

**Gender, Family and Fertility: Why are
Japanese Women Having Fewer
Children?**

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Abstract

Japanese women are having fewer children than ever before. There have been many quantitative studies undertaken to attempt to reveal the reasons behind this. The Japanese government has been concerned about the future economic decline of the country, and has been encouraging women to have more children. Although the Japanese government has been supporting women financially, it has not focused on gender equality, making it more difficult for women to be able to pursue their chosen careers. Japanese women have greater access to higher education than ever before, yet the Japanese patriarchal social structure still compels women to rely on men and all but eliminates their independence. The Japanese male-dominated society is resistant to change. Family ties are still very strong, and women are expected to take care of the household and do unpaid work, while men work outside the home and earn a paid salary. In the labour force, women do not enjoy the same level of equality and opportunity as their male counterparts, as it is naturally marry, have children, and take care of the family. The system is skewed in favor of the males. Women are not able to pursue the same career path as men; even from the start, women are often considered as candidates for potential wives for the male workers. In the course of this research, I conducted a total of 22 interviews of single and married Japanese women. I set out to explore and discover the causes behind why Japanese women are choosing to postpone marriage and have fewer children, as well as touching upon the much deeper issue of gender inequality due to the Japanese patriarchal social structure. Women cannot live how they want to and only for themselves; they must always put their families first. This study reveals the struggles of Japanese women and how many are confused, and how some resist the patriarchal system. Many women waste their education, careers, knowledge and experience, all in the name of maintaining family ties and the patriarchal social structure.

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Author's Declaration

I certify that this thesis is solely my own work and carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of York. This thesis has not been used for any other degree or professional qualification.

Introduction

Since I first became interested in low fertility rates in Japan, it has become a very topical issue. As the economic decline of Japan has deepened into a crisis, the low fertility rates there have been studied by those in many fields: scholars in the fields of economics, health, demographics, statistics, social sciences, and politics have all focused their attention on low fertility (Katayama et. al., 2006). Many theories and research studies seem to blame the problem on women becoming better educated, the rise of female independence causing damage through the influence of individualization and westernization, often involving negative opinions of contemporary Japanese women (see Shirawakase, 2005). I have started to wonder about the argument that giving women access to higher education is to blame if they choose to have fewer or no children. Why is it that when men have access to higher education, it has not discussed as a factor affecting low fertility? For instance, the possibility is not discussed that educated men might believe they have to take more responsibility for raising children, so they would like to have fewer children.

It is very interesting that Japanese women's ideal number of children is higher than the actual number of children they have (OECD, 2012). If, in theory, Japanese women are willing to have more children, why are they choosing not to do so? Can the onus for low fertility really be placed on women? Why is the burden and responsibility for having children placed solely on women? Why do Japanese men share none of the blame of low fertility? In Japan, there have been many quantitative studies on low fertility. I wanted to challenge these findings using qualitative research, to reveal Japanese women's individual attitudes toward fertility decisions, because there are gaps in the quantitative research findings about low fertility. At first I was focused on low fertility rates; however, I have found since I started my research that it is not that simple. The research uncovered much deeper issues than I had expected, related to the male-dominant social

structure, gender inequality and gender discrimination.

I begin in Chapter 1 by posing the question, ‘What is low fertility?’, and by comparing differences and similarities in this phenomenon in Europe and East Asia. Introducing the concept of gender inequality, from being single to after married life, helps to demonstrate that the reality of gender inequality is rooted further and deeper in Japanese society than one might expect.

In Chapter 2, I explain why I chose to conduct qualitative research, and my strategy of trying to make my interviewees comfortable enough to want to talk to a researcher, and my decision to conduct pre-interviews before the main interviews. I will discuss how I chose participants for my research and the difficult task of scheduling around the busy schedules of my respondents, and how I handled pre-interviews and interviews. In Japan the cultural etiquette that had to be observed. I gathered data and struggled through the process of transcribing.

In Chapter 3, I explain gender inequality. Patriarchal social structure forces women to take unpaid jobs, offers less responsibility for paid work, less job security, and less interest in helping women gain financial independence. This means women have to rely on men. From childhood, males and females in Japan are treated and raised differently from each other; different behaviours and language become natural. Even if women try to fight back against this inequality, it is very difficult to change. Gender inequality denies women the opportunity to keep a job; young women are welcome, but after reaching a certain age, the expectation is that they will marry and have a child. All of this makes it difficult for women to stay active in the labour force, so women are pushed into part-time work.

Chapter 4 covers Marriage and Family Values. Marriage is an important, major step for Japanese women and men because of strong family ties. I discuss the pressure women face to marry, the disadvantages they struggle with in their relationships with their in-laws, and pressure to have children. Children often face discrimination as a result of divorce, so women are avoiding divorce. Another

reason for avoiding divorce, even in an unhappy marriage, involves embarrassing their family.

Chapter 5 discusses Economic Resources, including working women who must fund their children's education without any outside help. Women face discrimination in the workplace. Women are expected to be young and beautiful, but even that does not guarantee that they will be able to keep a job. There is still a large gender-based pay gap; in Japan, the longer one works for an employer, the more one is entitled to promotions and higher wages; however, women lose more time off than men, and even if they only work part-time, women can barely keep a job. It seems women are in charge of financial matters, however the men are really in charge, leaving women to seek out part-time work, even if they would prefer to work full-time, because domestic duties represent an unpaid job that women are still expected to do.

In Chapter 6, I explore Care and Welfare Policies. The Japanese government has been developing welfare support for women, focusing on financial support for raising children but not concentrating on gender equality. The Japanese policies and support system encourages women to become part-time workers or housewives rather than women are able to keep their career. Therefore Japanese women still do the majority of unpaid care work, which widens the inequality gap between women and men even more.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis. Past quantitative research suggests that Japanese women stay at home because they prefer to take care of children. I argue that qualitative research has revealed information that quantitative studies have failed to uncover. Since the system was made to benefit the male-dominated patriarchy, many of them were forced to leave their jobs. The strong patriarchal social structure maintains these gender roles, but weakening its grip might allow husbands to share in the responsibilities of unpaid housework and child care, which might enable Japanese women to make more individual fertility decisions.

Chapter 1: Fertility in Context

Japanese Fertility in Context

Over the last 50 years, the total fertility rate¹ (TFR) has been decreasing in Japan as well as in most other wealthy developed countries in the world (Caldwell, 1992; 1999; MacDonald, 2000; Mason, 1992). As of the 21st century, half of the countries in the world are below the 2.08 TFR replacement level necessary to sustain current population levels (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 375; Caldwell, 1992). In Europe, as soldiers returned following the end of World War II, economies recovered and people became optimistic again; fertility rose sharply as a result (Easterlin, 2000). From 1946 to 1964, fertility rates were well above the norm, as western and northern Europe experienced a 'baby boom' (Sobotka, 2004), which compensated for lower birth rates during the Depression and the war (Easterlin, 2000). After a time, however, women began postponing having children, which affected the TFR. Things had changed in industrial and post-industrial countries, and the cost of having and raising children was on the rise (Morgan, 2003: 592; MacDonald, 2000; Ogawa, et., al, 2009). One of the factors involved was the conflict between women's obligations at work and at home (Morgan, 2003). In most cases, once the TFR in a country has dropped below TFR replacement level, it rarely goes back up and above replacement level (Bongaarts and Bulatao, 2000; Atoh, 2008; MacDonald, 2000; Morgan, 2003; Morgan and Taylor, 2006). Italy, Spain and Japan have had extended periods of time below TFR replacement level, but Spain may have a chance to stabilise its TFR due to immigration to the country (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 11). I chose to include some European countries' TFR in Table 1, because Italy and Spain have experienced low TFR and are characterised as more patriarchal societies, while Scandinavian countries and

¹ The definition of Total Fertility Rate represents the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children in accordance with the current age-specific fertility rate. The calculation of total fertility rate is the sum of the age-specific birth rates (5-year age cohort between 10 and 49) for female residents of a specified geographic area (nation, state, county, etc.) during a specified time period (usually a calendar year) multiplied by 5.

the U.K. have been more stable. TFR lower than 1.5 is defined as a ‘super low fertility rate’ (Morgan and Taylor, 2006). In East Asia, there are numerous such extreme cases, with Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan all experiencing super low fertility rates.

Table 1: Total Fertility Rates

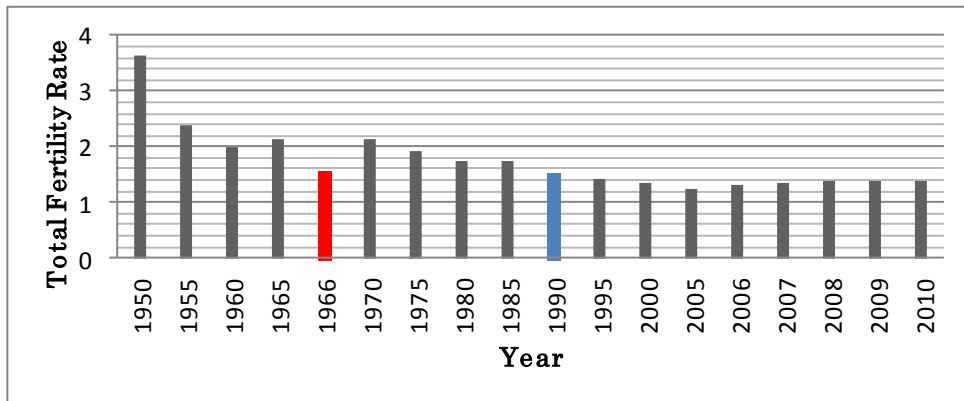
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Denmark	1.77	1.80	1.85	1.85	1.89	1.84	1.88
Hong Kong	1.03	0.96	0.98	1.02	1.06	1.04	1.11
Italy	1.26	1.32	1.35	1.37	1.42	1.41	1.41
Japan	1.36	1.26	1.32	1.34	1.37	1.37	1.39
Norway	1.85	1.84	1.90	1.90	1.96	1.98	1.95
South Korea	1.47	1.08	1.12	1.25	1.19	1.15	1.23
Spain	1.23	1.34	1.38	1.39	1.46	1.39	1.38
Sweden	1.55	1.77	1.85	1.88	1.91	1.94	1.98
Taiwan	1.68	1.12	1.12	1.10	1.05	1.03	0.89
UK	1.64	1.79	1.85	1.88	1.91	1.94	1.98

Source: OECD Factbook in 2010-2011: Total Fertility Rate.
http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook-2010/total-fertility-rates-table_factbook-2010-table6-en
 Databook of International Labour Statistic 2012, <http://www.jil.go.jp/english/estatis/databook/>
 Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive, Yuan, R.C.O. (Taiwan) in 2012.
<http://eng.dgbas.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=2>

Recently Scandinavian countries² total fertility rate has been stable (Atho, 2000; Thuya, 2004). Even though Sweden’s TFR is low, it is seen as being stable, especially after 2006; in 2000 the TFR was only 1.55. Many researchers and scholars have noted how successful Sweden has been in increasing and stabilising its TFR (see Hoem, 1993; Bernardi and Kertzer, 2007; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Nagase, 2001; Thuya, 2004; Ato, 1999; 2000). In 2012, TFR in East Asia experienced a slight increase South Korea's TFR rose to 1.30, Taiwan's to 1.20, and Japan's rose to 1.41. However in East Asian countries, the TFR has remained at a very low level. In Japan’s history, two years showed an especially shocking change of TFR, and those years (1966, 1990) are highlighted (see Figure 1).

² Scandinavia comprises Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Figure 1: Total Fertility Rate between 1950-2010 in Japan



Sources: The Japanese National Institute of Population and Social Research; NIPSR (2012)
<http://www.ipss.go.jp/pp-fuken/j/fuken2002/shusho.html>

Before and during the Asian Pacific War, Japanese women were encouraged to bear and raise as many children as they could in order to strengthen the country (Sato and Iwasawara, 2006; see Chapter 2). Several researchers have identified three distinct periods of fertility in post-World War II Japan. After the end of the war, the number of children women were having gradually started to decrease (Sato and Iwasawara, 2006; Lafleur, 1990). Abortion was legalised in Japan in 1948, which contributed to the decline in fertility with a steep rise in the number of abortions (Rehterford and Ogawa, 2004:1). From 1947-1957, fertility declined by more than half. Fertility leveled off from 1957-1973, and from 1973 onward it started declining again (Rehterford and Ogawa, 2004: 1), which is often referred to as the “baby bust.” In Japan also there was a brief baby boom right after World War II, similar to that experienced in western countries when soldiers returned home, but the TFR still sharply declined from 4.54 children per woman in 1947 to 2.04 in 1957.

Highlighted in red in Figure 1, in 1966, the TFR in Japan dramatically decreased. This decrease was referred to as *Hinoeuma*. This sudden downward spike, which returned to normal levels the following year, happened because 1966 was the “Year of the Fire Horse”, or *Hinoeuma* (Rehterford and Ogawa, 2004: 1). Many couples superstitiously believed that having a girl during that year would be unlucky, so they avoided having any children in 1966 (Rehterford and Ogawa,

2004). According to Itabashi (2007), regarding the *Hinoeuma*, there was an old belief that girls born in a year which fell on a 60 year cycle (which had begun around 1666) would become too strong, cause trouble, and destroy men. It was thought that women born on such a year would not be able to find a husband. For example, Itabashi explains that many women who were born in 1906 eventually committed suicide (2007). In 1934, many single women who had been born in 1906 were gathered and transported to China for Japanese men working on a railway there. The average age of those women was 28 years old, 8 years more than the average age of marrying at that time. They willingly chose to travel to China, hoping to find husbands (Itabashi, 2007). Over 60 years later, in 1966, Japanese people still held this negative belief and women tried to avoid becoming pregnant that year. One woman who happened to be born that year is the emperor's son's wife, and people started to regard this belief as mere superstition.

Between 1971 and 1974, there was a second baby boom in Japan, and the TFR was 2.14 in 1972 and 1973. But the TFR has not exceeded 2.0 since 1975, and has gradually continued to decrease over the years. It continued to drop throughout the time the Japanese 'bubble economy'³ occurred, from the late 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s. The TFR dropped to 1.57 in 1989 and 1990, known as the '1.57 Shock' (Ato, 1999) which highlighted in blue Figure 1. The TFR decline is still ongoing since the '1.57 shock' in 1990. This was the turning point to talk about the low fertility rate in Japan, because the TFR had already been less than 2.0, which means that people began to acknowledge that one family had fewer than 2 children, which was very shocking news for Japan. In 2005, the TFR of Japan was 1.26 (OECD Factbook, 2011-2012). Since then it has been increasing slowly and steadily (see Figure 1); in 2012, the TFR was 1.41 in Japan. However, in the 1966 '*Hinoeuma*', the actual number of children born was 1,360,974; during the 1990 '1.57 shock' 1,246,802 were born. But in 2012, only 1,050,806 children were born, the lowest number of actual children on record (Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare; MHLW 2012).

³ Japan's economy dramatically increased between 1986–1990; this era of prosperity was called the bubble economy (Otsu, et al, 2004, 1137).

Lower fertility rate results in declining populations with an increasing number of older people, in turn resulting in a diminished work force, which has negative economic consequences (Morgan, 2002). According to economists and population researchers, a low TFR may damage the balance of population between the younger and older generations and most countries are understandably worried about the weakness of their economies in the future (Ogawa and Retherford, 1996: 703; Greenhalgh, 1995; MacDonald, 2000; Morgan, 2002; Morgan and Taylor 2006; Grant, et. al, 2004; Kawamoto, 2001). This economic weakness is one of the most pressing concerns associated with Japan's low TFR (Ogawa and Retherford, 1996). Not only has the population in Japan been decreasing, but people are living longer due to advances in medical technology, which in turn affects the economy by creating heavier taxes to support the older generations with pensions (Ogawa and Retherford, 1996). There have been many findings from quantitative and demographic research on low fertility in many countries. Morgan and Taylor (2006) categorised seven already known findings about the causes. Morgan and Taylor draw on statistics from Europe, Asia, Oceania and North America. It often points out three long term low fertility countries; Spain, Italy and Japan. Their interest is not only demographic and economic, but it also focuses on cultural and ideological changes. Their seven findings can be applied to the root causes of Japan's low fertility.

1. Postponing Having Children

Women consider postponing children to be a matter of choice, while researchers refer to these decisions as 'shifts in timing' in having children, which directly relate to the perception of a 'time limit' (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 383). Shifts in fertility timing, however seemingly insignificant in the short term, lead to much larger timing gaps over the long term. A sustained increase in shifts over a long period of time is untenable for a society (Morgan and Taylor, 2006). The length of time for which women and men chose to remain single has been increasing,

because they are choosing to take more time to pursue their education and prefer to enjoy their single lives (MacDonald, 2000; Atoh, 2008). Those with a higher degree have more employment options, causing them to focus on their careers for a time before they eventually starting a family (MacDonald, 2000). The time when women start to consider having children or are ready to have children is later than before, narrowing the time limits for child bearing and negatively impacting the TFR.

2. Shorter Window of Time for Childbearing

The number of children a woman might have in her life is heavily dependent upon her age at the first birth (Mathews, Brady and Hamilton, 2009). For example, if a woman has her first child when she is 16, then theoretically, if her child follows the same path, she would become a grandmother at the age of 32, and could possibly still have more children herself. However, if a woman delays having her first child until the age of 32, and her child has her own child at a later age, the window of time is much smaller. This shorter window of time for childbearing means that couples might not even have a second child, resulting fewer children being born (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 383; Bongaarts, 2002). One issue that was mentioned was the physical and mental rigours of trying to raise children as middle age approaches in Japan (MHLW, 2010). Another factor is in Japan limited time and opportunity because of working long hours culture (Segawa, 2000). There is a much smaller frequency of men and women having sex in Japan, compared with many other developed countries (see Chapter 3). Among married couples who do not have sex more than once a month (sex-less couples), the top reason for Japanese men was that they were too tired due to the demands of their job (24.6 %); for Japanese women, it was because sex was too troublesome (18.8 %) (MHLW, 2009).

3. Overall Life Course

Fertility decisions are shaped and affected by the overall life courses of women and men. Factors that affect couples' life courses and fertility decisions include mental and physical health conditions, economic and social reasons, and individual choices (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 383; Friedman, Hechter and Kanazawa, 1994). In the past, having children was simply a given, but now it is more acceptable than before if women and men in developed countries do not wish to have children, explore different options and pursue a different life course (Morgan and Taylor, 2006). For example, in the U.K. about 40 % of women and men choose to remain single, which is more acceptable than it was 50 years ago, when marriage was seen as a natural way to ensure financial security (Morgan and Taylor, 2006). According to the NIPSS, as of 2012, there are eight times as many Japanese men who have never married than there were 30 years ago.⁴ The younger generation's values have changed (Suzuki, 2008); however, Japanese women are not expected to have children without being married (Atho, 2008).

4. Financial Costs and Time Costs

There are direct and indirect financial and time costs for women of raising children (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 384). At one time, it was believed that children would contribute economically to a family (Coldwell, 1982; 1991; Sechikawa, 2013), but today children are regarded as a financial burden rather than an asset, due to educational and time costs (Morgan and Taylor, 2006 ; Croix and Doepke, 2003). Expenses for raising a child are exceptionally high in Japan, and in addition to the obvious increased food and educational costs associated with raising more children, a second child means that parents must provide more living space, possibly even moving into a bigger place to live in order to accommodate an extra person (Morgan and Taylor, 2006). There are not only financial concerns, but also time costs to consider, especially for women. Raising

⁴ Japanese single men's age between 45 to 49 and age between 50 to 54 who are never married and add take average and at age 50 are single, which is the ratio.

children takes up most of women's time, causing them to miss out on career opportunities. The time cost of raising each additional child is also high, especially for women who suspend or resign from their careers in order to devote the necessary time toward their children, which has negative financial consequences (Morgan, 2004). Each subsequent child widens the gap between the time when the woman ends her previous career and the time she eventually tries to reenter the workforce.

5. Birth Control

As birth control becomes more socially acceptable and legitimate, more women can control their own fertility and can strategically and responsibly control their family planning. Morgan and Taylor reveal very similar patterns in developed countries, but there are differences between Western and European countries and Japan regarding attitudes toward contraception. Oral contraception is more often used by women, allowing women to control reproduction in many Western countries, but not in Italy and Japan (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 384; see below).

6. Ideal Number and Social Ideal Number of Children Decreasing

According to Morgan and Taylor (2006: 384) the ideal number of children has gone down in most countries, which can be directly or indirectly related to financial issues. In the majority of countries, the ideal number and the social ideal number of children is two. In Japan, however, the ideal number of children is still high (3 children average) compared with western countries, even though people are choosing to have fewer children (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: OECD, 2012). In Japan surveys have shown that the ideal number of children has not changed for two decades (Lutz, 2005). Yet, the actual number of children is falling.

7. *Responsibility to Have an Affordable Number of Children*

Large families are less acceptable than before. Today, it is seen as irresponsible to have many children because the high cost of raising children is a disadvantage for parents; such households have become increasingly rare (Morgan and Taylor, 2006: 384). Many countries have been struggling to pay out benefits. In the U.K., those who are jobless and with more than three children could face penalties and have their benefits slashed. U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron has said that these people must either stop having children or get a job, because additional children strain the national benefits system ever further (Shipman, Daily Mail 24 June 2012). In Japan, the situation is totally different; women are encouraged to have more than one child, and women with three children receive substantial extra government benefits (Ato 2006; Ida 2011).

Much quantitative research on the attitudes of Japanese women toward fertility has been carried out, but there is conflicting information. Some quantitative studies have found that women want to have two to three children (Ato, 2006; OECD in 2012), while other studies have said that the number of women who intend to have only one child is increasing (Ida, 2011). Other studies suggest that the drop in fertility rates has many causes, including women choosing to remain childless and a rise in the number of women who live in childless households in developed countries (Nakata, 2001; OECD, 2012). It is difficult, however, to discern which is accurate from this body of research and how it has impacted the Japanese fertility rate. Exactly what affects the intentions of women's fertility decisions has remained unclear, and very few studies have been done on individual levels of fertility decision making (Hayford, 2009).

I argue that Morgan and Taylor's demographics and other quantitative studies have yet to discover *why women* are choosing to have fewer children, or choosing not to have any children, in Japan. Morgan and Taylor's findings are very useful to understand what causes low fertility in general, but there is a limitation in using quantitative research. Chang and Song (2010: 549) note that in their demographic

research, resistance to the patriarchal culture is reduced and it would be better to understand more; more qualitative research is needed to learn about the experiences shaping people's lives. Japan's fertility rate has been low, but the number of children desired by women seems to be fairly high; it has not been made clear why women who wish to have more children are having fewer children. Japan's low fertility is often seen as a result of giving women access to higher education; individualism is also seen as a negative factor hindering the TFR (MacDonald, 2000; Thuya, 2000). In Japan, family ties are still important and individualism is viewed negatively as a 'selfish' trait. It is not legal for husband and wife to have different names, supposedly because each retaining their own name would cause confusion for their children (see Masuhara, 1997).

Gender Inequality in Japan

Hierarchy and Patriarchy

Japan remains a hierarchal and patriarchal system: women obey men (Ochiai, 2001: 2008, Sechiyama, 2013, Tokuhiro, 2010). The Samurai hierarchy established the *ie* family system (Ueno, 2009: 63; Harrington, 1995), which remained an important part of Japanese culture from the Edo Era (1603-1876) until World War II, and it was strictly hierarchical, prioritizing family members by age, gender and birth order (Ochiai, 2008: Tokuhiro, 2010; Rebick and Takenaka, 2006). *Ie seido* was based on a Confucian belief presuming a patriarchal head of the family who also served as the conscience guide of the family, especially among the warrior (samurai) class and some rich families (Tokuhiro, 2010: 17; Sechiyama, 2013), which comprised less than 10% of the population and developed over 600 years (Ueno, 2009: 63; Hendry, 2010). Most of the population during the pre-Meiji period were commoners living in autonomous communities where the rules were far more relaxed regarding marriage, name, premarital sex, divorce and remarriage than they are today (Ueno, 2009; Hendry, 2010).

⁵In pre-Meiji Japan, whatever a person of the samurai class was given as a reward from the emperor would belong to the whole family, or *ie*, not just to the individual (Hendry, 2010). That system designated the male leader of the household to have control over and responsibility for his family and property (Ochiai, 2008). During the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japan began a period of economic and political modernization (Williams, 1992), though this created some conflict with the traditional *ie* family system. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan modelled its laws after French law, drawing some criticism for adopting western ideals of a family built around close relations between husband and wife, or between parents and children; this eventually became the central ideal of the Meiji Civil code (Ochiai, 2000). After the adoption of the code, the concept of the '*ie*' gained importance, as the population was encouraged to show respect to the emperor and to their parents (Ochiai, 2000). Since the Meiji period, the *ie* has been associated with the cultural identity of Japan (Ochiai, 2000). Within the family hierarchy, the father was the head, followed by the first son and that son's first son, and finally the women. Mothers and wives are ranked below their own children, especially sons (Hendry, 2010).

Throughout the Meiji period, Japanese women were kept at the lowest level of society until the end of World War II. Following that, women were given greater access to education as part of the modernisation of the Japanese household. However, the education was intended to make a woman a 'good wife and wise mother', an archetypal figure within the *ie* family system which helps to support institutionalised patriarchy (Sechiyama, 2013; Ochiai, 2008; Tokuhiko, 2010). The '*ryosaikenbo*' (good wife and wise mother) ideology was one of the reasons used to justify granting women greater access to education but some women used their education to gain greater independence (Takahashi, 2003: 42). The traditions of the role of motherhood could be interpreted differently, though it was always expected that mothers would, at the very least, have children and care for them (Takahashi, 2003: 42). As Japanese women became more educated, it created some confusion between studying to be a 'good wife and wise mother' and modern

⁵ Eras of Japanese History; Edo: 1603-1876, Meiji:1868-1912, Taisho:1912-1926, Showa:1926-1989, Heisei:1989-present.

education. The pre-modern Confucian ideals state that ‘an ignorant woman is virtuous’, under which women were expected to obey their husbands without question (Sechiyama, 2013: 78). The ‘good wife/wise mother’ ideology was more modern, and also broke from the pre-modern Confucian ideals that ‘An ignorant woman is virtuous’ (Sechiyama, 2013: 78). The New Civil Code of 1947 officially abolished the *ie* system, yet it has survived and merely evolved into a more modern form (Ronald and Alexy, 2011). The legacy of the *ie* system is still felt today.

The modern ‘good wife/wise mother’ concept was originally meant to be integrated into the Confucian philosophy (Sechiyama, 2013: 79). Sechiyama (2013) notes that the new role omitted a woman’s obedience to her husband when it came to managing the household, and ignorance was no longer a virtue since women were also placed in the role of being their children’s first teacher. This was a clear break with the feudal ideals, and a nod toward women’s roles in raising future Japanese citizens trained to strive for national unity. The ‘good wife/wise mother’ concept also spread to China by the early 1990s, having first been ‘imported’ from Japan early in the 1900s, which is also likely when Korea adopted the idea (Sechiyama, 2013: 66-73).

Women in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan maintain a family-centric view because those countries have normalised ‘individualisation without individualism’ (Chang and Song, 2010: 560). A study conducted by Chang and Song (2010) argue that Japanese women are reluctantly family-centered, but still put their family’s interests before their own. All three countries also have the patriarchal system in common. Despite modernization, patriarchy persists in East Asian societies (Chang and Song, 2010: 560; Sechiyama, 2013).

This *ie* system promotes stronger relationships among family members but is more restrictive and complicated in matters of marriage and divorce, especially for women. Japanese women are expected to act as though belong to their spouses or their families, which makes it hard for a woman to make individual decisions

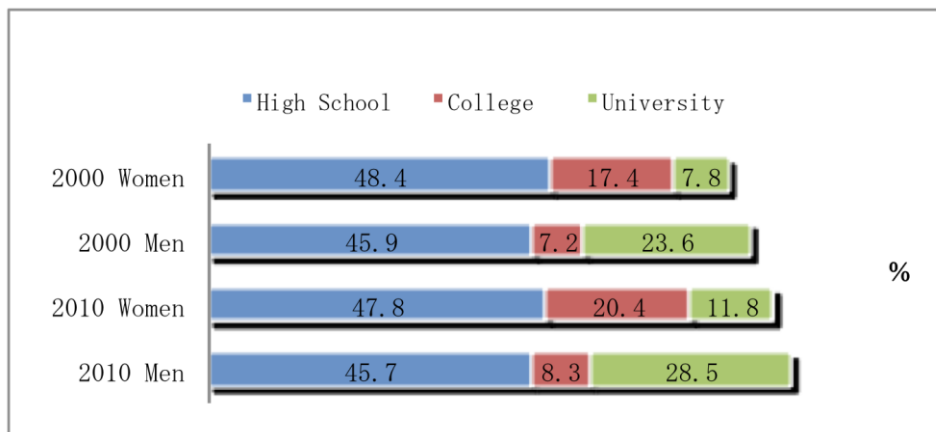
herself. They cannot choose what they want for themselves. It is a challenge for women to develop their own identities as a partner in a marriage, when the social construct of marriage in Japan is not geared toward allowing them to express any individuality (Tokuhiko, 2010). Ueno (2009, 2010) explains that as Japan became a more modern society, women started losing their rights in the workforce and their own sexual independence, their status gradually being restricted to that of wife and mother because of 'ie' system (see Tokuhiko, 2010). The notion that the 'good women and wise mothers' of Japan are expected to give up their own desires in order to marry, have children, and take care of their family seems unlikely to change.

Single Life

Today more women are pursuing higher education than ever before. Parents want their daughters to have the same educational opportunities as their sons, which could either lead to better career opportunities, or more opportunities for their daughters to meet men who are educated (Ikenaka, 2003). In Japan in 1950, the class system was abolished and replaced by a system based on skill, allowing people to be promoted in the work place (Suzuki, 2008). As the economy began to grow more, women began pursuing higher education (Shirakawase, 2008). In 1950, 34.6 % of Japanese men were attending colleges and universities; for women, the percentage was 17.2% (Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sport, Science and Technology, 2012). By 1966, this education gap between men and women had significantly shrunk; the percentage of men attending colleges and universities at that point was 28.2%, and the percentage of women attending was 20.6%. By 2000, the gap had been reduced even further, with 30.8% of men attending colleges and universities, compared to a percentage of 25.2% for women, and by 2010, the overall percentage of men attending college or university was 36.8%, and for women the percentage was 32.2% (see Figure 2). More women, however, are attending two-year colleges or vocational schools than universities, as opposed to men, the majority of whom attend universities rather than colleges. Perhaps this is because more women focus on receiving training for

careers such as auxiliary nurses, dental hygienists and kindergarten teachers, which they hope to be able to keep after marrying and having children (see also: Ono, 2000). Many Japanese women feel that if they have a degree from a university, it will be harder for them to pursue and keep a good job and may lead to a boring, meaningless, dead-end job (see Chapter 3).

Figure 2: Education Achievements of Japanese Women and Men



Statistics Japan in 2010.

http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2010/index.htm?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter
 Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sport, Science and Technology in 2012.

<http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2010/users-g/wakatta.htm#jump2>

According to the OECD (2012), a typical Japanese student scored 529 in reading literacy, maths and science in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This score is higher than the OECD average of 497, making Japan one of the strongest OECD countries in students' skills. This OECD research shows that Japanese students outperform other countries in studying, especially Japanese girls. On average in Japan, girls outperformed boys by 14 points, more than the average OECD gender gap of 9 points. Yet girls tend to pursue higher education at the college level, whereas boys tend to enter universities.

Parents would like to help their daughters pursue professional and specialized degrees in order to be able to compete with men and keep their jobs even after they marry, because the patriarchal structure of society makes it difficult for

women to keep a job. Women cannot compete at the same level as men because of the way the labour system and society are organised (Ikenaka, 1998; Ochiai, 2000; Ato, 1996; Steinhoff, and Tanaka, 1998). Parents still hope for a better future for their daughters, so they do all they can to provide a good education for them to be able to choose what they want to be and what they want to do with their lives. Parents are doing all they can for their daughters to open up as many options for them as possible. However, they realise that the odds are against them and that they will face difficulties in their professional lives when they decide whether to struggle to keep their jobs or to quit altogether. It is as if women's potential capacity and ability have been ignored and put aside in the corner.

Young Japanese women and men experience greater enjoyment and stay single longer to enjoy their freedom, more than previous generations, possibly because they are spoiled by their parents (see Ato, 2001; MacDonald, 2006; Rindfuss, 1991). The period of time in which women and men choose to remain single has been increasing, because they are choosing to take more time to pursue their education and prefer to enjoy their single lives. Japanese young people find the single life very comfortable, and are staying single as long as they can. Some parents want their children to be comfortable and enjoy their single lives, because they themselves could not enjoy being single when they were younger. Nowadays young Japanese people understand that their parents' generation had to work very hard and did not have enough money during the historical period when Japan was developing (Retherford, Ogawa and Mathukura, 2001). Until they are married, young Japanese women and men usually live with their parents, who are very supportive; many mothers still wash their adult children's clothes, dishes, and make dinner for them, almost like hotel services without payment or very low pay. With fewer children at home, parents can take better care of their children financially and physically. Many Japanese singles live for free or pay very low rent to their parents. Sakamoto (2001) found that 60.4 % of single men and women between the ages of 25 and 34 who still live with their parents contribute an average of ¥ 35,000⁶ (approximately £273) a month to the household, and

⁶ 1 pound is ¥ 128, as of May 10, 2012

53.7% of single women and men between the ages of 35 and 44 contribute ¥ 46,000 (approximately £359). Even if parents collect very low rent from their children, parents usually save it for them when they married (Yamada, 1997). According to the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research; NIPSSR (2000), in all age group the number of single males who live with their parents has been increasing. The average percentage is 70. For women, the tendency to live with parents decreases between 25 and 29 years old, but after that the percentage increases. The research shows that the average percentage is about 80 for women. Many young Japanese people who have a job and are single still live with their parents; they are not completely independent of their parents for their fundamental living conditions. Other East Asian countries are similar in this regard. According to Ochiai and Molony (2008), this is common for developed East Asian countries and is a cultural norm. However, Ting and Chiu (2002:620) found in their study that women and men in Hong Kong live with their parents for a longer period of time, but their reason is stronger traditional obligations to family rather than financial issues, and women feel much more responsibility to stay with their parents until they are married. The young generation of Japanese people are saving living expenses living with their parents and save up to travel overseas during holidays to discover the world, or shop and spend money on themselves.

Those with a higher degree have more employment options, causing Japanese women to focus on their careers for a time before eventually starting a family. Japanese women feel that after a certain point, it is too late to have children, and as a result they do not even see the point of marrying, so more Japanese women are electing to remain single, even if they desire to marry and have children (Segawa, 2000). More single Japanese women are making plans to stay single (17.7%) than men (3.3%) (NIPSSR, 2010). According to Nita (2004), before especially Japanese women decide to marry, they think of competitive advantages. If Japanese women and men cannot think of any advantages to marriage, they choose to remain single. Women are frustrated that they are forced to change their lifestyle so drastically after marriage or having children when men do not have to

in Japan (Yamada, 1998; Sarada, 1999). Women are more financially independent, but in Japan, married women are constrained to stay home and be housewives, which prevents them from gaining financial independence, leaving them with little choice but unpaid domestic work to take care of family and to be a 'good wife and wise mother' (Ochiai, 2008; Sechiyama, 2013); it is difficult for women to keep a job.

Women's Difficulties in Keeping a Job

There have been several interpretations of the '*ryosaikenbo*' ideology, either justifying the conservative, traditional notion, of keeping women at home, or a call for women to claim greater independence (Takahashi, 1994). The interpretations vary depending on the context of the historical period invoked alongside the ideology. The '*danson'johi*', which attempted to lay out the terms of equality between women and men, has not faded entirely out of sight, though the context and interpretation of the idea have changed with time. Although Japanese women are not looked down upon just for being women, their presence in the modern workplace is still viewed negatively rather than positively (Takahashi, 1994: 42). Gender inequality is a very troubling concern, even the Japanese government has been struggling to resolve this (Ochiai, 2001; 2002). They are worried that Japanese culture and traditions will change if women gain total financial independence. Ochiai (2000) also asserts that Japanese men are worried about women gaining financial independence, because in the traditional household model, men work only outside the home and do not share any household or child-rearing responsibilities. Even in the west with the number of women in the workplace increasing, they are still expected to do the majority of housework (Shelton and John, 1996; Hass, 1999; Coltrane, 2000).

Today, even when Japanese women are able to do some paid work, they are expected to do the same domestic duties and care work regardless (Takahashi, 1994). A phenomenon known as 'housewifization' emerged in the west and in

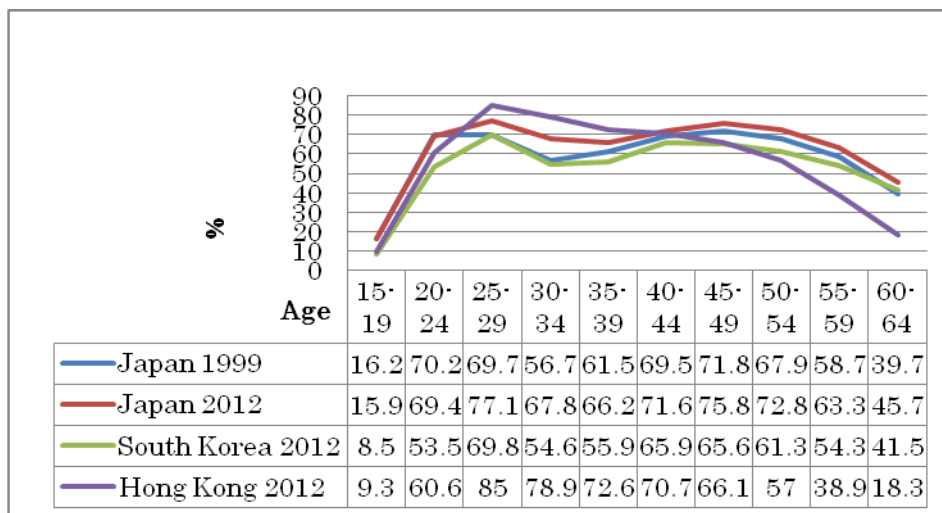
Japan where most married women assumed the roles of primary housekeepers and childcare givers (Ochiai, 2008: 3). Ochiai's (2008: 174) explanation for the three causes of 'housewifization' can be found in numerous societies, but is almost always caused by unemployment, child care, and managing children's education. With women and children removed from the labour force, men had to earn enough to support their entire families, thus becoming the core of the work force (Sechiyama. 2013: 33). Sechiyama (2013) also believes that the replacement of light industry is another factor that drove women from the labour market; the introduction of heavy industry was the beginning of modern labour relations and roles.

Ochiai (2008: 5) suggests an opposite of this trend, 'de-housewifization' has been gradually taking place since the 1970s, marked by increased participation of women in the workplace in America and northwestern Europe. This led 'second wave' feminists to criticize the gender-based division of labour that had become commonplace in many countries (men in the workplace, women at home). According to Ochiai (2008), the result has been that modern economic development first makes housewives out of women, then expects them to 'de-housewife' and re-enter the work force. It became the dominant paradigm in Europe and the West as the category of 'housewives' diminished and the number of divorces and single mothers rose. In Japan, however, 'de-housewifization' has not yet been fully realised. In most countries less-educated women have a low rate of employment, and more highly educated women have a higher rate of employment but in Japan there is only a relatively small increase in female employment as education improves (Ochiai, 2008). In Japan, educated and skilled women participate in the labour force when they are single, but after marrying, they still tend to leave their jobs, even if they are professional workers (Takahashi, 1994). There are more women professionals leaving their jobs in Japan than in most other countries (Hertog, 2008; Ogawa, 2004).

Other highly developed East Asian territories, such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, have shown signs of 'de-housewifization', though even these countries are similar

to Japan in several ways. Most people in those countries work in the main metropolitan areas, and like Japan, they have a low TFR (Yu, 2009; Lo, 2003). In Taiwan, higher divorce rates have been occurring, which fits Ochiai's theory of the process of de-houswifization better than other East Asian countries; however, there has not been yet an increase in single mothers compared with other East Asian countries (Tokyo University, 2012). Examining changes in female labour force participation rates between 1980 and 2005 in Taiwan, Huang (2009) finds that changes in the makeup of the population is a driving force behind the changes there. Breaking down the changes by education, marital status and family structure, a parallel has been found to the changes in women's participation in the workplace. The number of married women with preschool children has fallen, explaining the increase in the number of women participating in the labour force (Huang, 2009). Huang (2009) also notes that most of the increase in labor force participation can be traced to women with higher education.

