inspirational to several activists whom I interviewed.

Although Japan was not permitted to join the United Nations until 1956, the Women's and Young Workers' Bureau of the Ministry of Labour, impressed with the UN Commission on the Status of Women, has been sending observers since 1950. As stated in Chapter Six, the United Nations Decade of Women (1975-1985) and International Women's Year (1975) also stimulated much popular and media debate in Japan, and impacted upon public opinion (National Institute of Employment and Vocational Research, 1988). In the late 1970s the Japanese government established the National Women's Education Centre and the 1970s and 1980s saw a state-led building programmes of women's centres. These have proved to be more of a focus for overtly feminist activities than the *fujin kaikan*. This is indicated in the choice of name: *josei sentaa*, rather *then fujin kaikan*. While *josei* and *fujin* both mean 'woman', the Chinese character '*fu*' depicts a woman carrying a broom, and therefore does not indicate a challenge to traditional roles for women.

In July 1985, 27 delegates, led by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs; 13 advisory female Diet members and 700 NGO members, who were to attend the NGO forum, went to Nairobi to the UN conference where the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women was passed. Professor Komatsu Makiko has long been active in campaigning and research on women's labour issues, and wrote the second ever women studies textbook in Japan. She told me about the effect the conference had on her,

by encouraging her to be active and introducing her to feminists from other countries:

> ' Interviewer: Did International Decade of Women have a high profile in Japan?
>
> Komatsu Makiko: Yes, because the Japanese government began to develop Gender Equality Policy from 1975, the year of the first UN conference on gender equality in Mexico City.
>
> Interviewer: Did you go?
>
> Komatsu Makiko: No I didn't go. The second time I went – to Nairobi.
>
> Interviewer: What were your impressions?
>
> Komatsu Makiko: That's so vigorous, brilliant and [...] Power!
>
> (Interview, 19 January, 2001).

She added that she had been deeply impressed by 'the power of African women' and had come to deeply consider the relation between multi-culturalism and human rights.

The year before the UN conference in Beijing, the Japanese government established the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, within the Prime Minister's Office, with the function of 'gender mainstreaming', integrating a gender equality perspective across all areas of government policy (True and Mintrom, 2001). Approximately 6000 Japanese women attended the Beijing Conference (CEDAW, 2000). Moriya Yuko, founder of the School for female politicians referred to earlier in this chapter said,

> "It was the Beijing Conference in '95 (the 4th World Women's Conference) that made me start the network. I saw many women involved in the political scene before my eyes and I thought, 'Hey, we need this in Japan too!'" (Moriya, 2001, in WINGS).

After Beijing, attendees from Japan set up new NGOs and pushed for national and local governments to work in accordance with the Beijing principles. One

of the highest profile groups is the Beijing Japan Accountability Caucus (Beijing JAC), with branches in Tokyo, Kansai, Hiroshima, Sendai, Shizuoka, and Yamaguchi. The World Women's Conference Network, Kansai, was begun in 1996 by Kansai women, who had attended the Beijing conference, to 'make good use of the results of the conference and to enlarge the public role for women'.

The point has been made in previous chapters that it was the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women that formed the basis for the passing of the EEOL. The Japanese Association of International Women's Rights (JAIWR) developed various programs to publicize the Convention, which Japan agreed to ratify in 1980. JAIWR's programs are based on drama performances and questionnaires to check one's gender bias. Twenty years after the Convention was signed, the term CEDAW was known to 37 per cent of a July 2000 Survey conducted by the government for the July 2000 White Paper on Women (compared to only 13.6 per cent who had heard of 'affirmative action' and 7.1 per cent who understood the concept of 'unpaid work', Dales, 2001).

Unlike *uuman ribu*, the new groups tended to be more oriented towards single issues. There is no Japanese equivalent of the American National Organization of Women. However, groups do tend to be long-lasting and active, usually meeting frequently and producing *minikomi*.[98] Kohr (1999) analysed 590 groups from an initial list of 1000 on the *Onna no Nettowakingu* (Women's Networking) list for Japan. About 50 per cent, she found, could be classified as activist. However I would contend that 'research / study' groups on the list also play a role in creating pressure for change, and conducting independent research seems to be a core activity for groups in Japan. A group of lawyers and academics calling themselves the Women Workers Research Group (*Fujin Roudousha mondai kenkyuukai*) reported that 80 per cent of women surveyed in 1988 said the EEOL had had little effect on their workplace (1995). The *Part-Time Work Research Group to Consider*

Women's Working Life conducted a survey of 2319 working women (excluding dispatched workers) and liaises and shares information with other women's labour organizations elsewhere in Asia. Female students in the Kansai area (Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe and Nara) have conducted surveys on their experiences job-hunting and from 1986 (the start date of the EEOL) have publish the details of discriminatory experiences they have had while job-hunting names of companies in their book *Girls be Ambitious*. Furthermore, one of the most high profile activities of the women's movement, the publication of Counter-Reports to Japanese Government's Periodic Reports to CEDAW in July 1992 and August 1999. Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice, and to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. In March 1999, after the 43rd sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, with news from the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), that while there would be no NGO Forum at the Women 2000 Special Session of the UN General Assembly, "NGOs are encouraged to compile an alternative report on their country's implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action." Twelve organizations in Japan obtained responses from 300 organizations and individuals and finalized the report at a public meeting.

There is also a general expectation that those involved in research about women should be committed to the women's movement, and that 'women's studies' should not be an elitist, narrowly academic pursuit. The Women's Studies Association of Japan (*Nihon Joseigaku Kai*), for example, was formed in 1978, and has 600 members, including researchers, students, housewives and company employees (Worldwide Organization of Women's Studies, 2000; Khor, 1999) Komatsu Makiko commented:

"We should not say women's studies without movement. If you can say women's studies specialist, you have to be active. ... Maybe 60 or

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[98] *Minikomi* are newsletters which are often used by activist groups to publicize the issues with which they are involved. The word implies the opposite of 'mass communications'.

70 per cent of the scholars are involved in women's movement, but recently, academic only, I saw. " Komatsu, 2002, personal communication.