Figure 3: Japanese, South Korean and Hong Kong women in the labour force by age



Sources: Databook of International Labour Statistics 2012
The Japan Ministry of Health, and Labour and Welfare 2010
<http://www.jil.go.jp/english/estatis/databook/>

Japanese female employment over the female life course follows an M-shaped pattern (Ato, 1996, Ochiai et al., 2008; Tokuhiko, 2012; Sechiyama, 2013) with employment rates peaking in the age ranges of the 20s and again in the late 40s; those patterns have not changed. Between 1999 and 2009, more women are

fighting to get back to a job. Japanese women's M-shape on the graph seems to have a shallow valley between 1999 and 2012 (see Figure 2) which means more women are keeping their jobs than before. This M-shape is showing that fewer women are becoming housewives (Sechiyama, 2013). However, it is still common for women to leave a job when they have a child and return to the labour market after their children start school. Depending on which stage of their life they are in, women spent time in the workplace and at home, while men are expected to spend most of their lives after graduation in the workplace (Takahashi, 1994: 44). This is not only related to fluctuations in the labour market, but as part of the modern interpretation of the '*ryosaikenbo*' ideology (Takahashi, 1994). Women are still expected to concentrate their efforts on the home, and men are expected to give priority to their jobs. But as women become older, they are expected to take a part-time job and maintain the household and raise the children (Takahashi, 1994). This M-shaped pattern is similar to one seen in South Korea, where many mothers believe that their infant children's emotional development would be adversely affected if they were placed in public nurseries and not raised by their mothers (Ochiai, 2008; Chang, 2008). Many Japanese women believe that children's early years are a crucial time for development, so they stay at home during this important time and do not regret doing so (Waldfogel, 1998; Yu, 2009; Ochiai et al., 2008). This is because mothers have sole responsibility for raising children, resulting in deep emotional relationships between mothers and children, resulting in the introduction, in the Taisho period (1912-1926), of '*bosei*' and '*bosei-ai*' into the Japanese language as equivalents of 'motherhood' and 'maternal love', respectively. This was not the case with pre-modern family traditions (Sechiyama, 2013: 85). The concept of '*boseishinwa*' (myth of motherhood) has had a major effect in setting gender roles in the Japanese workplace and at home (Takahashi, 1994: 45). This notion of motherhood does not represent the reality of being a mother, but idealises the personal connection between a mother and her children (Takahashi, 1994: 45). This '*bosei*' insists that women follow the traditional division of gender roles. Another major influence on the propagation of motherhood is the myth known as '*san-sai ji shinwa*', which was the belief that the first three years the most critical time for children to develop physically and

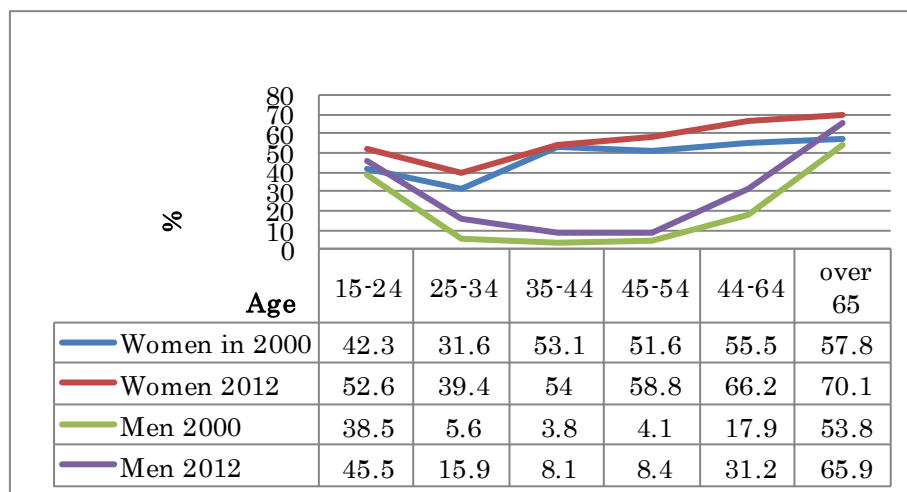
mentally (Ochiai, 2008). In Japan it was, and still is, believed to be important for mothers to take the responsibility of caring for children during those three years because of this myth. '*San-sai ji shinwa*' was popularised thanks to the work of British psychologist John Bowlby (1969), who researched attachment theory. However those beliefs and myths led more Japanese women to push to stay at home to take responsibility for child care. Is it any coincidence that, as more women gained greater access to jobs, suddenly those beliefs, studies and myths arose in Japan to push women back from the labour force? Since the end of the Meiji period, Japanese women have been told to value having children and holding down part-time jobs only, the 'good wife / wise mother' model again, returning them to the traditional motherhood roles of housework and child care. But in Japan they need labour power, so after raising children, women should return to work part-time or temporary work, but still could not become completely independent in the male dominated society. The career trajectories of women in both Hong Kong (see Figure 2) and Taiwan follow an inverted U-shaped pattern, where women work in the labour force at the beginning of their careers, then suspend working during maternity leave, and return to their jobs upon finishing their maternity leave (Cheng, 1997: 28). A high percentage of women in Hong Kong and Taiwan work through the period of child-bearing, child-raising years in their thirties, while the numbers drop significantly for those in their late forties, breaking the M-shaped pattern (Sechiyama, 2013: 257). There are two primary reasons fewer women in their late forties participate in the labour force. Women can retire five years earlier than men, and wealthier women are making the decision to be full-time housewives (Sechiyama, 2013). Whether in socialist or capitalist Chinese societies, women typically work while they have small children, and then retire early (Sechiyama, 2013).

When the labour force was not large enough in Taiwan, a new demand for more female workers toppled the traditional barriers to hiring married women and changed the entire labor market as a result (Yu, 2005). Employers began to offer married women better positions, which changed how those women sought jobs (Brinton 1995; Yu, 2005). In a comparative study of women in the Japanese and

Taiwanese labour forces. Yu (2009) found that a greater demand for workers in postwar Taiwan employers to provide better incentives to convince housewives to leave their homes and rejoin the labour force. During this period, however, female workers were concentrated in industries with greater demand for low skilled labourers, and more highly educated women were uninterested in returning to work (Yu, 2009). Now, however, more educated women are staying in the labour force in Taiwan, but not in Japan.

In Hong Kong, women pursue higher education because it directly influences their career and their ability to keep a job. When they have a higher education, they have a better chance of staying in the labour force; less educated women face a greater chance of losing a job (Cheng, 1997: 26), a situation similar to that which is faced by Taiwanese women (Ochiai, et. al., 2008). South Korea, ranks even lower 64 on the GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) than Japan (rank 54); however, South Korea also has more women working full-time after marriage or having children when compared with Japan (Ochiai, et. Al., 2008,). In Japan it seems more women are keeping a job than in the past, but the news is not entirely positive (see Figure 2) because more women are working part-time or in temporary work than before (see Figure 3) which means the inequality gap is widening.

Figure 4: Percentage of the Japanese population with part-time and temporary jobs, by age and gender



Source: Statistics Japan 2013
<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/>

In Japan, women's monthly wages were ¥ 203,132 (£ 1587), daily wage was ¥ 10,635 (£ 83), and hourly was ¥ 1,414 (£ 11); compared with men's average monthly wages of ¥ 429,156 (£ 3,353), daily ¥ 21,675 (£ 169) and hourly ¥ 2,541 (£ 20) (Databook of International Labour Statistics, 2012). This data shows that Japanese men are earning double the amount earned by women. There are greater pay gaps between women and men in Japan, because more Japanese women are forced to settle for part-time and lower-skilled jobs when returning to the labour force (Yu, 2009).

Most Japanese women who elect to have children end up leaving their jobs and giving up their careers, and sacrifice themselves to take care of their children, their homes, and their husbands (Magase, 2002 ; Ochiai, 2001). In Japan even the most educated women are often forced to accept menial positions when attempting to go back to work after a long absence, which underscores the very low job security of women (see Chapter 5). Many companies are looking for inexpensive manual labor, and Japanese wives can work at these jobs while their children are at school and husbands are at work (Broadbent, 2002; Yu, 2009 ; Waldfogel, 1998). The Japanese economy is more developed than Taiwan, but there is greater gender equality in Taiwan (Yu, 2009; Ochiai, 2008). Working women in Taiwan enjoy a higher status than their Japanese counterparts (Yu, 2009). In Japan, in contrast, many women still choose to take care of their families and children after marrying. Yet, in actuality they have no other options at all, so it is not so much a choice as a reality that must be accepted: the expectation of women to obey the hierarchy and patriarchy originating during the Meiji period remains (Sechiyama, 2013: 76).

Lack of Support

Steinberg and Nakane (2012: 26) found in their study that, to stabilize the TFR in Japan, the country has no choice but to allow more women into the labour force. Steinberg and Nakane (2012) argue that Japan must enact policies that will boost the number of female career employees; among advanced countries, Japan has the

lowest rate of female managers by far. They also argue that Japan must increase support for working mothers, such as flexible work hours, better child care facilities and longer maternity leave. This would keep more women in the workplace even after childbirth (Steinberg and Nakane, 2012; see Chapter 3). Many of the European welfare states have had no choice but to launch systems to provide for childcare, an area formerly seen as the sole responsibility of parents and, more specifically, mothers (Daly, 2002; Michel and Mahan, 2002). Globally, men do more paid work than women; however, women participate in more unpaid work than men. Men (80% between age 15-64) participate in more paid labour than women (60%) (OECD, 2012).

Table 2: Paid and Unpaid Work among Women and Men

	Paid Work (Minute) per day	Gap Paid Work per day	Unpaid Work (Minute) per day	Gap Unpaid Work per day
Denmark: Women Men	195 260	Men More 65	243 186	Women More 57
Sweden : Women Men	241 322	Men More 81	249 177	Women More 72
Norway: Women Men	220 305	Men More 85	225 152	Women More 73
Spain: Women Men	246 334	Men More 88	258 154	Women More 104
UK: Women Men	200 325	Men More 125	273 150	Women More 123
South Korea: Women Men	273 422	Men More 149	227 45	Women More 182
Japan: Women Men	274 478	Men More 204	269 59	Women More 210
Italy: Women Men	182 338	Men More 156	326 103	Women More 223

Source: OECD Gender Gap: Act Now in 2012
<http://www.oecd.org/gender/closingthegap.htm>

Japanese women participate the most in both paid and unpaid work. However, similar research conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2010) reported that more than 95 % of Japanese women

respondents answered that their ideal husbands should be capable of housekeeping and child-rearing and regarded these skills as ‘very important’ or ‘important’. South Korea is similar to Japan in this OECD research. Italian women do the most unpaid work, however they do much less paid work compared with Japanese women. In Japan work-life balance and satisfaction ranked in the bottom third of participating countries for OECD; Mexico and Turkey ranked lower, and South Korea ranked slightly higher. The same phenomenon of low fertility also occurs in Spain and Italy, whose population report a better work-life balance but less satisfaction. Schlunze, Hyttel-Srensen and Ji (2011: 108) found in their research that, compared to Europe, Japanese workplaces are almost entirely male-dominated, with little attention paid to the perspectives, personal feelings or quality of life of women. In Japan, the male-dominated society provides very few protections and rights for women in the work place, such as job security, flexible time, maternity leave, supportive environments for child bearing and holidays (see Chapter 3, 5 and 6). From a feminist perspective, gender equality in Japan simply does not exist when women want to have both a job and a family (Ochiai, 2001). Unless a woman is lucky enough to have an understanding and supportive employer, and husband, she faces two challenges in trying to keep a job.

Cohabitation and Married Parenthood

It is also culturally not accepted to choose to cohabit or to have a child outside of a marriage; there are limited options for Japanese women and men. Today, in the west women and men have more opportunities to live together without being married (Lewis, 2001). According to Lewis (2001), it is more natural for couples in Europe to live together and have children. In the west, there are fewer differences between people who choose to have children outside of marriage and traditional families, when compared with Japan. In Japan and South Korea, fewer than 2% of people are choosing to cohabit, with 70 % opposed to the idea (The Japanese National Institute of Population and Social Research; JNIPS, 2010).

Table 3: Percentages of unmarried women with a child or children

COUNTRY	1980	1990	1995	2002	2010
United States	18.4	28.0	32.2	34.0	35.2
Canada	12.8	24.4	27.6	28.9	28.9
Japan	0.8	1.1	1.2(*1)	1.7	2.0
Denmark	33.2	46.4	46.5	44.6	44.8
France	11.4	30.1	37.6	44.3	46.2
Germany	(NA) *2	15.1	16.1 (*1)	25.0	28.2
Ireland	5.0	14.6	22.3	31.1	33.4
Italy	4.3	6.5	8.1 *(3)	9.7	9.9
Netherlands	4.1	11.4	15.5	29.1	30.2
Spain	3.9	9.6	11.1	21.8	23.2
Sweden	39.7	47.0	53.0	56.0	58.2
United Kingdom	11.5	27.9	33.6	40.6	45.6

“Families and Work Transition in 12 Countries 1980-2011” Notes: *1 Data are for 2001 instead of 2002.*2 Data are for 1991 instead of 1990.*3 Data are for 2000 instead of 2002.*3 Data are for 2008 instead of 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Families and Work Transition in 12 Countries 1980-2011"
http://www.commerce.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2012/january/competes_010511_0.pdf

When a single woman in Japan becomes pregnant, it seems she only has two choices: having an abortion or entering (unwillingly) into a marriage; choosing to have an illegitimate child is rarely seen as an option (Hertog, 2008). Marriage is a very important family issue in Japan, and it is not generally acceptable to have children outside of marriage (Yu, 2002; Sato 2008; Ato; 1999). The Japanese have always regarded marrying and having children as the natural order of things (Atho, 2001; Raymo, 2008). In Japan it is very difficult to be a single parent, especially for women, because the family unit is culturally considered to be comprised of both parents, and very few support systems exist for families who do not fit the mold of the traditional family unit (Hertog, 2008). Table 3 shows that, of developed countries, Japan has the one of the lowest rates of births to unmarried mothers. In 2010 the percentage of women having children outside of marriage was just 2 % in Japan, but 45.6 % in the U.K. The highest was 58.2 % in Sweden. This shows that there are fewer differences in the numbers between having children outside of and within marriage in Europe quite a contrast with Japan. There are some compelling comparisons between European countries and East Asia. Japan, along with Korea, Italy, and Spain, tends to have more traditional

family structures (Segawa, 2001).

Very few Japanese women choose to be single mothers because there is much discrimination against single mothers and their children (Hertog, 2008: 123; Aoki, 1999 ; Alison, 1994). It is much tougher to be a single mother in Japan than it is in the west. Legally single parents and their children with single parents do not have the same rights as married couples and their children. Legally, a single woman with a child must ask the father to approve and sign the birth certificate. If he refuses, the certificate will not list the father, which means the child would face more discrimination without a certificate called '*Kosaki*' (see Chapter 3) which shows the entire family tree. Or the mother must go to court to ask for an order to retain all legal rights. This is difficult for women due to the time and finances involved. Women must continually wage court battles to receive what they are legally entitled to, such as child support payments. In Japan, there are far fewer such court cases; such cases involving marital, divorce and settlement problems are not common, and Japanese women have difficulty standing up for their legal rights and consequently suffer greatly from it (Hertog, 2008). As a result, few women opt to be single mothers. Those who do are regarded negatively and are considered to be careless and irresponsible, whereas single fathers are regarded with more warmth and empathy and are considered to be brave (Ochiai, 1998; Sato, 2004). When Japanese people apply for a job, that they have to write all of their family members' names, occupations and addresses, which would show whether or not the applicant has parents who live at the same address. Some companies still check their family members' backgrounds. These are all reasons Japanese women chose not to have a child without marriage.

Women in Japan do become pregnant outside of marriage, but they either marry before the child is born, or they opt for an abortion. In 2010 more than one fourth (25.4 %) of Japanese brides were pregnant. In 1980 this rate was only 10.6 %, so the number has more than doubled since then (MHLW, 2011). If there were fewer 'shotgun weddings', the percentage of people married might be even lower. There are fewer options available to Japanese women compared to women in other

countries, causing a decline in TFR in Japan. In contrast, women and men in European and other western countries have more options available to them such as cohabitation and single parenthood when making decisions to have children.

Contraception and Health Insurance

Contraceptive pills only became legal in Japan in June of 1999, quite late compared to western countries which have been using them since the late 1960s. In fact, some contraceptive pills are still illegal in Japan (Goto et., al. 2002). There has been little research about and limited access to them, resulting in a dearth of information for women (Sato and Iwasawara, 2006). According to the Japan Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in 2010, only 1.8 % of Japanese women are using contraceptive pills. Quantitative studies show that one of Japanese women’s one of the main concerns is the possible side effects of contraceptive pills (MHLW, 2010). Other quantitative research notes that, compared to other countries, awareness is much lower in Japan of women’s right to protect their own bodies, including the perception of responsibility of contraception (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan Research; COGJR, 2005). In European countries, there is more widespread awareness of women’s rights with regard to fertility decisions.

Table 4: Perceptions of Responsibilities of Contraception

	Women’s Responsibility	Men’s Responsibility
France	89.1%	9.5%
Japan	15.7%	73.2%
South Korea	27.6%	64.2%
Sweden	45.3%	17.5%
U.S.A	56.5%	28.1%

Source: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan research, 2005
<http://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/cyousa/cyousa.html>

As seen as Table 4, that most Japanese women rely on men to prevent becoming pregnant. However, it is much more difficult for women to access contraceptive pills when compared with the west. One major cause might be National Insurance card system in Japan. This system perfectly fits the patriarchal family structure in Japan. The National Insurance card follows a family system rather than an individual system. The information on the family National Insurance Card, known as *Hokensho* in Japanese, includes the main insurance holder's name and address, the city providing the service, expiration date, and the percentages which the family must pay and what the national insurance will cover. The main holder (normally the husband or father) will be contacted if any of his family members go to a hospital and which department of hospital⁷ they went to, as he will be partially charged by National Insurance⁸. After seeing a doctor, the hospital stamps what department was visited inside the *Hokensho*. This does not protect privacy. Since the main holder of national insurance in a family is usually male, this underscores the gender inequality in the male-dominated Japanese society.

Figure 5: Paper type of *Hokensho* (National Insurance Card in Japan) using one for whole family type



Source: http://stat.ameba.jp/user_images/20110507/17/casaanita/1e/66/j/o0480064011212923175.jpg

⁷ There are specialised departments in Japanese hospitals. There is no general practitioner system in Japan.

⁸ Typically, people who are employed pay 30 % of all health bills while the national insurance will cover 70 %. Elderly people and children under 12 years old are responsible for paying only 10 % of health bills, with the national insurance paying for 90 %.

There is a card type which is for individuals rather than for a family.

Figure 6: Card Type of Hokencho (National Insurance card in Japan) Individual Card Type



Source: <http://www.kyoukaikenpo.or.jp/11,189.43.html>

Most of the information of the card holder is the same as the old paper type. It is cannot be stamped, so all information is entered via computer which affords parents more privacy. The problem with the individual card is that, when a wife or her children want to be a National Insurance card holder separate from the head of the household, they have to pay higher tax than if there is only one national insurance holder per family (see Chapter 6; Appendix IV). This family insurance system might be affecting women's fertility decisions. When women are considering having an abortion or want access to contraceptive pills, it is harder for them to see a doctor. If women do not have individual insurance, the main family cardholder will know who used the card and for what purpose. This makes it even harder for women to make own their individual choices; postponing or hesitating to see a doctor may have forced women to make fertility decisions they might not have made otherwise. Since 1945, approximately 300,000 abortions have been performed every year in Japan (MHLW, 2010). In the U.K. in 2010, the number of abortions was 196,082 (National Statistic, 2012). In Japan, the official number of abortions are probably underestimated because of the National Insurance system, which does not reflect the number of illegal abortions.

Question for Research

When I began this process, I asked myself why Japanese women were choosing to have fewer children than before. There could be various reasons, such as Morgan and Taylor's seven findings; however, in Japan's case, a patriarchal society plus a male-dominated family structure might affect fertility decisions. There are gaps between what Japanese women want to do, and what their society and family expect them to be. When Japanese women struggle against their culture, their family feels shame, which means that Japanese women do not choose even if they want to do so. Family comes first, and women, wives and mothers find it more difficult to make their own decisions, because they have to be concerned with their family first and with themselves later, especially after marriage and even more so after being mothers, which is why the patriarchal '*ie*' system still exists in Japan.

Sechiyama (2013: 249) notes that every society experiencing falling fertility rates has had similar issues: men's attitudes and the society in general fail to adjust to an increase in the number of women in the workplace. But this explanation does not take all variables into account, such as Hong Kong, where middle-class women employ maids, often from the Philippines, for housework; despite this, Hong Kong's fertility rate is falling even lower than Japan's (Sechiyama, 2013). Sechiyama (2013: 249) argues that simply making it easier for women to return to work outside the home will not halt falling fertility rates, nor will a movement toward gender-neutral policies.

Using women's opinions, perspectives and voices at the individual level, I hope to find out why women have been choosing to have fewer children or none. What has been happening, or what do they need to be changed? What do they really want? It is my hope that this research into women's fertility decisions can highlight issues from which women have been suffering.

Chapter 2: Gender, Family and Fertility: Why are Japanese Women Having Fewer Children?

Research Design

Why qualitative research?

Everyday life, and the way it is structured, organized and limited, is experienced differently by people in different geographical locations, but especially by women and men, due to the overt gender division of Western society. Men fail to realize that the knowledge and concepts on which they rely lean heavily on a male perspective, rather than being truly objective and neutral. Women can see that this knowledge is subjectively masculine, but they are frequently excluded from science (Lorber, 1994: 22).

A male-centred viewpoint of social relations has long been the dominant viewpoint as Lorber indicates. Men have done research on women and women's issues, but that research is still conducted from a male perspective, and often fails to consider perspectives to which female researchers would be more sensitive. The answer is not simply that research should be conducted by women, but it should proceed from a feminist viewpoint which values women's experiences over established thinking that keeps traditional male power structures in place (Lorber, 1994: 23).

The personal experiences of women are seldom considered part of the academic mainstream, and their everyday concerns do not often become part of public knowledge (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998). Feminist research has often been ignored or regarded as less important by a male-dominated society (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998: 2). Feminist researches and studies have previously been treated as though they were more of a domestic private matter (Edwards and Ribbens, 2006), but attitudes are slowly changing and feminist research has developed and gained more acceptance in academic research than before (Olsen, 2011: 129). Feminism in Japan is often seen as foreign import (Molony, 2010: 90). Though initially seen as a threat to Japan's prevalent right-wing ideology during World

War II, 'transnational feminism' gained new ground as a dominant form of feminism in Japan (Molony, 2010). The Japanese feminist (or 'feminizumu') movement has been kept weak, and has been limited by traditional perceptions of 'ie' and the patriarchal system's prescriptive view of motherhood and housewife roles (see Chapter 1 and 3), and is tied to a negative image of the 1970s women's liberation ('uman ribu') movement (Tokuhiro, 2010). The lack of feminist research might be further evidence that the feminist movement has been weakly developed in Japan.

This may be one reason why qualitative research has been under-utilised in Japan. Feminists tend to favour qualitative research because it places such importance on women's experiences and stories (Jackson, 1998: 48; Maynard, 1994). Feminist researchers have relied heavily on qualitative methods to show the perspective of the individuals interacting with society (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 16). Very little qualitative research has been done on women's fertility decisions in Japan. Much quantitative research has been conducted on fertility in Japan, but this has mainly focused on the effect of the declining economy on the already low fertility rate, without enough attention on how women's lives and gender inequality factor into the problem. More specifically, the existing research is not focused on women's attitude toward fertility decisions, and is failing to find out why Japanese women are choosing, on an individual level, to have fewer children or none at all. In order to explore the issues behind the individual fertility decisions made by Japanese women, I decided to use qualitative research to discover more of the complexities and focus on gender issues and feminist perspectives. There are some areas where it is easy to see that women are obviously oppressed and dominated by men, but some of the oppression is less visible, and this applies to my research.

Feminist research, by its definition, examines women from their own perspective, and includes the researcher in the subject matter, with the understanding that the researcher's views shape the research, making it feminist research in the first place (Harding, 1987:9).

In keeping with Harding's view, as I have continued working on my research, I have realised how important it is to acknowledge feminist perspectives, because Japanese women have rarely had any opportunities to discuss their lives openly, for cultural and social reasons. Using a qualitative method helped me to explore what has not appeared in other research: women's voice regarding their own fertility decisions. Moreover, my research involves not only Japanese women's fertility decisions, but various other aspects of inequality and oppression. Harding (1987: 9; also see Edwards and Ribbens, 2006) also argues the feminist case that traditional belief systems often exclude women as carriers of knowledge or participants in science; history and traditional sociology are frequently expressed from the point of view of men. Feminist research places a value on women's experiences and social standing as a basis for research, instead of simply assuming a male viewpoint (Weston, 1998: 148).

Feminists pay careful attention to how female respondents think about their own lives and the lives of men (Harding, 1987; Edwards, Ribbens, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Behaviors of both genders that might have been regarded as insignificant by prior, more traditional, research are analysed to find new patterns (Harding, 1987). I chose to use face-to-face in-depth interviews, because I could then hear each woman's voice, allowing me to be flexible in asking about the process of making decisions. I hoped to uncover many views of Japanese women that were previously kept secret. One-on-one, in-depth interviews are best for gathering information about respondents' experiences and views, particularly when the subject matter is of a sensitive nature (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2004; Arksey and Kemp, 1999). Feminist scholars regard the individual interview as being one of the most commonly used, important, and effective research methods (Mason, 2004: 62; Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Wilkinson, 1998). In interviews we can draw upon our own experiences and understand the feelings of our respondents.

Qualitative research can delve more deeply into the issues and bring the process of Japanese women's fertility decisions more into focus. There could be major but

unrevealed motives for why fertility rate has been decreasing. For example, quantitative research does not show why there are differences between the ideal number of children women say they want and the actual number of children they do have. Do they really want to have children? If these women do want to have children, then why are they choosing not to have them? What do the surveys and quantitative research show, and what do they not show? Qualitative research will help to clarify the complicated issues behind Japanese women's fertility choices. Japanese women are resisting the oppression of the male-dominated social structure by changing their ideas on fertility. It is important to understand Japanese women's individual views in the process of decision making.

Lather (1998: 571) says that the goal of feminist research should be to correct both individual and widespread distortions of the female experience. Feminist research strives to 'capture women's lived experiences and legacy of emphasizing in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as sources of knowledge (Davies, 1996: 579; Campbell and Wasco, 2000; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Mason (2002) argues that qualitative analysis allows the researcher to examine many different social factors (such as the research participants' own daily lives, beliefs and what they mean) Preparation is essential in order to focus the interviews properly which will optimally benefit the research. It is also very important to build a good relationship with participants before conducting the interviews, and make them comfortable enough to talk, so I began thinking about how I could do this. If the roles were reversed and I was one of the participants, what would make me comfortable enough to want to talk to a researcher?

Research Strategy

My answer was, if I were one of participants, I would be more comfortable to talk to a researcher if I felt I knew and trusted the researcher (see Patton, 2001), and not have to speak to a total stranger about my experiences. I decided to conduct pre-interviews because in Japanese culture and tradition, 'trust' is necessary to build a relationship, allowing people to feel more at ease to talk to each other on a

more personal level. I personally met with the participants, so I would not be nervous and they would know and trust me prior to the interviews. In an interview session, this ultimately allows the researcher to gather a greater amount of information from the respondents' personal narratives (Yoshino, 2005). Chenail (2008) noted that conducting pre-interview exercises can improve reliability and productivity. The process of scheduling pre-interviews with some of my participants by Skype helped me realise that conducting pre-interviews was the right decision, since it is important to have face-to-face contact even for a little while: '*It made me feel much at ease*' (Kamiko, married with a child and housewife). When it is easier for participants to talk to a researcher, there are more opportunities to gather deeper and richer information and to listen to their stories (see Patton, 2001).

During the pre-interviews, I gave participants the opportunity to pick which name would represent them, so if any of them read my completed thesis, they would recognise themselves.⁹ Naturally, the participants did not know each other's names. This helped to build a relationship based on trust, and knowing that they might read and check my work later, it put pressure on me to accurately present their stories, though I used this as a positive pressure to encourage myself. However, this strategy worked well and all of them were happy to choose their own names to build a better 'trust' relationship.

My advantage was most respondents were interested in me, because I was still a student. I could use that interest to my advantage, to satisfy their curiosity, answer their questions, and gain enough trust to get to know each other and start a conversation. I explained that I was majoring in Women's Studies in the U.K., and that I was researching women's fertility decisions. I was especially interested in Japanese women's attitudes toward fertility decisions.

⁹ Each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym according to the category they fell under: single participants were designated with pseudonyms beginning with 'A-E'; married participants were 'E-S'; and participants living in the U.K. were 'S'. Unfortunately, there are many names beginning with 'K' and several of my respondents have similar pseudonyms, e.g. Kamiko, Kimiko, Kiriko, and Kuniko; nevertheless, I have a commitment to the respondents to use those names.

What are you going to be after those long studies? (Keiko, Married, housewife and two children)

I answered:

I have been told it is natural for women to have a child. I could not agree with it since I was a child. And then I studied and studied! I do not know what am I going to do (Smiled).

Keiko replied:

I could study more but I did not have the time like you do. I spent more time worrying about getting a job, getting married and having a family, typical Japanese women's path. By the way, I would like to know more about women's studies. Could you tell me more? Being a woman is not fair. I am interested in women's studies.

It was necessary to know each participant's background before the interviews, so we introduced ourselves to one other. In addition, women's studies is not a common or major subject at all, and most universities do even offer it as a course of study. There are two universities in Japan offering majors in gender and women's studies. Some of the interviewees said that it was very easy to talk to me because they knew me, even though I was not a family member or a best friend. The fact that I lived overseas made them even more confident in sharing their feelings because they did not feel they needed to worry about their private matters spreading around them. Keiko said,

I do not have to worry about my privacy because most of the readers (of my story) will be overseas. They do not know me. (Married, housewife and two children)

Pre-interviews were the best choice for this research, especially since some questions were very private and therefore difficult topics; these things would be easier to discuss if the interviewer and respondents had already established a good relationship, making it more comfortable to talk about sensitive issues that would not be discussed with a total stranger.

Sampling and Participants

This research used both convenience and purposive sampling. A convenience sample is a sample where the candidates are selected in part or in whole, at the convenience of the researcher (Babbie, 2001). I had known some of my respondents in advance, not personally, but as friends of friends. I avoided choosing close personal friends to participate in the research because I wanted to make participants comfortable and it was necessary to maintain a professional attitude (Woods, 1997). I also used purposive samplings, because it was important to interview respondents over a certain age who needed to be serious and were at ease to consider their feelings and experiences about marriage and fertility. Purposive sampling involves looking for certain characteristics for research, such as gender, age, race, class and so on (Babbie, 2001). I am 33 years old, so my convenience samples from school would be around same age as myself; this also matched the age group needed for my purposive sampling, which made it easier to find participants for the research. The target age range for the respondents of my research was between 29 and 40. The mean age of first marriage of Japanese women is 28.8 and the age of first marriage of Japanese men is 30.5 (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2012). The age range was decided in relation to the mean age of marriage; after the age of 40, the research shows fewer Japanese women are choosing to marry (MHLW, 2010). Purposive sampling techniques are carried out in a specific manner, as opposed to in a random fashion (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Researchers often use both convenience sampling and purposive sampling techniques when conducting interviews (Morgan, 1998). I used the snowballing technique to recruit respondents from my initial pool of friends. Snowballing or chain referral sampling, is also a form of purposive sampling. It involves participants using their own social circles to find additional participants to refer to the researcher (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2005). ‘Snowball’ sampling can help researchers find less obvious participants that other sampling techniques might miss (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2005). From a

cultural standpoint, using ‘snowball’ sampling makes it easier for respondents to talk with a researcher in Japan, because they have some knowledge of each other. The important question to ask when deciding about sample size in qualitative research is whether the sample provides enough data to allow the research questions to be thoroughly addressed (Mason 2002). Deliberately selected small samples or individual cases are utilized by the qualitative approach and intensely focused upon in the literature (Patton 2002: 230). When employing qualitative methods, it is important to choose participants in a rational manner as opposed to ‘creating a representative sample’ (Carpenter and Suto, 2008). To interpret the findings from a convenience sample properly, one must characterize (usually in a qualitative sense) how that sample would differ from an ideal sample that was randomly selected. I had contacted female classmates from my junior high school, high school, university and graduate school by email, phone and Skype prior to going to Japan. Two-thirds of my respondents were from Tokyo or a suburb of Tokyo, while the remaining third were originally from rural areas and had lived in the Tokyo area for at least twelve years. They were all very modern-thinking women. If the interviews had taken place in a rural area the results might have been different.

In total, I interviewed 22 people in Japan and two in the U.K. Originally the interviews were to have been done only in Japan, but I decided to interview two more Japanese women in the U.K. after I came back from Japan in the middle of February 2010. Their time living and studying in a foreign country would surely change their attitudes compared to women who have been living in Japan their entire lives. I have already mentioned that Kiyomi had lived overseas. Kiyomi has lived a different lifestyle, and has developed an attitude of independence. She has been enjoying her married life much more when compared with other participants who have lived their entire lives in Japan. This experience made me want to interview more Japanese women who live in the U.K. When people have lived overseas, they usually become aware of the differences between cultures (Adler, 1981), gaining practical experience from living within a culture, rather than learning about another culture from the outside (Roberts, 1994:12).

Table 5: Interview Subjects

Name	Age	Marital Status and children	Years in Relationship with a partner	Background	Education and Occupation	Partner's Education and Occupation
Akiko	30	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; An older brother and a younger sister; From a suburb of Tokyo	High school Has a job	N/A
Aya	31	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; An older brother; From a rural area	College Has a job	N/A
Ayako	32	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; An older brother; From Tokyo	University Has a job	N/A
Chiho	33	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; A younger brother; From Tokyo	University Has a job	N/A
Chiyomi	34	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; An older brother From a suburb of Tokyo	College Has a job	N/A
Chiriko	35	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; A younger sister From a rural area	University Has a job	N/A
Ema	36	Single None	N/A	Upper-class family; No brothers or sisters From Tokyo	Graduate school Has a job	N/A
Eri	38	Single None	N/A	Middle-class family; An older brother From a rural area	College Has a job	N/A
Eriko	31	Married None	2 years	Middle-class family; A younger brother From a suburb of Tokyo	University Housewife	B.A Business
Kayo	32	Married None	1 year	Middle-class family; A younger brother and a younger sister; From a rural area	University Has a job	B.A Engineer
Kayoko	34	Married None	1.5 years	Middle-class family; An older brother From a suburb of Tokyo	University Has a job	B.A Business
Kazumi	34	Married None	3 years	Middle-class family; A younger brother From a suburb of Tokyo	High school Has a job	B.A Business
Kazuko	35	Married None	3 years	Middle-class family; A younger brother From a rural area	University Has a job	B.A Engineer
Kamiko	30	Married 1	2.5 years	Middle-class family; An older sister and a younger brother; From a suburb of Tokyo	College Housewife	B.A Business
Kimiko	31	Married 1	2 years	Middle-class family; An older brother and a younger sister; From a rural area	College Housewife	B.A Sales
Kiyomi	32	Married 1	2.5 years	Upper-class family; An older brother From a suburb of Tokyo	Graduate school Has a job	PhD Associated-Professor
Kiriko	32	Married 2	6 years	Middle-class family; An older brother From a suburb of Tokyo	College; Has a part-time job	B.A Sales
Kumiko	36	Married 3	8 years	Middle-class family; An older brother From a suburb of Tokyo	High school House wife	B.A Sales
Keiko	36	Married 2	10 years	Middle-class family; An older brother From a suburb of Tokyo	High School Housewife	High School Sales
Saki	38	Married 3	12 years	Middle-class family; A younger brother From a suburb of Tokyo	College; Has a part-time job	B.A Engineer
Sakiko	29	Single None	0.6 year	Middle-class family; One younger sister From a rural area	University; Has a job; Lives in the UK	High school Shop Assistant
Suzuko	30	Single None	1 year	Middle-class family; One younger sister and brother From a rural area	College; Has a job Lives in the UK	High school Plumber

As Table 5 shows, ten of the women were single, including the two respondents who lived in the U.K., while the remaining twelve were married, including five without children. Respondents fell into three categories: single, married without children, and married with children. There were no respondents who were single mothers or had experienced a divorce. In Japan there is still a lower divorce rate and it is even rarer to be an unmarried, single mother (see Chapter 1).¹⁰ There is a higher pre-marital pregnancy rate than previously, but women tend to marry before having a child (see Chapter 4). All of the single participants had full-time jobs and were financially independent. None of the single respondents had a steady boyfriend. Some single participants mentioned that they had boyfriends that they would choose to marry, saying that certain life goals must be achieved within a particular time frame by a certain age (see below). The respondents who were living in the U.K., Sakiko and Suzuko, are living with their partners, which is very rare in Japan, and they are enjoying the freedom in their lives. All married participants had husbands with higher education, except for Keiko, who has the same level of education as her husband. Almost all of the participants defined themselves as middle class, except for two people who have master's degrees who defined themselves as upper class (see Table 5). Japan is the one of the most egalitarian countries in the world in terms of income and sharing of wealth (Wikinson and Pickett, 2010). Compared to Japan, which has set minimum and maximum wage levels, other countries such as the U.S., U.K. and Malaysia have larger gapes of income (Wikinson and Pickett, 2010). Japanese people feel that they not only share wealth, but also experience being a team at their workplace (Nakada, 1995), and therefore the majority of Japanese people, 79.7 %, consider themselves to belong to the middle class (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2010). One reason for this is that most Japanese people, by definition, actually do belong to the middle class. Another reason was that it was very difficult to distinguish who was from the upper, middle or lower class. The feudal system was eliminated after the 1868 Meiji Restoration (Sugimoto, 2013: 6). From a cultural perspective, class is very hard for people to talk about, especially among the upper classes, because this is usually regarded as arrogance or boasting. This could be

¹⁰ The divorce rate has been stable at 2 per 1000¹⁰, which means that there is still not a high percentage compared with other developed countries' and therefore few divorced single mothers.

the reason almost all the respondents chose to self-identify as middle class. Suto (1997) explains that in Japan people prefer to be in the majority and do not want to be in the minority. It is typical in Japanese culture for people often to inquire about averages, like the average age of one's first marriage, of graduation from school, and of having one's first child.

Scheduling

Recruitment was one of the easiest tasks at this stage of my research, and I felt very positive that everything would go smoothly. When I decided to conduct pre-interviews, I was worried about whether the participants would agree to meet me two times, considering how busy they were, but they happily agreed to meet twice. I was happy and the research was exciting for me until I had to begin scheduling. I had to fit all participants' pre-interviews and interviews into a very tight schedule, taking up much of my time until I left Japan. Before travelling back to Japan, I contacted participants by phone, email and Skype, and made appointments for pre-interviews. I started to conduct pre-interviews in the last week of September 2009, and completed them in the middle of November 2009. After finishing the pre-interviews, I began to conduct the interviews. There was a risk that I might lose respondents between the pre-interview and the interview. To avoid this I kept in touch with them, sending email greetings once a week every Friday afternoon. Luckily, I did not lose any contact with my participants between the pre-interviews and interviews. All participants replied to me by email after I finished conducting pre-interviews. It was good to send and reply to emails, because I felt that even taking the time to write a few sentences was worthwhile, and it helped to build the connection with participants. After pre-interviews were done and during the wait for interviews, one of the participants replied to my greeting email, and wrote that she was talking to her friends about the pre-interview, and said that her friend had a different view of relationship with her mother, which she would tell me about next time. I was amazed because, after finishing the pre-interview, she was thinking about it and talked to her friend and shared her experiences. The delay between the pre-interview and interview took

more time than I wanted or expected to spend, but I am glad I could complete all of the interviews. I had intended to return to the U.K in January 2010, but I finally completed interviews in February 2010.

Scheduling was one of the most difficult aspects of research, and I needed to be patient because I was interviewing each participant twice. I particularly did not want to mix pre-interviews and interviews because the pre-interviews could give me a chance to learn from them and arrange better interviews afterwards such as changing and adding questions and preparing vignettes to make better follow-up interviews. I wanted to have as much experience as possible through the pre-interviews. So, I had to wait until pre-interviews were completed. Many of the respondents were working long hours, including weekends. We set our interview on a Saturday for some people, particularly those working outside of their homes, because Saturdays and Sundays are usually days off, but some of them suddenly had to work on Saturday and had to postpone the appointment for both the pre-interview and interview, so it took longer than expected to complete both their pre-interviews and interviews.

Moreover, I learned from the pre-interviews; I saw one participant per day during each pre-interview except on weekends, when I met two participants, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. When making the weekend appointments, I had to make sure they were spaced out enough to allow for any extra time that was used by the first appointment of the day. Some participants insisted upon a certain day, so sometimes there was little choice, but fortunately no one had to wait. Pre-interview questions were much simpler and more general, but despite the pre-interview having fewer questions, it took an average of 2 hours, longer than I had expected. I originally expected each pre-interview to last an average of one hour. After pre-interviews, I knew that I wanted to complete interviews as soon as possible because my schedule had been delayed. However, I knew through my experiences with the pre-interviews, that the interviews would require a full day. Of course, after one pre-interview, I was tired but I had a second pre-interview scheduled some weekends, which was a very exhausting experience.