Several of the groups have a dual focus: perhaps particularly specific to Japan are English discussion groups, whose members initially come together to discuss current topics in English. Members are recruited, perhaps to discuss current events in English, and in an all-female group undergo a process of socialization/consciousness raising, which leads to the group or the individuals becoming keener to be involved in activism. Women's Messages, for instance, began in 1988. Its members come together to discuss topical news articles in English on a biweekly basis, as well as hosting talks about 'world issues' and 'women's issues'. The magazine is sent to about 600 individuals/ organizations in 87 countries and highlights sex discrimination in the Japanese workforce as well as forging links with, and supporting the campaigns of, women's groups overseas. Usui Yuki joined Women's Messages to practise her English language, but became increasingly interested in the articles she read. She is now a regular contributor, and translator to the Women's Messages Newsletter, and eventually went to Dublin to take an MA in Women's Studies. She now is very involved in Working Women's International Network, Women Helping Women.

Similarly, the English Discussion Society similarly has published two books, *Japanese Women Now (*English Discussion Society, 1993), and *Japanese Women Now Two* (English Discussion Society, 1996), in which they provide previously unavailable information about the situation of Japanese women in the home and in the workforce, in English.

Kohr (1999) notes that there are 50 groups, which are concerned with women's employment. Around 50 per cent of these provide support for part-time workers re-entering paid employment, while the other half are 'activist' groups which aim to redress issues of discrimination, balancing productive and reproductive work and issues of sexual harassment. There are, according to Kohr (1999) a further 50 groups concerned with women's

businesses, either pragmatically to create work which fits in with domestic labour, or to challenge male domination of paid work, by offering flexible work hours, provide services or teach women such traditionally 'male' skills as refurbishing.

Many of these women's groups make use of the *josei sentaa* to meet for "Self-enlightenment and teaching, collection and distribution of information, consultation, surveys and research, exchange of views among individual women and groups."(Uno, 1997: 2). While in Japan, I frequently attended meetings, seminars and lectures at one such *josei sentaa*, the Dawn Centre in Osaka. This 11 storey building was established in November 1994 by Osaka Prefectural Government, under the administration of the Osaka Gender Equality Foundation. It is open six days per week from 9.30 am to 9.30 pm and attracted nearly one million people in its first two years. While some feminist groups were less than enthusiastic about the women's centre building programme, complaining for example, that there was a greater need for refuges for women fleeing domestic violence (Uno, 1997), in recent years, women's activists, rather than being co-opted by the relatively institutional nature of the women's centres, have used them for explicitly feminist aims. Usui Yuki told me:

> " They [i.e. women's centres] help work effectively to play a supportive role, because they have places, so lots of women can have a meeting there and also lots of events are organized. So... the thing is these women's centres are all over Japan, and their policy or strategy is greatly affected by the boss.. .top people's awareness... understanding."

She agreed that *josei sentaa* are not necessarily feminist, but added

> ",,, recently a lot of NPO groups, women's groups, specially if they have power in local area, then this government or this *gyousei* [adminstration] contact this group to get some idea from the group, because they don't know well about their strategies ...So this kind of situation happens quite a lot. Actually I was asked by one of the *josei sentaas* to talk about the issues of organising women's centres"

As the Centres are a focus for women, activists can even make use of physical proximity to the Centre. Three lawyers that were active in the *Kintou Hou* Network have recently formed and independent practice situated in front of the Dawn Centre, where women can consult them on their labour rights.

The Globalization of Women's Activism

As well as using an international stage as a base for campaigning, Japanese women's groups have built links with other women's labour campaigners to add to foreign pressure on the Japanese government, to pragmatically share information and to build solidarity with women workers elsewhere in the world. Chapter Five recorded the joint organising of women's groups in Japan and in other Asian countries to protest about Japanese sex tours to countries hosting Japanese FDI. In 1995, the Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center was established in Tokyo to extend and provide a basis for the activities of the Asian Women's Association (AWA), one of several women's organizations in Japan which has adopted a critical view of Japan's role in Asia since the 1970s. It acts as a bridge to link Japanese women with women's groups elsewhere in Asia in order to share information and engage in joint activities around the issues of migrant women, prostitution and trafficking of Asian women, Asian brides and international marriages, Japanese - Filipino children, and women workers employed by Japanese multinational companies.

Another example, referred to briefly in Chapter Six is the case of transnational activism around sexual harassment. Japanese women's groups, in 1996, sponsored the week-long visit to Japan of the US National Organization of Women (NOW)'s Vice President Rosemary Dempsey. The aim of the trip was to raise awareness of sexual harassment. The more than 50 Japanese groups involved also intended to show solidarity with US women workers who had filed sexual harassment charges against the Japanese TNC Mitsubishi Motor Manufacturing. It seems indisputable that *gaiatsu* (foreign pressure) enabled the feminists groups to win their case. Dempsey met feminist groups, business leaders, parliamentary representatives, trade union leaders,

the Minister of Labour and representatives of Mitsubishi. The visit was widely publicized and the Minister of Labour reversed his previous stance, and came out in support of a tougher EEOL, which included prohibitions on sexual harassment (Corbin, 1996).

Prior to World Conference on Women in Beijing, several regional meetings were organized in Asia. At the Asia Pacific NGO Symposium held in Manila in 1993, women from East Asia held a regional workshop which resulted in the formation of the East Asia Women Forum, with the first meeting held in Japan the following year. This was rather significant as

> "Despite the fact that women in East Asia share the experience of the rapid economic growth in the region, the common cultural background of Confucian patriarchy and the history of Japanese military rule, it was the first gathering of activists from different women's groups in East Asia." (Moriki, 1997. pp.1-2).