In terms of scheduling, parents were most concerned about scheduling the pre-interview and interview. Participants who had a child or children preferred to conduct their interviews in the morning, at about 10am, and finish about noon. Those who had a job, even if it was only a part-time job, preferred weekdays, but they had to schedule during a day off from work. Participants who were single would be more flexible. All married participants asked me to schedule their interviews on weekdays, because they have children and husbands to consider. When some participants told me '*I have to consider my husband,*' I thought they wanted to spend time with their husband, but it was often for different reasons: because participants have husbands who do not take care of the children, or they have to spend more hours taking care of their children on the weekends, since the schools and nursery close for the weekend. Other respondents who mentioned a husband do not have a child or children, but are expected to clean the house and do housework over the weekend because they are married, even though they have a job. Only married participants with jobs but no children wanted to schedule interviews on weekends. One participant who has a full-time career also preferred a weekday so she could make time for work, and because she wanted to spend time with her child (Kiyomi). Kiyomi's case was totally different from other married women with children. Financially she did not need to work, but works because she wants to. Her husband is educated, wealthy and could provide a comfortable life for the family on his wage alone. He is also more supportive about doing domestic work than other participants' husbands. She also mentioned 'spending more quality time' with her child, while the majority of other participants said they 'have to take care of children and their husband' and domestic work. Kiyomi has a more comfortably affluent life because she is able to share roles with her husband. Other participants were possibly pressured to meet on weekdays, when their husbands were at work; where help and support at home were concerned, a husband is considered another child (see Chapter 3). One government study showed that a disadvantage of married life was that women spent less time with friends and family, and that one of the top reasons why they do not have time after marriage is because they have to take care of children and a husband (MHLW, 2010). For instance, Table 6 shows how one participant, Saki

(married, has children and part-time job) spends her time every day.

Table 6: Saki's Daily Activities

Time	For herself	For all of the family	Duties for her husband	Duties for her children
5:00 a.m.			A lunch box for him and breakfast	
6:00 a.m.			Wake husband up and be ready to send him to work, preparing his clothes, lunch bag and so on.	
6:40 a.m.			Take him to a train station by car.	
7:00 a.m.				Wake children up and make breakfast for them.
7:45 a.m.				Send two children to school.
8:00 a.m.		Laundry		Take one child to nursery by bicycle.
8:30 a.m.	Eat breakfast	Laundry		
8:45 a.m.	Goes to a part-time job			
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Work			
1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.		Grocery shopping		
2:15 p.m.	Eat lunch at home			
2:30 p.m.		Cleaning		
2:45 p.m.				Pick up child from nursery.
3:00 p.m.		Cleaning or finish laundry		Two other children come home from school; preparing snack for them.
4:00 p.m.				Take children to private classes: swimming, writing, English, mathematics, martial art class and dancing.
6:00 p.m.				Cooking dinner for children
7:00 p.m.	Eat dinner			Sit with children for dinner
7:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.				Check children's homework after dinner
8:00 p.m.			Pick her husband up from train station with children by car	
8:15 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.		Wash dishes	Prepare dinner for husband	Watching TV and play games with them and give each child a bath
8:30 p.m.				Read a book to help one child go to sleep
9:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.			Prepare hot bath for husband	Make sure two children go to bed and sleep
9:30 p.m.		Ironing	Making a drink for husband	
10:00 p.m.	Take a bath			
10:30 p.m.			Make drinks for husband again	
11:00 p.m.	Goes to sleep		Help husband sleep	

When I was making an appointment to talk to her via Skype, I found out about her everyday routine. It is easy to see that she does not have any time for herself when she is using all of her time for necessary activities such as working and eating. At this point, it crossed my mind: what about her husband? Japanese men work longer hours than in western countries (see Chapter 1) but my participants work longer than men (see Chapter 1 and 4). It may also be that Japanese men are able to work such long hours because of the way they use Japanese women to do work at home. Women's care work is always unrecognized because, even in parts of the world where women are part of the labour force, the cultural assumption is that men have the main responsibility of working and earning money, and women's main responsibility is care work (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 86; Lewis, 2002). After I heard Saki's daily routine, I felt very emotional, and it made me feel that I cannot waste her time or her stories, because they appear to be every woman's life story. Saki's daily activities involve much more work, whereas Kiyomi's daily activities are much more independent (see Chapter 3). Saki met me when she did not have to go to her part-time job. Most of the participants were very busy, so I had to choose a convenient time and place for them.

Choosing the Location

The location of the interviews should be comfortable, friendly, quiet, private and convenient for the respondents. A nice and quiet a Café was chosen for the pre-interviews in a suburb in Tokyo, which was more convenient for commuting, and not as crowded as central Tokyo. I was concerned about the sound level at the Café, but it was manageable. For interviews, I reserved a quiet, empty flat that my parents own in a suburb of Tokyo which is easily accessible. It took all of the respondents less than one hour to commute one-way for the interview and pre-interview. The location of the pre-interview was different from the interview, because I wanted to meet them in a public place first to allow them to feel more relaxed and less pressured. However, the setting of my interviews was more private. My parents live on the top level of the apartment; I used the place just below. Participants could bring their children to the interview but most of them

did not. I asked why they were uncomfortable bringing children with them, since my mother would be happy to take care of them during our interview. I also told them, with a laugh, that I was asking since my mother has three grand children, and she raised me and I had turned out all right, so they should not worry whether she would be able to take care of them. One of respondents said, *I did not want to create trouble for you* (Kumiko, married housewife with 3 children). Even if I was asking for their time to conduct an interview they were considering others, which is a very typical Japanese response. Two respondents brought their children, and I asked their permission to take the children to my mother. Both agreed. Neither the respondents nor I were concerned about the length of time of the interview or even when they could come. There was a kitchen and a toilet. During the interviews, I offered participants some tea, coffee and soft drinks, and some lunch and dinner my mother brought to us when I asked. Some respondents turned down the offer of lunch and dinner, and preferred to keep to the interview. I thought participants might feel uncomfortable to ask for something to eat during the interview, especially since my mother was providing food, so I asked to go out to eat or order something from there, but none of them wanted to order or go outside during the interview. I provided some snack food, sandwiches, rice balls and some cookies on a table. If any respondent had preferred another place, such as a café or park, I would have been happy to move to any more convenient and suitable place for them. I conducted twenty interviews in the flat near Tokyo, and two interviews in a café in the UK. I chose quiet and private areas of the cafés. When I was choosing locations and asking permission to use my parents' empty flat, my mother reminded me to bring '*omiyage*' (souvenirs) for my respondents and not to forget Japanese etiquette.

Interviews and Etiquette

Before leaving the U.K., I prepared gifts for participants, including leaf tea (approximately £5) and shortbread (approximately £10). This is our custom, and though it is not often mentioned, it is normal ordinary behaviour, not because I

was asking them to be interviewed, but because I was in the U.K. and would expected to bring ‘*omiyage*’ back to those in Japan who have never visited, to show them different things. I chose leaf tea and shortbread because those are well known and I guessed that most people would like them. I did not choose tea-bags because they are easier to get hold of in Japan and leaf tea would appeal more to an efficient tea culture. I had nearly forgotten about the ‘*omiyage*’ system. Nobody would have said anything if I had not brought it to them, but it is offensive not to display good manners, especially since I was asking to interview them at this point. It is a good gesture and good manners to bring something back from one’s travels abroad. Most Japanese people expect this. All my participants were very happy receiving my *omiyage* from the U.K. It may have helped to show them that I am a reasonable person. This custom is much less common in western countries. It might be mistaken for asking for favouritism by some people in western countries. In my own experience, when I lived in the U.S.A. and a professor asked what we were doing during summer vacation, I told him I was going back home to Japan. I brought classmates and the professor ‘*omiyage*’. He told me ‘I cannot accept it’. I was shocked to learn of this different cultural perspective.

I also offered to pay commuting expenses when scheduling pre-interviews because the majority of employers pay for commuting, even if workers only have part-time jobs. Japan’s commuting expenses are among the highest in the world (see Chapter 5). For instance, in the U.K., there are one-day bus tickets, train day tickets, and off-peak tickets, and ways of saving money on tickets for a day out, but not in Japan; however, all of the participants refused my offer to pay these expenses. Most participants told me ‘*Please don’t joke with me about taking money from you*’ Or ‘*You are student, I cannot take money from you*’. At the time I accepted their kind offer, but after each interview I felt bad that they were spending any money on participating in my interviews, since one of the topics was economic matters: some participants do not have any personal money. On the other hand, some my participants felt bad about the fact that I had spent money to bring them *omiyage*’ (souvenirs) despite being a student. ‘*You are a student, and spending money for the research and the omiyage and so on, please keep the*

money and use it for your study' (Saki, married with children, part-time). When I finished each interview, I offered one more time to cover their commuting expenses, but no one would accept it. I had guessed they would not accept my offer to cover their commuting expenses; however, it is good manners and a kind gesture, to offer '*Tatema*', even if only for the sake of politeness. Those last preparations highlight the importance of taking into account the customs of the local culture when conducting field work.

The Interview Process

Creating Rapport

One concern was that some of my participants were older than I was. In Japanese culture, this is called '*nenko-joretu*' (age hierarchy), which involves respecting those older than oneself. I always used a polite way of speaking when I was talking with all my participants at first, but some participants told me '*not to be too polite*'. When I was told not to be polite I used a more casual way of speaking Japanese because I was told '*that formal Japanese speaking makes me more nervous*'. It gave me an advantage, as a student, in speaking to older interviewees. I felt they would tell me and teach me much more about Japanese social structures. I was often told '*Don't do that*' such as: don't marry someone unless they support you not only financially, but by cooperating and supporting you at home, which is much more important. I felt like older sisters were telling me their experiences and teaching me to make better decisions for myself. I do not have any sisters, so it was very interesting, and sometimes I was moved by their thoughtful advice. One of my respondents told me, '*Don't make the same mistake as I did*' (Keiko, married with children, housewife). I was not sure if she was joking or being serious at first, so I smiled and nodded my head. Keiko added, '*I am serious, okay?*' At this point I could see she was trying to give me serious advice. Most of my participants were near my age, so it was easy to interview them, and they were relaxed enough to share some similar experiences as well. It is easier to share ideas and experiences in a woman-to-woman interview, though it was more

important to listen closely than to build a relationship (Reinharz and Chase, 2001: 226). During the interview process, I tried to focus on paying attention and allowing participants to talk, instead of spending too much time sharing my experiences. I was occasionally aware of forming ‘sisterly bonds’ with interviewees (Oakley, 1981 cited in Reinharz and Chase, 2001: 229). Reinharz and Chase (2001: 229) warn against confusing rapport, which is necessary for interviewing, with forming more intense bonds, since women often find it easier to socialize with others. I was very lucky that my respondents and I could share similarities and different experiences; whether they were married or single did not matter, since Japanese women share enough common experiences with inequality and oppression by men and male social structures (see Chapter 1).

It helped me that also we could share interests; each interviewee was interested in my study and had an understanding of my aims, which can make a major difference in the answers and the resulting research (Patton 2001). Pre-interviews helped my research, since I developed relationships with my participants, and in the interviews, respondents told me many stories and experiences, and sometimes shared their friends’ experiences and stories also. I was amazed how many of the women’s stories I could gather.

My interviews were flexible and conversational two-way communications. During the interviews, we could discuss a matter when it comes up, but generally all respondents were asked the same questions, to allow me to see both the differences and similarities in their decision making processes. When we were talking about cohabitation, some participants did not know why I was asking, because it is not common for Japanese couples to cohabit or have a child together without marriage. Only three participants were familiar with cohabitation because of their experiences of living abroad (Sakiko, Suzuko and Kiyomi). Sakiko and Suzuko live in the U.K., and Kiyomi had lived in Germany. Some of them asked me about cohabitation in western countries. Their facial expressions were surprised, and later changed to confusion. One participant asked me, ‘*What is marriage for them?*’ (Eri, single, full-time job). It was a difficult question for me,

because if I had never lived abroad, I would never have thought about it. If I had never seen or experienced it, I am not sure I could have understood. It helped me to review my literature and experiences of living in western countries before answering. This experience with two-way communication helped me to gauge my participants' interest in my research. They seemed happy to learn about different cultures. Some participants had never done any travelling abroad, so the stories were even more surprising for them to hear. One participant, Saki, said,

'It is depressing me. I wish I were single and younger I could travel all over. I feel I live in a small world' (Married with children, has a part-time job).

She is still young (age 38) and talked as if her opportunities for travel were over. She cannot do anything because of her marriage and her children. In her situation, marriage is the end of freedom, and she describes her life as a small world. She also added that she always does the same routine, there is never any excitement, and she feels she cannot do anything anymore. All she can do is focus on her family. There are similarities in many Asian countries in the expectation that women and mothers will give up their careers, independence and dreams after marriage or having children. Research conducted by Wei (2011: 114) examined the lives of Chinese women who emigrated from China to the U.K to support their husbands and provide better lives for their children, but gave up their social standing and careers in China. These women's situation is best summed up as living not for themselves, but to be satisfied living for their families (see Chapter 3). This is similar to life for women in Japan, however, Chinese women are able to find much more work outside and have a better chance to keep their career than Japanese women (see Chapter 1).

Rapport between the researcher and respondent is not a one-way street but a two-lane avenue of communication (Patton, 2001). The semi-structured interviews allowed for some spontaneous questions, but also allowed some respondents to express themselves on sensitive issues (Woods, 1997). These interviews also put respondents at ease, as they may feel more comfortable revealing information in a conversation than they would be filling out a form or a survey (Woods, 1997).

Both the pre-interviews and interviews featured open-ended questions. Reissman (1993) emphasises that interviewers should avoid using leading questions in order not to adversely affect their subjects' responses. An informal, casual conversation is better suited for this purpose as opposed to a more rigid question-answer session. Spontaneously asking questions and organically interacting with the subject is a normal part of the researcher's information-gathering process (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2003). In this approach, the researcher does not guide the process with specific questions, allowing the respondent to determine the direction of the interview (McNamara, 2009; Woods, 1997). The respondents tell the interviewer stories and their opinions, but the interviewers must be non-judgemental, must not argue with the respondents, and must be flexible and open-minded (Mason, 2002). It is sometimes an issue for researchers to avoid bias, and steps must be taken to maintain objectivity (Patton 2001). Reinharz and Chase (2001: 226) note that during interviews, the participants and interviewer may share similar experiences, but it does not mean they have the same or similar opinions. This sometimes happened to me during interviews, but I had to remember that to achieve my goal, I had to provide a forum for voices who do not often get to tell their stories' (Sprague, 2005: 120). I did not want to ignore anything because of my viewpoint was different from my respondents' perspectives. Those different views might be lead to find new findings, so I paid careful attention to what my participants said. Two participants, one of whom is married and the other single, told me similar surprising stories.

I would divorce my husband; if I were totally alone I would not have to respect my family (Keiko, married with children, housewife).

If I did not have any family, I would already have married and divorced at least a couple times (Sakiko, single, has a job lives in U.K).

Both of them immediately added that they love their families, but there are obligations not to choose that way, restrictions and expectations tied in with family. They would like to do it but they will not do it, or it would be too hard to do. I was nearly rushing to ask "why do you not do it?" But I waited a while so they would talk in more detail about it, perhaps indirectly. Meantime I was trying

not to show them my surprise or my emotions on my face, and tried to prepare for the next question. I was not expecting one other participant, Sakiko, to say that she would have been married and divorced if she did not have a family. Decision making would be easier for her if she did not have any family. Even if they are independent, grown up adults, it is difficult for them to make their own decisions. Keiko added at last, *'we are women at the end of the day'*. I asked her, *'Could you describe for me your feelings about being a woman, please?'*

'We cannot do what we want to do. I feel that my elder brother has made mistakes and is more accepted, but for me it would not be acceptable. Especially with big events, like marriage, now it would not be accepted. Women always seem to be oppressed, and we cannot make our own decisions, which is not fair. Women have to consider family more than themselves'. (Keiko, married with children, housewife)

Keiko feels her marriage was a mistake; however, she cannot confront that fact. She prefers to be silent, even though she says she is not happy. I was not expecting such an outcome. I felt upset, but tried not to be judgemental about why neither Sakiko nor Keiko could choose what they wanted; my goal was to try to understand what they want. Bearing in mind McCracken's (1988) caveat that qualitative interviews could be 'time consuming', 'privacy endangering', and 'intellectually and emotionally demanding' for participants, I remained sensitive to the needs and emotions of each person. I was sometimes emotional when I learned that some participants were pushed to leave a full-time job after marriage or having a child (see Chapter 3). I read a great deal of literature on gender inequality in Japan before embarking upon the research, but it was only after conducting personal interviews that I fully came to appreciate how Japanese women are compelled to live with inequality and discrimination.

Asking Questions

When I designed questions for pre-interviews, I had decided to start out with introductions, so it would be easier for participants to talk about themselves freely and to ask them to introduce themselves instead of asking general questions.

Unfortunately, this turned out to be a mistake. One participant was very quiet and demure, telling me only her name and her age. She told me '*I do not know what to say*' (Chiho, single, has a full-time job). So, I changed my plan on the first day of pre-interviews. I told Chiho, '*OK, I was being rude; I should have introduced myself first. I will introduce myself now,*' telling her my age, where I am from, marital status, relationship, and family background; my aim was to demonstrate to my participants that I would share with them too, because it was necessary to build trust. It worked very well and participants listened to my introduction. Sometimes participants forgot, or did not want to tell me, about their relationships, especially for single participants, which I wanted to find out. After making introductions, I asked single participants if they have a boyfriend or not. One of single participants who did not tell me about her past relationship, Akiko, '*I forgot my last relationship long time ago, that's why I did not tell you. I did not mean I am hiding*' (Smile) (single and has a full-time job). I made a list on paper and had it in my hand, marking the paper with a check mark when each respondent answered. So, I could check what information I had, and what was missing. If they did not tell me, I could see a list of notes and ask them later on. I made questions following a general life course. I wanted to ask respondents about their relationship with their mothers and the differences between their own education, work, and expectations from those of their mothers. This would show not only whether the relationship was close, but would provide more detail of what women learn from their mothers, what experiences they share, and how this affects their fertility decisions, the experience of being single, meeting a partner, deciding whether or not to marry, life as a married couple, and making fertility decisions (see Appendix I). The pre-interview session essentially consisted of general questions to get to know respondents, and it was also an opportunity to experiment with using vignettes.

Using the experience I gained from the pre-interview sessions, I changed and added some questions (see below) for the main interviews. The questions in the main interview were related to more specific topics and themes, such as the advantages of being single or married and the disadvantages of being single or

married (see Appendix II). I could also find out more about my respondents' experiences, opinions, and future plans. The questions in the main interviews followed a general life course.

I made a Table for questions for main interview (see Appendix II) which was divided into four different categories of participants; the questions I asked in the pre-interviews helped to categorise each participant prior to interviews: those who are single without a steady boyfriend, those who are single with steady boyfriend, those who are married without any children, and those who are married with a child or children. This was order to prevent confusion over which participants should be asked which questions. Some of the questions would not be applicable to all participants, such as the process of meeting a husband, experience of married life, how income was affected after having a child etc., because not every participant would have gone through all of those experiences. However, there were some equivalent questions, like asking about the ideal number of children, attitudes toward conception, opinions of shotgun weddings, intimacy and sexual experiences, and attitudes toward using oral contraceptives and abortion. I planned to ask about experiences dealing with intimacy or abortion toward the end of the main interview; I wanted to begin with more general, easier-to-answer questions before delving into more sensitive areas. The last was explored through a series of sensitive, experimental vignette questions to reveal their opinions about pregnancy among unmarried young women, and I hoped that the depersonalised questions would allow them to give their honest opinions (see Appendix III).

Many quantitative studies show fertility decisions as the result of economic issues, gender roles, gender inequality and welfare policies. I asked a question in the hopes of discovering more about their childhood experiences and what they want to pass on to their children. I also posed 'what if' questions. I asked them what they would change if they were the Prime Minister, hoping it would lead to their specific opinions, revealing what is most important for them, and why they are choosing to having fewer children, if any. I also wanted to find out from my participants what would have to change for them to be happy to have a child or

more children.

Pre-interviews

After pre-interviews, I had a great opportunity to prepare for the much longer in-depth interviews using my pre-interview experiences and new findings. Some questions resulted in more silence than other questions, and I learned from some mistakes I made during pre-interviews. After the pre-interviews, I needed to change some questions for the interviews, for instance, in pre-interviews I asked ‘*What kind of contraception do you use?*’ All of them told me they used a condom. I was expecting this response because Japan has some of the highest usage of condoms, because it is very hard to access other contraception for women when compared with western countries (see Chapter 3). However, I wondered if they wanted to use different types of contraception without relying on men. I could not hear any of the respondents’ voices, because my pre-interview questions were not structured to take note of their voices or attitudes toward contraception. So I made a note to remind myself to add a question during the interview, ‘*How do you feel about oral contraceptive pills?*’ There are many incidents of premarital pregnancy in Japan (see Chapter 1). Those questions might help reveal why Japanese women do not opt for contraceptives where they could take control, as opposed to relying on men to use contraceptives. Some of my respondents told me that some of them are scared to take other forms of contraception, because of the image of oral contraception pills in media talk about side-effects for women (see Chapter 3). However some of respondents would like to use or should have used other contraception so they did not have to rely on men, but access to those alternate forms of contraception are limited. One respondent said, ‘*I did not have to be pregnant if I was using contraceptive pills*’ (Keiko, married with children and housewife). Keiko was pregnant before marriage, but after she found out, she and her husband were married before the birth of their child. She would not have married him if she was not pregnant at the time, she added. The male-dominated social structure and family system (the one family insurance card) has been blocking access for women to choose their contraception, even though women

have the right to make that decision (see Chapter 1 and 4).

Another example that illustrates the benefit of conducting a pre-interview and adding questions afterward was that one pre-interview question concerned the issue of class. The majority of respondents described themselves as middle class except for two participants who had masters' degrees (see Table 5), so I made a note of it and decided to add a question to ask respondents to describe the upper class. When asked if they felt they had enough money, the majority of participants said '*More than enough money*'. One respondent, Keiko (middle-class, married, children and housewife) said, '*more than enough with only the father's single income and they have never worried about money*'. Keiko specifically did not count the mother's income to describe class. She also used herself to describe her definition of upper class: she thinks that, when she goes back to the labour force (which will be soon), her job will be part-time and she cannot imagine that her lower wages will contribute toward making her family upper class. Her image of upper class is that the wife is staying at home as a housewife for the rest of her life. She needs to work for financial reasons, so she told me she is thinking about going back to work soon, even if the job is meaningless for her compared to when she was single and enjoyed a job (see Chapter 4). Adding these questions to the interviews improved the interviews overall, leading to more findings.

I also realised that taking notes was useful during the pre-interviews to remind myself (see above) to pay attention to any change in the participants' attitudes, behaviours, tone or pitch of voice, or their eyes in response to a question. It was important for me to maintain body language which was open and emotionally neutral: nodding, smiling, showing that I was listening, and occasionally encouraging respondents to continue (Britten, 1999). These notes were taken because it was important to acknowledge changes in human behaviour during each interview, because the recorder would not show those behavioural changes. I noted how participants' behaviours changed when asked a specific question, so when analysing I could add emphasis that would be easier to understand in the circumstances. The first time I realised this was when a participant asked me a

question and I said something and she smiled; I realised it again when I asked ‘*do you have a child or children?*’ Some respondents’ facial expressions and posture changed when they answered, so I knew that adding a note would be useful for me to improve analysing my research. I also decided to take notes during interviews, but I tried not to focus too much on that aspect. I would lose focus on my participants’ stories, meaning I would lose track of questions, affecting my research.

At first, it was mentally exhausting, and I felt I was using a different side of my brain than usual. In the beginning, I was nervous about conducting a good pre-interview, but my nervousness was soon alleviated because most of the respondents were happy to talk with me very openly. The pre-interviews took an average of two hours (the longest one was 3.5 hours and shortest one was one hour), which was longer than I expected. At the beginning of each pre-interview, I also asked the interviewees for their permission to record all of their pre-interviews. I believe that in Japanese culture, it is better to record and to ask for permission verbally, rather than securing written permission. In Japan there are fewer written contracts than in other cultures. If I had asked for written permission I might have scared off potential respondents and would thus have negatively influenced this research. I also mentioned them only I would be able to access those both pre-interviews and interviews. I also assured my interviewees that all of their responses would be anonymous and confidential, and thus hoped to gain their trust. I had clarified that everything would be confidential and that some parts of their background stories might be changed, but most of the respondents asked me to not identify them.

Some of the interview questions were sensitive, so before that I wanted to try using vignettes during pre-interviews to see how useful they would be (Appendix III). It was very useful to depersonalised the questions. Moreover, one respondent did not know how to react after I read one of the vignettes during a pre-interview. Akiko (single and has a job) said, ‘*I will think about it till next interview*’, and then she remembered and told me what she thinks. I was quite surprised my

participants felt the need to take responsibility for my research. I greatly appreciated it. Interviewees can become more comfortable talking to the interviewer after a pre-interview meeting.

Interviews

Each interview was expected to last at least two hours because the pre-interview was much simpler and consisted of fewer questions. Most took more time than expected sometimes as long as six hours. The average interview length was about four hours, while the shortest was about one and a half hours. During the interviews, the respondents spoke at length most of the time. As with the pre-interviews, I asked permission to record before starting the interview. I felt relaxed, because I was already prepared from conducting the pre-interviews and felt more confident in interacting with my respondents. Before each interview I was already somewhat familiar with their interests and opinions, allowing me to hear their viewpoints. I also felt that it was nice and fresh to see each other after some time had passed since the pre-interview. One participant, Saki, told me '*It is my fourth time¹¹ to see you. I missed you (Smile). We are not strangers anymore*'. She also suggested that it could be interesting to have a group discussion to talk and share our experiences. At the time I thought this might be a better idea than individual interviews, but I changed my mind because Saki is a very sociable, outgoing person and she loves to share her experiences, but some respondents were quieter and shy and it would have been easy to miss their opinion. It is also because some participants might not like to share their experiences due to concerns for their privacy.

Kiyomi's (married with a child and full-time career) case was again very rare; when I met and greeted here, before recording had even begun, she told me:

My husband and 'our child' are making dinner for me while I am being an interviewee (Smile).

¹¹ At first I contacted the participant by Skype to make the appointment for the pre-interview. The second contact was the pre-interview, the third time was confirmation of the interview by Skype, and the fourth time was the interview.

This sentence was very important for three reasons: (1) She looks very happy and smiled. I had not asked her, but she started to tell me. (2) She has a very supportive husband who helps with domestic work and teaching, while the majority of other women complained that their husbands only play with the children, or they do have nothing to do with the children. (3) Only she used the phrase 'our child', while other participants specifically said 'my child' or 'my children'. That choice of words implies that the children and the responsibilities that go with them belong to women, while only easy tasks, and keeping the family name, belong to their husbands. Women sometimes use unusual wording to explain their situations, 'translating' their experiences to explain their perspective (DeVault, 1990: 96). Listening to women's choice of words in explaining their experiences is vital to feminist research (DeVault, 1990). During pre-interviews, I had already found that Kiyomi was different from others because she was satisfied with her marriage, so I wanted to listen very carefully. I immediately took notes of what she said, and noted gestures such as a very big smile.

However, the researcher and respondent need to understand each other, and the researcher must control the interview so the interview does not stray too far from the topic. When I asked '*How did you meet your husband?*' many respondents straight away began to complain about their husbands. The question revived uncomfortable memories of their past experiences, and it was sometimes hard to find out about the respondents' marriage decisions. However, even those negative experiences were positive findings for me, because I have never imagined how married Japanese women changed to fulfill the role of their husbands' mother, who did everything for them before they were married (see Chapter 1 and 3). Feminist researchers must realise that the women acting as participants in their research are often trying to work against and change the oppression they experience (Ralph, 1988: 139). Fine and MacPerson (1992) demonstrated that women engage in self-analysis as they express their own feelings on feminism, using the occasion to consider different ways of being women, dealing with gender, power, culture and class struggles (Fine and MacPerson, 1992; 201). However, even if sometimes during the interview I wanted to ask more direct

questions to participants, for instance why participants wished they could be divorce their husbands but chose not to, I had to keep calm and remember Woods's (1997) tip of keeping a focused interview technique. Rather than asking directly, I asked respondents to express their responses as a story. I would ask questions such as '*Could you give me an example?*' or '*Could you elaborate on that idea ?*' and respondents started to give me more detailed information. Respondents started sharing more information. For example, Kiriko (who is married with children and has a part-time job) said, '*My husband has changed after marriage, especially after we had a child, but do not want to divorce him now because it would be a disadvantage for the children.....*'. I could hear that, from her single life through dating her husband, the pressure and process of marriage and the obligation of her family (parents) and the pressure of her husband changing after marriage, and now obligation of her new family, especially for her children. Use of Woods' technique allowed me to expand my research, because if I asked directly '*why don't you divorce?*', the answer would only be '*for the children's sake*'. Feminist researchers must pay careful attention to the organization of their interview questions, and the interpretations suggested by the wording of those questions (Anderson et. al., 1997: 114).

During the interviews, I realised again the importance of taking good notes, so I could go back and ask them certain things. When I asked about the ideal number of children and the reality, the majority of women said their ideal number was higher than reality, which the quantitative data also shows, but two respondents said their ideal number was fewer than reality, so I did not want to forget the different findings between the quantitative research and the qualitative research, so I took a note and I asked '*How do you come up with the ideal number of children and reality?*' Two respondents ideally only wanted to have one daughter, but the reality is that they will have two children in hoping for a son, because they feel pressured to maintain the family name of their husband's family. Kamiko has already has a daughter and she is very happy, but she said she has to at least try once more to prove she tried, because she knows that his family wants another child, hopefully a boy. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

(2010), Japanese women prefer to have a daughter, which is also indicated by my research, but my research found that it does not mean they do not have any pressure to make a decision as in Kamiko's case, who already has a daughter: she does not particularly want to have another child, but feels the responsibility to have a son.

Sensitive Issues

I was concerned about participants telling me their stories regarding sensitive topics. Vignettes are very useful for qualitative research because they can help people focus on what they want to share and so make the process less intimidating (Barter and Renold, 2000: 309). Those conducting qualitative research have found it useful to employ vignettes to reveal respondents' attitudes toward and beliefs about certain situations within a cultural and moral context. Participants are usually asked to say what they or a third person would do in particular situations involving a moral dilemma in difficult and sensitive topics. (Barter and Renold, 2000: 310). In this way respondents do not feel they are talking about their own experiences. Sometimes I used vignettes (see Appendix III), because a respondent had stopped talking or did not say very much. One example was when Ema was talking about pregnancy outside of marriage and then became quiet, so I used the following vignette (see Appendix III):

'Miss A is 32 years old. She has a great career. She loves her job. She has a boyfriend, but their relationship is not serious. She has become pregnant. What should she do?'

She should talk to her partner first and make up her mind. Personally she can afford to support her child, but if she wants to have a child they should marry too. How can she respect her parents if she becomes a single mother? I have a friend who became pregnant outside of marriage, and she was not serious about her relationship, but after discovering she was pregnant she and her partner married. Now they are happily married and a second child on the way. Relationships and marriage are different. I personally and strongly believe this. Arranged

marriages, not like those where parents choose a mate for their children, but where people can date or meet a partner at a club and then get married, will last longer I believe because love is created day by day. Before marriage a couple can see only the good things. After getting married, everything will be different. My parents have always told me that. (Ema, single, employed full-time)

I came to see that vignettes can be very useful in eliciting the deeper opinions of respondents. Vignettes help to put relationships into context (Barker and Ronald, 1999). If I had not used them, the results might well have been different. When I asked about pregnancy without marriage, most respondents fell silent or took longer to answer, but after using a vignette, respondents such as Ema opened up and started to share more intimate information. Vignettes help subjects to focus and be more forthcoming in their responses (Stolte, 1994). Another participant, Keiko, who is a married housewife with children, initially balked at answering a question I posed regarding pregnancy outside of marriage. After I used a vignette, she relaxed and started to talk more.

It depends on whether or not she thinks having a child the most important, but she should try to keep her job anyhow, even if she decides to have a child... Actually, I was in a similar situation to hers. I regretted not keeping my job. (Keiko, married with children and housewife).

Keiko had previously not told me anything about being pregnant before marrying. After I used a vignette, however, she slowly opened up about it. At first, she spoke about the hypothetical Miss A but gradually started to compare herself to the character and remarked on their mutual experiences. Respondents do not want their interviewer (me) to judge their responses toward the situation nor they do not want to me to know their true opinion or what they would do if they were pregnant, because making fertility decisions is a sensitive topic. Stolte (1994) explains that vignettes are useful for qualitative interviews to elicit respondents' thoughtful replies regarding the vignette subject's reactions rather than their own. The flexibility of vignettes helps respondents to give their answers more comfortably and more thoroughly (Riley, 2001).

Qualitative researchers allow their interviews to be flexible and flow in unforeseen and interesting directions, as opposed to having a scripted set of questions, and may adopt a thematic approach which covers a range of topics they wish to explore (Mason, 2002). However, it is very important that the interviewer knows how to pose questions and deal with lack of response, for sometimes the interviewee cannot respond so quickly. Perhaps she may be deep in thought and trying to examine herself. The interviewer thus needs to pursue the matter by using the respondent's hesitation to probe more deeply. I took a note when a participant's facial expression changed. It was also an opportunity for me to prepare to ask questions in a different order than planned during a participant's silence. When I was using a vignette to ask about the idea of abortion, one of the participants was quiet after I read the vignette, leading me to wonder what I should ask next. Or maybe she did not want to tell me, but after pausing to think, she told me about her friend's experience with abortion. She was thinking of the topic while she remained silent. If I had not waited, or had not put enough thought into which question to ask next about her opinion of abortion, she might not have told me the story of her friend's experience. It was a very important experience for me to realise how important it is to allow respondents to think and talk. In this case I was able to add the voices of two women's experiences. If the interviewer misses the opportunity, however, some very pertinent information might be lost. Sometimes such a moment can provide surprising revelations that the interviewee herself never gave conscious thought to before.

During the interviews some of the married participants expressed distress and anger toward their partners, society and the law. Some even expressed regret about marrying, telling me they wished they could change the past and be single again. Yet despite this nobody regretted having children. In fact, some of the respondents who were married with children said that they wished they had had a real choice of being single mothers, or that they regretted marrying. Married respondents mentioned that they did not think that becoming single mothers or remaining single were choices they could make in their lives. There are pressures to conform to the majority and in the average lifetime women are expected to

marry and have children. Yoshizumi (1995: 184) noted that once women are considered to be past 'marriage age', they are regarded as 'unsold goods'. I should take the time to make them more comfortable talking to me to share their experiences as members of the same generation.

When I asked the single participants about their backgrounds, some were surprised when I asked them their actual age or if they had children. It is interesting to note that most of the single women (7 out of 10) at first jokingly said '*Do I have to say my true age?*' or '*I am 20*'. Single women did not want to tell me their actual age, explaining that they were ashamed to still be single, especially after age 30. In Japan there is cultural and social pressure to achieve major things by a certain age. After age 35, only 2 % of women and 3 % of men will marry¹² (Census, 2010). There is accordingly one distinct difference between married and single women when revealing their age; none of the married women hesitated to tell me. Culturally, it is assumed that women do not have any children outside of marriage, so when I asked the single respondents directly if they had any children, they reacted with surprise and shock. Japanese women still have to follow rules of the traditional way of life married and having a child without marriage is taboo (Fujumura-Fanselow, 1993; also see Chapter 1). During the interview, one respondent said, '*I am single; how would I have any children? If I had children now I would have already been married before having any*'. Another replied, '*I already mentioned before I am single; how could I be a mother beforehand?*' A third said, '*I am still single. That means I am totally single*'. Five women mentioned that if they did have children, they would have (or already been) married; three of those five stated that they would not be brave enough to be a single mother. Two respondents who lived in U.K. responded a little bit differently

If I married a non-Japanese man, I could imagine being a single mother or having a child without marriage (Sakiko, single and has a job).

¹² In 2005, the proportion of single women between ages 35-39 was 12.8%; for single men of the same age, it was 30.9%. In 2010, the proportion of single women between ages 40-44 was 10.8% and single men was 27.9% (Japanese Census, 2010). The proportion of both men and women over 40 who married for the first time was 0.5%; for both men and women marrying for the first time over age 45, this proportion was 0.1%.

In the U.K., I could imagine having a child without marriage, but I am not sure what my family would think (Suzuko who lives in U.K, single and has a job).

There were differences between other respondents when it came to their ability to be single mothers. Suzuko mentioned her parents, just as other respondents mentioned respect for their parents and family, so they cannot imagine being a single mother or having a child without having been married. All of the married respondents currently without children said they intended and wanted to have children in the future:

I am married. I do not have any children yet, but I would love to have a child as soon as possible. We have been trying, but it has not happened yet. I hope it will happen soon (Kayo, married without child, has a full-time job). (My emphasis)

I am married. I have been married two years now, so I think this year or next year I want to have a child (Eriko, married without a child, housewife). (My emphasis)

They seemed to want to communicate that since they were now married, they wanted to start having one or more children and regarded that as the next step in the process, quite as if they felt they were entitled to having children. This will be covered further under the discussion of marriage and family (see Chapter 4). Lastly it should be mentioned that, both of them reminded me of their marital status and talked about their perspectives and plans regarding fertility decisions. It is important for Japanese women to be the same as everybody else, to join the majority and choose a predictable life course; they feel pressure and discrimination, and feel they cannot avoid having the choices made for them (Fujumura-Fanselow, Kameda, and Yoshizumi, 1995). I could see behavioural differences between married and single women during the interviews, especially on sensitive topics such as fertility decisions.

Analysing and Writing Up

My aim in using qualitative research methods was to discover the hidden voice behind women's fertility decisions. However, this research led me into much deeper issues that have to be understood and expanded in order to be analysed. I realised after the interviews that I could not only talk about fertility decisions, because many women have difficulties to make their own individual decisions due to family pressure, social pressure, discrimination against women even before marriage, and the decision to have a child or not have a child after marriage. Women in Japan may also be experiencing discrimination due to their fertility choices: having or not having children, and being single or being married. For instance, one of the main subjects explored in quantitative research is the effect of financial issues on fertility. After women decided to have a child, there were many losses for women, such as financial independence, which has been discovered by quantitative research on fertility, but not how women are choosing not to work and relying on men. This research told me that it was because it is simply harder to work at home and also keep a full-time job (see Table 6), for women are forced to work unpaid work and then made to rely on men, and women are at a disadvantage (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 86). It is physically difficult to have a full-time job because there is little support from husbands, social policies and the welfare system; however, it is also harder for women to keep a full-time job because they are discriminated against in Japanese social structures that are not specifically protected by laws governing women's job security (see Chapter 3 and 6). 'Having' and 'keeping' a full time job are two hurdles for women to conquer or give up. Which is easier and which way are women choosing? It is not only a matter of finances, which is only one factor involved in making it more difficult for women to make these decisions. Another thing I have found through my research is that many quantitative researchers have produced misleading literature, claiming that Japanese women prefer to be housewives and stay at home (Watanabe, 2011; Maruyama, 2001). As I listened to the recorded interviews, I was more and more interested in discovering the gap between quantitative research and my qualitative research. My first interest was the low fertility rate,

but my research expanded to include the question of whether these women want to become housewives. The quantitative research only shows that respondents might say they prefer staying home to take care of children due to the belief that the first three years are the most important (see Chapter 1), and it might show that the tax system (see Chapter 6) helps women more if they stay at home after marriage, so they might choose to answer ‘yes, I prefer to stay at home’. This is the strength of using qualitative research: it added much more detail on how and why women are choosing, or are being forced to choose where quantitative research does not show that decision making process.

I allowed one day for interview and transcription for both the pre-interviews and interviews. I have used a small portable voice recorder, which could be connected to a computer to copy the interviews. I could listen from the recorder or from the computer as I transcribed. Sometimes I could not concentrate at home, so I took the computer out of my study area and went outside to transcribe. It was important to listen to my participants’ words very clearly. In order to analyse all recorded interviews were first transcribed in Japanese. The process of transcription took a long time because all of the participants told me more of their stories, experiences and beliefs than I expected. After reading the transcriptions several times, I wrote down any emerging themes that surprised me. Re-reading transcripts can be useful for finding unexpected differences and similarities between participants (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). I was especially interested to see differences between my participants who are married and single. For instance, during this process it seemed that most of the married women had not wanted to be housewives when they were single, but the single women were more realistic; one said ‘*I would say to be married is not difficult but changing my life to be housewife is difficult, so I am still single*’ (Akiko, single and employed full-time). My more realistic participants remained single. This research needed to expand and analyse data more than I expected, but I gathered much more information on the participants’ stories and experiences than I required.

There was simply so much data, I did not know where to start. I remembered to review the information from the interviews with regard to a few specific questions,

aware that the findings could change during analysis (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). I chose at first to ask three main questions: (1) their ideal number of children, and intent to have children, (2) their description of an ideal marriage (which might indicate respondents' attitudes toward choosing to become a housewife), and (3) challenges of having raised children, because the aim of my research was to find out why Japanese women have been deciding to have fewer children or none at all. Existing quantitative research leaves gaps, showing only that Japanese women want to be married and want to have children, and showing that the ideal number of children is higher than the actual number they will have.

Next I tried to identify themes, recurring ideas, patterns, and behaviours (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). Woods (1997) advises researchers to be mindful of repetition of specific words or repeated mentions of specific incidents, as well as making note of verbal irregularities and emotional states, such as anger, embarrassment, laughter, and so on. Careful notes of the entire exchange are as important to the researcher as the words themselves (Olsen, 1994 et. al). For instance, when I asked my participants '*How do you feel about oral contraceptive pills?*', three of them looked confused. I then tried to clarify with a more precise explanation. One of them did not have any knowledge of contraceptive pills. The other two were aware of them, but had never thought of using them. Kayo (married without child has a full-time job) said '*Fortunately, neither my husband nor I have any "rubber allergy", so it is not necessary*'. It shocked me, because to the best of her knowledge, using contraceptive pills was more closely related to an allergy than to a means of having control over fertility decisions or women's rights (see Chapter 1). Even if they would like to use them, it is harder to see a doctor because of the 'Hokensho' system (see Chapter 1). If I had not made notes of these facial expressions, I risked misunderstanding; better understanding of women's real voices and stories should change a researcher's point of view and offer new discoveries. Sometimes it is normal for researchers to guess and imagine something, but it does not mean that we understand other people; for me, it was hard to imagine some women's attitudes toward fertility decisions. After living overseas for a while, where many women are using contraceptive pills (see

Chapter 1), it was difficult for me to remember that some women had so little knowledge of them. They have access to the internet and can learn about them, but there are few other opportunities to learn about contraception. This facial change gave me a fresh view of the cultural experience in Japan, and how important it is to record both women's words and their facial expressions.

I was exhausted mentally and physically by the process of listening to and transcribing the recordings. However, nearly every detail from the interviews was important to my research, so I transcribed the entire recording. In the meantime, I had to look carefully at the notes I took during the pre-interview and the interview. Did respondents mean what they said, or were they joking, which a simple transcription might not recognise? When I was transcribing, I added memos to the side, indicating facial expressions and tone of voice, laughing, upset, seriously saying, joking and irony, etc. One participant said '*I love my husband so much. He is my destiny. He is my load!*' But it was irony, because after this she began to tell her story of how much she regretting having met her husband. It took so much time and I started to be worried about having the time write up the thesis, because there are many important stories I have, but also felt that I would never finish going through what seemed like endless information. But I told myself to go step by step, transcribing one by one, every day. I also felt that commitment to my participants, since they shared their stories and spent their valuable time with me.

I had to choose categories and topics for first Chapter, and which text matched the themes, and to explain why some categories appeared more important. The analysis was focused on the four following issues: alternatively gender equality is covered in Chapter 3, particularly regarding gender roles in housework and career loss, since only one of my respondents (Kiyomi) were happy after marrying and having a child. The fourth chapter I chose to focus on marriage and family values. There is a strong relationship between marriage and the fertility rate in Japan. After marriage, more participants became unhappy, and all respondents who are single were worried about marriage, which is a very important decision for Japanese women due to the pressure to marry. The fifth chapter discusses

economic resources: the costs of having and raising children which are ever increasing. Lastly, the sixth chapter covers care, welfare and policy, which takes a closer look at the underdevelopment and inequality of welfare and policies for women. Those last two chapters are usually the main topic being researched in quantitative studies of low fertility rates, and while I do not deny the connection, these issues have to be understood within the context gender inequality. Of course there are links, but if gender equality changed, issues such as high education expenses would become less important. Welfare and policies have been established by the Japanese government to fight TFR (see Chapter 6), however respondents either did not care or did not believe change was coming anyway; one respondent told me 'It will not change anything, even law, because it has not changed anything before now' (Kiriko, married with children, employed part-time). Other respondents who are married also mentioned changes in Japanese law to reduce working hours; however, their husbands do not change their habits anyway: *'Even if my husband comes home earlier or takes a day off he just sleeps'* (Saki, married with children, part-time; see Chapter 3). Those two topics will be discussed later, however, in the course of my research I discovered that there were many issues mentioned where respondents wanted to see change. After creating a rough table of contents, I decided to choose some quotes to illustrate new and interesting findings. A carefully chosen quote can support an interpretation of data, but there is a risk of choosing or editing a quote only to supports the argument at hand (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) say that any quote's inclusion should be explained, without being edited so heavily that the point is lost to the reader. It is also important to find quotes from different respondents to support the same theme (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003); often in my research, this was Kiyomi. During the interview Kiyomi said, *I am not happy when someone called me Saito's ('husband's' family name) wife. I feel I lost my identity* (married with a child and full-time job). Kiyomi is happy with her married life, but she was not happy to be treated as if she now belonged more to her husband and his family. Even if Kiyomi is happy with her marriage, she is not happy with how Japanese people treated her after marriage. This could indicate a much more unsatisfying life for the majority of

Japanese women. I was able to follow the entire course of their lives and how they made decisions, starting when they were children until now, sometimes including the future, because how they were raised and will be treated in the future reveals what they want and hope for themselves and their children. I tried to connect key points and important findings while sorting through the data. I asked myself where the research was leading me, what the major lesson was, and if there were any new findings and differences between the existing quantitative research and my research. It was the trickiest part for me to make decisions about which quotes best fit which themes and Chapters, because I felt many themes are linked and I was confused about which Chapter would be best served by a quote; for example, whether a quote was a better example for explaining gender equality or economic resources. I was confused and repeated same quotes and findings in different Chapters. It was a tricky task because so much of the data contained very similar opinions and stories. At times I thought I was going mad listening, reading, and transcribing the same material. My memory was not working properly.

After transcribing and choosing quotes, I translated passages and quotes from Japanese to English. I have tried to keep participants' original speech as much as possible not to lose their meaning, personalities, voice strength and expressions. Making notes of distinctive ways of speaking is of great importance (Standings, 1998). Some expressions only exist in the Japanese culture, and even if similar English expressions existed, I am not a native English speaker and could not recognise some of the equivalent expressions. I could understand what participants meant, but when I was translating I had to make sure to translate Japanese cultural references for readers who might not know them, which is very challenging. It can be difficult if the language of the people to whom I spoke is different from the language in which my research will be written (Temple, 1997). I had to determine if a literal translation would be best, or if my interpretation might be missing some connotations of the responses (Birbili, 2002:2). After I did the translation, I read it again to make sure that meanings, phrasing and cultural differences survived the translation to English. It was natural for me to understand, however explanations had to be added for non-Japanese-speakers. This process

required a detailed working knowledge of both cultures (Birbili, 2000: 2). I asked my English-speaking friend several times to read the translations, and asked their opinions and if they had any problems understanding them.

Participants knew that their stories would be translated into English and become part of my thesis in U.K., so they knew they would remain anonymous. They were not worried about being a part of it, but if it were written in Japanese and published in Japan, it would have been more difficult for them to respond, and this could have affected our interviews. There were many good responses which caused me to spend more time on the transcription process. Sometimes I was confused as to whether portions of the conversation were necessary or unnecessary to the transcription. After that, I listened and re-read the transcript, cutting and pasting selected quotes to group them by theme, and re-reading them to see if the quotes linked to other themes.

I was sensitive to the concepts of weakness and oppression from Lorber's theory of gender inequality, and women's struggle against men. Those theories fit this research well by helping to explain why low fertility has become a problem, because solutions based on women's viewpoints have been ignored. Lorber (1992: 22) raises the standpoint feminism argument that the experiences and voices of women will be different from those of men, and women must make themselves heard to challenge a male-dominated society. Lorber (1997: 22) believes that the common thread of feminism is placing the female viewpoint and voice at the center of research, politics, and culture, rather than reducing it to a marginalized perspective. Hegemonic power is held by the party that controls scientific research and education, as well as the symbolism that pervades an entire culture. Western society draws many of its justifications for assumptions about man and women from scientific findings. Feminists frequently accept scientific fact without question, while standpoint feminism offers criticism of mainstream science and social study, provides an alternate method for researching feminist topics, and questions the power behind the knowledge and research that society already embraces (Lorber, 1997: 22).

Reflection on the Research Process

Qualitative research is more widely used in western countries, but there is much less use of qualitative research in Japan. It is thought to be difficult in Japan to do qualitative research, because Japanese people normally do not talk about their private lives, preferring to discuss these matters only with close family members (Sasagawa, 1997). Japanese people tend not to share certain private problems even with their close friends, particularly regarding life-changing issues and big decisions, such as marriage, taking exams, divorce and pregnancy (Dixon-Mueller, 1993; Sasagawa, 1997). Moreover, the reasons behind their reluctance to discuss these issues are more difficult for researchers to uncover.

At first I was worried about the interviews, and the lack of literature and related studies in Japan, but I felt it would not be so difficult to do. I enjoyed listening to the experiences and stories that emerged in the interviews. Of course, it was sometimes difficult for participants to speak openly to me, so I had to use vignettes, to read depersonalised stories to encourage them to give their opinions. Even as a Japanese researcher, I had to be careful not to be too formal, but once I built the relationships, it was easy to do the interviews. It was easy to establish relationships with the participants. It helped me a great deal that the respondents were interested in me, my age, my marital status, and so on, and they wanted to find out what they could discuss with me without embarrassing themselves. But I was very open and when they wanted to ask me something, and I answered as much as they wanted to know. It helped that I was a student, single and around the same age as the participants; they felt it was easier to share information which was very helpful because they felt that I was not in a higher position (or, more likely, in a lower position being a student not following the traditionally accepted Japanese path). Some single participants told me that it was easy to talk to me about marriage and having a child because I was also single. I felt that some of them even wanted me to agree with them and be a part of these issues. Some single participants were worried that they would be judged by someone to be too old for marriage and child-bearing. During interviews, my respondents advised

me in many ways, especially those who were married with children, how precious time is for single women, and on choosing the right man or choosing not to marry at all. One of the participants I clearly remember, when she was advising me, would not look at me or put her hands on me. I felt she was looking at past me, remembering when she was single and telling herself these things.

Lastly, most respondents were interested in my thesis. I could have very good interviews with great depth and quality because I was a student overseas. If I was a government employee conducting this research, it would have affected the interviews, but because I was a student, there was no pressure or judgement; it was easy for them to talk to me. I am a student, so there was no class barrier, which I felt was my strength (and I was told so during the interview). They mentioned that they would like to read my completed thesis, which delighted me. On the other hand, I have started to feel pressure in writing about this topic, due to their expressed high interest. I hope I will be able to complete this thesis and uncover new findings. Moreover, it will help readers to understand some unclear data and gaps from previous qualitative research, and would also help readers to understand Japanese women's attitudes toward fertility decisions. I would also hope that more qualitative research would be undertaken to focus on and support women's decisions.

Chapter 3: Gender Inequality

Introduction

All men profit from the ‘patriarchal dividend’ which refers to the unpaid work of women in raising children and doing the housekeeping, their low-paying jobs in various service fields, and the caring, emotional support they provide. This deep-rooted gender disparity is prevalent in the fabric of cultures around the world, shaping economies, family structures, politics and religion, even our vocabulary. True equality would require analysing these issues and bringing about reformation not on a personal level, but on a societal one (Lorber, 2010: 5).

As Lorber points out, women are compelled to perform unpaid domestic work, and men benefit more than women do from being married or living together, even if after having children. Men enjoy the benefits of greater financial power. This is still happening all over the world. Gender inequality is often seen in economic terms, such as income, financial inequality and the number of women participating in the labour force vs. the number doing domestic work, but it is important to acknowledge that women are spending huge amounts of time at home and are missing opportunities for paid work as a result in most countries (Robeyns, 2003; Cockburn, 2002). Lorber’s theories of inequality very much fit my understanding of Japan’s male-dominated, patriarchal society, and the instances of gender inequality described in this chapter. Standing (1999: 587) analyses the workplace inequality facing women in developed countries in terms of male-dominated ideologies and religions, even though there are fewer barriers faced by married people or parents; those setting the cultural standards have tended to be men. Standing (1999: 587) also noted that women have lower job security, fewer entitlements and lower wages (see also Bono, Vuri, 2011; Seguíno, 2010). Hartman (2002: 97) argued that not only must the hierarchy of division of labour between men and women end, but that *all* division of labour between the sexes needs to be erased in order for women to achieve equality with men, and for either gender to achieve the fulfilment of its human potential.

Inglehart and Norris (2003) imply that the changes that occur in gender roles due to modernisation can be predicted, and occur in stages. Industrialization brings

women paid work and better opportunities for education and literacy, and it can also mean a significantly reduced fertility rate. This empowers women to participate in political decision making, but generally they still have less influence than men. A second, post-industrial phase introduces more gender equality: women can achieve management positions and gain greater influence professionally and politically. The results of their study indicate that only the most advanced industrial societies have reached this point, while over half of the world has not. Changes occur in public life as well as personal lives, as the traditional two-parent system becomes less common and there is wider acceptance of liberalization of sexual behaviour, marriage and divorce; the effects are felt even in the workplace (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

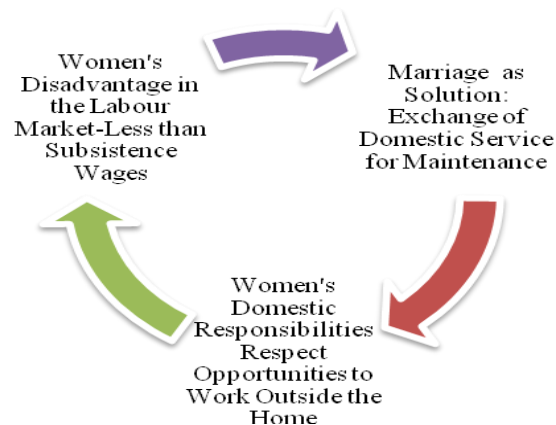
Japan is one of the most modernised and developed countries in the world, but Japan has yet to establish even basic gender equality. In Japan women cannot even keep a job after marrying and having children, which is the first step toward equality of labour force and financial equality in the women and men, even before we see further problems such as the income gap and women's lack of management positions at work (see Chapter 6). Women are still expected to leave their jobs after marrying or having a child; even if women have the same level of education as men, it does not mean that they have the same opportunities for career advancement (see Chapter 1). Confucianism, along with patriarchal traditions and belief systems, prevents women from attaining power (Lim 1997: 32). Optimistically, if Japanese women could remain at their jobs as men do, it would lead to more equal pay and higher position for women. However, in such strong patriarchal societies such as South Korea and Japan, it would be difficult to attain more gender equality because the Confucian ideology preserves the patriarchal structure (Lim,1997). There are many Western countries where gender equality is much more developed than in Japan, but there is still inequality in pay, and few women have higher positions than men in most of these countries (see also Jacobs, 1996; Whitehouse 1992; Kamo; 1994).

Only a few countries have come close to complete gender equality in paid and

management positions at work, such as Norway, which introduced a law which specified that 40% of higher management positions have to be occupied by women. At the time when the law was enacted in 2003, only 7 % of such positions were held by women. Two years later, that percentage had only risen to just 18 %, well short of the goal of 40 %. In response, the Norwegian government issued a strict mandate which stated that any company failing to comply with hiring more women in higher management positions to reach the goal of 40 % would be dissolved (Atsumi, 2011). If the Norwegian government had not strictly enforced rules about gender equality in management positions, it would not have reached the desired threshold of 40% of higher management positions being held by women.

How many countries can take the steps Norway has taken to be more gender equal? I cannot see it happening in Japan. Although Japanese women now have greater access to education than before, they still face formidable obstacles in being able to keep their jobs after marrying and having children. There is much inequality preventing women from remaining in a job over a certain period of time (see Chapter 1), but most of the time, after marrying and having children, women are working part-time, doing temporary work, or working at home. I have realised in the course of conducting this research, that it all comes back to the fact that Japan is still a strongly male-dominated and patriarchal society.

Figure 7: Patriarchal Society: A vicious Circle



Source: Heidi Hartman 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex', 1976 ¹³

¹³ Permission was granted to use my supervisor Professor Stevi Jackson's version of this graphic based on Heidi Hartman's 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex'.

The vicious circle of patriarchal systems is like asking if the chicken or the egg came first. At home, women are dominated by a patriarchal system: women do unpaid domestic work. Even work outside the home is subject to a male-dominated society, and there is still inequality; for the most part, women can hold only lower-responsibility jobs at work.

This Chapter will explain how gender inequality for women persists from childhood until adulthood. When children are born anywhere in the world, they observe their mothers' and fathers' behaviours at home and learn about gender roles. This continues from generation to generation. Inglehart and Norris (2003: 19) discuss the attitudes toward gender roles held by people in East Asia, focusing particularly on Japan. As one might expect, the values of the younger generation and older generation differ greatly. Younger people tend to favour greater equality of the sexes, while older people are more comfortable with more traditional roles for men and women. Yet societal change cannot occur quickly, as people retain the values and beliefs that were instilled when they were younger (Inglehart and Norris, 2003: 19). In Japan, from the day girls and boys are born, they are treated differently and taught how to speak and behave differently, ensuring the continuation of the male-dominated patriarchal society.

Cultural and Behavioural Differences

Behavioural Differences

Inequality is an integral part of gender identity; each gender is sequestered socially to justify unequal treatment, leading many to regard gender inequality as normal and natural (Lorber, 1997:29).

As indicated by Lorber's gender inequality is treated treatment between as a natural. Most of the time, when a child is born, the mother takes care of them, and the child (whether a boy or girl) sees the mother is taking care of them, the idea

forms in their minds that women's responsibilities are taking care of children and taking care of the house, perpetuating the existing gender roles of that way of life, and how much the mother and father are involved in housework (Henley and Kramarae, 2001). If the father spends more time working outside and doing maintenance at home, it fixes the idea that men's job is to work outside and fix things at home, which influences the children's idea of gender roles (Henley and Kramarae, 2001).

One of the everyday differences is that women and men speak to one another differently, but there are some similarities between women and men of similar class, age, ethnicity, and so on (Coates, 2004). But in Japan, the use of language between women and men is very different from western countries' language use. There are distinctly different 'male' and 'female' speech patterns in Japan. The '*female*' pattern tends to be more polite, while the 'male' pattern could be construed as arrogant or demanding. I myself was only made aware of this after I started to learn English, and at first I was confused, because in Japan there are many differences between women and men's way of speaking. One of my respondents shared similar experiences, Suzuko (living UK, single, employed full-time): '*there is much more equality using the English language rather than Japanese language, because basically we do not have to think about whether we are speaking to women or men when using English*'. Sasaki (1997) explains that Japan, with its distinct male and female language, is thereby different from other cultures. According to Sasaki (1997), Japanese people must know and use three different modes of speaking: masculine, feminine, and 'polite,' the last of which is very similar to the feminine mode.

When I was a child I felt it was not fair that my brother could say most things and describe anything using the Japanese language, but I was told often not to use those sayings, or do not say that, and so on. However, now I am doing the same things to my son and daughter. I feel bad, but I have to, right? What can I do? I cannot change Japan (Kiriko, married with children, part-time employed).

Kiriko felt inequality through the use of language in Japan, but she has to teach her daughter the same unfairness. She feels that her resistance against social convention cannot effect any change, and gives up and follows '*what should be done*' for women and men. These instances of inequality, in normal everyday word usage, help to erect barriers to equality between women and men, and perpetuate the teaching of differences between women and men. Kondo (1990), a Japanese-American sociologist went to Japan as a young female student and experienced difficulty in accepting Japanese women's roles, not only in language, but because there are many surprising tasks and responsibilities that fall to women in Japan, becoming a natural part of their everyday lives. She was surprised that, when someone wants more rice in their bowl, the bowl is passed to their mother, and she is expected to fill their bowl with rice each time (Kondo, 1990). Kondo had to act as though she was not offended by this behaviour and many others, and said it was difficult to ignore the gender inequality that exists for Japanese women in everyday life, accepted as culturally natural behaviour. In her two years of living in Japan, she did not want to be transformed by these inequalities.

Sechiyama (2013: 83) explains how Japanese husbands behave after work; until recent years, it was common for them to use only three words after coming home: '*Meal, bath and bed*', and women had to do all of the housework for their husbands. I have found through my research that the behaviours of Japanese husbands follow a similar pattern: wives do everything for their husbands, remaining awake to assist until their husbands sleep. Saki wakes her husband up, makes breakfast, lunch and dinner, takes him to the station to work, and takes him back home by car, makes drinks, prepares his bath, and prepares for her husband's sleep (see Chapter 2). I did not ask her how many words her husband says from the moment he comes back from work until he goes to sleep; I could imagine little conversation because she told me she is very busy the whole day, but her husband does not care if she is busy or not. Saki said, '*Even if my husband sees and realises I am getting the children ready for bed, he will still ask me to bring a drink for him*'. Even on her husband's day off, her daily activities do not change much (see below).

There are many expressions of behaviour in Japan that pertain exclusively or especially to women. Gender roles are a learned behaviour, shaped by society's expectations, acquired attitudes, and behaviours specific to certain situations; girls, boys, women and men have different experiences that shape these roles in the world (Lott, 1987; Coates, 2004). Perhaps many Japanese people might not realise it or simply accept these differences between women and men, but females are treated as being somehow inferior to males, even when they are still children. They even have a different way of sitting on the floor.

Figure 8: Differences in Ways of Sitting by Gender



For Japanese female



For Japanese male

Source: (Left side) http://userdisk.webry.biglobe.ne.jp/007/913/58/N000/000/000/IMG_2582.JPG

Source: (Right side) <http://genki-do.up.seesaa.net/image/yugami-kotuban.JPG>

Japanese women are not allowed to sit in the 'male style,' and vice versa. If someone sits the 'wrong' way, they will possibly be regarded as either being rude (females) or homosexual (males). Japanese women are expected to sit in the accepted female style, and men are expected to sit in the accepted male style; there are more differences as well, such as formality, kinship, occupation and ages (Kondo, 1990). From the feminist viewpoint, cultural acceptance of gendered behaviour and widespread disapproval of anything straying from the accepted norms are simply a means of controlling the culture and keeping the male-dominated power structure intact (Lorber, 1997: 30; Inglehart, and Norris, 2003). I was taught the required expressions and mannerisms as a child, such as how to sit, how to speak, and how generally to behave and they are still being taught today in Japan. There are many such restrictions placed on Japanese women. They are so deeply ingrained that people do not even think about

exhibiting these mannerisms but do so instinctively as it were; they find it to be neither strange nor restrictive. One respondent living in the U.K., Sakiko, noted that her time of living abroad had made her realise that in Japan women face more discrimination:

I hadn't realised just how much inequality there was between men and women, following the female and male ways of behaviour when I was still living in Japan. When I was in Japan, I was told often: behave like a woman. At the time I did not think but what is it to behave like a woman? Now I can ask, but when I was in Japan. I was told to behave politer, softer and quieter (Sakiko, single, has a job in the U.K).

The fact that people regard such submissive and deferential behaviour as natural and a normal part of the culture is disconcerting to say the least. Even the U.K. does not have total gender equality far from it in fact but Sakiko's experience living in the U.K. opened her eyes, and she has come to realise that she has many more opportunities and a better developed sense of equality than in Japan. She told me that she has been enjoying living in the U.K., and added that there are more freedoms and equality for women there, and fewer expectations. During the interview she mentioned that, when she was in Japan, she hated that some of her family members told her, '*You are a girl, so you cannot do that, you do not behave like that*'. She asked me, '*Have you ever had the same sort of experiences?*' She wanted me to agree and I wanted to know her experiences. I have had many of the same experiences as Sakiko, so I said '*Yes, I have*'. She asked me for an example, so I told her that I had once hated my physical appearance; because I have a scar on my face, many male strangers told me when I was a child that no one would want to marry me, or that my voice was a lower tone than normal (what is normal?). '*You are like a boy*' was something which hurt badly to hear as a child. Sakiko agreed with me and finally told me, '*I miss Japan, but I do not want to go back there because there is no hope that it will change, anyway. Even I did not notice the degree of inequality in Japan before I lived in the U.K.*'. Japanese women and men have yet to acknowledge the inequality of the gender gap, because they think it is the natural way of life that women take care of the house and men work outside to earn money for the family (see Chapter 1). Even if they

notice and acknowledge the inequality between genders, what they can do? There are limitations on how much they can change how they speak, and it is very tricky to convince people to acknowledge such change. There are other examples: Japanese people celebrate different customs and events, celebrating girl's day and boys' day; boys' day, called *Kodomo-no-hi* (which means child's day) is treated with much more importance than girls' day.

Girls' Day and Boys' Day

Figure 9: Pictures of Displays for Girls' and Boys' Days



Hina-ningyo
Inside House for Girls' Day



Gogatu-ningyo
Inside House for Boys' Day



Koi-nobori
Outside House for Boys' Day

Source: <http://www.yoshitoku.co.jp/>

Japan celebrates both a Boys' Day (May 5th) and a Girls' Day (March 3rd), but only Boys' Day is a national holiday (see also Ehrenreich 2003). Historically, when a baby girl is born the maternal grandparents will give her special dolls, but when a baby boy is born the paternal grandparents will provide the dolls. Figure 1 shows examples of Boys' Day and Girls' Day observations in Japan. Although dolls are on display inside the home on both days, only on Boys' Day are decorations, called '*Koinobori*', displayed outside the home. Koinobori is a symbol indicating that a family has a boy, and is always shown off from outside. Boys' Day is more publicly visible and more openly celebrated than is Girls' Day. In my own experience I have had only one maternal grandparent, my maternal

grandmother. She had raised five children, of whom my mother was the youngest. She could not afford to provide me with special dolls. On the other hand my paternal grandparents were wealthy, and so my brother was given the biggest dolls. Even though my father's side could have afforded to provide special dolls for me as well, they did not. Therefore my parents gave me the dolls that my maternal grandmother could not. At first, when the tradition began in 681 A.D., these dolls were meant to bestow good luck and protect the children (Hasegawa, 1965; Sano, 1998). Today such dolls symbolize a child's future success, which is represented by the variety of doll sizes and types of accessories to show the level of expected wealth. By this standard I was thus destined to be very poor and miserable, as I had very small dolls and only a small number of accessories. Today I cannot imagine anyone in Japan not having those dolls. According to Shogaku-kan (2008), they cost an average of ¥ 250,000 (Approximately £ 1,953). It can thus be stressful for grandparents.

It is ridiculous that my parents have to buy such an expensive doll because of tradition, but my son already received dolls from my parents-in law, so my parents feel and I feel it is necessary for a daughter as well, which truly I feel unnecessary. I am supposed to belong to my husband's family and even change my name; however, ironically my parents still have to do something for me and their grandchildren. This system only uses the female's family when they want to. It is also more troublesome that I have to put them out and away until the children are married, especially with the myth for daughters that we have to be on time to put them away after Girl's day (Keiko, married with children, housewife).

Keiko makes a very interesting point, because historically, after marriage, a woman is supposed to have no dealings with her family. However, when they need to buy expensive items for their daughters, women's parents have to buy them. This is one of the paradoxes of Japanese society. On Girls' Day, by tradition, the parents must put away the dolls the following day. If they are late in doing so, it is believed the result will be a delay in their daughter's marriage, however the same deadline is not applied to boys' dolls. It might indicate that marriage is primarily a concern for women, and women are expected to care more about it. Also, as Keiko mentioned, *'It would be my responsibility to follow this custom*

even I do not believe the myth; my husband would not take on any of the responsibility for it'. Packing these dolls is a time-consuming process, because the dolls and tools are expensive, and more be individually packed with special care to prevent them from being eaten by bugs.

My parents were a little bit different, however; they donated my dolls to an orphanage so I no longer have them. Most families, however, keep the dolls until their daughter is married. My participants' mothers took care of the dolls on time and put them away on time. However, I could see differences between single participants and married participants' parents' attitude toward those *Hina-ningyo* and the beliefs surrounding them.

My mother still cares about Hina-ningyo and decorating, and putting them away on March 3rd after noon, and praying that I could marry (Smile). It is like a joke. (Akiko, single, full-time employed).

My mother simply does not believe in Hina-ningyo after I married, because I think I am not so happy with my married life. However, she said that when her granddaughter is born, she would buy it for her out of respect for my husband's parents (Kazumi, married without a child, full-time employed).

Single participants' parents, especially mothers, still believe in following the custom to take care of *Hina-ningyo*, but married participants' parents and mothers do not seem care about it, but are still intent upon following the custom. My research revealed that none of my participants believed the myth, and they think it is better not to have this custom. Most participants have negative opinions of those days. Kumiko (married with children, housewife) said, *'I have to organise family parties for those days and people are comparing notes: who got small dolls, small parties and so on, which is too much. My husband says those events are for our children. But he does not do anything, anyway.'* When I was listening to their attitudes toward Girls' day and Boys' day, it all came back full circle: participants have to do all the work to organise the parties for their children, while their husbands do not do anything, even if they hold a positive opinion of the event. I wondered if my participants would be in the same position if their husbands said

they would enjoy the event. One participant told me that *'I would enjoy it if my husband would do all of the hard work for the children those days'* (Kiriko, married with children, employed part-time). Japanese men do not want to do anything involved in children's events, expecting women do all of the work to have big dolls and big parties. *'My husband does not care about the expenses of child parties; he always says "get this, get that" to order me to do'* (Kamiko, married with a child, housewife). Japanese men only work outside, and do not consider other issues and unpaid work and how those inequalities might affect women's fertility decision making.

Women's Responsibilities and Decisions

Keeping a job or not being able to keep a job

The starting point is already different: to be born as a woman. Will women ever be treated as the equals of men? I did not realise how important this question would become when I started my research, because my research and study have gone deeper than I had ever imagined before I started (see Chapter 2). I found a pattern among my participants who could and could not keep a job: there are many difficulties and reasons why women give up their careers and jobs. Kiyomi (married with a child, full-time job), is a unique in this research because she is happy and satisfied with her life even after marrying and having a child, which is easy to understand compared with the general life experience of Japanese women who are unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives. Her background is highly educated, teaching at university and happy because she could keep her job after marrying and having a child.

My life is good, I have a child, job and a supportive and helpful husband. I did not have to choose career or family, I could have both. My husband and I experienced life overseas. We studied together there, which helped him to share the responsibilities of sharing domestic work. I changed my family name legally but I am using my own family name at work. The school is accepting this (Kiyomi, married with a child and has a job).

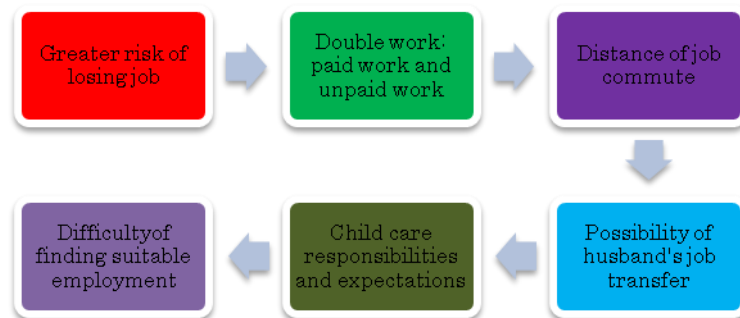
The first factor in Kiyomi’s narrative is that she did not have to choose between work and family, and was able to keep them both, but the majority of women have to choose only one; after marriage and after having a child, she could keep a job because of her professional work environment (see Chapter 6). In professional and career jobs more allowances are made for those who care for children, such as flexible working hours, maternity leave and so on (Ato, 2000; Yamane and Ook, 2008). Second is a supportive husband to share domestic work, and the third one is she could keep her name, at least at work. It is important that she did not have to choose or change after marriage (see Chapter 6). It is still rare for women to retain their jobs in Japan after marrying and having children. When a Japanese woman has a child she has to take maternity leave, making it difficult for her to return to the same career even if she has support (see Chapter 6). Kiyomi had support from professional work and her husband, both of which are rare; she is very fortunate. She also has her parents’ support: when she married, her prenuptial agreement with her husband was that her parents would live nearby. Her husband is a very understanding and supportive man, which is unique in my research.

Table 7: Daily Duties for Kiyomi, Her Husband and Her Parents

Time	Kiyomi	Kiyomi’s Husband	Parents
6 a.m.			
6:30 a.m.			
7 a.m.	Make breakfast for all		
7:30 a.m.			
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.		Take child to nursery and go to work	
8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Leave house to work		
3 p.m.			Pick up child from nursery
5 p.m.	Pick up child from parent’s house		
5:30 p.m.	Play with child at home	Grocery shopping for dinner	
6 p.m.		Cook dinner for all	
8 p.m.	Wash dishes and ironing	Clean house	
9 p.m.		Put child to bed	

Kiyomi’s duties are much lighter than those of other participants (see Chapter 2 Saki’s daily duties), because her husband and her parents help with domestic duties. In fact, Kiyomi’s husband works fewer hours than other participants’ husbands (see Chapter 2), which I will talk about in a later section. Kiyomi told me that she has hobbies and she has time and money, which is also very rare. During interviews, most participants said they had to choose to live far from their parents, mostly because they had to choose not to live very far from the husband’s workplace, making it was difficult to ask parents for help with child care. It was surprising to find that most of participants did not rely on their parents for child care during the week. Kiyomi has a life that most Japanese women would dream of, but it is a lifestyle that’s very rare and difficult to find. My other respondents have to go through many difficulties to keep a job.

Figure 10: Participants’ Difficulties in Keeping a Job After Marrying



This is the process that has emerged from the narratives of my respondents; however, it is a very simple diagram of a process in which there are much deeper issues. After marrying, women have a far greater chance of losing their jobs because their employers force them to leave, and because there may be too much work outside and at home. When a wife and husband live together, they have to choose a convenient place to live for commuting to work, and it will usually be nearby the husband’s workplace, making it harder for women to commute and manage both a paid job and unpaid work at home. Husbands often transfer to different offices in Japan and overseas, making it even harder for women to keep a job. Women have child care responsibilities and the expectation of women in

Japan to be wise mothers and good wives (see Chapter 1) further restricts women. Lastly, when women return to the labour force after having children, they cannot return to the same careers they had before when they were single. Japanese women have many hurdles to keep a job.

Moreover, in Japan many companies have been hiring women as candidates for future wives for their male workers. The expression *koshikake-zoku* means that only young and beautiful women are hired by companies as ‘*window dressing*’ and for the prospects of the male workers, since men and women can meet each other at the office (Kagawa, 1996). Female office workers in Japan are referred to as *ofisu redi* (office ladies, or OL for short). OLs are responsible for everything from bookkeeping and word processing to more mundane tasks such as secretarial and even janitorial duties (Adachi, 1989; Ogasawara, 1998). The majority of women in companies are working in supporting roles to male employees (Tatenaka, 2000). According to Ueno (2004), Japanese women are always supporting men, both at work and at home. They are relegated to supportive positions even if they are as highly educated and skilled as their male counterparts. The chances of their being promoted are slim, and Japanese women are treated differently from men due to the patriarchal, male-dominated society. Women face more hurdles than men in the workplace and fall behind. It is nearly impossible for Japanese women to compete with men (Adachi, 1989; Ogasawara, 1998). OLs do not carry business cards, which are crucial for anyone in Japan who desires a more responsible job (Ogasawara, 1998). Even if women work longer, this work is not treated as experience or a career. Most of men’s jobs are treated as experience, and it is a positive even if they change jobs (but not so for women). OL is a job taken by Japanese women which does not further their careers. Japanese women are not categorised as career employees, and longer experience can be negative (Lo, 1990; Shirahase, 2009). Easy and non-responsible jobs are usually reserved for women, and experience is not considered beneficial for women, making it is easy to replace women’s positions in Japan. Keeping young women at work is important for Japanese companies, to prepare them to be future wives for male workers in Japan.

My friend lost a job because she was the same age as me, and still single, and working at a small company. The company wanted to hire a younger woman, so they get rid of my friend. When I started to work I thought I would meet a nice man and get married in my 20's. I have been working now since I was 18, quite a long time. Many of my colleagues married and quit their jobs a long time ago. Only I and one other woman are left and still working at the same company. I am lucky I am working for a large company, so that they cannot get rid of me. If I were working for a small company I would have already experienced trouble in trying to stay there. Most companies do not like to keep older female employees, I think. (Akiko, single and has a job).

Most companies seem to view women as expendable, preferring to hire younger females and then forcing them out when they decide they are no longer needed (Sato, 2004). In large companies more than half the women working full time are no older than 29, with a significantly smaller proportion in their 30s or above (Ogasawara, 1998). It is difficult for women to remain in a company when they age past a certain point (Lo, 1996). Japanese culture pressures women to be sexually appealing and beautiful, yet expects them to assume the duties of domestic life when the time comes (Rosenberger, 2001) For instance, in the case of Akiko's friend, she was too old for the company's purposes, and Akiko felt she had a more secure position because her company was large.

Paradoxically, women are seen potential wives, even though having relationships at work is often a very problematic issue for Japanese women. People have always believed that it is not possible to focus on work while maintaining that kind of relationship with a co-worker. Quite often in such cases, it is the woman who is transferred to a different department within the company, the man remaining in the same position, creating a disadvantage for the woman (Lo, 1996). According to Lo (1996), who has experienced very different work situations herself both in Japan and in other countries, most people hide these relationships from their bosses, most female workers being worried about their jobs and not wanting to move. One respondent, Eriko, said that her boss had subtly implied that dating colleagues is forbidden, especially in the same department, so if she intended to stay at the company she would be transferred to a different department or a different office altogether. It is always the women who are moved and transferred,

because they are not regarded the same as males on a career path (Lo, 1996).

Another respondent, Kayo, also had a negative experience.

I first met my husband at work. It was nothing special, but it was a difficult situation for us because our company prohibited dating among the employees, and so we had to hide it from all of our colleagues. Another reason we didn't say anything was that we would still have to work together at the same company even if the relationship didn't work out. It was very uncomfortable. I thought of it as a platonic love. He was nice and so we dated, and then I was kind of pushed by my parents to marry him. By the time I turned thirty most of my friends had already married, so I thought maybe it was time for me too. I dated him for about two years. I cannot see myself having a good career in this company because I am a woman. My husband and I started working for the company at the same time; in time he was promoted, but not me. It is unfair, but it is not a big company so we do not have any sexual equality rights. Only a big company can have that sort of rights. One of my friends who works for a large company says they are more careful about it, but not our small company. I do not enjoy working here, so when I become pregnant I might quit my job and become a housewife. I wish I could enjoy my work more and could focus on my work like my husband. He enjoys being promoted often. (Kayo, married without a child, has a full-time job)

In Japan women graduate from University and then work for several years until they either marry or have a child, and then they are expected to quit because of the expectations of their family or society (Lo, 1990). Even when women do stay in their jobs after marrying, in most countries they face many gender inequalities, such as a lack of promotion opportunity and child care support (see also: Cockburn, 2002; McMullin and Berger, 2006; Chapter 5 and 6). This lack of opportunity causes Japanese women to become disillusioned and lose heart in fighting to keep their jobs (Adachi, 1989; Atho, 2002). One such example of this inequality is at a bank where the payment curve of the OLs reached its zenith at an earlier point and a lower level than men, resulting in a disparity wherein a woman would have to work until age 51 to reach the same level that a man in a similar position would reach in only four years from starting out (Ogasawara, 1998:12; also see Lo, 1990; Habu, 2000). The pay differential is greatest among people in

their forties, with women making less than half the wages men do (Ogasawara, 1998). Thus Kayo (Married without a child and has a job) was considering becoming a full-time housewife because she was not happy with how she was being passed over for promotion by her male colleagues. Her husband was promoted, but she was not. She realised her future in the company would be bleak and so could not see any benefit in continuing to work there. When Japanese women decide to marry, they face another barrier to keeping a job, because there is no strict law designed to protect women (see Chapter 6). A law to protect women was established in 1972, stating that when women are married or pregnant, an employer must not force them to leave and must not cut wages (see Chapter 6). But even then, one of my respondents experienced illegal action by a company trying to fire her.

I told my office manager that I was marrying soon. The manager asked me right away 'when?' 'Are you planning staying?' I said in 3 months time and yes, I would like to stay. But two weeks later I was told that, about a month before, I had made a mistake and made trouble for our team, so I had to go. Even I did not remember that happening, and there is not any evidence I made the mistake. I could not do anything and I was forced to leave the company (Eriko, married with out a child and housewife).

Two of my participants, Kayo and Akiko, said that they think large companies offer much more protection to women, however, Eriko was working for a larger company, but she was forced to leave the company when she was married. One government study shows that 9% of women are forced to leave a company after marriage or having a child (MHLW, 2011). Though the law exists, an employer could make many excuses to make women leave a company even if they do not want to (see Chapter 6). In Eriko's case, she was forced to leave the company not because she was marrying, but because she was accused of making a mistake in her work. Even with legal protection, married and/or pregnant women still face the possibility of losing their job, even married women who aren't planning on having any children.

After having a child, respondents expressed their concerns that finances demand that women should return to the labour force, but most respondents who are married without children said they plan to quit their jobs after having a child. During the interviews it came to light that some of the respondents were experiencing the responsibility of raising children; some were dreaming of being mothers, and some of them were willing to quit their jobs because they were not their ideal jobs. Even if women could remain at work after marriage or after having a child, some women are pushed into different departments, or are transferred to different, less important jobs to make them decide to leave the company (MHLW, 2011).