Women's activists became increasingly aware of the link between their own situation and the globalization of Japanese production. In fact, one of the rationales for opposing the revision of Labour Standards Law was that regulations would be similarly relaxed in Japanese companies overseas, as this extract from the 1999 Counter Report to the UN makes clear:

> "In addition, we are afraid the abolition of the restriction for the protection of female workers will have a bad influence on Asian Women Worker's working conditions. It is necessary to watch carefully that the working conditions of Asians does not worsen in Japanese enterprises." (Japan NGO Report Preparatory Committee, 1999: 51)

Similarly Shiozawa Miyoko, Director of the Asian Women Workers' Center explained her hesitation to write "Stories of Japanese Women Workers", as a companion volume to the publication of stories of Korean and Filipino working women, as she felt that the vast material differences between the lives of women in Japan and those elsewhere in Asia would make it difficult for women outside Japan to appreciate the difficulties women in Japan faced. However she decided to contribute to the book, because she believed that

not only were women workers in Japan subject to the double burden of responsibility for housework and childrearing, in addition to a job outside the home and discrimination, meaning that 'although their suffering may be mitigated by enjoying occasional extravagances, their human growth is seriously hindered, probably in a way very different from our Asian sisters" (Shiozawa, 1986: i). This, added to concern that ' the Japanese method of labour control, which is becoming increasingly sophisticated and is now being introduced into Asian countries through Japanese–owned corporations", and the trade friction caused by long working hours and labour intensity, causing the market expansion of export-oriented low-cost projects convinced her that

> "...the struggle for liberation from the bitter exploitation of capital is common and can be shared, although the forms of struggle may be different in each country (ibid:ii).

Again, groups in Japan have attempted to raise consciousness through research and publicity. The Association of Asian Women (*Ajia no onnatachi no kai*) between 1977 and 1991 published the *Ajia to josei kaioho* (Asia in Everyday Life), in which they considered food, cosmetics, and manufactured goods produced in Asia and brought to Japan so that Japanese women could see the way in which they were direct beneficiaries of exploitation of their Asian sisters. Other editions of *Asia no Kaiho* focussed on political repression in Asian countries; Japanese cultural imperialism; liberation movements in Asian countries; the economic activities of Japanese companies in Asian countries; and international tourism industry and its links with prostitution (Mackie, 1999). The emergence of the ethical consumer is perhaps a sign of the links between the economic and cultural aspects of globalization.

Recently such organizations as the Asian Women's Association have paid attention to Japan's role as a major donor of foreign aid in the region and the increased emphasis on support for tourism-related projects.

Working Women's Network: An example of an activist group

Working Women's Network (WWN) has a long history. It started in October 1995, having grown out of a smaller group (*Kintou Hou* [EEOL] Network) which was set up in 1986 to discuss and raise awareness of the EEOL. *Kintou Hou* Network itself grew out of a study group with an interest in women and labour issues. In 1995 around 100 women came together to form WWN in support of core members who were suffering from discrimination in the workplace. WWN's inaugural meeting at the Osaka Dawn Centre attracted a large number of company workers, civil servants, lawyers, researchers, and the organization now has a membership of over 800. WWN is currently supporting the core members, who are plaintiffs in a number of sex discrimination cases against various branches of the Sumitomo Corporation.

Members commit a great deal of their own money and time to the organization. The Japanese government reported to the International Labour Organization that women in Japan earned on average 80 per cent of average male earnings was countered by a visit of 12 WWN members to give evidence to the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO in September 1997 with their own statistics and information about their cause. The same month the delegates made representations to the United Nations and the European Union (WWIN 2001a). These activities were well-covered in the Japanese press, as was the visit of Dr. Marsha A. Freeman, Director of the International Women's Rights Action Watch, who, at the behest of WWN, in 1999, submitted to the Court her statement on the following issues in the case of Shirafuji Eiko and Nishimura Katsumi versus Sumitomo Electric and the Government of Japan. The Japanese government had claimed that Japanese tradition was an obstacle to the immediate implementation of CEDAW, and argued for a culturally-based gradualist implementation of the standard of sexual equality in the workplace, while Dr. Freeman pointed out that the language of the convention required immediate implementation of the non-discrimination provision (WWIN, 2001b).

WWN is backed by a subsidiary organization, Working Women's International Network (WWIN), consisting of Japanese activists and a fluctuating number of foreign women living in Japan. When I attended there were usually about 10 members and Dales (2001) reports that there are now around 7 regular attenders. Meetings are conducted in English and Japanese. Foreign members were encouraged to network with people in their own countries to collect signatures from overseas for a petition supporting the Sumitomo women. The movement also produces an English version of their *minikomi* Working Women's International Network: A Message from Japan, which mainly provides details of the progress of the court cases. WWN places a high value on using international exposure of the Japanese situation to attain their goals. Usui (2002) told me:

> "They organized a symposium about informal discrimination ... indirect discrimination and I think speakers from abroad came to Japan and did several symposiums. Also ... yeah, I think these kind of symposiums to deepen the understanding of women's working situation, and especially they have a network with other countries, because their activities is introduced in foreign countries too. For example they brought a counter-report of their working situation, which is totally different from the government report, so they brought this to New York and revealed the situation ... it was a kind of *gaiatsu* (foreign pressure), because Japanese government or Japanese legal system does not deal with these issues seriously, so women go abroad directly and appeal more sympathetic organization in foreign countries, and then they give some comment to the Japanese government. [This] embarrass[es] the government quite a lot. ..... it gives the impact, so in that sense their strategy to appeal to the outside of Japan organization has a great impact to raise the awareness ..."

I asked about the size of audiences at symposia, and Ms Usui claimed that, depending on the size of the meeting room, meetings attracted up to 450

participants. Despite their efforts, those court cases, which have so far been decided have ultimately resulted in defeats for the plaintiffs. However they did mount a striking protest, hiring a helicopter to advertise their protest and then forming a human chain around the courthouse. This too was covered on television and in the newspapers.

8.4. Conclusion

Campaigners to improve the position of working women in Japan are active and well-informed. However, the institutionalism sexism of the parliamentary system and the mainstream trade union movement, as well as the homosociality of Japanese society, means that formal politics has not been the main means of engagement for politically active women. There are signs that Parliament and local government are opening up to women, and those women who have entered formal politics have tended to have both a high profile and a feminist agenda. The impact of economic globalization in causing Japanese corporations to alter their employment practice, legislators to pass laws facilitating this has been well-documented (Hasegawa and Hook, 2001; Dore, 2000). However the processes of political globalization, including the development of supranational governance, transnational activism, and foreign pressure (or at least the perception of foreign pressure) have also affected Japanese government policy. Particularly, Japanese national and local governments have passed more rigorous sex discrimination legislation and built a physical network of women's centres.