I am definitely quitting my job when I become pregnant. I do not particularly enjoy my work. I would prefer to be a good mother and take care of my child. I have felt that it was enough to take care of my husband, but my child will be different. I would like to take care of my child probably until school starts. I want to be there for my child. My mother stayed at home for me, so I want to be a good mother, which is the most important thing for me at this moment. (Kazumi, married, without a child and has a job)

Some of the respondents who were married without children were willing to be mothers, wanting to be the ideal mother. Japanese women are afraid of not being good mothers even if they have to make sacrifices. When single women were asked by researchers about their attitudes toward a remaining at a job after marriage, 36.9 % of women said they would like to keep the job, but after having a child, decreased to 21.3% of women wished to remain (MHLW, 2010). Japanese women face tremendous difficulty if they wish to return to the workforce in the same kind of job after having been gone for a length of time (Okagawa, 2001). For example, many women who had been teachers before birth attempted to return to their jobs, yet all they could find was factory work or work as shop assistants (Oda, 2008). This is one example of why Japanese companies have started to become concerned about national depopulation, because they want to hire and retain talented, intelligent and trained people and they have started

providing better working conditions, especially for women. During the raising of a child, women are most likely to lose their careers, and even if women go back to the labour force, they are usually offered unskilled jobs (Ochiai, 2008; Shirahase, 2009). Women have to work after their children become older due to financial reasons, even if they can only find menial jobs.

I quit my job when I become pregnant. Now I have a part-time job working at a factory where I check bread. I used to work for a bank. I wish I could get my old job back. But because I need money I do not have any choice. That is the reality. (Saki, married with children and has a part-time job)

Nagase (1997) also described the ‘home-working’ style for Japanese women who are married and have a child, and who stay at home and do some jobs to earn income. It is called *Naishoku*. A supplier brings tasks to a housewife at home, sometimes checking faulty products such as electrical goods, stationery, toys and clothes. Depending on the volume and speed with which they do the job, they earn a small amount of money when the task is completed. Recently, many more *Naishoku* jobs have become computer data entry jobs. When children are small, Japanese women stay at home, take care of the family and home, and work (do *Naishoku* and earn some money) at home. Below are images of ‘*Naishoku*’ in this case, making envelopes.

Figure 11: Naishoku



Sources: <http://photohito.com/photo/82581/>



http://yaplog.jp/vert_saison/image/621

I used to work for a large company. Everything was great! I was able to earn my own wages and spend all of my money on myself. But now that I am looking for a job, there is no way I could get my old job back. I also can't work full-time anyway, because of my children and my husband. I prefer going outside to see different things other than my home surroundings. Every day I see the same views, but it would be difficult to leave the house. I would do Naishoku (Home-working) to earn some money. (Keiko, married, children, housewife)

In Keiko's case, she now has to perform an unsatisfying job. Keiko said, '*I prefer work outside, even part-time, because I can feel connected to the outside world and society again*'. She was not happy, she would have a meaningless job at home, but she preferred even a meaningless and unsatisfying job if it meant working outside of her home, but in her situation it is still hard to find outside work, so for financial reasons she has to choose work at home. Keiko told me that her friend is making envelopes at home and she does not, but she needs to do so.

Lack of Support

In Japanese companies, men and women do not travel along the same career trajectory, such that it is much easier for men to claim better and higher positions than women. According to research conducted in 2010 by Corporate Women Directors International, Japan was ranked 38th out of 42 countries for labour force equality; the four countries ranked lower than Japan were Arab countries. The research shows that only 1.4 % of higher management positions are held by women. South Korea was ranked 37th, with 1.5 % of higher management positions in Japan held by women. The most equality between women and men found by this research occurred in Norway (40.3%) and second-ranked was Sweden (21.9%) and U.K was 12.2% (Corporate Women Directors International, 2010).

Most Japanese men work for only one company. One study compared this with 42 other countries, and found that the younger generation of Japanese people still believe that it is better to stay with one company, compared with young workers in

other countries (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 2012). That is, they do not often change jobs, except in the cases of part-time workers, and this applies to women as well. So for Japanese men it is nearly a lifelong commitment, with the average male employee working for the same company for 40 years. This is the '*Nenko-joreshu*' system: when you stay longer at work, you are automatically promoted, similar to the patriarchal system in which the older male is the top of the hierarchy (see Chapter 2). Women usually have more time off, such as for maternity leave and for taking care of sick children. In Japan this can cost women their chances of promotion while most Japanese women must give up their jobs after starting to have families.

Japan and South Korea share similarities regarding women in the workforce, though it is more common for South Korean women to re-enter the workforce via self-employment, since that country is less corporate-based than Japan, and self-employment is also regarded as a viable path for men (Yamane and Ook, 2008: 78). It is also more common for South Korean families to rely on networks of relatives to help with child care. Women also find it easier to enter professional careers and women in South Korea have more rights in the workplace than they would have in Japan (Yamane and Ook, 2008: 77). This results in a dichotomy between Japan's advanced urban and economic planning, and its educational system on one hand, versus very slow advancement in gender equality on the other. This is an important factor in the low fertility rates experienced in Japan and South Korea (Suzuki, 2008: 36). Women professionals generally marry men of comparable productiveness, but even in the West, men still receive greater recognition for their work and move up the career ladder faster (Lorber, 2005). In Japan, it is even worse. This problem has been discussed at length in the media and at academic conferences, and it is generally agreed that it is very important to keep talented women in the workplace, or the consequences could soon be economically disastrous due to the shortage of properly skilled workers in Japan (Shionoya, 2001). Despite this recognition, little has changed.

Dasgupta (2000) found in her research that Japanese husbands today prefer their

wives to be employed outside the home for the sake of the extra income, but not as the main provider. It is better for Japanese husbands if their wives do meaningless jobs such as 'Naishoku' to make extra money and help the family financially, but women will not gain the confidence from this work that is needed to become more independent. Women are unsatisfied with their limited options to help their families financially, but this is not regarded as part of their duties as a mother and wife (Delphy and Leonard, 2002). The constant interruption of daily life, the tendency for other family members to take them for granted, and not being considered for work positions that involve major decision making, form a discouraging pattern for women and diminishes their efforts and achievements in the eyes of others (Lorber, 1997: 16; Delphy and Leonard, 2002: 21). Also during my interviews, respondents said that they felt it was 'unfair' having to work 'double time,' both inside and outside the home. Jackson and Scott (2002: 152) point out that, if both their home chores and outside work are counted together, women work much longer hours than men. In an average day, a Japanese man spends 59 minutes cooking, cleaning or attending to child care duties, while the average amount of time spent by men on these duties in the OECD was 131 minutes (see Chapter 1). Women are expected to work four times longer. Japanese men do not want to change anything that would allow women to have more responsibilities and easier access to paid work.

Men still think women are supposed to be in charge of the household. Finch and Mason (1993) describe how the cultural and geographical surroundings of women and men may affect gender roles and role models, but morality, responsibility and acknowledgement of the differences in gender are important to change men's attitudes towards gender roles or sharing the responsibilities of domestic work. Whereas working wives have two duties, working both outside and inside the home, their husbands have only one such duty, working outside the home.

I married and quit my job, because if both of us were working outside, it would be impossible for me to do all of the domestic work by myself and take care of a child. His and my work place are quite far from our house (Kamiko, Married housewife, with a child).

Even though some women need to earn money for the family, they cannot work outside; they have to work at home to earn money. Women who left a job after marriage or having a child said that their main reason for leaving work was to focus on housework (39 %), because they felt they had to quit because women cannot take on both responsibilities (26.1 %). For 4.7 % of the women, the reason was the distance between their workplace and home (MHLW, 2011).

Women have to consider commuting time as well because when they are single, she can commute and come home, but after having a family, women have to handle all domestic work and take care of children. They would use more time to commute, leaving many women such as Keiko to take on *Naishoku* work at home. Another respondent, Saki (married with children, employed part-time) said, *'I could not go far to work part-time because I have very limited time. Commuting is losing my time. I chose my part-time, which was just a conveniently close location'*. My respondents wanted to find any job close to home, or work at home to earn some money for the family. Their husbands could pursue their jobs and gain more confidence; this has a negative effect on women, since men's financial power leaves women little choice but to obey the call to work at home for financial reasons after marrying and having a child. They lose their self-esteem as a result.

When Japanese people pursue their career, there are some opportunities for employees to transfer to other offices Japan or offices overseas. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 2011, Japanese men often transfer to different offices: 36.2 % of employees of smaller and medium-sized companies have a chance to transfer to other offices, while 46.9 % of employees of larger companies have opportunities to transfer offices (MHLW, 2009). When a husband is transferred to another office and must go to another city or prefecture, the family might have to move depending on the distance involved, again making it more difficult for women to keep a job. Kamiko also mentioned that her husband has quite often transferred offices, so it is more difficult for her to keep a job (Married housewife, with a child).

Retirement

In most countries part-time workers do not receive equal pay or equal benefits because their shorter hours make them ineligible (Gregory and Connolly, 2008). One respondent, Kiyomi, had a secure job and was completely financially independent from her husband, saying that she would have a good settlement when she retired and that she was not worried about finances. Kiyomi is rather unique in that she has been able to retain her financial security and independence. Kiyomi's case illustrates the importance of understanding women's desires and needs so to allow them to thrive personally and professionally. The Japanese company retirement system also widens the gap of inequality, forcing women to rely all the more on men, i.e. their husbands. Thus in situations where a woman would prefer to divorce before her husband retires, she must often put it off, waiting until he retires before she can receive any benefit payments. One option which many Japanese women have been exercising after their husbands retire is known as *Narita Rikon* (Divorce at Narita Airport), which has a double meaning. The original meaning refers to young couples who would marry and leave for their honeymoon from Narita Airport, but then decide to end their short marriage upon their return which was popularised in a 1997 television drama. In this situation where the husband and wife have not been married long, there are no children involved and thus fewer responsibilities, since children bind the wife to the husband to each other and compel them to not divorce (see Chapter 4). Divorces of couples married less than five years and more than 25 years have steadily been increasing since 1990 (MHLW, 2010). The other meaning of *Narita Rikon* is that after a couple's children marry and go off on their honeymoon, the parents can finally divorce, because the children are now married adults and the father is of retirement age. One respondent, Kumiko (married with children and a housewife), told me about her parents.

My mother was thinking seriously about divorcing my father after he retired, but she realised that it would be very financially difficult to live by herself, so she decided not to. She calculated their pension, which was about ¥17,0000(£1,328) a month for both of them together. She could

not live on half of that.

In April, 2007, a law was enacted which stated that when couples in Japan divorce, women can apply to receive the maximum amount of money from their husbands' retirement benefits, which is half. In April, 2008 this law was further modified which stated that even if the husband has not yet reached retirement age, wives are entitled to half of their husbands' retirement settlements. Japanese law has been favouring women, but there are still many issues. In most cases, men cannot gain access to their retirement settlement until they actually retire, so they can claim that they have no money, often forcing women to give up pursuing those claims (Murakami, 2009). Japanese authorities are trying to change this to be more favourable toward women, but they have not been completely successful, making it more difficult for women to pursue divorce. Any available pension monies will be split after a divorce, but there are still financial difficulties (see also Chapter 4 and 6).

I worked full-time until I got married; now my children are in school. I need to raise education expenses for them, so I am now working part-time, about 25 to 30 hours a week. I am not entitled to any retirement benefits from my company, which is unfair. I do the same work as any full-time worker, but my status is that of a part-time worker. (Kiriko, married with children and has a part-time job)

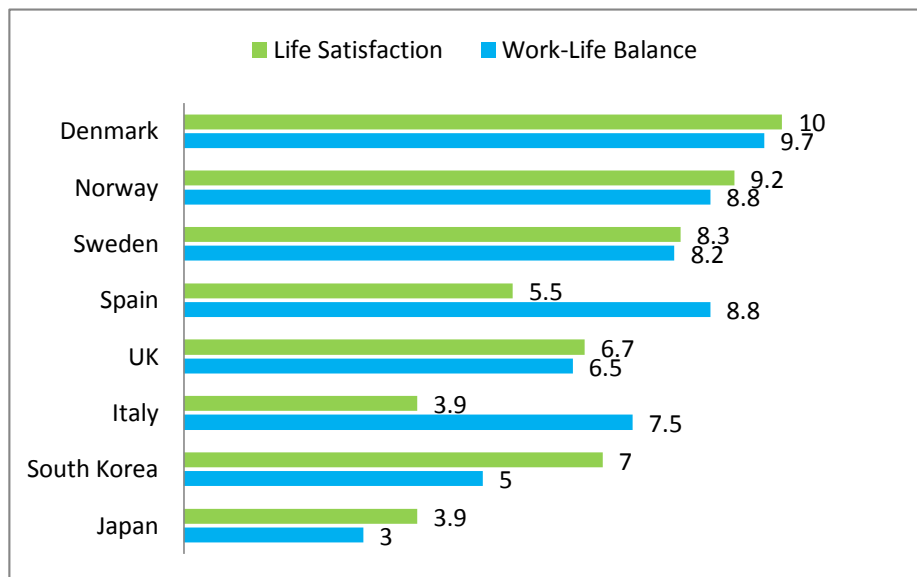
The average retirement allowance in 2008, for employees who had worked at least 20 years on a full-time basis, was ¥ 23,350,000 (£ 182,422) for those with bachelor's degrees, and ¥ 20,010,000 (£ 156,328) for those with only high school diploma (MHLW, 2008). Actually, those who had stayed at one company for many years earned quite a bit on the 'escalator system.' As many as 85.3 % of companies provided severance packages for their retiring full-time workers. Kiriko (married with children, employed part-time) was 32 years old and expected to continue working until she was 60 or 65 years of age, at which time she would have been working on a part-time basis for 28 to 33 more years. Companies are quite eager to employ people like Kimiko (Married with a child and housewife)

for cheap labour. More than 50 % (51.7 %) of companies who employ temporary and part-time workers explain that they prefer to hire such workers because of reduced cost, and more than one-quarter of companies (26.5 %) say that they can control the number of workers easier, increasing the numbers during busy times, and reducing the numbers during slower times (MHLW, 2010). Nearly 80 % of employers feel that hiring temporary and part-time workers is beneficial to them, for there is less payment, less commitment and fewer restrictions on their part. Part-time workers can be easily laid off, and they do not receive any retirement benefits. Yet Kimiko felt that she was doing the same kind of job as a full-time worker but without any of the benefits or security. Both Kazumi's and Kiriko's husbands could expect to receive a full retirement allowance, but even though Kiriko might work for more than 20 years on a part-time basis, she would not be entitled to any benefits. Less than 10 % of temporary and part-time workers are receiving any benefits (MHLW, 2010).

Balancing Work and Home Life

Women cannot simply undertake a paid job and gain independence because men do not do domestic work. Cockburn (2002: 180) says that there is an unspoken question about women in the workplace: can they ever achieve equality with men, or will their gender always be a disadvantage? Even in European countries, where women have greater rights and enjoy better living conditions, there is not total equality yet, including Scandinavia (also see OECD in 2011: Work and Life Balance). One of my respondents Saki (married with children, part-time) has a busy life because of her husband does not support her at home (see Chapter 2). For Saki it is impossible to have full-time job without any support because there is not enough free time in her day.

Figure 12: Satisfaction with Work-Life Balance



Sources: OECD Better Life Index. Work-Life Balance (2012)
<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>

Moreover, according to OECD (2011) Japan has the longest working hours and out of 36 countries, ranks 34th in work-life balance; below Japan were Turkey (rank 35) and Mexico (rank 36). The research found that families found it particularly hard to achieve this balance. Some couples want more children, but delay because they cannot afford for either partner to stop working. Some parents are satisfied with the size of their families, but find it difficult to find the time to work. The resulting imbalance becomes a problem for governments: families that cannot achieve a balance between work and home life are less healthy and less productive as a result. When families have to choose between work and raising children, fewer babies are born and fewer jobs are filled.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan has been introducing laws to encourage Japanese men to go home and help women by trying to reduce working hours and allow for a more balanced family life. In 2007 Japan installed a new Ministry of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs which was in charge, among other things, of documenting the decline in fertility. The ministry's 'Work-Life Balance' charter stresses the long-term importance of creating policies to balance work and raising children. The ministry also

established a ten-year plan (2008-2017) which includes three major goals: The first goal is to raise the labour force participation rate of mothers at six months after giving birth from 38 to 55 %. The second is to increase the percentage of men who take paternity leave from 1.6 to 10 %, and the third is to increase husbands' time spent on housekeeping and child care from 60 to 150 minutes a day. In 2005 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare introduced a mascot named '*Kurumin*'.

Figure 13: *Kuromin*



Translation: Above: Supporting Joining Child Support
Below: Year of authorisation

Source: <http://www.job-getter.com/img/kurumin.gif>

Companies have to try to receive this '*Kurumin*' logo certificate from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare every year. They can earn it if at least 70 % of the female employees who have recently had children take maternity leave, and if *any* male employees are taking paternity leave. Even if only one male employee is taking paternity leave, the company would be accepted. This logo has been used by companies for advertisement since 2010, printed on the companies' business cards, courier bags and so on, and it can earn the companies a tax deduction. Since the tax deductions were announced, 920 companies earned the seal and qualified for the deductions in 2009, while 1,300 companies received the '*Kurumin*' in 2012. One of my participants told me about the '*Kuromin*'.

My company received Kuromin, and my married male colleagues were joking, 'good, we are hoping for fewer hours then.' I asked them, 'What you are going to do when you finish work early?' They told me they are planning on going fishing or golfing. They are hopeless, really (Chiyomi, single, employed full-time).

Chiyomi already has a negative opinion of the government plan, which is not helping women. It seems it is only helping more men to enjoy themselves. Approximately 6,500,000 companies exist in Japan and the top five prefectures in Tokyo have 267,630 companies with 2,777,223 employees, but only 39 of those companies received the ‘Kurumin’ (MHLW, 2012). It is not hard to receive the ‘Kurumi’ symbol, but the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan has to focus more on supporting women with flexible hours. Even though Chiyomi’s company received the ‘Kurimin’, she has not seen any changes. Chiyomi said,

‘Maybe ‘ONE’ male colleague took paternity leave. That’s why we received the ‘Kurimin’ or whatever it is called. As far as I can see, after having children, my female colleagues are gone. I know the meaning of flexible hours, but it would be impossible for our company, simply because a supportive atmosphere for women does not exist here.

Only large companies can and will accommodate these needs, usually to use that fact to advertise their work environment for women, but the majority of companies ignore gender inequality. Kawaguchi (2000) argues that in recent times, Japanese husbands have been going home earlier in the day to help their wives. But I found that most of my participants were not helped by their husbands. Kim (1997: 37) found, in her research of the patriarchal system, that Korean husbands did not like their wives adopting a ‘westernised’ ideology of individualism. South Korea and Japan are similar male-dominated societies (see Chapter 1) they do not like changing; even nowadays, many wives work outside but men feel failure (Kim, 1997: 33) not to be able to provide all, and yet they still refuse to share in domestic work. My respondents’ husbands are not from an older generation, but despite being from the younger generation, they are not interested in changing their attitudes to gender roles, or doing more to support their wives or families. Even if those Japanese government policies changed and Japanese men could have fewer working hours, it would not guarantee that men would do more domestic work to reduce women’s workload, as I saw from my participants’ experiences. Saki’s weekend activities (her husband’s days off), so that it can be compared with her weekday schedule (see Chapter 2).

Even if my husband comes home earlier or takes a day off he just sleeps. I cannot clean the house because of him. Plus I have to prepare his meals three times a day. When he is at home there are more things for me to do, and I cannot do what I want to do. I have three children and a part-time job. I do not need a fourth child! (Saki, married, has children and has a part-time job).

Table 8: Saki's Weekend Activities

Time	For herself	For entire family	For her husband	For her children
6:00 a.m.				Make breakfast and lunch
6:30 a.m.				Wake child up
7:00 a.m.				Dress up in baseball uniform
7:30 a.m.				Take a child to baseball field by car
8:00 a.m.				Stay there and give lunch to coach
8:30 a.m.			Wake husband up	Wake up other two children
8:45 a.m.			Make breakfast	Make breakfast
9:00 a.m.	Eat breakfast			Help eating breakfast
9:30 a.m.				Brush teeth and help to dress
10:00 a.m.				Take second child to private class: dancing class
11:00 a.m.		Grocery shopping		
12:00 p.m.			Making lunch	Making lunch
1:00 p.m.	Eat lunch			Pick up children
3:00 p.m.		Continuing cleaning or finish laundry		Children come home from activities; preparing snack for them.
4:00 p.m.			Take him to golf practice range	Take them to park and so on; outside activities
6:00 p.m.			Pick husband up	
7:00 p.m.		Making dinner		Check children's homework
8:00 p.m.		Wash dishes	Prepare hot bath for husband	
8:30 p.m.			Make drink for husband	Watching TV and play games with them
9:30 p.m.			Make drinks for husband again	Read a book to help one child go to sleep
10:00 p.m.		Ironing		Make sure two children go to bed and sleep
10:30 p.m.	Take a bath		Make drinks for husband again	
11:00 p.m.	Go to bed		Help husband sleep	

Saki smiled and joked that one difference between weekdays and weekends is that she could sleep until 6 instead of wake up at 5am. Japanese women actually react rather negatively when their husbands take a day off. Wives even prefer husbands who are absent. Women feel that there is more work to do when men are around. Saki's weekend is not very different from her weekdays, because domestic work and child care is nonstop, plus taking care of her husband. Saki told me '*I would prefer going to a part-time job, even if I do not like it there, rather than taking care of another child who is my husband*'. It was surprising to find that mothers take turns each weekend making a lunch for their children's coach, so some weekends she has to make lunch for the baseball coach.

I asked: '*Do you have any opinion of lunch service for a coach?*'

Saki said: '*It is not a written rule but everybody is doing it, so I have to. I do not want to be a leader to say we are paying for the coach, why do I have to make a lunch? I am afraid my child will be picked on by the coach if I say something*'.

In a male-dominated culture, women and mothers are expected to make a lunch for the male coach. The Japanese patriarchal social structure not only compels women to be housewives, but it also brainwashes them into believing that the key to their happiness is to be good wives and wise mothers, harkening back to the ideology of the Meiji Period. This forced servitude of women to men is still continuing to this day (Kimura, 2012: 108). Women and mothers have to do all the work for a family; even though Saki thinks it is not right to make a lunch for a coach, but she is not fighting back against this system, because she prefers to do it rather than confront the matter and bring a negative reaction for her child. I was fortunate to hear the story of lunch-making duty for a male coach, because the week I interviewed Saki, it was her turn to make him lunch. If it had been a different week, it might not have been mentioned. Other married women with children told me of similar experiences, such as a school teacher voicing an opinion they oppose, but they do not protest. Kiriko (Married with a child, part-time job) said, '*One of the male school teachers offers a very male-dominated opinion of mothers, but I ignored this because of my child*. He said '*mother should*

stay at home'. Other married participants with children also mentioned similar duties for school: PTA (Parent-Teacher-Association), class leaders, publicity, health and physical education, off-campus activities, and so on. Each school term and every class has to choose a parent to be an officer in charge, and the majority of these officers are mothers.

I have never seen a father as in an officer of something at school. I have three children; every year I am being some officer at school. Sometimes in classrooms, we argue because no one wants to do it, because everybody is busy and nobody wants to spend time to be an officer. Only mothers have to do those responsibilities and sometimes argue at school and so on, men, father do not have to be involved in any school activities or duties that would cost them their free time, which is not fair.(Kumiko, married with children, housewife).

About once a week, there are meetings to attend and other duties and events every month for officers. It varies from school to school, but according to my respondents who are married with children, one parent from each has to be involved in some school activities. *'We cannot ignore those officers, someone has to do it. We could not decide, so we did a lucky dip to pick up a piece of paper; if it says something you have to be an officer'* (Kiriko, married with children, employed part-time). It is a mother's commitment and task to do this when her children are at school. School activities and events are regarded as duties for mothers. Japanese wives and mothers have to do the majority of housework and raising the children. They do not have time to themselves when they go to a nearby part-time job or do *'Naishoku'* work at home to earn some extra money for family, and they make less money than men, so women have to take on the responsibilities of domestic work and child raising.

All of these inequalities might have led to more women in Japan remaining unmarried; few women have the same range of choices that Kiyomi has. The result is that it is better to remain single rather than marrying or having a child, because it means more responsibilities and more change for women. Aya (single, employed full-time) said, *'I prefer to be single rather than changing all which I*

have now being free! My career is not bad, and my friends who are married are miserable, but do not wish to say it' While even today many Japanese people still believe old expressions and symbols, this not true with single women. All the single participants preferred not to quit their jobs, even past research findings show that less educated Japanese women are more likely to remain in the labour force (see Chapter 1), while my research indicates that women want to stay at work, but are not able to.

My mother wanted to divorce my father, but she did not because of me. I appreciated my mother for that, but I do not want to be like her. She has always told me to be an independent woman. She always encourages me to pursue a higher education accordingly. So I will not quit my job. My career is very important to me. (Chiriko, single and has a job)

Chiriko cited reasons such as wanting a safety net in case of divorce, wanting to maintain her own self-esteem, not wanting to stay at home, and also financial reasons. But after marrying and becoming pregnant, will they still have the same opinions as before? Do single women remain single because they feel they cannot take such a huge step? Many single respondents mentioned the responsibilities and pressures they would face, and feared becoming be a wife and a mother.

Expectations of being a Woman

The Traditional Japanese Wife and Woman

Culture and the media, through representations of women in movies, television, advertising, popular music, and even dance and ballet, has deconstructed feminism by aiming its messages at children, teenagers and adults alike. The messages, both subliminally and more obviously, relay society's approved notions of female and male bodies, gender roles and sex. Songs about the "man who got away" reinforce a heterosexual viewpoint; a tragedy such as "The Death of a Salesman" reinforces the traditional values surrounding the nuclear family, and no room is left to question the underlying messages about sexuality or gender roles.

Women are encouraged to make decisions about work and family of which society will approve, while decisions not sanctioned by society are shown to be destructive. (Lorber, 1997: 33-34).

Lorber's comment can be apply to the experience of being a traditional Japanese woman. The roles of wife and mother are played by popular actresses on TV series, and are glorified in music and the media, with the promise that women will meet a nice partner and 'live happily ever after', but my research has shown that the reality of being a traditional Japanese woman does not always lead to this happy ending. There is a famous mythical figure named Yamatonadeshiko, who embodies how to be a good Japanese wife. She is a quiet, good housekeeper, hard worker, and supporter of her husband and family (Kawaguchi, 1996). The name Yamatonadeshiko is a combination of *Yamato* (Japan) and *nadeshiko* (a small, beautiful and strong Japanese wildflower).

Figure 14: A Nadeshiko Flower



Source: <http://www.hana300.com/nadesi.html>

Yamatonadeshiko never actually existed; she was created long ago to be a symbol of the ideal Japanese woman's behaviour and beauty. Shindo (1999) explains that this Yamatonadeshiko has created much difficulty for women and men to find partners. That is, partners' ideals and expectations are too unrealistically high because of this symbol. According to Shindo (1999), there are serious gaps between the typical male and female visions of the ideal partner. Men believe such an ideal could and should exist, but many women today feel totally the opposite of

what Yamatonadeshiko is supposed to be. In 1959 Akiko Kojima, the Japanese woman who won the title of Miss Universe, said in her speech that her dream was not to be an actress or model but a good wife. As a result she became a representative of Yamatonadeshiko. She led many men to believe in the ideal of the intelligent, beautiful and supportive wife. Another example is the 1980s singer Momoe Yamaguchi. She was popular and beautiful and had a promising career, but suddenly she announced her retirement in order to marry. She also said she wanted to be an ordinary woman and a good wife, and she still serves as the symbol of the 'good Japanese woman'. Surprisingly, there is a Japanese Women's Union recruiting women to be like Yamatonadeshiko. The union organizes tea parties, kimono parties, flower arranging parties and Japanese calligraphy exhibitions. The purpose of the Japanese Women's Union is to ensure that the values of the ideal traditional woman are preserved, such as having a strong spirit, being supportive of the family, and being a good mother, a good wife, quiet, and beautiful.

The concept of Yamatonadeshiko still persists today. The Japanese women's World Cup football team was called '*NadeshikoJapan*', the same meaning as Yamatonadeshiko. They won World Cup in 2011. As an illustration of the Japanese people's specific image of Yamatonadeshiko, a TV series was recently created featuring one of the most famous and beautiful Japanese women of today as Yamatonadeshiko. When interviewing my respondents about gender roles, I asked them if they were aware of Yamatonadeshiko. All the single participants said yes. Three participants mentioned they could not be like her because Yamatonadeshiko has to be a beautiful woman, something that all the respondents knew well. Most single Japanese women think it is important to spend time and care to maintain their beauty. But this mythical being symbolizes a near-impossible traditional ideal.

I cannot be a Yamatonadeshiko. I am not beautiful as she [the Yamatonadeshiko actress] is. I do not want to work hard and support my husband. If I were as beautiful as she is my husband would do everything for me. (Akiko, single and has a job).

Many of the single participants thought that even if they were beautiful enough to identify themselves as Yamatonadeshiko, they would not want to. During the interviews I was given the general impression that if they were that beautiful, then the men should serve them, not the other way around. Their comments could perhaps be an indication of the emergence of a new, modern-day Japanese woman.

Can you imagine being like her? She is very beautiful and does everything for her family and husband. If I were her I would play around and finally I would find a rich man so I would not have to do anything. Japanese men are dreamers and ask too much from women. Why do they only think about themselves? Do they think they are princes? I do not think so. (Ayako, single and has a job)

Single women think when they are beautiful they have greater chances and more choices and feel they do not have to work so hard to do anything. In my study there was a big difference in the responses between the single and the married participants, but there are fewer differences between the married participants with or without children. Most of the single participants made mention of Yamatonadeshiko's physical appearance and that they could not be like Yamatonadeshiko, but the married women were more likely to be comfortable describing themselves as such.

I am the one. I did not think I would be, but since marriage I have changed so much. I am working hard to support and do everything for my family. I quit my job for my family too. (Kimiko, married, has a child and housewife)

One participant in particular (Saki) described her own metamorphosis into Yamatonadeshiko after marrying. She noted that pursuing her image 'was like fishing for my husband. He's treated me well, but now I have been caught'. There is a Japanese expression that says, 'After we have caught a fish, we no longer have to feed it'. All but one of the participants referred to themselves as Yamatonadeshiko. The one who did not, Kiyomi, felt that sometimes there was no

other choice but to be Yamatonadeshiko so as to work hard to support her family and husband. In Kiyomi's case, when she shared domestic work with her husband, she was more relaxed and I felt much more confidence and did not feel desperate or forced to do the work. Kiyomi also said, '*I have not changed so much after marriage I am happier, perhaps*'. All of the other respondents mentioned that since marrying and giving birth, they had had to change.

I have turned into Yamatonadeshiko since marriage. Now I that have a family I have to be a hard worker and support my family and my husband. (Kiriko, married, has children and has a part-time job)

Since I married, and especially since having my first child, I have had so many responsibilities to keep to my family. I think I am now Yamatonadeshiko, but was not so before marriage (Keiko, married with children, housewife).

It is interesting to note that only one of the participants in the married group mentioned Yamatonadeshiko's appearance, the rest focusing more on her hard work and support of her family. The participants apparently thought they were working very hard to support their families and felt entitled to say so.

Marriage has made me different. Before marriage my husband did everything for me, but now I have to not only do everything for him but also for my children. I am working outside to help financially and then I come home to do the housework. (Saki, married, has children and has a part-time job)

I am Yamatonadeshiko because I am working hard; actually I am working both outside and at home. I am Yamatonadeshiko because I support my husband. (Kayo, married, without a child, has a job)

Yes, I am Yamatonadeshiko. I am supporting my husband and working hard. (Kazuko, married, without a child, has a job)

Sakamoto (2002) explains that most Japanese woman want to be married if they feel it is worth it to change themselves into being a good wife and a good mother. It is also the case that many Japanese women leave the workplace after marriage and do not return until their children have grown (Holloway, 2010). Japanese mothers also have a very strong desire to take care of their children and be a

positive influence on them during this critical period (see Chapter 1).

I do not want to work outside the home yet because my child is still small. I think the period of time until they are three years old is the most important time for raising a child. I want to be there for my child always. (Kamiko, married, has a child, housewife)

Ochiai (2008) found research that many people in East Asian countries say they would like to stay at home while their children are small; in Japan, this means until the child is three years of age (see Chapter 1), since it is believed that until children reach that age, it is vital to their development that they be loved and raised by their mother. This myth supports Japan's male-dominated society and the gender inequality that forces women to leave their jobs (Ochiai, Yamane and Ook , 2008). Even after becoming mothers, the women feel guilty about working outside the home even if there are financial considerations.

I raised my children until they were three years old. I needed to go back to work as quickly as possible for financial reasons, but I always felt bad that I could not stay longer to take care of them (Kiriko, married, has children and has a part-time job).

This myth is developed in China and South Korea as well (see Chapter 1): China has its own 7 year myth and Korea has a 5 year myth (Ochiai, 2008; Yamane and Ook 2008). When women do try to work alongside men, they would face a virtual double shift, consisting of their full-time careers and the responsibilities involve in managing a family and a home, and would feel guilty for not spending that time with their children, since men do not share parenting duties (Lorber, 1997: 24).

Japanese men, however, are still dreaming and searching for their Yamatonadeshiko, and women are still searching for a prince. Women wait to meet the perfect man, especially those who have a higher education or are older (Ono, 2002). According to Sakamoto (2002), as age increases the ideal partner terms also increase. Her analysis is that the partner generally does not turn out as the woman wishes, yet the women do not want to think of themselves as failures.

It appears that once they are married, these women have to force themselves to change and to take on most of the responsibilities of housework and childcare. Hara (2008: 53) found that single women in Japan do not want to lose their freedom, so they prefer not to marry.

If I were beautiful I would marry a rich man and then I could be Yamatonadeshiko, because I would want to maintain that lifestyle. But this is the twenty-first century, so I cannot become a Yamatonadeshiko unless someone makes me into one. (Chiyomi, single, and has a job)

Chiyomi denies the possibility of beauty. She maintains she is not Yamatonadeshiko, yet would prefer to have a wealthy husband, so she can lead a more comfortable life. The money received by a wife is unrelated to her household chores, but is instead tied to how much money her husband makes; a woman who performs fewer chores but is married to a wealthier man receives more than a harder-working woman married to a poor man (Rahman and Jackson, 2010: 69). Chiyomi is part of a new generation of Japanese women who have decided that they will not behave like Yamatonadeshiko, unless someone makes her conform to that behaviour; however, many of my respondents already mentioned that, if they changed after marriage, it is more likely to be a change to become a more traditional Japanese woman in the mold of 'Yamatonadeshiko'. Chiyomi and my other participants are members of the same generation, women who choose to marry someone who is more likely to try to reshape them into Yamatonadeshiko.

It was believed that it was better for women not to pursue higher education because it was believed that higher education would destroy their Yamatonadeshiko-like behaviour. According to Suzuki (1998), higher education allows a woman to become more independent, delaying marriage. It does seem as if highly-educated women have fewer opportunities to meet their ideal partner, leading to fewer marriages. Suzuki (1998) believes that women avoid marrying because they realise they will have to do more housework than their husbands. They will choose to remain single until they can find their 'perfect' partner

(Suzuki, 1998). However, research shows that although Japanese women are highly educated, they are more likely to quit their jobs after marriage and/or giving birth (see OECD, 2011 and MHLW, 2010, 2011 and 2012). My participants told me that they were more likely to leave work to be a housewife after marriage.

One reason for this is stability. When people in Japan marry, they usually stay together for life. Japanese people are raised with a teamwork ethic that is important in the culture. This is exemplified by the uniforms women wear throughout their lives, starting in kindergarten, continuing throughout school and into the workplace.¹⁴ Another example of the teamwork principle can be seen in corporate activities. Every morning since the 1930s, the famous radio programme ‘*Radio Taisou*’ (Radio Exercise) has been played in many Japanese workplaces in order for the workers to exercise together (Lo, 1990). When I took a sociology class and learned about companies and organizations in the U.S.A., a professor asked me why Japanese people exercise together at work. In the U.S.A., it is impossible ask all workers to exercise together in the workplace. For Japanese people it is normal; if or when the company asks you to do so, everybody should do so at work. In addition, many companies’ workers travel together for ‘*Shanai Ryoko*’ at least once a year. ‘*Shanai Ryoko*’ has been decreasing, however: in 1994, 88.6% of companies and organizations participated, while by 2009, only 51.6% of companies and organizations were choosing to do so (Nikkei Research, 2012). Some colleagues at work are chosen to organise one or more nights of the trip by a department or the entire workplace. Some companies even arrange overseas trips for colleagues to get to know each other better. For them the value of the workplace supersedes that of the family. Bearing this in mind, when people start to have families, women start to feel the pressure of having more work to do because their husbands are not there to help with their families. Japanese men are more focused on work, and shoulder fewer responsibilities, relying on someone else to do domestic work after marriage. Long working hours affect all facets of family life and responsibilities. According to the Durex Sexual Well-being Survey

¹⁴ In Europe and other Western countries, it is mostly blue-collar workers who wear uniforms, as well as some customer service jobs like bank workers and flight attendants. In all such cases both men and women wear uniforms. In Japan, however, while both blue-collar men and women and customer service workers also wear uniforms, unlike their Western counterparts only white-collar women and not men have to wear uniforms.

(2007 and 2008), Japan was the country with the least sexual satisfaction (see Chapter 1). Is this true and if so how and why? Is it affecting lower fertility?

Intimacy & Sex Life

Since 1960, sexuality has become more liberalized in the west, and the open pursuit of sexual pleasure is seen as part of a balanced lifestyle and identity (Jackson and Scott, 2004; 2008). On the other hand, for some women, sexual intimacy is merely part of reproduction, and there is great pressure for women to have a child in some cultures, religions and countries (Morgan et., al, 2008). Japanese women and men's attitudes toward sex have been changing, aligning more with a westernised view. Sex might be an essential part of marriage, but it is not restricted only to marriage. According to the Durex Sexual Well-being Survey (2007 and 2008)¹⁵, the mean age of the first age of sexual experience (having sex) was 17.3 for Austria, 18 in the U.S.A., 18.3 in the U.K., and 19.4 in Japan. Japan was the one of earliest ages in Asia. What were my respondents' perspectives on sex? Does less frequency result in less opportunity to become pregnant? Before I had asked participants about their intimate lives (How important is it for you to have a good sexual relationship?), I used a vignette: '*Mrs. A has a great husband. But Mrs. A is not sexually satisfied with her husband and their sex life. What should she do?*' It was a good judgment to use a vignette because I believed that more direct questions would have made the interviews awkward.

Before our marriage my husband and I had a wonderful sex life, but after the wedding the 'Cinderella Story' was over! My husband was always working and coming home very late, causing us to have less sex. I also felt that we were doing it only because we wanted to have children. After I had my child our sex became less frequent. He is always tired and so am I. I sometimes feel he looks at me as the mother of his children, not as his wife or woman companion. I feel that though he is the father of my children, he is not my dream man. I know why: It was because my

¹⁵ The Durex Sexual Well-being Survey could be limited because samples are voluntary. For instance, according to NATSAL (2000), in the U.K. first age of sexual experience (having sex) was age 16. However I used the Durex survey because it seems its data for Japan are not so far from Japanese data. According to the Japanese Association of Sex Education (2011), over half of all men and women between ages 18 to 22 are sexually active.

husband cheated on me after I had our children, but I did not want to destroy my family, especially for the sake of my children. (Kumiko, married, with children and housewife)

Men's long working hours affect sex life. Even after working a long day, men are expected to go out with their colleagues and business partners for drinks, an important part of the Japanese business culture 'settai' (Sato, 1999). It is important for men to drink together; drinking with colleagues is part of the culture and part of being a member of a workplace and taking customers for drinks. Japanese businesspeople believe it is important to drink together (Linhart and Frühstück, 1998). Moreover, working such long hours negatively impacts men and women's sex lives because the husband come home late, often drunk and tired. According to the Global Sex Survey (2007 and 2008), the average annual frequency of sex was 103 times per year. Japan, however, was in last place at 48 times per year.¹⁶ This research shows that the excitement and satisfaction felt by Japanese people were lowest. Most married respondents with children reported that they had less sex than before having children, the frequency of sex becoming less and less as time went on. The Japan Family Planning Association in 2010 described married couples who have sex less often than once a month are classified as 'sexless', and 34.6 % of Japanese married couples are sexless. However, there is a large and varied sex industry in Japan. Kumiko's case is that her husband has used the sex industry, so he does not feel so bad even though he cheated on her, since it was just fun and not an emotional attachment. After Kumiko told me this, I asked, '*How would your husband react if you used the sex industry to cheat on him?*'

I cannot imagine going there because it would affect our relationship, and I do not want the children involved in this mess because he would not forgive me. I love sex but I love my children more. If I forget about sex and forget my husband cheated on me, everything will be fine, but I do not love him anymore.