Although these changes are making electoral politics more accessible than previously, most campaigners for women's labour rights continue to concentrate on activities within women's groups. Their aims are typically to raise public awareness of women's disadvantage in the workplace and to campaign for tighter regulation of companies. There is a perception within these groups that Japan's high degree of involvement with international organizations and the positive view in Japan of internationalization can work to women's advantage. This is to some extent a correct perception as

Japan's equal opportunities legislation and increased public awareness of women's labour rights are strongly associated with the United Nations and the ILO. Women's groups are increasingly working with their counterparts overseas both to share information and also out of a feeling of national responsibility towards the situation of women workers in Asia.

The example of Working Women's Network shows several characteristics of a Japan women's activist group. It is of long duration and core members combines research with protest, and places a high priority on creating effective international links. It makes use of institutional facilities for women, and is exercising an increasing influence within Osaka Dawn Centre. It has been successful in recruiting members and publicising issues, but has not, as yet, achieved direct success in achieving its goals.

Chapter Nine:
Discussion and Conclusions

9.0. Introduction

This thesis has analysed the relationship between gender and globalization in one specific national context: Japan. Japan's position as an affluent, industrialized liberal democracy, with a distinctive national model of capitalism, means that Japanese women's experiences of globalization differ from those of women both elsewhere in Asia, and in other First World countries. The actions of the Japanese state and Japanese companies have been instrumental in the globalization of production, which is now having reciprocal effects upon the Japanese national model of capitalism. In response to global economic change, the Japanese model of capitalism is being intentionally restructured through company practice and legal change. This restructuring (*risutora*) impacts differently upon men and women, as the liberalizing processes associated with globalization interact with specific local institutions, including the ideal of the three generation family and the position of women in the Japanese national model of capitalism.

The theoretical background for the analysis drew upon insights from mainstream theoretical analyses of globalization, the state and historical institutionalism, as well as upon gendered analyses of globalization, to explain how the processes associated with globalization are changing the gendered national model of capitalism in Japan. Chapters Two and Three were a critical review of this literature. Chapters Four and Five described how the institutions of the Japanese model of capitalism emerged in the specific conditions of the postwar political economy of Asia; how men and women had very different roles in this model, and the pressures for change upon that model. Chapters Six and Seven described how this model is changing, with different consequences for men and women, under the exigencies of a globalizing political economy. Chapter Eight described how women activists are both reacting to the restructuring of employment and how globalization is presenting new opportunities for activism around feminist concerns.

Three central aims have steered the argument throughout this thesis:

- To contribute to the debate about the impact of globalization upon women by bringing in insights from the case of Japan into the wider academic discourse

- To examine the impact of restructuring upon women's employment in Japan

- To describe the actions women are taking individually or collectively to resist or campaign for change in their working environment and the laws and practices regulating it.

Section 9.1 will summarize the thesis, showing how it has met the latter two aims, while Section 9.2 will set my findings in a wider academic context, showing how the case of women working in Japan reinforces, contradicts, or adds to hypotheses about gender and globalization. The chapter will conclude with Section 9.3, which suggests some areas where more research would be appropriate.

9.1. A summary of the thesis

Analytical framework

Although there are many definitions of globalization, and debates about the extent to which it has been realized, Chapter Two of this thesis produced historical empirical evidence to show that there have indisputably been moves towards global economic interdependence, with the result that national control over economic forces for most countries in the world has become less feasible. There has also been an international convergence in social and cultural practices. That is not to say that globalization has been uniform throughout the globe, or that it is the world is 'globalized': it is in the process of 'globalizing'. One of the areas in which economic integration and social change have been most striking is East Asia.

The state has played an important role in the economic development of East Asia, as East Asian governments have encouraged FDI, particularly from Japan. However, the state plays an ambivalent role in the process of globalization. Globalization is generally taken as implying that the nation state has been superseded by the forces of transnational capital and / or supranational organizations. However, as Rai (2002:199) argues,

> "...the nation state continues to be a critically important actor in the international political economy as such it is not simply a victim of globalizing forces, but a participant in the refashioning of itself and the world we live in."

The Japanese state, in particular, has been a very pro-active player in the process of the globalization of production as, for strategic geo-political and economic reasons it has forged closer links with East Asia, Europe and the United States. This has facilitated the globalization of Japanese production, which has had reciprocal effects on the Japanese economy. The relatively low cost of producing manufactured goods outside Japan has undercut Japan's export-oriented economy. Japan has also come under pressure from the US to open its markets and even restructure its institutions to facilitate foreign penetration. While imports have entered Japan, very little FDI has: this net flow of capital and jobs out of the country has provoked concern in Japan about 'kudouka', or 'hollowing out'.

Japanese industry has tried to counter this challenge by attempting to cut costs of domestic production, by reducing labour costs and making the workforce more numerically flexible. Representatives of Japanese business have successfully campaigned for the state to deregulate labour in ways that make it easier to achieve a more numerically flexible workforce, and has pursued policies itself, (as well as supporting measures to make it easier to invest overseas, thereby increasing hollowing out). This deregulation is happening in the context of an internationally hegemonic discourse in favour of free trade and laissez faire capitalism. Nonetheless, the particular policy mix each state chooses varies according to its political, social and cultural complexion, and, of course, according to its level of strategic power in the

international political economy. The Japanese state has generally adopted liberalising measures, such as the deregulation of agency work, and the repeal of protective legislation for women, and reductions in taxation, which have had differential effects on men and women in the Japanese labour force.

Gender and capital in post-war Japan

Labour markets are socially constituted (Polanyi, 1944). The institutions shaping a labour market will include its existing political and economic institutions, and its social norms. One of the strongest social norms in postwar Japan has been that of the male breadwinner, where both blue and white collar male employees have shown commitment to their employers, and in return have job security, seniority-related pay increments and promotion and training, as well as more 'social' benefits, such as welfare benefits, grants on marriage, childbirth, illness, death, provision of company housing, and subsidized shopping facilities that in other countries might have been provided by the state. The role of women in this model has been to provide a temporary, peripheral labour force, until marriage, and then domestic labour, care for children. The persistence of the ideal of the three generation family in Japan means that a higher proportion of women provide care for elderly family members than is the case in most Western countries.