¹⁶ On the other hand, the rate of unprotected sex with an unfamiliar partner was lowest in Japan (27%), while the next lowest was Spain (43%). In 1999 oral contraceptives were legalised in Japan, forty years after the United States. Yet today the rate of oral contraceptive pills is only 1.3 percent, in contrast with condom use at 75.3 percent. Respondents talked about their sexual lives and use of contraceptives. Most used condoms unless they were planning to have children.

Kumiko is ignoring the satisfaction of her sex life in favour of her pride and her children; most people would find this decision difficult. There many kinds of sex industries in Japan. Women endure less frequent sex and unsatisfying sex at home, while Japanese men using the sex industry. The following is a table comparing the various sex industries in Japan.

Table 9: Explanation of Sex Industries

Name	Service	Price	Time
Kyabakura	A place where men go to sit and drink with them.	Approximately ¥7,000 (£55). Plus choosing a woman can affect price. Drink prices vary; one drink is approximately ¥1000 (£7.80)	Per hour Men usually stay there about 2-4 hours.
Osawari (Club)	The men can both drink and touch the female employees.	Approximately ¥10,000 (£78). One drink approximately same as Kyabakura or a little more expensive.	Half an hour Men usually stay there about 2-4 hours.
Pinsaro	Female employees perform oral sex.	Approximately ¥10,000 (£78)	Approximately 15 minutes to half an hour.
Soap-land	A female employee from a catalogue with whom to have sex in a room	Approximately ¥40,000 (£313) to ¥60,000 (£469), possibly more	Approximately Between one hour and two hours.

Source: http://www.lovefactory.jp/statistics_4.php

The total number of sexual industries in Japan registered and accepted by the government was 402,433 (National Police Agency in 2011). There are 33,258,000 Japanese men between the ages of 20 and 59 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2010) which works out to be 82 men per establishment. I chose this age range, because in Japan, men and women 20 years of age can legally have access to sex industries, and the retirement age is 60. Soapland men can choose from a catalogue containing pictures and profiles of female employees. Usually any of those sex services can be observed by men from catalogues. Customers are also expected to buy drinks for the female employees. All of those

services are provided a place, rental of which is included for a price.¹⁷ Kurosaki (2002) explains how it is very common for male colleagues (and often their bosses) to go to a 'kyabakura' after work or a meeting. It may be that men (husbands) who report not having sex are actually indulging themselves in the commercial sex industry. There are also 'Love hotels', which are facilities for couples to stay overnight or for just a few hours. Love Hotels are part of the Japanese sexual culture, a place to rent a room to have sex, which does not mean always prostitution. It is more often used by unmarried and married couples because there is little space in the house, especially when many people live with their parents have little privacy. They find a Love Hotel useful to have sex (Basil, 2008). Rooms can be rented for 'kyukei' (a two or three hour rest) or 'shukkuhaku' (overnight stay) by way of a series of buttons in an anonymous lobby area where patrons do not come into contact with other people or have to furnish identification. Those who make reservations on the internet need only provide a reservation number when they check in (Lin, 2008). Preserving patrons' privacy is a high priority, and it is common in urban Japan for these places to be used for sexual intimacy (Lin, 2008). Many Japanese couples use these Love Hotels because single women and men are living with their parents. Single people enjoy their sexual life more. Most single participants have positive opinion about their sex lives.

When I have a boyfriend I have to enjoy having sex, otherwise why I would I do it? If your sex life isn't satisfying then it is not a completely healthy relationship, I believe. (Akiko, single, full-time employed)

I enjoy having sex; if I did not, I could not see the point of having a relationship with someone. (Chiho, single, full-time employed)

Single people think it is important to have a good sex life with one's partner and to be satisfied, but after marriage it changes to becoming an obligatory routine either because they want to become a pregnant or feel the pressure to become

¹⁷ Those figures were obtained from the internet between 2010 and 2012. Researching the prices was difficult because the activity depends on a location.

pregnant.

I used to enjoy having sex with my husband and my boyfriend before him, but now I feel more pressure to become pregnant. I sometimes I feel I have to become pregnant each time after I have sex with my husband, which is sad. (Kayo, married without child, full-time employed)
As I've become older I have felt more pressure to become pregnant than ever before. I cannot enjoy having sex with my husband anymore. I feel more responsibility for our family. (Kazuko, married without child, full-time employed)

After having one or more children they tend to have less sex because both partners are busy and tired. It is the long-hour working culture that leads to less sex. Or men are using sex industries only to satisfy themselves. According to Yamakawa (1997), as of fifteen years ago many companies have employees work six days a week with very long hours. He also explains that on the one day of the week they have off, all they can do is rest, which is not conducive for a healthy sex life (Yamakawa, 1997). However, one respondent, Keiko (Married with children, housewife) said, 'I feel I am not attractive anymore because there is no sex'. One participant (Kumiko, married, has children and housewife) explained how she was suffering and struggling since having her first child. She said that she and her husband were evolving more into the roles of being parents than that of male and female lovers. As a result her husband had been cheating and indulging himself after work, while she struggled alone in a sexless marriage, working both inside and outside the home.

Saito (2004) observed this no-sex phenomenon and noted that 20 % of married couples had not had sex for over one year. She explains that after marriage, and especially after having their first child, couples engage in less frequent sex than before, chiefly due to the busy lifestyles and long work hours for both men and women (Saito, 2004). According to Saito (2004), it is very difficult for couples with children to shift back into 'lovers' mode after being in 'parents' mode for a good while. As for the married participants without children, only one of them, Eriko (a married housewife without children) said that she was enjoying her sex

life, while the rest felt pressure to become pregnant and were thus experiencing less enjoyment. Kazumi (married, without a child, has a full-time job) said, '*I want to tell parent's in-law I cannot become pregnant by myself*' (see Chapter 4). Eriko mentioned her own concerns about sex after pregnancy and having a child, because she has seen her friends experience major changes in their enjoyment of their sex lives.

Sex becomes another part of the responsibility of having a child; after that, Japanese couples seem to complete their responsibility to create children and become sexless couples. One government study shows that between age 35 to 49 over 50 % of Japanese women indicated that they were 'not interested in having sex' or had 'negative feelings toward having sex' (The Japanese Association for Sex Education, 2011)¹⁸, usually after having children. Jackson and Scott (2004; 243) noted that 'routine' and 'dull' sex, and sex solely for reproduction are regarded as 'bad' sex, whereas sex is meant to be thought of in terms of spontaneity and passion. For Japanese couples, sex is often regarded as a responsibility rather than spontaneous or passionate. Japanese women are under enormous pressure to have a child after marrying (Tsuya, 1991). If the pressure to conform to society by marrying and bearing children is dropped, lower levels of fertility need not be the result. If women can still expect a satisfying life, or material benefit, from becoming wives and mothers, they will still marry and have children (Mason and Jensen, 2003). One major exception to the evolving definition of a family in most industrialized countries is that traditional gender divisions within the family unit are not changing much (Mason and Jensen, 2003). Japanese women live with gender inequality, but they are still marrying, and most single participants want to marry and have a child someday. Why are they still choosing to marry and have children? There are many issues causing Japanese women to postpone marriage and having a child, but the majority of them to choose to marry and have a child. Even my single respondents mentioned that their intention in the future is to marry and have a child. What is the meaning of marriage for them? Moreover, what are family values for Japanese women? The

¹⁸ The study was conducted by survey and random samples in Japan. Sample size was 869 women and 671 men. The mean age women was 34.6 and men was 34.5.

next chapter will focus on that topic, because family values are important for Japanese people, and during interviews I found that many respondents mentioned feeling that pressure.

Summary

A strong male-dominated patriarchal society has been forcing Japanese women to do unpaid work, which means losing financial independence and leads to gender inequality, as well as women's loss of self-esteem. There are many inequalities: when girls are born, they are treated differently, and are raised to believe that the differences are natural, not the result of inequality. Women and men notice some of the inequalities in their society and fail to notice others. Some of my respondents realised the inequality behind men's behaviour, dictating when men can do but women cannot do, but what can women do to bring about changes in culture and behaviour? It would be very difficult to change, and even nowadays, when countries such as Korea and Japan have weaker traditional family values than before, certain family ties and values might be difficult to change, or will only change very slowly, or not at all (Suzuki, 2008: 33).

My research shows that single women want to remain in the labour force even after marriage and having a child, but after marriage or having a child, many women are leaving work or are being forced to leave a job; they simply cannot keep a job because it is too much to take on both paid and unpaid work in Japan. Many quantitative researches show (see Chapter 1) that women want to take care of child, and that Japanese women are choosing to leave a job; however, some of my respondents wanted to leave or left a job because they could not have the same career path as men, thanks to inequality in the labour force. They had or they have only a job with fewer responsibilities, or a meaningless job, so they decide to leave. Of course some respondents gave the same reasons as seen in quantitative research: that they want to take care of children or wanted take care of children because they feel guilt and believe in the myth of '*sansai ji shinwa*', which (see

Chapter 1) is part of the responsibility of being a women and mother in Japan. Japanese men do not support raising children even if the government tries to balanced work and family life. My respondents' husbands took advantage of the system to enjoy themselves. This government policy to try to balance work life and family life has been helping in some developed countries such as Scandinavian countries; however, these measures might not work in countries such as Japan and Korea, which value such strong family ties (Hara, 2008; Suzuki, 2008). Hara (2008: 59) argues that women cannot find career fulfilment or financial stability unless they are freed of the traditional roles that go with having children. But this requires government and society to support, or risk having fewer children or a zero birth rate. Countries which have developed such child care systems as babysitting, tutors and child care workers overcome the problem of low fertility (Suzuki, 2008:36), while those whose traditions force women to fulfill traditional maternal roles do not (Suzuki, 2008).

Men with the same level of education can remain in one job or with one company for a lifetime and be taken care of by a wife, but if women want to the same opportunities as men, they must have a much higher education of skills enabling them to be totally independent, such as one of the respondents (Kiyomi, who has married, has a child and kept a job as teaching at University). Women have to still face the possibility of making the decision to marry and start a family, even after marriage, women cannot enjoy their sex lives because they feel the responsibilities of reproduction. Gender inequality affects attitude toward fertility decisions, and more women are having fewer children or none. Countries suffering from low fertility rates have less female participation in the workforce, strong traditions regarding family ties, and strict rules regarding marriage (Suzuki, 2008: 32).

Chapter 4: Marriage and Family Values

Introduction

In the past, marriage in western countries was regarded as a lifetime commitment, but lately there has been a greater prevalence of divorce, cohabitation and single motherhood, which has caused some to declare a deterioration of family values (Featherstone, 2004). In recent years, moreover, the number of married couples has been declining, and there has been an increase in the percentage of single (never married) people, childlessness, and divorced people (Hara, 2008: 43). The idea of family has been gradually evolving from the traditional formal structure toward a new, more informal arrangement of closeness and commitment without strict legal bonds (Bird, 2004). In East Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea, although family ties are not as strong as they used to be, they still influence in family life (Atoh, 2008: 20, Suzuki, 2008). In Japan there is a strong emphasis on family relationships and values, especially pertaining to marriage (Sato, 2000; Atoh, 2000; 2008; Ochiai, 2008). Parents still influence and affect the marriages of their offspring to a large degree (Sato, 2000; Atoh, 2008; Suzuki, 2008). One of my challenges in this study was to explore, how strong family ties and the patriarchal structure affect women's fertility decisions, which is closely connected with Japan's lowest-ever fertility rates.

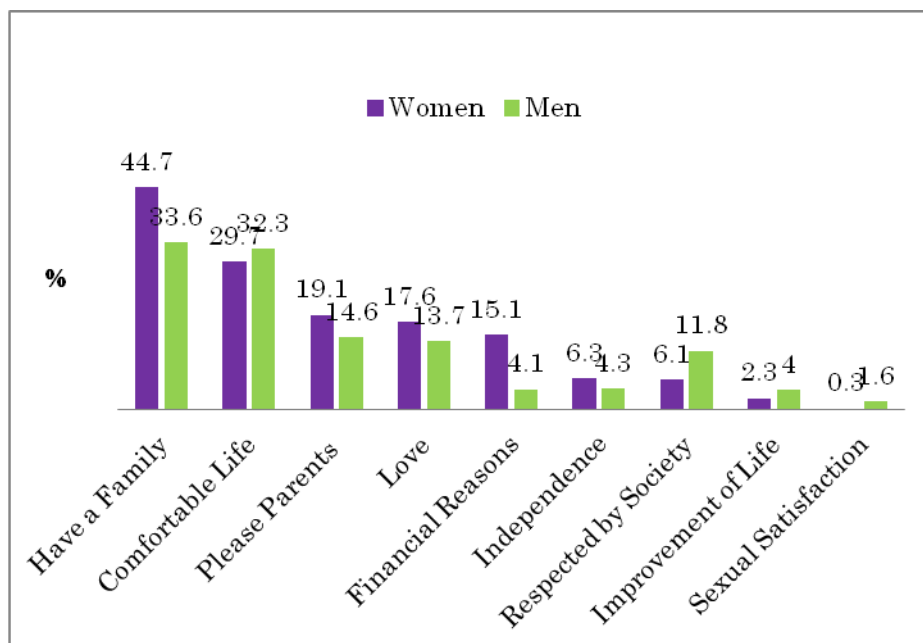
Marriage

Advantages of Being Married

Before the Meiji period (1868-1912), even though Japanese men could legally marry only one woman, they would often be involved with multiple other women (*Omekake*). Wives were not protected by law, and men were not punished for

taking multiple lovers (Hendry, 2010). Japanese women were not able to apply for divorce, even if their husbands had an affair. Men, on the other hand, could divorce their wives for any reason they wished. Hendry (2010) explains that, in the past, it did not matter to Japanese men who they married for themselves; it mattered to their family. Today, however, things have changed. Japan has one of the latest-marrying populations, but one thing that has not changed is a strong desire to marry. According to MHLW (2010) 89.4 % of women and 86.3 % of men¹⁹ express a desire to marry in the future. The top reason women and men cite for wanting to marry is to have a children and start a family. (Atoh, 2008: 18). Marriage is no longer necessary to have an intimate sex life in Japan²⁰; the freedom to have a sexual relationship is now an advantage of being single (see Chapter 1; see also Tokuhiko, 2010; Atoh, 2008).

Figure 15: The Benefits of Being Married



Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2010.
<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/shingi/2r9852000001wmnj-att/2r9852000001wmt0.pdf>

¹⁹ Single and married Japanese women and men between age 20 and 49; based on random sample about 70,000 random sample, with a roughly equal number of women and men. The ministry has conducted this same study every three to four years over a long period of time, and the rates have hardly changed.

²⁰ There are various sex industries in Japan (see chapter 4). One is the ‘love hotel’ industry. Japanese single women and men who live with parents can utilize these ‘love hotels’ to have sex.

Japanese men gain respect from society by marrying; twice as many men as women consider this to be a major benefit of marriage. Bernard (2002: 208) notes that, in the west, marriage is also a boon to men's reputation and stature. Bernard's findings also apply to Japanese society, because more men are connected to society by working outside, but fewer women are connected to other women. According to Benokraitis (1993), in Japan to retain the loyalty of unmarried employees in the under40 age bracket, several companies had started to offer the prospect of marriage as a new incentive and had engaged matrimony brokerage firms to act as matchmakers. The respondents 51.9 % of the men and 49.5 % of the women said they wanted to married around a certain age (which happens to be around the mean age of first marriage in Japan) (MHLW, 2005). One of the major concerns was the desire to find a 'perfect partner' before marrying, with 46.7 % of the men and 49 % of the women mentioning this. Tokuhiko (2010) explains that Japanese women's attitude toward marriage has changed more than that of men because of inequality: it is better to postpone marriage to wait for an ideal partner, rather than marrying early. Tokuhiko's study noted that Japanese people care a great deal about the timetable for marriage, including the ideal '*tekireiki*', or marriageable age, for their first marriage (Tokuhiko, 2010: 48).

Quantitative studies have often examined the economic based on women's attitudes toward marriage (see Chapter 5). The results of the quantitative research are unclear as to what kind of financial reasons are compelling women to marry. Tokuhiko's (2010) qualitative research discovered a generally negative opinion of the Japanese tax system among married career women, though fewer single and non-career women held that opinion. When Japanese women work after marriage, they will be taxed more unless they are working on a part-time basis (see Chapter 5). Moreover, quantitative studies might have missed some of the other nuances of Japanese women's attitudes toward marriage. The majority of Japanese women and men want to marry, yet, paradoxically, they believe staying single is a better option for both women (87.6 %) and men (81 %), with a greater number of women holding this opinion than men (MHLW, 2010; see also Chapter 1). Recent

generations in most developed countries have found greater benefits to being single, such as greater freedom, independence and autonomy, compared to being married (Hodkinson, 1993: 43; Athoh, 2008; Hara, 2008; Suzuki, 2008). Some of my highly-educated respondents, Kiyomi and Eri in Japan, and Sakiko and Suzuko in the U.K., said that it is important for partners in a marriage to share similar values and support each other. Kiyomi's case is unique (see Chapter 3 and 6) in that she is the only married woman in my study who says she is happy after marrying (see Chapter 6).

I married my husband because we had common values. I did not marry my husband only for love, since I thought that love was not more important than sharing the same values. So now I was happier than when I was single, because most people do not expect men to change, but they will. My husband and I had some differences, but eventually I had, in addition to a very good job and financial independent, a beautiful child and an understanding husband, sort of (Smile). He never stopped me from working. If he had not been happy and I had not been happy, we could have gone on to lead separate lives. But I did not want to choose living separately because of my child, and my family. I thought I had been wise not to choose only 'love' marriage. (Kiyomi, married with a child and has a job)

Kiyomi had married a wealthy, understanding and supportive partner, but she said she loved him because they both had the same values and the willingness to share responsibilities. Compared with other participants, Kiyomi feels very fortunate to have her husband, but even in her interview, she said 'understanding husband, sort of' with a smile. I asked her 'What do you mean "sort of"?' She said 'He is not perfect, but I am pragmatic and did not expect too much from my husband; rather, I knew what I wanted and what to expect from him before marrying him'. She is an exception in that, unlike the other respondents, she was able to pursue a career as well as having a family. She has enjoyed more independence and has had more choices available to her in her life. Although she does not intend to separate from her husband, she is independent and knows that she has the option to leave if she ever so desires. According to Hasegawa and Nagase (2006), many highly educated women are averse to marrying, believing that raising even one child

while pursuing a career would be problematic, and they are not willing to change their lives. Fewer than 30% of mothers in Japan continue their careers after giving birth (Hasegawa, Nagase 2006). In contrast, in Sweden more than 70 % of women continue their careers after having a child. While in Japan, marriage and children are hurdles which women must deal with if they hope to pursue their careers, these hurdles are much lower for highly-educated women in other developed countries (Kimura, 2008; Ochiai, 2008). Ema is single, has higher education, and she knows what she wants.

When I was younger, I wanted to have all for my partner, focusing on material things, such as a beautiful car, gorgeous looks, a high education, and higher salary, but now I feel I need more moral support, understanding and kindness, and not the material things he has to offer.
(Ema, single, employed full-time).

She is independent and is looking for more than just financial support but that is proving to be harder for her to find her ideal partner. These are weak areas in Japan, so it is difficult for an independent woman like Ema to be happy with her partner after marrying like Kiyomi. Are there many supportive and understanding men seeking marriage in Japan? It seems not. It could be very difficult for Ema because Japanese men often look for women with a lower level of education than themselves to be the dominant person at home (see Chapter 1). As women grow older, their attitudes toward marriage change. The number of younger women who would like to marry is high, but after age 30 the number of women who feel that way is significantly smaller (Segawa, 2006). The gap between younger women who want to marry and women over 30 who want to marry is 16.7 %, compared to men with a gap of 3.6 % (MHLW, 2010). What is stopping women from choosing marriage even when they would like to marry? According to Figure 14 (Benefits of Marriage), one of the top reasons stated was to start a family and having children. When women cannot have children, however, they cannot see any benefit to marrying, so after age 30 the intention to marry declines. Men seem to have no comparable age limits to having children. Or it might be that seeing and

hearing other women's negative impressions of marriage may cause women to avoid marriage for fear of the freedom they would lose (see Chapter 3).

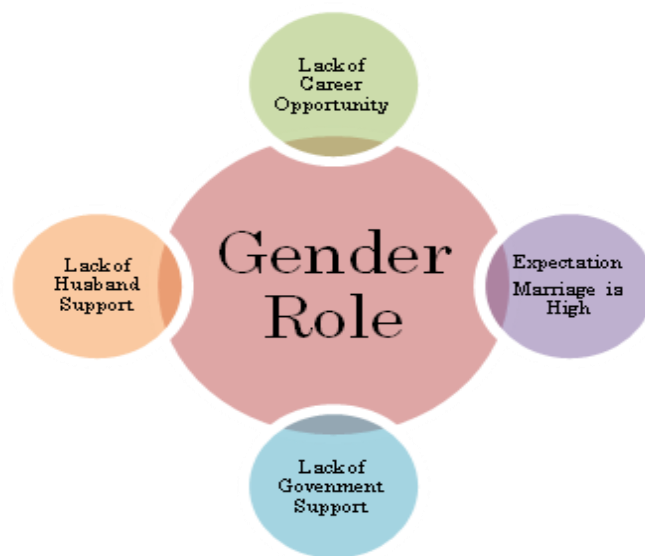
Quantitative research does not clarify the decision making processes involved. In my research, I have found why and how women lose interest at a later age, which I will explain later in this chapter. More and more Japanese women and men are staying single longer. What is the advantage of being single?

The Advantages of being Single

Though it is almost unimaginable by modern standards, seeking marriage soon after graduation was a status symbol of success for American college educated women in the 1950s and 1960s (Cherlin, 1992: 8). 'A ring by spring or your money back' was a popular saying for that generation, during which it was not uncommon to see women marrying at the age of 21 in the U.S.A. (Cherlin, 1992). Now, most women and men in developed countries are postponing marriage and remaining single longer (Cherlin, 1992: 8; Holloway, 2010). In Japan there is an expression, '*dokushin-kizoku*' (single nobility), which refers to the fact that single Japanese people have more freedom and live more comfortably than their married counterparts, and are supported by their parents longer (see Chapter 1). Morihara (2006) found a gap between being single and being married, explaining that Japanese women and men enjoy being single because they are spoiled by their parents. Children live with their parents for a long time, until they are married, which is common in Japan since parents have still the economic power to support their children. Yamada (1997) called these adult children '*parasite singles*', whose mothers support them by cooking, cleaning, and washing their clothes for them at home. Atoh (2008: 26) argues that living with one's parents for a long time until marriage can cause some to postpone marriage, because life with their parents is very comfortable, especially when their mother does domestic work for her children. However, after marrying they find the new reality to be quite different, with issues ranging from family and financial concerns to changed spouses. It

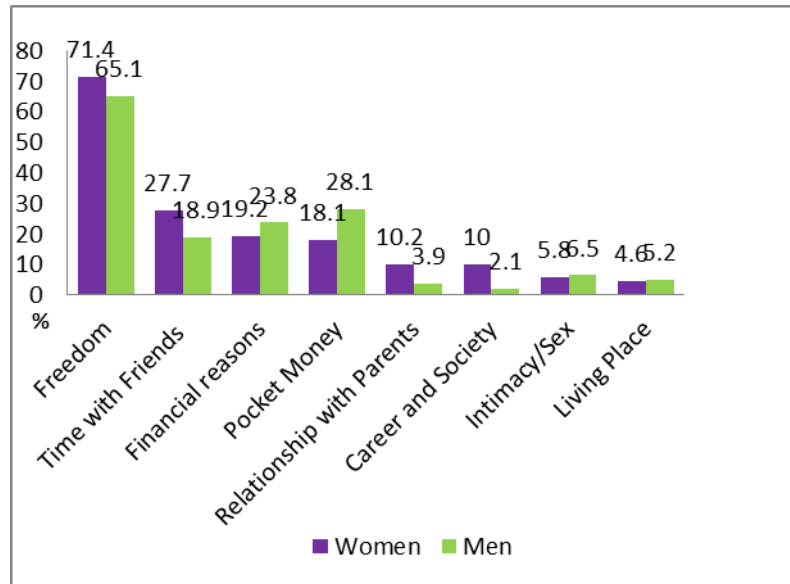
benefits a son's image when his mother takes care of domestic work, and even after marriage, many men expect to continue this same pattern with their wives providing domestic work. My research echoes Atoh's theory on how a patriarchal, male-dominated social structure will eventually lead to a low fertility rate.

Figure 16: From the Patriarchal System to Gender Role Responsibility to Fewer Children



Atoh's theory states that the expectation of men is that women and mothers will do all domestic work, specifically men's mothers (before men marry) and men's wives (after men marry), making it very difficult for women to maintain a career. My own findings confirm that without any support from either the government or their husbands (see Chapter 3), women must finally leave their jobs and rely on their husbands. Some single participants are aware of this pattern, meaning that some of them cannot decide whether to marry or not and even some married participants are afraid to become mothers, because of the overwhelming commitments and responsibilities of being a mother. Women are also enjoying being single; however, there are different reasons (and some similar reasons) that Japanese women and men take advantage of the single life.

Figure 17: Advantages of Being Single



Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2010.
<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/shingi/2r9852000001wmnj-att/2r9852000001wmt0.pdf>

It is hard to choose between a comfortable single life and a married life with less freedom and more responsibilities. When I saw this research (Figure 2)²¹ it reminded me of two things; one was the scheduling of my interview around Saki's busy schedule (see Chapter 2 and 3). She did not have any time for herself, she wakes up earlier than husband, takes care of family and sleeps later than husband, and on average was sleeping only 6 hours. The other reason was that the majority of married respondents complained about their husbands spending days off with friends, while my respondents had no days off and were constantly working full time at domestic work and, for some of them, part-time jobs (see Chapter 3). Men might be less concerned about spending time with friends and family (see Figure 16), because this might not change after marriage. Women are more concerned about having relationships, careers and their standing in society than men (see Figure 16).

I have a great relationship with my mother. She is not only my ideal mother but she is also a great wife. She would have done anything for me and for my brother. She worked when she raised us, even though she did

²¹ Samples are the same as the benefits of marriage (table 1) in this chapter.

not care for her job, which was making envelopes at home. She chose the job because she did not want my brother and me to feel lonely after we came home. Though her job was very low-paying and was not satisfying, she did it all for us. She did almost all of the housework too. She was a wonderful mother. She gave us everything we asked for, both emotionally and financially. When I needed someone to talk to about important matters, I was able to talk with my mother. I am not sure if, when I do marry and have a child, I can be like my mother (Chiho, single, employed full-time).

Her mother was always there to do everything for her, and Chiho realised that her mother had had to give up a lot in raising her and maintaining the family. She felt a great deal of pressure and worry about marrying and having children. According to Okazawa and Ozawa (2010), many women from the younger generations experience this same kind of stress, making it difficult for them to marry and have children. That is, they are afraid of having to make the same kinds of sacrifices their own mothers had to make. Young women growing up take note of gender roles in the home, with fathers considered the ‘head of the household’ and generally more important, while their mothers spent their energy on their husbands; these young women now do not identify with or want to emulate their mothers’ roles (Murray, 2000). During the interviews most of the participants expressed good and positive views of their own mothers and their relationship with them, with no differences between single and married participants. None of my respondents’ mothers had a higher education level than their daughters. Since those mothers had difficulties in accessing higher education, it perhaps influenced their attitudes in focusing on education and saving every penny to raise their children (see Chapter 5). Yet some participants felt very negative toward the cultural archetype of motherhood.

It was a while ago that I became a mother for the first time, but I was very worried about being a mother. I knew it was a big commitment. I knew that even a dog or a cat has to be taken care of it until it dies, but a child is a much larger commitment. I cannot give up on them; I will have to take care of them as my responsibility until I die. It is therefore not appropriate for me to do something fun by myself. I feel that I have to have fun with my family. Sometimes since becoming a mother I have gone out to be with my friends, yet I felt guilty spending the time and money. I still feel that using money only for myself is kind of wasteful. If I had to

*choose one word about being a mother it would definitely be 'patient.' To have one's own children is a precious thing but it is hard, and so before I became a mother I was worried about taking on such a responsibility.
(Keiko, married with children and housewife)*

Most of the respondents used phrases like 'big commitment,' 'pressure' and 'huge responsibilities' to describe motherhood (see Chapter 3). There were no apparent differences in views between single and married participants, since everyone felt at least some degree of apprehension toward being a mother, or more accurately, being the archetypical Japanese mother. I found that many participants indicated that they felt pressured to be like their own mothers when they themselves had children, because their mothers set a high standard of responsibility. They felt that their mothers had been perfect and still were (see Kamamoto, 2001). For some participants, marriage and motherhood means they must transform themselves into traditional Japanese women 'Yamatonadeshiko' to take care of their husband and children (see Chapter 3). It also involves pleasing their parents, so some respondents decided to marry someone for wealth or higher income instead of love. Kamiko (Married with a child and housewife) chose to marry into wealth, but came to regret it because her husband changed. What, then, are the differences between those who marry for love and those who plan their marriages more strategically? Those who had married for financial reasons thought that they should have married for love instead, assuming that they would at least have love, while those who married for love felt they should have married for wealth, so that they would at least have had enough money to take care of themselves and their children.

Ren'ai : Love Marriage

In Japan after World War II, the number of arranged marriages steadily decreased as the number of marriages based on love increased (Atoh, 2008: 18). Japan also has fairytales about looking for the perfect partner, or Japanese men are looking for ideal Japanese women 'Yamatonadeshiko' (see Chapter 3). It is also widely

believed that in Japan everybody has a red thread on their little finger which is connected with the little finger of their future spouse; this belief is known as ‘Akai-ito’ (a red thread), and many people believe they are destined to meet their ideal partners.

Figure 18: Akai Ito



Source: <http://www.ciel-reserve.com/blog/s264.JPG>

Some participants mentioned this red thread; Ema (single, full-time job) said, ‘*I do not know my akai-ito was been cut?*’ She has not met yet a man to be her husband, and had difficulty in meeting a man who shares similar interests and values. One married participant, Keiko (married with children, housewife), said, ‘*my akai-ito has to be mistaken or tangled to marry with my husband because it was simply a mistake*’. I could not tell if they actually believed in the ‘akai-ito’ or just using it as a metaphor. So, I asked them ‘*Do you believe in the akai-ito?*’ Most of them laughed or smiled but they said ‘*I believe it*’. Ema said, ‘*If I do not believe that, I feel there is no hope and become more miserable about my chances of being forever alone*’. She added that she feels a great deal of pressure.

Marriage is frequently defined as a relationship between two equal partners based on love, companionship, and physical intimacy (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 203). In most developed countries reasons given for seeking marriage include the appeal of spending one’s life with a perfect partner, a feeling of security and commitment, and companionship (Dryden, 1999). As Japan started experiencing higher economic growth, this way of thinking gradually emerged as people started to

marry more for love. In developed countries as young people started to earn their own wages and become more economically independent from their families, it became less important for them to choose a spouse based solely on what would please their parents (Robyn, 2011). Japan's case, however, is still different: Figure 1 shows one of the major reasons Japanese women and men consider marriage to be advantageous is to make their parents happy, and my respondents often mentioned pleasing their parents by marrying and having children.

Lewis (2001) states that it is quite rare for Western couples to marry for reasons other than falling in love. Two types of marriage exist in Japan: *ren'ai*, which translates as 'love' and means a marriage with modern-based sensibilities, and *omiai*, which translates as 'arranged' and is more traditionally family-oriented (Holloway, 2010). My grandparents were married as *ren'ai* which was very rare at the time. When I was a child, I heard the story many times from neighbours of the same generation. I am not sure of my grandmother's date of birth, but my grandfather was born in 1912, just after the end of the Meiji period. Unfortunately, my grandmother passed away before I was born and I never met her, but she was a very modern woman. Both families were against their marriage, yet they persevered. All of my respondents described their marriages as *ren'ai*. Although Kimiko chose her husband for pragmatic reasons such as wealth and education, she talked about how much her husband had changed and how she had become like a maid, expressing regret about marrying him and wishing she had cohabited with him before marrying.

I cannot respect him anymore. He treats me so bad. I have to pick up his dirty clothes. He loves to show me off to his colleagues and take them to our home, meaning I have to cook for them almost every week. We have hardly enough money to keep going, yet he does not want me to work outside either because it would be shameful for him, he says. If I had a wonderful job, on the other hand, he could have told his colleagues so and pretended his wife had chosen to work outside the home, but I have not been able to do this. I would only be able to get a job working at a shop or factory or as a cleaner, and he does not want me to have such a job. His colleagues and supervisors would think we were struggling financially. There is no way he can reveal such a thing. I hate him so much. (Kimiko, married with a child and housewife).

Several other respondents expressed regret about marrying their husbands. One of them, Saki (married with children, employed part-time), had quit her job, married and had children, because she loved her husband. But she regretted having to return to work at a factory in an unsatisfying job after having given up her former career. Despite the fact that she is much busier than her husband and that she gave up her career for him, her husband does not contribute to any of the care work. She often asks herself if it was worth it (see Chapter 2). Another respondent, Kiriko (Married with children and has a part-time job), said that it was too late for her to divorce her husband now that they had children. She said she was focusing now more on her children, her daughter in particular, whom she was teaching to be financially independent so she would not need a husband. And Kimiko (married with a child and housewife), who was not working at the time, regretted choosing love over financial considerations when marrying her husband, reasoning that even if she became disappointed in a marriage to a man of means, she would still at least have money. But now she was mentally, physically, and financially exhausted by her husband.

I asked them how they had met their future husbands in the first place. The majority of the respondents started to answer this but then quickly segued into complaining about their husbands and the disappointing situations they were now stuck in. Indeed, during the interviews it was very difficult to keep the conversation on track as to how they had initially met their husbands and then decided to marry; rather they were more interested in discussing the disappointing aftermath and how their lives had been negatively impacted.

I met my husband at a party. It was a pivotal mistake. I was happy because I had just graduated from a two-year college and my soon-to-be husband had a university bachelor's degree. When my parents got to know my boyfriend, I thought they were finally happy. Before I met him I had dated a man who had only graduated from high school. My parents were not happy about our relationship, and during the time I was dating him they often told me that I had to think deeply when I married. They would say things like, 'We want your husband to have a higher education than you,' and so on. I was sick of hearing things like this, but on the other hand I wanted to make my parents happy. So I met the new man and chose to marry him, but I now feel I should have married my

ex-partner. He was not a good student, but he always made me laugh. But my parents were more important than him I thought, so I thought my husband's education would make both me and my family happy in the long run. I dated him about a year before marrying. (Kimiko, Married with a child, housewife).

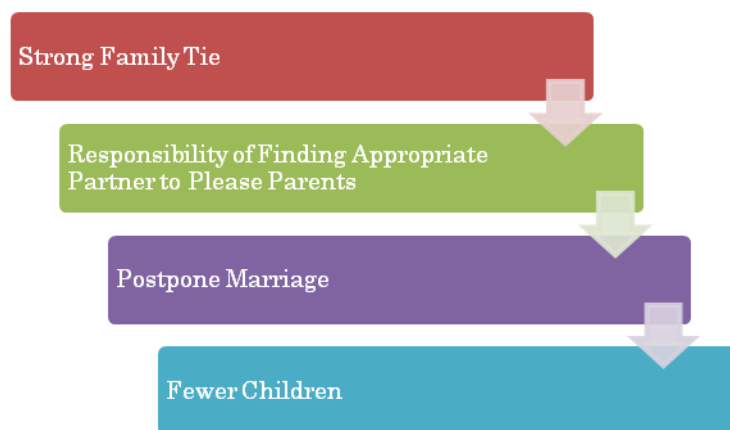
Kimiko's case is hardly unique, for it is very important, even necessary, in Japanese culture to make one's parents happy (see Ozawa, 2010). Kimiko had gone to a two-year college to please her parents. But they were not happy with her college boyfriend due to his low level of education. As pointed out previously in this study, it is uncommon to find Japanese couples where the man has a lower degree of education than does the woman (Mithukura, Ogwawa, and Retherford, 2010). As Kimiko wanted to satisfy her parents, she found a husband with a higher degree of education but regrets it now. Kayo's situation was similar. Kayo (married without a child, employed full-time) along with many other women, has experienced intense social pressure to marry.

Compared to other developed countries, there are still there are many restrictions and much traditional behaviour in Japan, especially regarding relationships and marriage (Sakaiya and Kawamoto, 2001). In many cultures, love is assigned different meanings by people of different classes, ethnicities, ages and religious beliefs (Seidman, 1991: 101: Lorber, 2010). Everyone feels at least some degree of social pressure in Japan because nobody wants to be a 'black sheep' by being different, preferring to be among the majority and in a safe position (Sasagawa, 2004). This notion of wanting to be 'average' and in the majority is highly ingrained in the Japanese consciousness and is reflected in the media; for example, many magazine articles focus on the ideal age of marriage (Sasaki, 2004). There is thus cultural, social, and parental pressure for Japanese women to be a part of the marital majority (Kudo, 2001).

During their interviews two other respondents, Chiho (Single, employed full-time) and Ema (Single and employed full-time), mentioned how their own mothers had chosen their fathers over ex-partners who had a lower level of education. Both

participants still believed that education is a very important factor in choosing a partner, yet felt that their mothers had sacrificed their own lives just for them. It was their opinion that mothers have to make a trade off, letting go of some of their dreams in order to focus on raising children (Cleese and Bates, 2003). According to Cleese and Bates (2003), daughters want to please their mothers, yet they can somehow never do enough to satisfy them. Parents often interfere in their children's and especially their daughters' relationships.

Figure 19: Strong Family Ties to Low Fertility



Japanese tradition requires that young people obey their elders, especially their parents (Sasaki, 1998). Most parents are very focused on their children and try to control or influence their children's judgments and decisions (Sato, 1997; Atho, 2008). Because there are fewer children in Japan than before, parents can spend more time and money with each child, which contributes to parents' controlling and obsessive behaviour (Kurozawa, 2001). This seems to be a common theme. Parents interfere in their children's lives and strongly influence whom they will marry. When Japanese women reach a certain age when their parents feel it is the proper time to marry, they usually choose a partner who makes their parents satisfied and happy, despite any doubts they themselves may have. Many regret the decision afterward, especially since the majority of women give up their jobs to raise their children. If, however, women choose not to marry, they face disapproval from their parents, family and society in general, and have to live

with the constant guilt (Hertog, 2008).

Additionally, if a Japanese woman decides to have children without marrying, their future will be profoundly and negatively affected (Tanaka, 2009). In Japan there is still discrimination against people with unmarried parents; they face unequal treatment when applying for jobs, for example (see Chapter 1). Hertog (2008: 205) notes in her research that women are expected to maintain the well-being of their family and are highly pressured to preserve the two-parent family for the sake of their children. In Japan it is believed that if parents are not together in a proper family unit, their children will be negatively impacted psychologically and develop skewed views on gender roles. Hertog's single respondents wanted to marry for the sake of their unborn children after becoming pregnant, even if they had a negative opinion of their partners and would be consigned to an unhappy married life. She also found that her respondents felt that it is better for parents to remain together even if they do not get along, rather than children being raised by single mothers (Hertog, 2008).

Women in Europe, on the other hand, face far less worry and fear in making it as a single mother or as an unmarried mother cohabiting with a partner (Tanaka, 2009; Ozawa, 2010). In contrast, women and men in Japan would prefer to postpone marriage and enjoy their freedom of being single, and would prefer to wait until meeting an appropriate partner. Many dating companies have sprouted up, purporting to help men and women do just that (Kyogoku and Takahashi, 2008).

Omiai : Arranged Marriage and Dating Agencies As a New form of Marriage

In the past decades so-called romantic love has become the foundation on which couples and families are based, yet *omiaï* marriages persisted well into the 1970s and 80s (Ronald and Alexy, 2011; Athoh, 2008). Marriage in the East was

traditionally regarded as a family business, and was arranged by parents who strictly adhered to the social hierarchy (Haggins et al., 2002: 75). Arranged marriage was common during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Couples needed their parents' permission to marry, and it was common in Japan for the bride and groom to have never met until the actual wedding day (Hendry, 2010). The cultural definition of love differs in the east and the west. Jackson (1999: 96) notes that it is impossible to separate love from its cultural and social contexts. However, in Japan, the belief that love can still grow after starting a family is known as '*Aijo*'. People who subscribe to this belief spend a longer time together and feel more accepting of each other and are more attached to each other (Hardly, 2001). '*Aijo*' can be used after marriage when couples have histories and a family together, so they decide to remain as a family and stay together. Some respondents mentioned '*Aijo*'. Keiko (Married with children, housewife) said that she no longer has romantic feelings for her husband but 'I have still '*Aijo*' because of children'. According to a 2008 IPSS study, the percentage of marriages that were arranged fell from 64 % to 29.4 % between 1982 and 2005 (Ronald and Alexy, 2011). Other Japanese government research shows that in 1965, 50 % of marriages in Japan were arranged, but by 2005 the number had fallen to 6.2 % (MHLW, 2005). These studies show different numbers, but Ronald and Alexy's research counted Arranged Marriage as well as the practice of using Dating Agencies to meet and marry.

People make use of such companies to search for a suitable partner with the same or similar values as their own. They also use them out of convenience because of their long working hours and lack of time and places to meet suitable partners. Today, dating companies are especially popular in Japan. According to one agency, it is common for women and men to become engaged within one month of first meeting and married within six ('*Rakuten*' Happy Life Club, 2007). One example of such an agency is called the Happy Life Club. This is one of the largest agencies and one of my respondents told me about it. They advertise on TV and the internet, in magazines, and on transport posters. This might be considered to be a modern form of (self) arranged marriage. While the marriage rate on the

whole has decreased, the number of dating companies has increased. Some participants have experience with using dating companies.

I have been attending events sponsored by dating companies. I like walking in the mountains, so I joined outdoor events and gatherings so I could meet someone who has a similar hobby and hopefully meet someone who has the same values and same standards as me. But so far I have not met the right person. My friend recommended that I should meet someone privately. She said I can look at the book to find someone who is similar to me and to make an appointment. I want to pick the right person, regardless of my age. I like my life and where I am currently at. (Chiriko, single, employed full-time)

According to Sakamoto (2002), as one's age increases, the standards of women's ideal partners also increases. Women want to be comfortable and to have more independence and freedom. They do not want to give up their enjoyable single lives. For men, paradoxically, it is the opposite. They gain more than women when they marry (Sainsbury, 1999), so as men become older, their ideal partner level decreases (Sakamoto, 2002). Dating companies are not only useful for finding partners, but are also regarded as providing a good chance to meet the 'perfect' partner. Before meeting a prospective partner, a person will have had a chance to review his/her background in such areas as age, income, place of birth and educational level. If the person then feels that the prospective partner is not suitable, they will not meet; both partners must feel that they are suitable for each other. This can be considered to be a modern form of arranged marriage. While the practice of traditional arranged marriages has greatly decreased, the number of dating/meeting companies has increased. According to Ogawa (2006), there are approximately 3,100 of these companies. There are different varieties of dating companies, like those that provide parties, set up dates, and facilitate other events conducive to meeting people. There are even some dating companies which deal only with clients in select professions and a certain level of income. One such dating agency, representative of the industry as a whole, had, as of 2007, 60,000 members total 53 % male and 47 % female. The women's ages ranged from 20 to 52 with a mean age of 31, while the mean male age was 36. The education level of the female members ranged between middle school graduate to doctorate. Table 1

shows the percentages of each education level.

Table 10: The Level of Education of Males and Females in One Dating Agency

Level of Education	Male (%)	Female (%)
Middle School	0	2
High School	1	23
Technical School	24	31
Two-Year College	1	27
University	55	15
Masters Degree and beyond	19	2
Total	100	100

Source: Happy Life Club, Tokyo, 2007. (<http://onet.rakuten.co.jp/service/event/>)

The mean income of the female members was ¥ 3,650,000 (£ 28,516) per year. A variety of occupations is represented by both the women and men members, yet there is a considerable gap between male and female income, the mean income for male members being ¥ 5,850,000 (£ 45,703) per year, a difference equivalent to approximately £17,000. However, it must be noted that 8% of the female members were unemployed. The mean incomes by age group for the Japanese population might help one understand more about participants in this dating agency.

Table 11: Average Incomes by Age Group

Age Group	Male (¥)	Female (¥)	Average (¥)
25-29	3,880,000 (£30,313)	3,000,000 (£23,438)	3,530,000 (£27,578)
30-34	4,830,000 (£37,734)	3,120,000 (£24,375)	4,280,000 (£33,438)
35-39	5,670,000 (£44,297)	2,960,000 (£23,125)	4,830,000 (£37,734)
40-44	6,270,000 (£48,984)	2,830,000 (£22,109)	5,070,000 (£39,609)
45-49	6,680,000 (£52,188)	2,770,000 (£21,641)	5,190,000 (£40,547)
50-54	6,960,000 (£54,375)	2,740,000 (£21,406)	5,330,000 (£41,641)
55-59	6,830,000 (£53,359)	2,720,000 (£21,250)	5,340,000 (£41,719)
60~	5,080,000 (£39,688)	2,410,000 (£18,828)	4,070,000 (£31,797)

Source: The Japanese National Tax Agency (2008) (<http://www.j-tjs.com/value/salary>)

The members of this dating agency tended to have relatively high incomes. The joining fee was ¥ 30,000 (£ 243), while the average annual fee was ¥ 237,600 (£ 1,856), depending on one's class level. There are three such class levels: Platinum, Gold and Silver. The Platinum Class is very exclusive and expensive, in which select people meet on an arranged basis. The Gold Class averages once a month for individual meeting, as well as allowing people to attend meeting parties. Silver Class members only attend parties. The mean period of membership after joining was eighteen months for women and twenty-six months for men. Most of the members (82 %) were working in Tokyo or its suburbs. To join in an event (party, date, or counselling) required an extra fee which averaged around ¥ 132,000 (£1,031). There was also a 'termination fee' of ¥ 210,000 (£1,641), which was payable when two members became a couple. There was an average of 2,700 events per year and opportunities to meet new people. There are also classes which provide training on how to approach prospective partners, as well as how to become a couple. This company offers classes to both men and women, but its main focus is on men who have a higher education 74 % of its male members held a bachelor's degree or higher as of 2007. According to this agency, since 1986, 133,076 people have become couples through their activities. Japanese people are more likely to meet a life partner in a group. Their goal in using dating agencies is not only to find someone to spend a good time with, but also to find a prospective partner with whom to start a family, which might be different compared to people in Western countries using dating sites. Gunter (2008) compares British online dating and U.S. online dating, and the U.S. research shows that women and men women are more likely to find a friendship, but men are 4 times more likely to be looking for a partner or sexual partner. Gunter (2008) said that twice as many men use dating sites in the U.K. when compared with women. U.K. research shows that 47 % of participants enjoyed sex and casual relationships through dating online, while only 9% of participants were looking for a serious marriage partner (Gunter, 2008:88). In the west it is much more common for people to look for a date, spending leisure time together, sex and more casual relationships on dating sites. According to Gunter's research (2008), over two years U.K. respondents spent an average of only £ 200 on dating sites compared with one of Japanese

dating agencies (Happy Meeting Club), whose registration fee is more than £ 200. To meet new people and have opportunities is much more expensive in Japan, which means that looking for a partner is taken more seriously, leading dating companies to advertise that joining their agency makes it more likely to meet a partner who will have more social influence. Moreover, Japanese women and men are seriously looking for a life partner. Why the serious drive to meet a life partner, and why marriage?

Why Marriage?

Norms and Cultural Acceptance

Many feminist scholars are critical of the system of marriage; men are taking advantage of women, using women like their property and as labourers to take care of them (Jackson and Scott, 2004; Collins, 1998; Bernard, 2002; Ochiai, 2002). In Japan, it is typical for one to go to school, graduate and have a job, and once women are married, they quit the job and stay home to take care of family (see Chapter 1). Even in other East Asian countries, such as South Korea and Taiwan, women have more career options and are remaining longer in the labour force (Ochiai, et. al., 2008; see also Chapter 5 and 6). Moreover, women in western countries have more options and opportunities than in Japan, whether it is being a single mother, cohabiting with or without children, or being married without children (see Chapter 1). However, such ideas are still not yet culturally acceptable in Japan (Kawamoto, 2001). One respondent, Suzuko (single, has a full-time job), had a boyfriend in the UK but could not tell her family that she was living with him, knowing her parents would be upset. She said she enjoyed her freedom and having fewer restrictions and was glad she had the opportunity to live with her partner, regarding it as a better option than marrying. It is fortunate that she was able to explore that option, since women still living in Japan have much less freedom. As Ema said:

If I could I would prefer to live with my boyfriend before marrying, but I think it would be impossible because my family would be very unhappy. I know what they would tell me: 'You are not young anymore. You have to marry, not play around like a young person. You have to behave like an adult.' (Ema, single, employed full-time).

When I asked Ema why she wanted to live with her boyfriend before marrying, she said that she wanted to know for sure if her partner was truly the one person she wanted to have in her life, realizing it to be a very big commitment. She also added that younger people do not think very carefully or deeply about their decision to marry (although she states she does not know if that is necessarily good or bad in itself), and as she herself had grown older and heard about her friends' and relatives' experiences, she had started to become frightened about choosing to marry. Her parents had told her they thought she should have married when she was younger, before she realised that marriage is not a perfect life. There are social barriers to cohabitation in Japan in that there is no accepted social status between 'single' and 'married' (see Chapter 1). Many of my respondents wanted to live with their partners, but did not because of its unacceptability (see Chapter 1). Besides, couples usually need their parents' permission to live together. In addition, when people rent a place to live in Japan there are many restrictions; for example, they are required to list their parents on the application as guarantors for their rent. It would be very difficult to rent a place without parents' guarantees. Kimiko had actually planned on living with her then-boyfriend, but they were forced to eventually marry because every rental place required a co-signer.

Japanese families treasure their *Koseki*, special books that chronicle their family history. The modern *Koseki*, which was established in 1871, is the Japanese Family Registry, which contains information about paternity, adoptions, discontinuation of adoptions, deaths, marriages and divorces. Family members have to be registered in order to have legal status. The male head of the family holds the property ownership rights and is responsible for the whole family, and is succeeded by his son upon his death (Ronald and Alexy, 2011). According to Motoya (1999), Japanese *Koseki* registration makes it difficult for women to choose their family name after marrying, or to be a single mother. It used to be

very common for Japanese companies to consult the *Koseki* of prospective employees before hiring them. Any divorces or instances of cohabitation would disrupt the flow of the family narrative. The expression *Koseki wo Yogosuna* literally translates as ‘*Don’t spoil our family history.*’

I wanted to live together with my husband before marrying him, but there was no way we could just live together because of our parents. They would have killed us if we had told them we wanted to do that. Not only our parents, but also our relatives would think we were crazy to choose to cohabit. I wish I could have lived with my husband before marrying him, because I would not choose to marry him now. He has changed a lot since we married. I was very young and a lot of my friends were getting married. I went to weddings and felt I wanted the same. Now I can see that I merely wanted to play like being a wife. I also feel I should have listened to my family when they said that financial security is very important for marriage. I should have chosen a wealthy husband—my parents were right. (Kumiko, married with children and housewife)

Another respondent, Keiko (married with children and housewife), said that if she had been able to live with her husband beforehand, she would have never chosen to marry him because he had changed so much. It could be the same result: he could be very supportive when they live together, but after marriage his attitude could change dramatically anyway. It is understandable that women may feel they have more choices before marriage and no choices after marriage. Kumiko also mentioned a degree of social pressure, because all of her friends were married. She had looked forward to their playing the roles of wife and husband, but it did not take her long to realise the differences between real life and an imagined perfect life. In Keiko’s case she had become pregnant before marrying, so she had had little choice but to marry even though she did not want to.

Parental Pressure

Many of the respondents mentioned that they felt pressure from the families. Eri (single, employed full-time) and Chiyomi (single, employed full-time) were very similar in that they both wanted to marry. They also wanted to marry to please

their families. Chiyomi had joined a dating organization which organises events for people to meet prospective partners, but she had not yet met anyone for whom she would be willing to give up her comfortable single life. They struggle because they want to make their families and parents happy, yet what they want is not the same as what their parents want.

I feel a lot of pressure from my parents, but I could never give up what I want for my partner's sake. I have read that as women grow older, their standards for the ideal partner become higher and more difficult to attain, which I believe to be true. I want to make my parents happy, but I cannot give up so many things. I am living very comfortably, and I believe that my life should be even better after I marry. But most of my friends became unhappier than before. I couldn't take that sort of life. I am very much struggling to maintain a balance between making myself happy and keeping my parents happy as well. (Ema, single, a full-time job)

Ema's standard of the ideal partner had increased as she grew older, and she was struggling between conforming to the mores of traditional Japanese society and pursuing her own happiness. She wants to be independent and not worry about finding a partner, and wants to focus on doing whatever she wants to do. She knows that after marrying, her life would change, and she would have to live for her family, not just herself. Although Ema wanted to please her parents, she felt she could not give up what she had, namely her financial comfort, freedom and independence. One respondent, Sakiko, said that her experience of living in the U.K. had changed her viewpoint toward Japanese society and customs. Living and learning overseas helps people to acknowledge cultural differences and increase international awareness and cultural understanding (Pickert, 1992; Milleret, 1991; Wagner and Magistrale, 1995). Sakiko (single, employed full-time, lives in UK) noted that her eyes had been opened to more freedom and opportunities, yet like Ema (single, employed full-time) she still felt that she should make her family happy. Similarly, Kawazura (2008) explained her experience of studying in the USA when her father tried to persuade her to come back to Japan to marry. He believed that studying abroad was not important for his daughter and thought she had made the wrong decision. Kawazura (2008) explained that her father believed what he thought was right in the context of living in Japan, but that she did not

share her father's beliefs. People in Japan generally believe that women should marry men with stable jobs and then start families, especially when they reach a certain age (Kawazura, 2008). The single participants felt pressured to marry, yet they could not imagine having to give up what they already had. Most of them said that they would choose to marry if they had a partner, except for the one who was currently living in the UK. Sakiko (single, employed full-time, living in UK) told me that she would choose to live with her partner before marrying, or perhaps not marry at all. She felt that she had more options available to her living as she was, and faced less pressure in the UK than in her home country. She noted that there seemed to be more pressure for those in their thirties who had partners, and that it was essentially the same, in fact, as being married. Many of the single respondents talked about how they struggled with trying to pursue their own happiness while wanting to make their families happy.

However, none of the respondents, either single or married, felt that they wanted to be single for the rest of their lives and were afraid of being alone in the future. Japanese people are also worried about the perceived time limit of marrying and waiting too long. It is ironic that even though women have more educational opportunities available to them today, they still worry about aging and being too old to marry. Less-educated women have fewer financial resources available to them and tend to choose partners who are on the same level as themselves (Upchurch, Lillard and Paris, 2002). Most of the single respondents mentioned their age and worried about marrying relatively late. Eri, (single, employed full-time job) for instance, believed that if she was not married by the time she was forty, she would have to give up all hope of ever marrying and having a family.

I do not have any partner... but I could tell you that if I did have a boyfriend now I would feel a lot of pressure from my parents. They even told me they hoped I would become pregnant so I would marry. So I think that if I had a partner now, I would marry him to make my parents happy. I am not young anymore, so I think it would be my last chance to marry if I lost this opportunity. I am in my late thirties, and my chances are getting slimmer. When I turn forty I will probably give up my hopes for

marriage and having a family. Half of my life will be damaged, for I believe that there are two stages in one's life: the first stage is being single, and the second is being married. But on the other hand it is very hard finding a partner, because I am very comfortable living in this moment and I don't want to forfeit my comfort. But I feel guilty not being married when I think of my parents as well. (Eri, single, employed full-time).

It is still considered natural in Japan to marry and have children, and the male-centered thought pattern cannot accept any other alternatives, such as not having children. However, elsewhere in the developed world, it has gradually become more acceptable for women to have children outside of marriage and more women have opted for single motherhood than ever before (Wagner and Magistrale, 1995). However, Japan still lags behind most western countries in acceptance of being single. Takuhiro (2010) note that Japanese couples choose to marry if the woman becomes pregnant out of wedlock, resulting in a low proportion of single mothers (1-2%) since 1960 (see also Chapter 1). If a woman becomes a single mother, it brings shames for her family. It is important to win parents' approval and to please them, as my respondents described. Family is very important in Japan.

It may be somewhat difficult to understand marriage in Japan if one is only familiar with Western marriage customs. For example, if a child is born outside of wedlock in Japan, it will always be considered illegitimate, even if the child has been properly registered just after birth. If, as an adult, that person wishes to change his or her surname or any other information on their birth certificate, they would not be allowed to do so (Hendry, 2000). Of course there could be always be an exception, but it would involve several legal fights. Many women become pregnant but choose to marry before giving birth (see Chapter1). When young women become pregnant, it is common for their parents to be involved in the decision-making process. Before and after marriage, the majority of women must accept the will of their families and the responsibilities that entails.

Family Values

Pressure and Relationships with parents-in-law

After a couple marries their parents feel a sense of relief that their children will not be single for the rest of their lives, as well as looking forward to having grandchildren. The couple themselves, however, now face greater involvement with their parents-in-law, which can be a source of stress. This demonstrates the Japanese ideal of *Yome*: a woman not only marries her husband as an individual, but also the husband's whole family (Hendry, 2010). Much of the pressure placed on women during and even prior to marriage comes from in-laws.

My sister always told me that it is very hard to visit one's parents-in-law, because their values are different. My sister's in-laws want to know everything about her and their son's married life. His parents emphasize saving money for the future, but not my sister. She used to live overseas and she loves to travel a lot, but she now she has to hide her holiday travel plans from her parents-in-law. If her parents-in-law found out that they had gone on a holiday somewhere, they would give my sister grief and make her feel guilty for spending so much money. I do not want to have such a life. I want to travel whenever I want. Why should I have to worry about two more people interfering in my life? It can be worse if the husband has a sister or a brother, since they could interfere in my life as well. My sister's husband has a sister who is a pharmacist and just turned thirty, but she has saved a lot of money and leased a flat. My sister feels pressure because both she and her sister-and-law work even though the couple are still renting the flat. It is not fair that people think financial management is the woman's responsibility in Japan. My sister feels a lot of pressure because she is still childless. She wants to enjoy more time to herself. I am not sure that my parents-in-law will be like my sister's, or that they will affect the relationship between me and my husband (Chiriko, single, employed full-time).

Even my single participants had negative views of having a relationship with their future parents-in-law, yet the married ones had very positive views of their own parents even after marrying. In Japan it used to be held that after marrying, a woman belonged to her husband's family (Sasaki, 1996). It is less common in recent years for Japanese couples to live with husband's parents immediately after

marrying. Traditionally, the oldest son and his wife and children would live with his parents and inherit the family home in the ie system (see Chapter 1), but in recent years it has become more common to live separately from the parents. In 1975 the proportion of married couples moving in with one set of parents soon after marrying was 71.9 %, as compared to 2010 when the proportion had dropped to 18.6 % (Census, 2010). This is a major change in which there is much less support with childcare for mothers from grandparents in Japan. Many young couples live in large cities and parents still live in rural areas. Even if parents would like to take care of their grandchildren it would be impossible. A lack of siblings to help each other was the main cause of the weakening of the family network in the 1980s (Ochiai, 2008: 17). With fewer siblings around and parents living too far away to be able to help with childcare and domestic necessities, Japanese women are opting to have fewer children (Ochiai, 2008). South Korea women have much more support from parents and communities to raise children (see Chapter 3). However, Japanese couples tend to live with the husband's parents as they grow older. The proportion of people over the age of 65 who live with one or more offspring is 52.3 %, while for those over 75 years old it is 59.5 %, and for over 85 years old it is 65.6 % (Census, 2010). According to the 2010 census Tokyo has the lowest number of people living with either set of parents after marrying. On the other hand, a much higher number of couples live with parents in the Japanese countryside.

I do not want to live with my husband's parents, but we may eventually have to take care of them and move into their house. It may be my destiny, I don't know. So we had better just continue renting our flat for now, which my husband's company almost completely pays for. At least I can save some money for my children's education, and at the end of the day we will have a house. (Saki, married with children, employed part-time).

Although Saki did not want to live with her husband's parents, she felt it was inevitable that they will move in and take care of them. She does not have any time to take care of her parents-in-law now (see Chapter 2 and 3). She said 'I even prefer my part-time job to taking care of them. I am sure one day I will have to

quit working to take care of them. Though wanting to postpone it as long as possible, she added that she sometimes felt pressure from them. She appreciated her husband's company's payment of their housing expenses, especially because she herself was a part-time employee with no benefits or support from her own company (see Chapter 5). Although she regarded living in her husband's family's house as a last resort, she at least had fewer economic worries than other people who did not have any other place to live. While women are pressured to help take care of their husbands' side of the family and to live with the husband's parents in the future, Saki dearly wants to avoid this, yet saw no way to do so. She seemed resigned to her fate, being sure she had no other choice in the matter.

Sasaki (1996) pointed out however, that today in Japan women prefer to ask their own parents to watch their children for them. She explained that when a woman leaves her child at home they should ask their parents-in law to look after it, yet she found that most women think it is easier to leave a child with their own parents (Sasaki, 1996). Historically, however, it was very difficult for a woman to ask her own parents to watch the children, because after marrying she was considered to belong to her husband's family (Sasaki, 1996). Nowadays, wives feel it is easier and more comfortable for them to ask for their own parents' help and support, but they feel pressure and guilt if they do not see their in-laws often, especially around holidays, when it is considered a responsibility to see one's parents-in-law. I found my participants feel pressure during holidays; it is not a relaxing time for them.

Visiting Parents-in law

It is indeed very difficult to take any holiday time in Japan. Less than half of Japanese people 48.1 % take all of their holidays, and on average, 8.6 days of vacation time are taken per year (MHLW in 2011). This figure was compared to other countries; especially in European countries, workers take more holidays, such as France (38 days), Spain (30 days) and Italy (30 days) and most European

countries' worker use all of their holidays. When researchers asked for the reasons why Japanese employees could not take all holidays off, 67.3 % of respondents said that it was to avoid causing other people to have to work more. It should be mentioned that most companies pay money instead of giving holidays, even though that practice is illegal, so after a certain deadline passes, companies pay for unused holiday time, which is legal (Hashimoto, 2000).

However, the Japanese system is different in that there are holiday vacation periods in the summer and winter. The summer holiday period, called 'Obon', falls on different days every year between the middle of July and August. It is believed that dead family members return to their homes, so people must visit their deceased loved ones and ancestors. The winter holiday period, called 'Nenmatsu', welcomes the new year. In Japanese culture, it is important to see family during this time. During that time, many Japanese single and married couples visit both sets of parents and visit family gravesites, which is an important custom. During holiday time everything is overcrowded and traffic (cars, trains, buses) is very heavy. Everything is more expensive during these periods and things can be very stressful as everyone all over Japan wants to travel to their hometowns. This phenomenon is called 'kisei-rash'. Before the period of 'kisei-rash', there are warnings and expected long wait times on highways and roads, at airports, and for trains and buses to most destinations, covered like weather forecasts on television news channels.

Figure 20: Kisei-Rash



Translation and description: Waiting times and traffic jam locations
 Sources: Right Image: <http://www.news24.jp/pictures/2009/08/13/090813029.jpg>
 Left Image: <http://actionjapan.jp/imgs/articleheadline/3511.jpg>

It is always busy when we have holidays. We have to go to the countryside to visit my husband's parents. I personally do not like to go there. It is very tiring and expensive to go there and undergo stress because of them. It is not a holiday at all. (Kayo, married, without a child, employed full-time job).

Even when the husband has a day off or is on a holiday, women have more negative feelings because they are forced to be so patient and do so much for their families. The husband is happy to see his family during a holiday, even if he does not do anything for holiday preparations, similar to how the husband usually does not do any Child day's preparation though men like to have a big party for it (see Chapter 3). Kumiko (married with children, housewife) said *'I have to drive to my husband's hometown, which is always a day of overcrowded and stressful driving.* I asked her why he does not drive ? Kumiko responds *'He likes driving when the car is on the road, however he said he is too tired and needs to rest his feet.* Several of my participants have negative opinions of visiting in-laws. Women particularly face the pressure to visit their parents-in-law, and also to obey them. My respondents do not want to, but they have to, out of respect for their elders and family, which is yet another task for Japanese women.

It is our responsibility to take the children to show to my husband's parents during holidays. It is no fun for me at all. I cannot behave like my parents at their house. I do not have to worry what I do at my parents' house, as they will do everything for my children and me. I do not have to ask for anything; everything is there for us. (Saki, married, has children and has a part-time job)

They like visiting their own parents, but when they visit their parents-in-law they have negative feelings. During the interviews it seemed that the respondents had a very good relationship with their own parents, especially their mothers. Many my respondents mentioned certain verbal expressions describing how to be a good traditional Japanese woman and wife which is expected of them by men and by their families. Japan has very strong family relationships, with many obligatory commitments. There are many events, gatherings and parties for which women are expected to cook food and other

preparations Japanese men give no support (see Chapter 3). One respondent described her husband as if he were another child, and some participants also had negative opinions of husbands who spent time at home, representing one more person to take care of, and they expressed displeasure that their husbands expected them to perform the same duties as the husbands' mothers (a typical ideal Japanese woman is the mother who does everything for her children) (see Chapter 1 and 3). Such an expression, of course, has negative connotations. Some Japanese men develop a 'mother complex' (*mother-con*), becoming very attached to their mothers such that they are unable to become independent from them, creating an 'idealized woman' which young women find difficult to live up to (Ochiai, 1994 and Taniguchi, 1994).

After married I quit my job. I want to have a child as soon as possible, especially now because I have been asked by everybody when I am planning to have a child. It annoys me. I want to have a child more than they do. Plus my husband is never asked such a question. He does not feel any pressure. My parents are fine, but when we visit my husband's parents they ask and tell me that they want to see a grandchild soon, because they do not have much longer to live. They make me feel guilty for not having a child for them. I do not want to visit them anymore, but my husband insists on it. I sometimes feel he is a 'mother-con.' (Eriko, Married, without a child and housewife)

Once a couple is married there is usually pressure from the family to have a child. In Japan there is a traditional saying that if a couple does not have any children within three years, the wife should leave. Sechiyama (2008: 82) says wives need to 'secure' their place in society by having a child within three years, reflected in the saying 'If there is no child after 3 years, the bridge is gone'. Even though there could be a problem with the man, the pressure is still put on the woman. Some of the participants mentioned this pregnancy pressure, especially from the parents-in-law. Almost all married women adopt their husband's surname (see Chapter 3). It is still important to preserve the family name from one generation to the next. As a result, Japanese women feel pressured by their parents-in-law. One of my participants told me '*This is the 21st century, but I feel pressure to have not only a child, but to have at least one son at to keep my husband's family happy*

that the child will bear their name' (Kayo, married without a child, employed full-time). Another participant who is married without a child feels similar pressure: Kayoko told me, when we discussed the ideal number of children, *'It might be that women have to feel pressure to have a boy for the husband's family, but women want to have girl, and that's why the ideal number is high in Japan'*. I had never thought about this because I had never found any literature mentioning Kazuko's point of view, although some quantitative studies may show that Japanese women prefer to have a daughter rather than a son (MHLW in 2010). One of my respondents told me they want to have a daughter, and if their first child is not a daughter, they will try until they can have a daughter (Eriko, married without a child, employed full-time). I asked about this strong desire to have a daughter; Kazumi said *'To be honest, men are useless'* (married without child, employed full-time). Even single participants desire to have a daughter for themselves, despite the family pressure to have a son. Akiko (single, employed full-time) *'I want to have a daughter. A boy is troublesome, but I am sure I will try to have a son as well because of my husband's family, right? My sister told all about it, to keep the family name and the old system'*.

Other participants feel pressure from parents-in-law; Eriko said *'In-laws are worried about whether their family name will be kept, and they hope to see and enjoy their grandchildren. I feel they are selfish and annoying'* (Married housewife, without child). There is thus a huge gap between the relationship with one's own parents and with the in-laws regarding fertility. It is assumed that even if both sets of parents ask the woman the same pregnancy-related questions, respondents' feelings will be completely different between the two. When her own parents ask or tell her about pregnancy, she takes it positively (they're simply worried about her), but from her parents-in-law she takes it negatively and feels more pressure because women feel that their parents-in-law are only worried about keeping the family name, not worried what the couple wants to do.

Every time I have been asked when I am planning to have a child, I feel I want to tell them that I cannot become pregnant by myself. I hate it when I see my husband's parents always feel pressure if they even mention it.

They used to annoy me by asking about pregnancy all the time. So I stopped visiting them, and then they realized I was annoyed. And I want to have a child too, more than anyone can imagine. (Kazumi, married, without child, employed full-time)

My parents do not ask me anything about my pregnancy. I will ask my mother to tell me about it because she knows everything and I really want to have a child soon. (Kayo, married, without child, employed full-time)

The respondents thus felt pressure from other people, especially from parents-in-law regarding pregnancy. They expressed a belief that men do not feel the same pressure as women about fertility. Parenthood is always defined as motherhood, and women are always described as mothers (Glover, McLellan and Weaver, 2009). Yet even though in Japan people still think it is natural to have children, more and more are starting to regard it as more of a personal decision. Despite the cultural pressure to preserve the family name, people are having fewer children today.

Nonetheless, it is common for a son's parents to be involved with his family, and is also common for parents to help their married children financially. Parents still have the power to be involved with their son's family, compared with somewhat less involvement with their daughter's family (Suzuki, 2003). Kayoko told me that '*Honne*', which means true voice, is a part of Japanese culture where someone thinks of something usually a negative opinion but feel it is better not to say directly, so as not to offend or harm someone (Condon 1984; Lebra, 1976). It is frustrating for women to have to visit their husbands' parents' house out of respect, but in the meantime they are uncomfortable while visiting them. One other respondent mentioned that she is unsatisfied with intimacy in her life, and she wants to tell her husband's parents, in '*Honne*', '*How I can be a pregnant when your son is always out?*' (Eriko, married without a child, housewife). Eriko wants to tell her in-laws in her true voice that it is their son's fault that they have not seen a grandchild, but instead she has to listen to their complaints. Child birth is a responsibility that is pushed onto women, even if their husbands are absent from

home or they have little or no sex life (see Chapter 3).

Ironically, the parents-in-law who pressure their daughters-in-law to have children generally experienced the very same pressure from *their* parents-in-law; the cycle of pressure continues with each new generation. Women especially felt pressured to have sons. Even if parents-in-law do not intentionally exert pressure, their daughters-in-law nevertheless feel it. Kayo (married without a child, has a full-time job) said she felt that fertility plans are a private matter, mentioning that her parents-in-law had been repeatedly pestering her about it, making her feel very uncomfortable. As for my participants who were married with at least one child, they said their parents-in-law no longer mentioned anything about fertility plans because they had already succeeded in that matter. They talked more about the children's discipline and family life.

I hate it when my parents-in-law tell me how to discipline my own children. They are my children, not theirs. I want to make the rules for my family. They should be happy just to see their grandchildren. Yet I wish I could make a rule against showing them their grandchildren. My husband, though, does not seem to care at all, even when I have been complaining about his parents. (Kumiko, married with children and housewife)

Kumiko said that after having her first child, she started to realise that her husband and his family were very inconsiderate people, and that her husband does not say anything to his parents or intercede with them on her behalf. Kumiko also told me that when she asked her husband to go visit her parents, he always say '*He does not want to go; He is not using my family name, so he does not belong to my family.*' And he laughs about it. '*He thinks that I and children belong to his family. I hate his attitude.*' Kimiko complained that he does not care for her family, but she has to care for his parents and we have to go there to pretend to be a happy family. Many women would prefer to go their separate ways from their husbands, yet they choose not to do so. Why are these women staying with their husbands and not opting for divorce?

Divorce

History of divorce and attitude towards divorce in Japan

During the Meiji period (1868-1912), wives were allowed to initiate divorce proceedings against their husbands and to take them to court. There were still many restrictions, however. Many issues that would be grounds for divorce in today's society, such as a husband's affair, would not be an acceptable reason for a woman during the Meiji period to ask for divorce. Following the Meiji period in 1926, the doctrine of '*teisou gimu*' (responsibility of chastity) was established. This allowed women to file for divorce based on a husband's infidelity (Ohtsuka, 2003: 34).

During the Meiji Period, if a husband initiated a divorce, the wife had to leave the household. Wives had no rights at that time, and many had to leave their children behind with the husband's *ie* (family) (Ochiai, 1999; Hendry, 2010). Women could be commanded to leave their households for any reason by their husbands or even by their husbands' families (Ohtsuka, 2003: 34). At that time, the divorce rate was higher than it is now (between 2.6 to 3.6 per 1,000 people) because women were seen as 'labour', and if women did not bear a child within three years of marrying (see Chapter 2), men would often divorce their wives and marry new ones (Yuzawa, 2005).

Divorce rates in Japan declined after World War II, but slowly began to increase after 1964 (Suzuki, et. al., 2001). The lowest rate was in 1951, 0.97 per 1,000 people; for more than a decade, the average of 2.0 per 1,000 people has been stable (MHLW, 2012).

Table 12: Japanese Divorce Rates

Year	Rate per 1,000 Population
1951	0.97
1963	0.73
1971	1.0
1983	1.26
2008	1.99
2009	2.01
2010	1.99
2011	1.87
2012	1.88

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2012

In developed East Asian countries such as Japan, and Taiwan, the divorce rates have increased but compared with western countries, the rates are still low (Chapter 1). According to the Asahi Shinbun, in 2005 Taiwan had the highest divorce rate in Asia, prompting the Taiwanese government to announce that they would start teaching family values at school.

In Japan, the family is a very important unit. People think more in terms of the unit rather than of the individual, and thus do not want to destroy the unit of the family (Yuzawa, 2005; Othuka, 2003). People regard divorce, like single motherhood and cohabitation, as threats to the sanctity of marriage and the family (Brid, 2004). There does, however, seem to be a pattern in Japanese divorce. The people who divorce tend to have fewer family commitments, such as couples who are childless and older couples whose children are grown. With fewer responsibilities and fewer restrictions, they do not have to worry about causing any harm to their children. Three respondents who are married with children wanted to divorce their husbands, but they chose not to because of their children. They regretted having married for ‘love,’ because now they had to support their families and work at home as well. They now knew that husbands change after marriage, and they believed that since such change presumably could not be prevented, at least financial wealth would have mitigated things somewhat. These

three obviously needed their husbands for their children to have better lives. As with marriage, divorces involve not only the husband and wife but also the entire family. Couples agree to remain together for the sake of their parents and families even if they do not get along well. During my interviews most married respondents with children mentioned that if they had not had children they would have chosen to divorce. It might be that Japanese men become worse after marriage and after their wives have children, but it is hard for Japanese women to take any action because, after marriage, they worry about the reputation of their parents and their children, and choose not to divorce, even though their own situation grows bleaker after having a child. They choose to be patient and remain married.

Being patient and remaining married

Throughout the Meiji Period and through the end of World War II, Japanese women were told that, once they were married, it was their ‘destiny’ and was meant to be. Husbands behaved any way they wished; even if they perpetrated acts of domestic violence, had other lovers, and/or simply never came home, their wives were expected to be good and patient wives and mothers and to always stay with the family (Othuka, 2003: 38; Rosenberger, 2001). Although this view has weakened, it has still persisted to this day.

I have found my research that after marrying it seems more difficult for Japanese women to pursue their own happiness. There is an expression, *Nintai-ha-bi-nari*, meaning ‘Patience is beauty,’ which Japanese parents and teachers often teach to their children (see Rosenberger, 2001). In my research, I have found that the Japanese male-dominated patriarchy is closely linked to family ties, especially between mothers and children since the responsibility of the traditional gender role of taking care of the family weighs on women, making them feel like they have to be patient even with an unhappy married life, thinking of the rest of the family and not themselves.

I have started to feel that if those family ties were weaker, Japanese women could more easily make their own decisions. I feel that my research into Japan's male-dominated society suggests that there is a strategy to keep the patriarchal system in place, so that women have to be patient about the inequality of gender roles, giving up the freedoms they enjoyed when they were single, while men do not have to change anything.

My father was born into wealth, but my mother wasn't. I can imagine it was difficult for my mother to be involved with a totally different family culture. She told me that she suffered because of the differences, but my father was too busy to give her support. Many times she thought it would be better to separate from my father, because of those differences. What stopped her was me. I was already born, and she was focused on me to have a higher education When I have a child I do not want to divorce. I know that I will be able to afford to raise my child because I am independent. But because I really do not want to choose to divorce, I am very scared of marriage (Ema, single and has a job).

Ema's mother suffered because of the differences between her and Ema's father, so Ema hoped to avoid the same fate. She wanted a partner who was more highly educated than her and had a higher income, yet she wanted her partner to share the same values. Japanese society is trapped in a cycle now where Japanese women are searching for a partner who is like a father and more, while Japanese men are looking for a partner who is like a mother (Kawamoto, 2001; Kobayashi, 2001). Most Japanese men's mothers stayed at home and took care of them while they were growing up, so the notion of a wife as mother is deeply ingrained in them (Okazawa and Ozawa, 2010). The 'three year myth' (see Chapter 1) states that Japanese mothers should stay at home to take care of their children from birth to the age of three, which is believed to be the most critical developmental time for the children. Ema's mother's negative marriage experience made her reluctant to marry and give up her comfortable lifestyle. Even though she was not yet married, she was already concerned about her future children. Kimiko's mother, on the other hand, believed that it is important to marry a man who is financially wealthy:

My mother always told me that a man needs money, and how important it is to have money for one's livelihood. She therefore told me to choose a man with money. My family was middle-class, but my mother worked very hard both inside and outside the home to raise me. She sometimes told me she envied some of her friends who stayed at home to take care of their children. Yet I dated men who did not have a higher education, which means they were low-income. But they were very good to me and I loved them, but in my mind somewhere I had decided to marry someone with a higher income. So I married a man with a high education, but I am not happy now. I wish I had known that I should have been more independent financially and so have more choices. My parents sent me to a two-year college, but I do not have any higher skills. I also quit my job when I married. I thought I could make my mother proud, but if she ever finds out I am not happy with my husband, she will be very disappointed. I cannot tell her about my unhappy married life. (Kimiko, married with a child, housewife)

Kimiko explained that she already had a child, and so she did not wish to divorce her husband. If not for the child, however, she would have chosen both to divorce and to develop the skills needed to be independent. She also stressed that she wanted her child to be independent, and so she was saving money for her child's education (see Chapter 5). Kimiko does not want to see her mother to be disappointed or to see her fail in her (superficially happy) marriage. They have a close relationship, but she feels bad that she cannot reveal the truth to her mother. She is being patient and following in her mother's footsteps just as she had been raised. During the interviews I asked respondents who were married with at least one child if they would divorce their husbands if they did not have children. Most of them said they would.

I am not happy in my married life. I would consider divorce if I still had no children. But men are not stupid, because the majority of my friends have told me of similar situations. When a couple has a child, the husband starts to change. If I divorced, it would make my children's lives more difficult, and they would be negatively judged by society and other people. Thus there is no way that I could choose to divorce my husband. I want to make my children independent so they will have more choices in their lives. Therefore I will live for my children. (Keiko, married with children and housewife).

Keiko, like many other women, stayed with her husband for the sake of the children, even though she would have preferred to divorce. Saki agreed with this, pointing out that she must sacrifice herself for her children. Some respondents regretted that they themselves were not financially independent yet would like their children to be so, thus placing a high degree of importance on their children's education, knowing from their own experience how important that was. The respondents' ages were between thirty and thirty-eight. Their parents had already focused on giving their daughters a higher education, which has been common since at least the mid 1960s. Before that, however, and especially before World War II, only men and wealthy women had access to education in Japan. When selecting a partner, it has become critical for women to balance financial and material considerations with feelings of love. Such choices tend to be made when women have few career options (Farrer, 1998). Women's desire to marry tends to be situated in the context of their culture and families (McNay, 2000). It has to be noted that Kiyomi has self-confidence and self-esteem because she has a full-time career and retains her independence. It would be easier for her to divorce her husband than it would be for most of the other respondents. There are more choices for her, but on the other hand, it is a hard change for many women, because even if it is easy to get a divorce from their husband, independence brings other difficulties. Even if a woman is financially independent, there is a stigma against divorce and the woman and their children face discrimination as a result. However, financial independence has been helping women to be freer and offer them more choices. In the next chapter, I will focus on economic factors for Japanese women.

Summary

These interviews have revealed that Japanese women are subject to much pressure and confusion. They have to sacrifice so much when they marry, and they often lose their independence, self-identity and financial and other opportunities. The family tied and patriarchal system limits individual women's decisions. Atoh

(2008: 26) suggests that future Japanese couples could free themselves from the traditional family roles, allowing for more equality, and they could choose to have their ideal number of children. Nevertheless, most single respondents expressed a desire to please their parents by marrying in the future. Those still single feel the pressure of aging and are in a race against time. Eri (single and has a job), for example, said that if she was not married by age forty then she would give up all hope of marrying and having a family, believing it would be difficult for her to have and raise children in her forties and beyond. Perhaps Japanese women are more worried about not having children more than not marrying. But if they do not intend to have children then what is the point of marrying? They would lose more than they would gain if they married. Chiyomi (single and has a job) echoed these sentiments, adding that she had no desire to be her husband's maid now that she was financially and emotionally comfortable, yet she did want to have a child. She said it was very difficult having to decide whether to meet someone and marry right away or to just wait and see a little longer, though she was worried about her time limit for having children.

After marrying, many women find the reality of married life to be quite different from whatever notions they may have had beforehand, as they must deal with family, financial and emotional issues that they had never expected. Women to choose not to seek a divorce from their husband, but for men, this offers security because most Japanese women will not choose divorce because of the family ties; they do not want to cause concern for their parents or children. Japanese women have to adjust to a new family unit with its customs and must obey their new parents-in-law after marrying. Japanese men, on the other hand, stand to gain everything when marrying, for they will have someone to take care of them both physically and emotionally. Once they have had a child, Japanese women have virtually no chance to leave their husbands. Furthermore, there is still very little help and support from the Japanese government for women who wish to do so, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Even though there are many single parents in the UK and other European countries, it is still not a socially acceptable option in Japan, so many women feel they have no choice but to marry and accept

their fate of being maid and de facto mother to their husbands if they ever hope to have children. In Japan, the divorce rate is low; although it is legal to seek a divorce, it is a difficult choice for women, since it will result in the same pattern of job loss (see Chapter 3). Japanese women find it difficult to make their own decisions, especially on important matters such as keeping a job, marriage and divorce, because of all it derives from the male-dominated society and patriarchal system. It is ironic that this system affects women's fertility decisions. As Holloway (2010) says, it is less important to focus merely on the declining fertility rate than on the social condition of women in Japan.