Firms, particularly the larger companies associated with the Japanese national model of capitalism relied upon the temporary nature of the employment of women peripheral workers to provide numerical flexibility in the workforce and to allow men to rise upwards through the company and take on more responsibility as the *nenko* system required. The system has evolved as a result of labour shortages, combined with the availability of an educated and experienced workforce of older women, who desired to work outside the home. From the late 1970s, it has become more and more common for women to first work part-time, then leave the workforce to raise children, and then to return as lower paid part-time workers: their part-time status being encouraged by the tax and pensions system as well as their continued responsibility for reproductive work.

These norms of the employment system are not solely attributable to unique Japanese cultural traditions. The Japanese national model of capitalism developed in response to choices made by political and economic actors in the first few decades following the Second World War: particularly the passing of the 1947 Labour Standards Law and the character of Japanese enterprise unions. However, once institutions have been developed, then they tend to persist as the values and preferences of political actors develop within those institutions. Institutions can become dysfunctional and unstable as a result of exogenous change, and it is in times of change that they are particularly likely to be transformed. The success these actors have in achieving reform will depend on their power, and the strategies they employ. This thesis has argued that globalization is just such an exogenous force, and that different actors within Japan are reforming Japanese institutions in reaction to it. These actors include economic and business interests, feminist campaigners and politicians and working women in all sectors of the workforce.

Globalization and the restructuring of women's employment in Japan

Mainstream theories of globalization, the state and historical institutionalism have largely been gender blind, although the impact of globalization has been shown to be heavily differentiated according to gender. This has certainly been the case in Japan.

Globalization is producing two kinds of, apparently countervalent, pressures for change to the Japanese national model of capitalism, both of which have different implications for men and women. There are pressures for labour market deregulation, to increase the international competitiveness of Japanese production. There are also pressures for the 're'-regulation of labour to establish a principle of sexual equality at work. The deregulation of employment, including the removal of sex-specific protective legislation, has made it increasingly difficult for many women to pursue full-time careers

Japanese companies are responding to the challenges to the Japanese national model of capitalism brought about by globalization, particularly those occasioned by structural change (particularly a decline in manufacturing) and increased vulnerability to cyclical forces (embodied in the threat of capital flight). They are doing so by segregating the regular workforce into discrete, and gendered groups, and, like employers elsewhere, increasing the size of the non-regular workforce.

Although a combination of activism within Japan and the development of a global standard concerning equal treatment of men and women in the workplace, has put pressure on the Japanese government to reduce the more obvious aspects of sexual discrimination in employment practices, the equal opportunities legislation which has been passed, such as the EEOL, has often been counter-productive for working women. Within the regular workforce, women continue to be largely confined to clerical positions with very limited chances of advancement. Many firms have reacted to the introduction of the law by formalising informal segregation in employment, based on gender. Having a different job category to their male colleagues makes it more difficult for women to sue their employers for discriminatory treatment. Furthermore advances in formal equality, have been accompanied by a loss in protective legislation, such as limitations on nightwork for women, that have resulted in some women finding difficulty continuing in their current jobs. It has however, provided new opportunities for a minority of determined elite women to find jobs in the management track of companies. Furthermore an increasing number of young women are undertaking training to become certified as senmonsha (specialists). For society in general, there is also some evidence that the publicity surrounding the Equal Employment Opportunities Law has helped to change attitudes about working women. Transnational activism has also been shown to be effective in raising awareness of sexism in the workplace. Globalization may also resulted in change in the attitudes of employers and employees towards regular female employees: as more Japanese managers and students having diverse and internationalized careers, they are exposed to different models of workplace social relations, including relations between men and women.

The relative size of the regular workforce, relative to that of the non-regular workforce, is decreasing, particularly in sectors which have been highly affected by the exigencies of globalization, such as the banking and airline industries. The past ten years have seen a remarkable growth in part-time work, dispatched work, and other forms of non-regular employment. The increasing desire of women to work, combined with government encouragement for women to combine reproductive work with paid employment outside the home has meant that there is a pool of women available to meet the increasing demand for 'non-regular' workers. The EEOL creates an additional incentive for employers to take on women as irregular workers, as occupational sexual segregation means that employers are not obliged to provide them with the same pay and fringe benefits as male regular workers.

Paato and homeworkers are expected to be married women, who are financially supported by their husbands, and consequently firms do not appear to pay them wages to cover the costs of reproduction. Dispatched workers are generally expected to be young, conventionally attractive and have a personality that fits in with firm's expectations. Some anecdotal evidence exists that these non-regular workers are excluded from the workplace community.

As the irregular workforce has grown, so it has diversified. In some sectors, particularly retail, the experience of long-term part-time workers is being recognized by their employers, who are increasingly graded them according to their abilities and offering some of them increased responsibility in the workplace. The variety of employment open to dispatched workers is also growing, albeit that one consequence of this has been a fall in the average wages of such workers. In some cases, dispatched work can lead to regular job opportunities.

Globalization and Women's Activism

There is an active feminist movement in Japan. However, the parliamentary system and mainstream trade union movement have largely been closed to women and thus have not proved fruitful avenues for attaining feminist demands. Activists therefore have tended to concentrate their energies on women's groups, with the aim of consciousness-raising about women's position in the workforce and campaigning for change. These groups are characterized by their longevity and their mixture of scholarship and activism. Some have recently begun to take advantage of legal changes to gain formal representation for women in national and local assemblies and a higher profile for women workers. The prestige that international organizations such as the ILO and the UN have in Japan, has meant that Japanese women's groups have also made these sites of protest, in the knowledge that this strategy will ensure a high profile in the Japanese domestic media.

Japan's relative wealth has enabled a relatively high proportion of feminist activists to travel to UN Women's Conferences, which have had a profound influence in Japan, and have increased awareness of the impact of globalization upon women overseas. Japanese women's groups increasingly work together with foreign women in Japan and abroad, to share information and out of awareness of the impact of Japanese companies overseas.

9.2. The implications of the Japanese case for current debates on gender and globalization

Although the mainstream literature on globalization, the state and historical institutionalism has been a useful framework for analysing the impact of globalization upon Japan, these are incomplete literatures, in that that they, with few exceptions, neglect the gendered nature of globalization. Literature about gender and globalization has filled an important gap in these literatures by analysing how globalization impacts differently upon men and women. It has also shown how globalization has different impacts upon women

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depending upon their nationality, ethnicity and social class. This thesis has examined a particular case study of gender and globalization: that of the restructuring of work in Japan in response to globalization, and the way this affects women. This section will show how this case study relates to the themes uncovered in feminist critiques of globalization (cited in italics), and discusses which thesis findings are generalizable, and which result from and interaction of global forces and local institutions and are therefore specific to the Japanese case.

- *Globalization is presented in a gendered and natural phenomenon in political discourse, in a way that suggests nation states are powerless to resist its exigencies.*

Chapters Four and Seven cite evidence from key players in the Japanese economy to show that, in Japan, as elsewhere, the discourse of globalization employed by elites presents the phenomenon as natural and irresistible and recommends a neo-liberal economic strategy as a necessary response to its challenges.

- *States respond to the challenges of globalization by marketization and the adoption of neo-liberal policies. These policies have impacts, which increase the reproductive work of women.*

The neo-liberal economic strategies adopted by the Japanese government, include both the deregulation of labour, introducing higher charges for tertiary education and encouraging families to provide care for the elderly. The result of these policies is that women with young children or elderly parents continue to provide the largest proportion of care for family members, but this is combined with going out to work part-time to contribute towards living costs, education costs for their children, and perhaps the provision of care for elderly people. Furthermore, deregulation has made it more difficult for some women to pursue full-time careers, as the removal of gender specific social protection

legislation has made it possible for them to be asked to work unfeasibly long hours, which are difficult to combine with reproductive labour.

- *Dominant ideologies can lead a state and existing institutions to negotiate a compromise between encouraging change and maintaining current gender orders.*

Kelsky (2001) has argued that it has become almost axiomatic to present women as the 'victims' of globalization – particularly non-Western women. While recent work is far more nuanced than this (cf. Rai, 2001, Suarez Aguila, 1999 in conversation with Scholte, 2000, ILO/SEPAT, 1998b), Japan is certainly a case where globalization has had complex and contradictory effects. On the one hand, it has produced an increasing acceptance of the 'global standard' of gender equality and produced new arenas where women can campaign for improved labour rights. On the other hand it has encouraged the movement towards a less-regulated and more segmented labour market, where women are more likely to find employment than has previously been the case, but, in most cases, are likely to find employment that is less secure and less well-remunerated than has, until very recently, been the case for most Japanese men since the 1940s.

The promulgation of the EEOL is a prime example of a dominant ideology of leading state and institutions to negotiate a compromise between encouraging change and maintaining gender orders. A detailed examination of the impact of the EEOL shows that this legislation has led to the formalisation of the gender-based segregation of regular workers, and encouraged employers to employ an increasing proportion of women in non-regular positions.

- *There has been a 'feminization' or waged work, as an increasing proportion of jobs are taken by women, and an increasing proportion of jobs are irregular, part-time and/or service sector jobs which have typically been filled by women.*

In Japan's period of rapid economic growth, women actually became less likely to work outside the home than men, even as their standard of education increased. There is nevertheless a long tradition of women in Japan undertaking paid employment, a tradition which declined during the 1950s and 1960s, but in recent decades, Japan has, like most other countries in the globalized economy, seen a feminization of the workforce. Chapters Five, Six and Seven provide quantitative data to support the proposition that the processes of economic, social and political globalization are strongly associated with an increase in the number of women working, a diversification of the positions women hold, and growth in the proportion of non-regular jobs in the economy.

- *The entry of the workforce of many First World women into professional positions, is facilitated by the domestic work of poorer migrant women.*

Recent studies (e.g. Chang and Ling, 2000; True, 2000) have shown that a minority of elite women have found that globalization offers them opportunities for travel, and a professional career, comparable to that of elite men, but that for many women, the experience of migration is one of providing domestic labour for other women. Japan is an exception to this case. Although, there has been a significant growth in the number of women seeking professional careers, Despite increasing inward migration, Japan has not seen the emergence of a class of foreign female domestic workers. On the other hand, increasing number of Japanese women are choosing to work or study abroad generally out of desire for advancement or self-fulfilment rather than economic necessity.

- *Globalization can weaken local patriarchal structures by exposing culturally-specific practices to global scrutiny, while flows of information and ideas increase reflexivity within cultures.*

In Japan, as elsewhere, the increase in women in the workforce and the adoption of a global norm around the idea of gender equality, has led to an

intensification of women workers' struggles for labour rights. Japanese women have, in recent years, succeeded in gaining increased representation in local and national assemblies and have also founded their own trade unions, which have had some success in negotiating settlements for their members in industrial disputes. However, the emergence of new institutions of global governance, and the esteem in which these are held in Japan, has provided Japanese campaigners for women's labour rights with new sites of resistance to gender inequality. Japanese women have also form networks and alliances with women in other countries, particularly in those regions that are the hosts for overseas production by Japanese corporations.

9.3 Suggestions for further research

This thesis has by no means been a comprehensive analysis of globalization and the restructuring of women's employment in Japan. The goal of this thesis was to gain a broad overview of the situation of women in Japan. Studies from other countries though have shown that not only does globalization impact differently upon men and women, but also, it impacts differently upon women according to their class and 'race'. Understanding of the impact of globalization in the Japanese workforce would be greatly enriched by studies of the situation of women from the Burakumin caste, or of Korean permanent residents. Similarly, the flow of women who do come to Japan to work as migrants bears closer examination. Japanese-Brazilians, for example, can claim Japanese citizenship on the basis of having a Japanese heritage, but are differentiated by culture and language from the majority of the population.

I have concentrated on the experiences and actions of Japanese women resident in Japan. A study of the migration of Japanese women; the experience of such women working or studying overseas; the positions they later occupy and the opinions they hold if and when they return to Japan, would throw considerable light on the development of transnational identities

in a globalizing world, and on the role of structure and agency in the constitution of such identities.

A third factor to note is that the non-regular workforce is not solely composed of women. The increasing marketization of higher education has led to more students taking *arubaito* (part-time jobs), which contribute to Japan's growing service sector. Furthermore the growing number of young people of both sexes, known as *freeter*, who choose to take short-term or irregular jobs, a phenomenon which has been the cause of much critical comment in the press, points to a growing diversity of Japanese attitudes to work and leisure. This may have implications for the degree of commitment which companies can reasonably expect of their male regular workers in the future. These phenomena too merit examination.

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Appendix A: Pilot Study

From Mid-1996 until March 1997, while working as Visiting Foreign Lecturer at the University of Shiga, I conducted a scoping exercise using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. As personal introductions are very important in conducting research with Japanese respondents (Pharr, 1981), the participants in this survey were found through a 'snowball' technique. Initial interviewees were found through personal recommendation. Both initial and subsequent interviewees were asked to recommend others who would be willing to answer questions about their work experiences. In total, this technique yielded 214 usable responses. Respondents varied in age from 19 to 64, enabling me to collect anecdotal data about different work experiences of women throughout much of the post-war period. The mean age of respondents was 34.7 years, with a standard deviation of 10.33. The marital status of the respondents at the time of the interview was as follows: 52.6% single, 39.4% married, 0.9% cohabiting with a partner, 4.2% divorced, 0.9% separated; and 2.8% widowed. Sixty-eight respondents (31.8%) had children, of whom 12 (5.6%); had children under five years of age. The employment status is presented in Table A.1 below, and the text of questionnaires, which also acted as topic guides for interviews are on pages 351-357.

Table A.1. Employment status of respondent

Employment status of respondent	Number of respondents	Percent
Self employed/freelancer	4	1.9
Small business owner	7	3.3
Full-time with job security	123	57.5
Part time	36	16.8
Freeter*	6	2.8
Working in family business	2	0.9
Home worker	4	1.9
Other	23	10.7
Total	205	95.8
No response	9	4.2
Total	214	100.0

回答カード

日本の女性と仕事に関するリサーチプロジェクトのためのインタビューにご協力頂き、有り難うございます。アンケートは匿名で、お答えいただいた内容の秘密は厳守致します。回答者、および回答者の所属する会社名が明らかになることはありません。それでもなお答えたくないという質問に関しては、空欄のままで結構です。

1)　年齢　　　　　　　才

2)　会社名

3)　勤続年数　　　　　年

4)　役職名

5)　あなたの仕事に就くのに最低限必要な学歴はなにですか？

6)　婚姻に関してお尋ねします。あなたは、

　a)　独身である。
　b)　結婚している。
　c)　同居している恋人がいる。
　d)　離婚した。
　e)　別居中である。
　f)　配偶者と死別した。

7)　お住まいについてお尋ねします。あなたは現在、

　a)　会社の寮に住んでいる。
　b)　親と同居している。
　c)　一人住まいである。
　d)　友人と同居している。
　e)　配偶者または恋人と一緒に住んでいる。
　f)　　　　　子供と一緒に住んでいる。
　g)　配偶者あるいは恋人と、子供と同居

8)　子供さんをお持ちの方はお答えください。

9)　あなたは、つぎのどれにあてはまりますか?

b)　自由業
a)　自営業
c)　正社員
e)　パートタイマー
f)　フリーター
h)　家業の手伝い
i)　内職
j)　その他　（　詳しく説明してください。）

10)　あなたの平均的な勤務時間を曜日ごとに書いてください。

月曜日　　　　　　　　　～
火曜日　　　　　　　　　～
水曜日　　　　　　　　　～
木曜日　　　　　　　　　～
金曜日　　　　　　　　　～
土曜日　　　　　　　　　～
日曜日・　　　　　　　　～

11)　始業・終業時間、勤務時間については、あなたにある程度の自由が許されていますか。

12)　あなたの学歴をお書きください。

学校名　　　　在学期間　　　　学部　　　学科　　　　学位・資格など

13) あなたの職歴をお書きください。

会社名	在職期間	役職名	仕事の内容

14) あなたが現在の仕事をしている理由として重要だと思う順番に、次の項目に1から9までの番号をつけてください。

a) お金が必要である。

b) 余暇を楽しむためには、お金があったほうが良い。

c) 仕事が、自分自身の能力を生かす機会を与えてくれる。

d) 仕事が楽しい。

e) 職場の同僚と一緒に仕事ができるのが楽しい。

f) 仕事で成功したい。

g) 勤務時間が短くて他のことと両立できるから。

h) 勤務場所が通うのに便利なところにあるから。

i) その他重要だと感じている理由

15) あなたの平均月収はいくらですか。

a) 50,000 円以下

b) 50,000 円 ～ 99,999 円

c) 100,000 円 ～ 149,999 円

d) 150,000 円 ～ 199,999 円

e) 200,000 円 ～ 249,999 円

f) 250,000 円 ～ 299,999 円

g) 300,000 円 ～ 349,999 円

h) 350,000 円 ～ 399,999 円

i) 400,000 円 ～ 449,999 円

j) 450,000 円 ～ 499,999 円

16) あなたはボーナスを支給されていますか。

質問事項

1) あなたに仕事として求められていることを具体的にあげてください。

2) 仕事をするにあたって、どの様な研修・職場実習を受けましたか。

3) 就職後も、会社の社内研修・職場実習をうける機会がありますか？

4) どの様にして今のしごとに就きましたか？求人、就職活動はどの様に行われましたか。

5) どうして現在の仕事をしようと決めたのですか？

6) あなたの仕事のどういった所がすきですか？

7) あなたの仕事のどういった所が嫌いですか？

8) 現在の会社に採用されるにあたって、あなたと男性社員の採用方法に何か違いがありましたか。

9) あなたの同僚の男性社員が受ける社内研修・職場実習と　あなたが受ける社内研修・職場実習に何か違いがありますか。あるいは、これまでにそういう事がありましたか。

10) あなたは将来おそらく昇進できると思っていますか？

11) 管理職に昇進する話があれば、承諾しますか？

12) 今後、自分はどの様な職業生活を送っていくと思われますか？

13) あなたは上司と自由に話ができると感じていますか？

14) あなたの職場に労働組合はありますか？

15) あなたは組合員ですか？

16) あなたは組合員になりたいと思っていますか？
なりたい、もしくはなりたくないのは、なぜですか。

17) 職場の同僚と、仕事以外の付き合いがありますか？

18) （あてはまるなら）　あなたの家では、だれが主として家事・子育てをしていますか？

19) （職場復帰した人に）あなたが仕事を再開したとき、家庭内で仮に小問題が生りましたか。）１

20) 女性であることが、また、結婚している、あるいはしていないことが、職場のあなたを見る目やあなたに対する扱い方に影響を及ぼしていると思われますか？

21) あなたの母親・父親はどんな仕事をしていますか？　または、していましたか？

22) （あてはまるなら）あなたの夫あるいはパートナーはどんな仕事をしていますか。

23) あなたは給料をどの様に使いますか？

24) 家の外で働く女性についてどう思われますか？

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Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed for my research project into Japanese women and work. The questionnaire is confidential and anonymous. Neither you, nor the company you work for will be identified. Nonetheless, if there are any questions which you are unhappy about answering, please feel free to ignore them.

1) Age

2) Company

3) How long have you worked for this company?

4) Job title

5) What are the minimum educational requirements for this job?

6) Marital Status

   a) Single

   b) Married

   c) Co—habiting

   d) Divorced

   e) Separated

   f) Widowed

7) Where do you live?

   a) Company dormitory

   b) With Parents

   c) Alone

   d) With friends

   e) With partner

   f) With children

   g) with partner and children

8) Children

Number	Age	Gender

9) Are you classified as

   a) Self—employed/freelancer

   b) Small business owner

   c. Full—time with job security

   e) Part—timer

   f) Freeter

   h) Working in family business

   i) Homeworker

   j) Other (please explain)

10) What hours do you usually work?

	From	To
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thurs		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

11) Are you allowed any flexibility in the hours you work?

12) Educational history

School/Institution	From	To	Majar	Qualifications achieved

13) Employment history

Company	From	To	Job title	Duties

14) Please place in order from 1(most important) to 9(least important), the reason why you do the job you do.

a) I need the money.

b) The money is useful for spending on leisure.

c) It gives me the chance to use my skills.

d) My work is enjoyable.

e) I enjoy the company of my co—workers.

f) I wish to succeed in my career.

g) The hours worked fit in with my other responsibilities.

h) The location is convenient.

i) Other reasons you feel are important

_____

15) How much money do you earn each month?

a) less than 50,000 yen

b) 50,000 — 99,999 yen

c) 100,000 — 149,999 yen

d) 150,000 — 199,999 yen

e) 200,000 – 249,999 yen

f) 250,000 – 299,999 yen

g) 300,000 – 349,999 yen

h) 350,000 – 399,999 yen

i) 400,000 – 449,999 yen

j) 450,000 – 499,999 yen

k) 500,000 or more

16) Do you receive a bonus?

Questionnaire

1) Of what do your duties consist?

2) What training did you receive to do this job?

3) Do you have any ongoing, on the job training?

4) Please tell me about the recruitment procedure for this job?

5) Why did you decide to take this particular position?

6) What do you like about your job?

7) What do you dislike about your job?

8) Was there any difference in the way you were recruited and the way your male co–workers were recruited?

9) Is/Was there any difference in the training you receive/d and the training your male co–workers were receive/d?

10) Do you feel you have good prospects for being promoted?

11) Would you accept promotion to a supervisory position?

12) How do you image the rest of your working life?

13) Do you feel you can speak freely to your managers?

14) Is there a union at your workplace?

15) Are you a member of a trade union?

16) Do you wish to be a member of a trade union?

17) Do you socialize with your co–workers outside work?

18) (If applicable) Who is mainly responsible for domestic chores/childcare in your home?

19) (For returners) When you returned to work, did you face any problems at home?

20) Do you think your gender or your marital status has affected the way you are perceived/ treated at work?

21) What kind of work do/did your mother and father do?

22) (If applicable) What kind of work does your partner do?

23) What do you do with the money you earn?

24) What is your opinion of women working outside the home?

– 3 –

Appendix B: Interviews with working women

Most respondents in the pilot study chose to fill out written questionnaires. However some working women agreed to be interviewed in person. Interviewees in the 1996/7 fieldwork were working in the following occupations:

Clerical work in factory (2)
OL
Laundry worker
Building manager
Ticket sales clerk
Manager of translation agency
Consumer research
Tourism company employee
Website worker
Advertising
Tourist office worker
Antique shop owner
Kitsuke ('kimono-wearing') teacher
Teachers (2)
Lecturers (4)
Dentist
Homeworker
Employee of TNC

It is difficult to separate 'elite' from non-elite interviews, as many campaigners and court plaintiffs spoke about their own experiences during interviews. However, in addition to the interviews listed in Appendix C, I carried out the following interviews with working women during my second period of fieldwork, between October 1999 and March 2000:

Group meeting with employees of trading companies writing book about their experiences (7)

Individual interviews:
Former dispatched workers (2)
Civil servants (3)
Sogoshoku pensions analyst
Flight attendant
Jimushoku/ippanshoku workers (2)

Appendix C: Elite Interviews

October 1999

Focus Group Interview with English Discussion Society / Writers of *Japanese Women Today* and *Japanese Women Today I,* Kyoto

November 1999

Interviews with Stewards of Osaka City Trade Union, Osaka

December 1999

Yunoki Yasuko - Showa Shell Union Representative, Tokyo

Group interview with Board of *Tokyo Josei Union*, Tokyo

January 2000

Group Interview with *Shosha ni Hataraku Josei,* Osaka

February 2000

Shirafuji Eiko – Plaintiff in Sumitomo lawsuit, Osaka

Ms Kageyama – Plaintiff in Sumitomo lawsuit, Osaka

Ms. Watanabe – Plaintiff in Sumitomo lawsuit, Osaka

March 2000

Interview with Koedou Shizuko – Activist and Co-Ordinator of Women Helping Women, Osaka

February 2002

Usui Yuki: Activist and writer on *Women's Messages*, Sheffield

Professor Komatsu Makiko, Professor of Women's Studies, Mukogawa Women's University, Newcastle-Upon-Time