However, quantitative research shows that Japanese women desire to have partners who are highly-educated with a healthy income. Single people are looking for partners who share the same hobbies and similar values and who can provide more support like Kiyomi's husband. Women want to have the same opportunities as men. Women who marry men of a higher status, but do not receive the support they were hoping for, regret not marrying purely for love. On the other hand, those women who do marry for love often do not receive moral support, and regret not marrying a more affluent husband for material reasons. It seems no one can be happy, except for one of my respondents who is educated and is in a mutually-supportive marriage. This kind of relationship tends to be rare in Japan. Moreover, women can choose to divorce and try to regain total financial independence and confidence, but it is still rare to find circumstances similar to those reported by Kimiko. It is important even if they do not want to choose divorce, but in these cases there are choices such as 'insurance' and more confidence for women. The majority of women do want to marry but want to wait until they find a perfect partner. Since this is very difficult, this results in fewer marriages which in turn results in fewer children being born.

Finally, Chiyomi and Eri (both are single), felt it was very unfair for women to have such a short time to decide whether to marry or not. When women graduate from university around their mid-twenties, they start to enjoy a life independent from their parents, yet they soon face the pressure to marry from both their

parents and society. They actually have a very short time about five to ten years before aging out of their window of opportunity to enjoy living comfortably and independently, and to decide whether or not to marry and have children. Atoh (2008: 26) suggests that Japanese young people should become more independent from their parents earlier, in order to learn how to live independently and learn how to cohabit with a future partner, which might bring about more gender equality, a departure from the system of family ties, and the ability to make their own decision about who to marry. However, it is not so easy to break free from family ties. Atoh (2008) argues that being independent is important for young Japanese women and men. However, Japanese women have to work longer hours to compete with Japanese men, and even if they decide to remain single and devote their lives to their careers, they still face inequality in income and job promotion (see Chapter 3). Such inequality causes women to lose hope and any interest in staying with their jobs. The next chapter will focus on economic factors in the struggle of Japanese women for financial independence.

Chapter 5: Economic Resources

Introduction

Because of inequalities in gender roles and relationships, women had fewer opportunities to work outside the home in the past. Traditionally, women have often been treated as being less intelligent and less economically important than men, an exception when it comes to raising children, which has been regarded as a being activity natural for them (Lorber, 2010, Mickelson, 1989 and Smith 1987). Economic reasons notwithstanding, most feminists are not satisfied with the 'natural, God-given' traditional arrangement that the woman's sole responsibility is to take care of the children and the household (Lorber, 2010). The proportion of working mothers has been increasing together with the growth of the global economy (Somerville, 2000). Yet, there is still gender inequality within the household, which has been expanding over time (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2004). In addition, even in developed countries the earnings gap between women and men is substantial and lingering (Mumford and Smith, 2007). Even though dual-income families have become more common, women's wages are still often considered to be just an 'extra' supplement to the family's income, so women are still expected to do the housework in addition to their jobs outside the home (see Chapter 3). As this inequity increases over the course of the marriage, the wife becomes more dependent upon her husband, who thereby becomes more and more dominant (Kymlicka, 2002).

However, there are differences between Western countries and Japan. In Japan, even though there are a greater number of women who have pursued higher education they are staying at home to be housewives after marrying and having children 'dehousewifezation' has occurred very slowly (Ochiai, 2008). Since the 1970s and the collapse of the bubble economy of the late 1980s (see Chapter 1), the number of single-only households doubled, and the fertility rate and the number of housewives have decreased (Reibeck and Takenaka, 2006; Suzuki, 2008; Yamada, 2008). In Japan, childcare and homemaking are two large

determinants of a woman's decision as to whether or not to remain in the work force (Yu, 2010). Japan is also one of the most expensive countries in the world in which to live, particularly considering housing and education costs (see Chapter 1). In this chapter, I will consider the impact of women's fertility decisions on them, and discuss financial responsibilities with the family.

Gender Discrimination in the Work Force

Job Opportunities

Britain's Equal Pay Act, passed in 1970, was a step toward equality, setting into law comparable pay in comparable jobs between men and women (Daly et. al., 2006: 167). Similar ideas began to appear in 1972 in France, but did not become part of law until 1983, with carefully defined criteria determining how 'work of equal value' could be determined between men and women. Equal pay legislation came to Japan during the postwar American occupation, but this has had little effect on the wage gap between the genders. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was introduced in 1985, prohibiting gender discrimination at any stage of employment, from recruiting to promotions to dismissal (Daly, et. al., 2006). Yet even after the passing of this Act, hoped for equality was still not achieved (Smith, 1987; Molony, 1995). In most cases men have more financial power and security than women do, thus making it more likely for women to be treated as sexual objects, domestic servants and childcare providers (Kymlicka, 2002). There is substantial inequality between women and men in terms of wage gaps, education, and experience and promotion patterns (Daly, et. al., 2006)

The majority of women in Japan work on either a temporary or part-time basis and thus do not normally receive support from their companies (see Chapter 1). They also face many other inequalities like low wages and lack of holiday pay, sick pay and retirement benefits (see Chapter 6). Such women therefore tend to accrue a smaller retirement fund from their outside jobs than might otherwise be

the case (see Chapter 3). It is thus evident that when a woman decides to start a family, this creates more disadvantages for her; the result is that women tend to opt for having fewer children, postponing having children, or not having any children at all. After having children most Japanese women return to the labour force on a part-time basis (see also Chapter 1 and 6).

There are differences between women and men in the way they are hired, trained and promoted (see below and Chapter 3). Some countries even require women to provide a sterilisation certificate, submit to a pregnancy test, or show proof of their marital status (Tzannatos, 1998). In Japan, most employers require potential employees to disclose their age and provide a face photo. It is very popular to use professional photographers to take and edit photos for use in one's C.V. Many participants had this experience when they were looking for a job. Akiko said, *'I remembered I went to down town Tokyo and professional photographer took my photo for my C.V., but not my brother's'* (single, employed full-time). I asked her how she decided to use a professional photographer for her C.V. Akiko said *'A beautiful face has a better chance of getting a job, but when companies see men's C.V., they look more at skills and knowledge, but not for women, so my brother did not need (a photo)'*.

There is a very prevalent age bias in hiring by companies, which mainly recruit 20- to 25-year-olds who have recently graduated or are about to graduate from a training school, collage or a university. One respondent, Kimiko (married with a child, housewife) said, *'my female friend is working at a large international cosmetic company. She has been promoted, and she also has a child and is happy'*. Kimiko's friend is educated and working for a larger company, and because she is protected by the labour union, she has a greater opportunity to enjoy gender equality, for larger companies are more acutely aware and concerned about their reputation in Japan and globally. But it is important to mention that Kimiko's friend is working in the cosmetic industry, and not in the computer or automobile industries which are significantly larger. Deeply-rooted gender discrimination in Japanese culture still persists, resulting in a deficit of women in the economic

sector (Ferber, and Nelson, 2003).

Smith (1987) described one job traditionally filled by women only, ‘bus girls,’ tour guides who were expected to wear feminine uniforms and hats, use very polite language, and sing songs to entertain sightseeing tourists. Another example is the ‘elevator girls’ hired by very upmarket department stores which was considered an ideal job for women in the 80s and 90s in Japan, and became the subject of a TV drama in 1992. These are beautiful young Japanese women who guide customers on ornate elevators to their desired floor and use very polite language. These particular women’s jobs have been decreasing since the busting of the bubble economy (see Chapter 1) but though they still exist today in smaller numbers. One of my respondents, Kumiko, was a bus girl when she was single:

It was fun for a while to travel around Japan, only I had to be a hostess and make the men happy. I first started when I was 19 years old and was quite popular through my mid-twenties, but I could no longer do it by the time I reached my late twenties. Even if I were still single, I would not be able to do it anymore because I am too old and not attractive enough. I’m sure that if I hadn’t quit after a certain point, I would have lost my job not long afterward. (Kumiko, married with children and housewife).

Figure 21: Bus Girl



Figure 22: Elevator Girl



Sources: Right:

http://image.search.biglobe.ne.jp/search?q=%E3%82%A8%E3%83%AC%E3%83%99%E3%83%BC%E3%82%BF%E3%83%BC%E3%82%AC%E3%83%BC%E3%83%AB&sm=vtp_hvy#

Left: http://hisakobaab.exblog.jp/iv/detail/index.asp?s=9099724&i=200910/13/28/a0050728_2246327.jpg

Kumiko is 36 years old now. The majority of Japanese companies prefer to keep only young women in their jobs (see Chapter 3). There is still much gender and age discrimination in Japan because culturally the Japanese still believe there are things men and women need to do by a certain age, such as marrying and having

children (Nakata, 2008). Once past the age considered appropriate for marriage, or past the ‘young, beautiful’ age, Japanese women like Kumiko lose these jobs. She could not keep the job even if she wanted to due to her age. It is not just certain jobs traditionally held by women; even when working in office jobs and for larger companies, women are forced to leave their jobs or, it is made difficult for them to keep a job (see Chapter 3). Women have to be young and beautiful to keep a job, and worry about losing their jobs once they are past their youth. The length of time that Japanese women remain part of the labour force is short, which means women are more losing a chance to earn income.

Rebick and Takenaka (2006) also point out different limitation on job opportunities for Japanese women. According to a 2000 survey by the Japan Association for the Advancement of Working Women, women at the time comprised only 4 % of all management track (*sogo shoku*) positions, and in large companies this number was only 2 % (Rebick and Takenaka, 2006: 9, also see Molony 1995). *Sogo shoku* positions require longer work hours plus a willingness to relocate, even overseas if necessary (see Chapter 3). This makes it difficult if not impossible for Japanese women to either keep such jobs or return to them after marrying or having a child (Rebick and Takenaka, 2006: 9; Molony, 1995). Japanese women working in *Sogo-shoku* positions alongside men still face discrimination and negative reception from society because those women are rare and do not conform to “appropriate” Japanese women’s behaviour (see Chapter 1 and 3).

Against Gender Appropriate Behaviour

Gottfried (2000) conducted research which studied how the male-breadwinner gender contract compromised women’s positions and how standardized employment contracts revolved around the needs, interests and authority of men and corporations in Germany, Japan, Sweden, and the United States. He found that Germany and Japan follow a male-breadwinner/female care model, compared

to the dual-breadwinner/female care model in the U.S. and dual-breadwinner/social care model in Sweden. In Sweden there is greater equality, compared to the U.S. in which women have greater responsibilities in both areas (Gottfried, 2000).

In Japan, gender roles are very specifically defined (see Chapter 1 and 3). Molony (1995: 269) uses the term ‘*Oyaji Giyaru*’²² in Japanese, which translates as ‘*Oyaji Girl*’. *Oyaji* means ‘old men’ and *Giyaru* is a woman aged younger than 30’s. Molony (1995: 270) explains that, although young women seem to be welcomed into a male-dominated work environment, they find they must become more like men in order to adapt, such as drinking energy drinks on the platform at train station before work, playing golf on days off, and so on. This concept does not challenge the idea of men’s behaviour and seems to suggest that masculine behaviour is not only restricted to males. She also notes that even if Japanese women are working in the same manner as men, they still cannot do everything that men do, such as going out after work to drink with co-workers (and spend time and money) because most Japanese working women are expected to rush home after work to attend to housework, husbands, and children (Molony, 1995).

I am married and my job is not sogo shoku; I am more of a helper for male staff, so I do not think many people talk about me so negatively. Some women are single and working as sogo shoku and at a higher level than some male co-workers. One woman, who occasionally goes on business trips to the countryside of Japan with male co-workers of a lower position, told me that many people talk about her negatively because she is successful at work, especially men. They always say, ‘That’s why she is still single.’ I feel so bad that many male co-workers are jealous of her success. Even when she goes on a business trip, male workers automatically judge her co-worker, a male of lower position, as being senior and speak to him and ask his decision instead of hers. (Kazumi, married without a child and has a job)

Japanese men automatically think that men’s positions are higher than that of women. This is why even though Kazumi’s colleague works in a *Sogo shoku* position, people still tend to speak to her male colleagues and not to her when she

²² Fujiwara Sachiko created the manga character ‘*Oyaji Giyaru*’ in 1989, which became well known just after ‘*Oyaji Giyaru*’ was chosen as one of the trendiest expressions in 1991.

travels on business. Although women's employment has been increasing, and there have been more opportunities for women to obtain higher professional and management positions in the hierarchy than before, gender inequality still very much persists in the workplace in most countries (see Chapter 3). 'Nenko's joretsu' is a system where workers are promoted automatically based on how long they have worked, but if women take a break from their careers, they lose their place in the system (see Chapter 2). If women do stay in the labour force and remain single for a longer period of time, they are sometimes referred to as "otsubone".

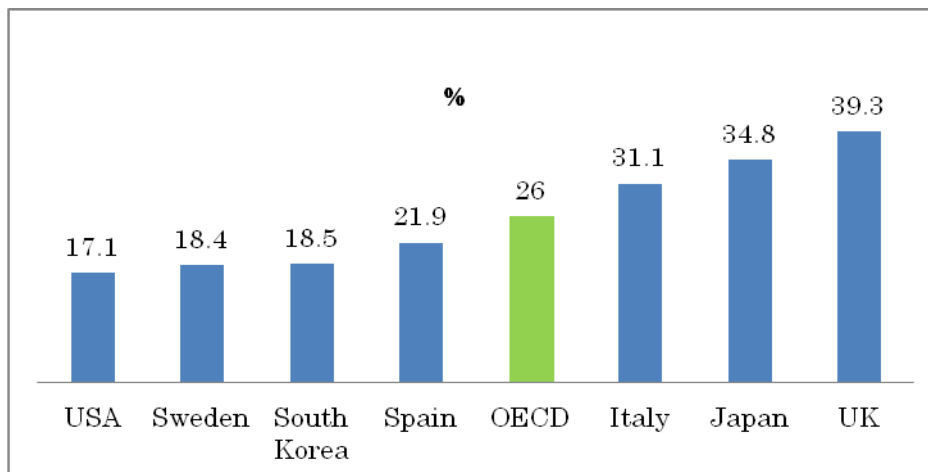
My senior colleague, who is single, is secretly called "Otsubone". Anytime anybody is talking about her, she is always referred to as "Otsubone", which means that she is abnormal to be single for her age and working still full-time, she is strange and different. She is a successful career-minded woman, but her image is always negative, which is too bad. Many younger junior female colleagues are afraid to be like her. If I were a single woman, I would definitely be called "Otsubone", but I am married, so maybe not now. (Kayoko, Married without a child, employed full-time).

Historically, during the Edo era (1603-1868), this term referred to women of a higher rank who organized the women serving the emperor or shogun. In 1989, a famous drama series aired throughout Japan which featured an *otubone* as a main character, and so this terminology entered the popular culture and people became familiar with using and hearing this word. Today, the term *otubone* is used (somewhat pejoratively) to refer to a woman who has been in a position of power in a workplace and who is also single. When men gain a higher position, they feel pride in their accomplishments; however, Japanese women in higher positions gain a negative image, and Japanese workplaces and Japanese men make young women fear success. Women are teased and given nicknames such as 'oyaji garu' and 'otsubone' by men. Because of men's jealousy over women pursuing their careers, staying at work is difficult not only physically but mentally and emotionally. Societies tend to negatively view and judge women who work longer hours and work full time.

Inequality Between Full- and Part-Time Workers

The gender pay gap has been narrowing for full-time workers, but not for part-time workers (Gregory and Connolly, 2008). An average of 40 % of British women work part-time, because the majority of care work is still done by women (Gregory and Connolly, 2008). Some have suggested that the gender earnings gap in Britain could be virtually eliminated if women working part-time or full-time were able to receive the same dividends to their characteristics as their male counterparts (Mumford and Chzhen, 2011:837). In Britain, the majority of men who work part-time are at the younger and older ends of the age spectrum, with very few workers in their prime. In contrast, the ages of women who work part-time are more evenly distributed across the age range (Mumford and Chzhen, 2011). There is a particularly high number of women working part-time between the ages of 35-44, the peak years for childcare, and also for women working in higher-level jobs, a critical time when they are building their careers and aiming for the top jobs (Gregory and Connolly, 2008: 3). Japan is very similar to the U.K. in this regard. Men who work part-time are mostly students and retired workers, whereas female part-time workers are women who are raising children and/or whose children are starting to attend school (see Chapter 1). In Britain and Japan more women are working as a part-time than other in developed countries.

Figure 23: Part-time Employment as a Proportion of Total Employment for Women in 2011.



Source: OECD Full-time and Part-time employment in 2011
http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook-2011-2012/part-time-employment_factbook-2011-60-en

Italy, Japan, and the U.K. have a higher proportion of female part-time workers than the OECD average. Many women in the U.K. are deciding to work on a part-time basis after having a child, which usually means they are taking on less-skilled work and are downgrading their jobs. It is difficult to balance both domestic duties with paid work outside the home, especially after having the first child (Gregory and Connolly, 2008). Gregory and Connolly (2008) argue that the underutilisation of the human capital of these women directly conflicts with the nation's stated goal of increasing educational participation and strengthening skills in the workplace. This is very similar to what is happening in Japan: more women than ever before are highly educated, yet they are often compelled to downgrade to lower-skilled, part-time jobs. In Japan part-time work is not considered to be indicative of the ideal of professional work, even though manual jobs are more common (Molony, 1995). Now compare South Korea to Sweden, where women have the chance to become more independent. South Korean women follow a pattern similar to Japanese women's 'M- curve' pattern of life (see Chapter 1); however, when South Korean women return to the labour force after they are married and have children, more of them work full-time (Ochiai, et al., 2008). Fewer Japanese women are working full-time because their country's tax system, which is determined by the men in a male-dominated society, might affect their decisions. This tax system is supposed to be beneficial for a family, assuming that women should take care of family while men work outside, and favours financial support for married couples (see Chapter 6).

Another factor affecting women's fertility decisions might be the decline in the economy. The economic decline has further affected many Japanese women, and the rift between full-time and part-time workers has been ever-widening (Census, 2010). One government study shows that the top reason that employers use part-time workers is because they are cheaper than full-time workers (MHLW, 2010). Part-time labour in Japan is defined as less than 35 hours a week (MHLW, 2010), compared to the OECD definition of part-time labour which is 30 hours. In Europe, even a little less than 35 hours a week would be considered full-time. Technically, even if Japanese women are working part-time hours, it is similar to

European women's and men's full-time hours. Women who work only part time lack job security, make less money, and do not receive benefits such as bonuses and face the risk of suddenly losing their jobs (see Chapter 6). Full-time workers receive, on average, an annual bonus which is equal to from three to six months' wages in Japan. Civil servants receive an equivalent of four months' wages.

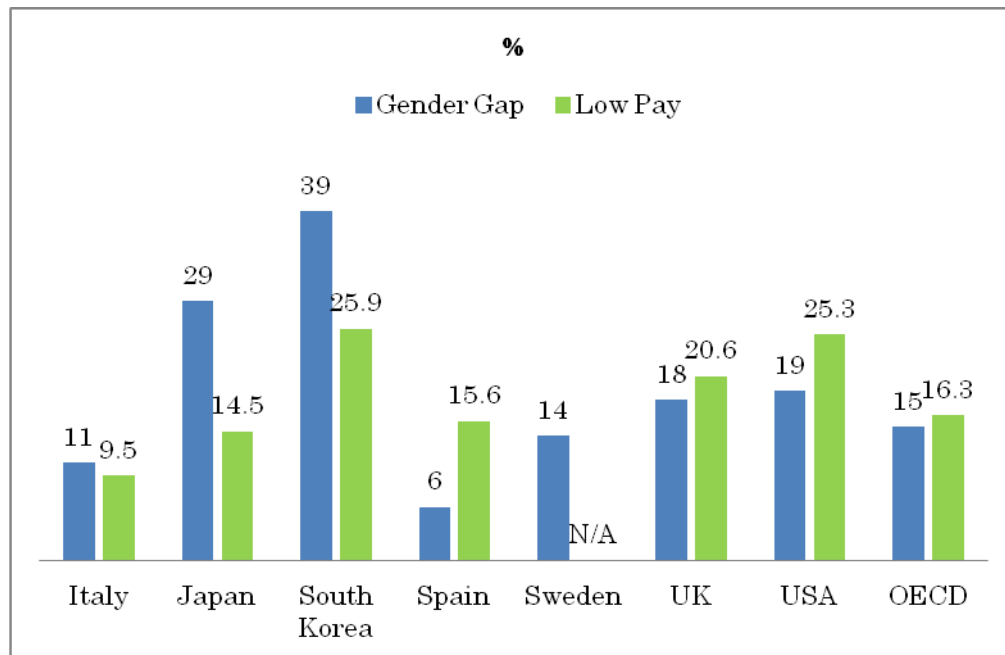
As it is, some women do keep their full-time jobs even after marrying or giving birth, but that kind of situation is fairly rare (Kiyomi is the only example of that in this study). I found that many respondents felt guilty they were being pushed out from their workplaces.

I felt so terrible to ask for any days off because my co-workers had to work that much harder when I was taking days off. I felt guilty and worried about what other co-workers thought about me after I married, especially because I had gotten pregnant before marrying. I was ill and had to take days off. I did not want to give up my work. I particularly didn't want to lose my bonus, which was very good, but there was no way I would keep my job (Keiko, married with children, housewife).

I asked my participants about their and their husbands' bonuses. All of those who were working full-time received bonuses which were an average of 5 months' worth of wages a year. My participants' husbands' average bonuses were 6 months' worth of wages a year, which was the highest amount possible. Bonuses are usually divided into two annual payments, once in the summer and once in winter. According to research conducted by Japan Economic Newspaper (2011), the average winter bonus was ¥ 719,401 (£ 5,620) in 2010²³. Japan has less of an income gap compared to the United States and other developed countries (Pickett, 2005: 670); however, Japan also has a higher gap between men and women's income when compared to these developed countries.

²³ The research surveyed 102 companies and mean age was 39.6.

Figure 24: The Gender Wage Gap²⁴ and Incidence of Low Pay²⁵



Source: OECD in 2012; Employment Policies and Data: Distribution Gross Earning of Full-time Employees and Gender Wage Gap. <http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm>

As can see in Figure 24, Japan and South Korea have wider gender wage gaps between women and men, and between full-time women and men. Italy and Spain, also countries with long-term low fertility issues, have smaller gender wage gaps. Those two countries are below the OECD average, and below Sweden, a country with a much greater degree of gender equality; even among other developed countries, such as the U.K., U.S.A. and South Korea, there is a significant gender gap. South Korea has the highest income gaps between full-time women and men; however, South Korean women are working full-time more than Japanese women (Ochiai, 2008). The graph would seem to indicate that South Korean Women have more financial independence than Japanese women, but this is not so easy to determine because the gender gap is wider in Japan, which means more women are working in low wage conditions. Most workplaces in Japan have minimum and maximum wages, which cause fewer income gaps when looking at averages of earned income (see Frank, 2005; Chia, 2008). Some countries, such as Italy and Spain, where women work full-time or can keep a full-time job, see more equal

²⁴ The gender wage gap is unadjusted and is calculated as the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men.

²⁵ The incidence of low pay refers to the share of workers earning less than two-thirds of median earnings.

pay between women and men; however, Japan and South Korea indicate that women are working in lower responsibility jobs, and women have less access to reach higher positions occupied by men, even if they work full-time. As a result, they lose interest in working. If Japanese women had the same opportunities as men to keep a full-time job, they would have more chances to be promoted to higher positions, because staying in one place longer usually automatically leads to promotion via '*neiko-jorethsu*' (Chapter 2) and '*the escalator system*' (see Chapter 3). Women have less time to participate in the labour force, and this could be one of key points for Japan's low fertility crisis. However many quantitative researchers have found that one of the top reasons for low fertility is high education expenses for children, a problem not only in Japan but also for other East Asian countries, especially South Korea (see Chapter 1).

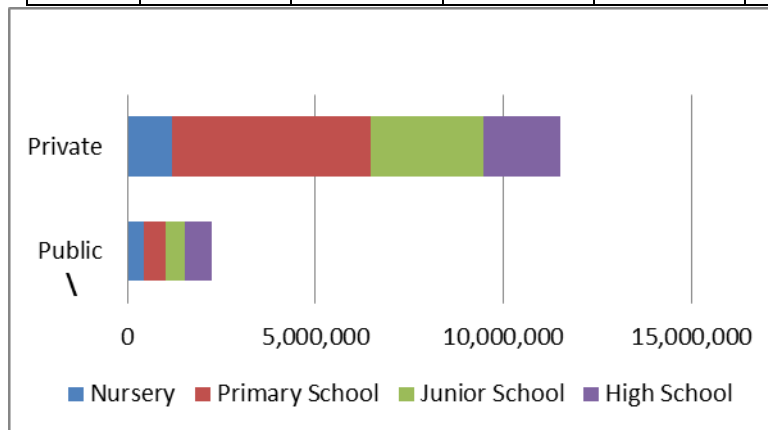
Education Expenses

In Japan education expenses are very high, public school is cheaper when compared with private schools, with only a few expenses such as books, lunches and uniforms, Japanese parents spend considerable money on expensive extra private studies outside of normal school hours. According to the 2010 census, Japanese people are worried about their children's educational expenses. In Sweden, for example, both entrance fees and tuition are free from elementary school through university, and students can access loans for their living expenses from the government (Segawa, 2000). Japanese parents feel responsibility for their children's living expenses, and most parents help with their children's expenses even when they go to higher education, whether college or universities. One government study shows that a mean parental contribution to a college or university of expenses when the child lives with the parents was ¥ 1,085,600 (£ 8481) for a public university and ¥ 1,692,700 (£ 13,224) for a private university, per year (Ministry of Education of Japan, 2012). The cost for children who did not live with their family was ¥ 1,709,800 (£ 13,358) for a public university, while a private university was ¥ 2,363,200 (£ 18,463). Japanese parents seem to bear a

heavy burden of financial responsibility for their children. Even before children enter the higher education system, there are 15 years of education expenses from nursery to high school, whether they receive a public school or private school education, and many students mix the two: public education until joining a private high school, going on to private after-school classes, and so on.

Table 13: The Average Expenses of Education Fee Private and Public School, from Nursery till High School in Japan

	Nursery (3 years)	Primary School (6 years)	Junior School (3 years)	High School (3years)	Total
Private	¥ 1,170,000 (£ 9,141)	¥ 5,290,000 (£ 41,328)	¥ 3,000,000 (£ 23,438)	¥ 2,040,000 (£ 15,938)	¥ 11,500,000 (£ 89,845)
Public	¥ 440,000 (£ 3,438)	¥ 580,000 (£ 4,531)	¥ 500,000 (£ 3,906)	¥ 710,000 (£ 5,547)	¥ 2,230,000 (£ 17,422)

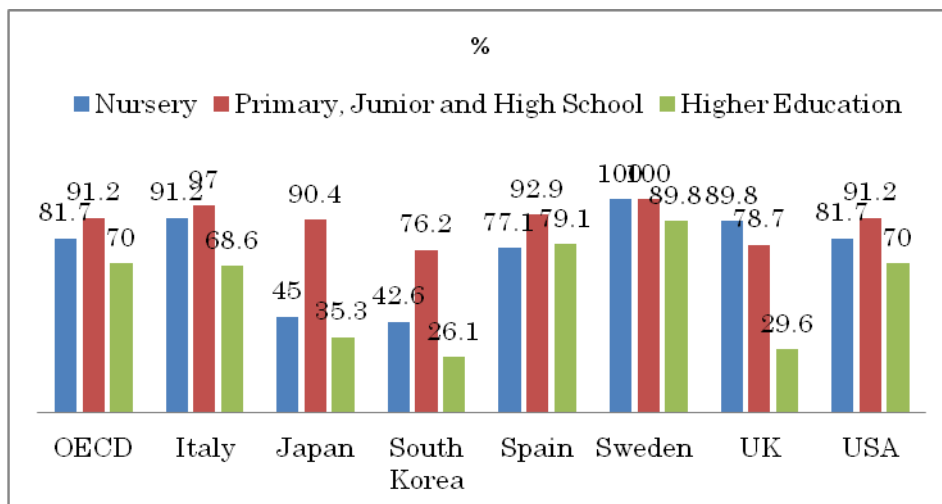


Source: Ministry of Education Culture, Sport, Science and Technology-Japan in 2012
<http://www.mext.go.jp/result.html?q=%E5%AD%A6%E8%B2%BB>

The same study shows that the mean Japanese income in 2012 was approximately ¥ 5,500,000 (£42,969) per year. One can see just how difficult it is to save such a huge amount for education expenses per child. Usher and Medow (2010) studied affordability and accessibility of higher education in 15 countries: Australia, Canada, England and Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States. They found that the U.S. and Japan were two of the most expensive countries in the world for higher education. Norway, Denmark, France, Sweden and Germany were more affordable in comparison, and Japan was the most expensive among

developed countries (Usher and Medow, 2010). As well as having the highest education expenses in the world, Japan has demanding academic standards, yet it provides the least support for individual families and students. Usher and Medow (2010) explain that in order to obtain a higher education, there are five main costs: education costs, living costs, grants, loans and tax expenditures. There is tremendous pressure, particularly financially related, that Japanese parents face when raising children. This kind of pressure could be reduced if Japanese society began to regard raising children as part of its societal responsibility, which would help create a healthier balance for parents (Obuchi and Okazawa, 2010; 129).

Figure 25: Relative Proportion of Public School Expenditure as a Percentage by Level of Education



Source: OECD Directorate for Education and Skills; Financial and Human Resources Invested in Education in 2012
<http://www.oecd.org/edu/educationataglance2012oecdindicators-chapterbfinancialandhumanresourcesinvestedineducation-indicators.htm>

The countries suffering from excessively low fertility Japan and South Korea invest less in education, especially nursery and higher education. It could be more difficult to access higher education in Japan, South Korea and the UK financially. Usher and Medow (2010) note that the education and living expenses of Japan are very high compared to western countries. Japan is unique in that there are no grants or loan systems in place to offer support to students. Lack of a system places more financial pressure on parents who are trying to provide a higher

education for their children. According to Usher and Medow's research, most European students have access to grants which reduces their costs. Denmark and the U.S. have the most generous grant systems, followed by Sweden, the Netherlands, and Finland. Education fees are very high in the U.S., but there are many grants and loans available. When students graduate and reach a certain wage level, they must begin returning any money they borrowed (Usher and Medow, 2010). Universities in the U.K. have started to charge students fees, adopting a system of loans similar to that in the U.S. Loans are available in Japan only on a commercial basis. Borrowers in Japan must be over 20 years old, which means most parents are responsible for loans. Japan has the highest cost of education and the least amount of government support. This makes it very financially difficult to have children for Japanese people. As parents are unwilling to compromise on their children's education, the common choice for them is to have fewer children (Atoh, 2008). A good education is seem to equal a good job; because of the intense competition in Japan, skimping on one's education is simply not an option for most parents (Hunter, 1993). Korea has a similar tendency toward extreme academic competition, with 'extreme education fever' and fierce competition to entrance into colleges and universities during the economic boom of the 1980s, when teachers and scholars were revered according to Confucian traditions (Suzuki, 2008:33).

During the interviews I asked the participants the following question: If finances were not an issue, how many children would you like to have? This is important to know, because many studies have shown that women do want to have more children, yet this has not been happening (see Chapter 1). Finances have been one of the most-mentioned reasons in regard to this issue (Suzuki, 2008). Several respondents had the same response: '*It is impossible not to think of finances*'. These women did not know how to address this hypothetical question because of their very real and all-consuming household financial responsibilities (Paul, 2011). Most respondents, including Kumiko (Married with children and is a housewife), had difficulty responding to the question, yet they did mention financial concerns. Since many respondents answered similarly, I decided to try a

different approach and used the following vignette with them: Your good friend wants to have a second child, but she and her husband are worried about their finances. They can cover the expenses of one child fairly well, but things would be harder if another child came along. What worries her the most, and what advice do you give her? This use of vignettes turned out to be successful, revealing sensitive, personal and powerful opinions regarding fertility decisions by helping to identify the common theme of education expenses. Responding typically, Kimiko (Married with a child, housewife) talked about how expensive it can be to raise a child, how mothers want to give their children the best of everything, and how financially risky it can be to have a second child.

I would say their biggest concern would be educational expenses and whether they would be able to financially provide for their children or not. If I were her I would have difficulty deciding if I should have one more. I would want to provide my children with the best education, which is very expensive. But at the same time I could never cut corners; I want my children to have a good education so they can have a better future.
(Kimiko, Married with a child, housewife)

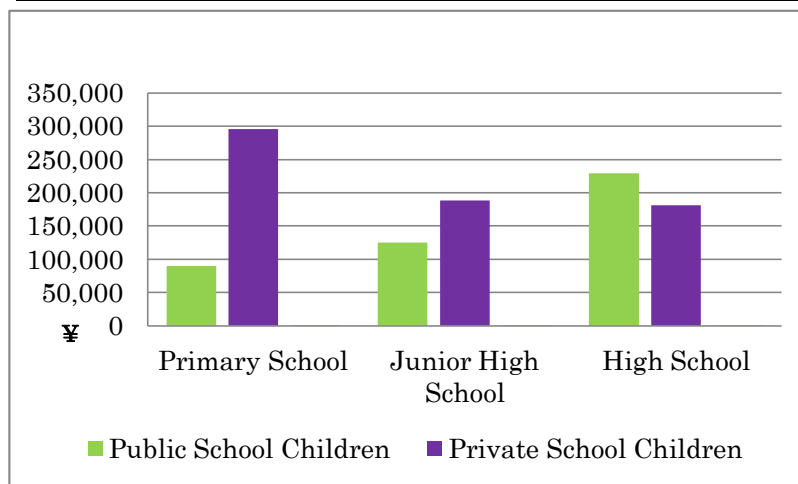
Although my respondents worried about educational expenses they considered them a vital investment in their children's future. There are differences between before and now; historically, a child was an investment for the parent's future to take care of them and provide supporting labour, but parents are investing for children now, not for themselves in the future. In countries with similar low fertility issues, such as Japan and Italy, there are strong family ties between parents and children, and Italian women have fewer children because Italian society values 'quality' over quantity (Tabuchi, 2008: 73).

Most parents hope their children will develop special skills. The Japanese Ministry of Education (2008) found that parents' ideal jobs for their children were mainly those of doctors, lawyers and teachers. For instance, the cost of education for becoming a doctor in Japan means private medical school fees in excess of ¥ 30,000,000 (£ 234,375) and public school fees of ¥ 3,500,000 (£ 27,344) (Ministry of Education Culture, Sport, Science and Technology Japan, 2012). As

parents' desires and hopes increase, so do education expenses. But even if education were free in Japan, Japanese parents would still spend money for private supplementary schools for a future academic career.

Table 14: Annual Cost of Supplemental Education among Japanese Children Per Year

	Primary School	Junior School	High School	Total
Public	¥90,000 (£ 703)	¥125,000 (£ 977)	¥229,000 (£ 1789)	¥444,000 (£ 3,469)
Private	¥296,000 (£ 2,313)	¥188,000 (£ 1,469)	¥181,000 (£ 1,414)	¥665,000 (£ 5,196)



Source: Ministry of Education Culture, Sport, Science and Technology-Japan in 2012
<http://www.mext.go.jp/result.html?q=%E5%AD%A6%E8%B2%BB>

Table 14 is only the cost of '*juku*' (private educational institutions) after school to help children prepare for their future academic careers (Hirano, 2001). Both public and private school children's parents spend a large amount of money on their children's '*juku*'. Until high school, private school children's parents spend more money on their children's '*juku*' than public school children's parents, but after high school, public school children's parents spend more. This could be because attending better universities in Japan means a better career and better life, so parents want to ensure that their children have the best chance to compete for the most competitive exam²⁶ (see also Suzuki, 2008 and Hara, 2008).

²⁶ Universities and colleges set a date for entrance examinations once a year. If prospective students fail, they must wait to take the exam the following year. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports,

This ‘*juku*’ system has been expanding in Japan. ‘*Juku*’ can be expensive. In my own personal experience, when I was a child most of my classmates attended different kinds of such establishments. I myself attended ‘*juku*’, learned Maths and English, took supplementary English speaking lessons, and took swimming, piano, Kimono lessons (which is not part of ‘*Juku*’; it is part of ‘*Naraigoto*’, which mean lessons), so Table 14 does not include the fees for those activities. Japanese parents are not only giving the children the opportunity to learn through studying, they are also exposing them to some skills relevant to a job or hobbies in the children’s future. As Japanese people feel strongly that children who do not attend such private courses will fall behind the rest, the result is quite a financial burden on parents.

When I was a child I attended many supplementary lessons. Now I can see how expensive they were for my parents. At the time I thought my mother was very tight with money, but I know now it was very hard for her to keep sending me and my brother to such lessons after school. My mother used to work both outside and in the home; she not only did housework but also mended clothes to earn extra money at home. I have a comfortable life now because I am still single. I do not think I will be like my mother when I marry or have a child. I do not want have to sacrifice myself. If I have to change my life style, I really don't have any desire to marry anyone sometimes. I think that it takes patience to be a mother, and that marriage is a sacrifice—but only for women. (Ayako, single and has a job)

Ayako felt her mother was tight with money and had negative feelings toward her, adding ‘*At the time, I thought my father was sweeter because he secretly gave me some pocket money, but now I know it was easy for him to do because he did not manage the household finances. He did not think about it so much, he just spoiled me*’. Ayako’s memories of her mother were always of a woman who was very careful with spending money. Since her mother had dealt with all the financial matters, she had also had to deal with much worry and stress. Ayako understands and now has some negative feelings toward her father, who she feels did not support her mother enough. Other participants who are married have to be careful spending money now, and experience stress like Ayako’s mother when she was a

Science and Technology-Japan (2010), 16.4 % of all current university students took more than one year to enter Universities.

child.

I have a small child now, and so it is very hard for me to work outside the home. I am very worried about education expenses. I cannot afford to buy anything for myself because I feel it is wasting money. I feel so sad that I have to regard buying something for myself as a waste of money, but I do have to worry about my children's education expenses. If I didn't then no one would, because my husband never does. Lately he has taken a defiant attitude, and he told me that he cannot do anything and that his salary will not change. But if he helped out more at home, I could work outside the home and earn extra money - but he does not. Only I work at home, and I am mentally and physically tired. How then can I pay for my children's education expenses? Those are the highest expenses I have to worry about. I can save on food, but not on education. (Kumiko, married with children and housewife)

This was a typical pattern of my participants who cannot work or could not keep a job: women want to work for mental and financial reasons, but husbands are not supportive (see Chapter 3, 4 and 6). I felt that some of these women were awaiting some 'permission' from husbands to make decision, a holdover from the male-dominated patriarchal structure which demands that women still have to obey and listen to what their husbands say. Before marriage, Kumiko had to ask her father's permission, but now she has to ask her husband before making her final decision. Even though Kumiko feels it is necessary to work for her family, she has to ask for her husband's permission. I felt so bad listening to her story: she cannot work and she feels that buying something for herself is wasteful. It is a vicious financial circle of capitalism, patriarchy and job segregation by sex (see Chapter 3) which the patriarchal structure creates, pushing women out of paid work and making them responsible for domestic work. Pahl (1995: 363) argues that economists fail to take into account that married women treat money that they have earned for themselves differently from money earned by their husbands to be spent on necessities. It could be reduce women's worries and stress, if husbands would help women to make financial decisions. In Kiyomi's case, the ability to go out and work has a positive effect for her mentally, and a positive financial effect for her family. But most Japanese men do not share responsibilities of domestic work (see Chapter 3 and 6) and financial responsibilities of the household. Nursery care is expensive in Japan, so people are faced with the choice of working

outside the home in order to afford such an exorbitant cost, or else stay at home to take care of the children in order to save money (see Table 13). Even women who do not want to follow such a patriarchal structure are choosing to stay at home for financial reasons.

During the interviews I also asked my respondents the following question: If you were Prime Minister, what policies would you introduce that would allow women to have their ideal number of children? Many of them talked about changing the nursery care system (see Chapter 6) and easing the financial stress it causes. *‘My husband is hopeless when I ask him to share childcare duties, but the government support is hopeless to make us suffer more for financially raising a child’* (Keiko, married with children, housewife). The UK has this same problem as well, where most women must work outside the home and leave their children in a nursery, which is rather expensive (Cox, 2006). It can also be difficult to find a nursery that is compatible with one’s work schedule if the person has to work many long hours. One study found that only 2 % of children under three years old in the UK had access to subsidized nurseries, and that less than 1 % of women were receiving subsidies; in comparison, the rate in France was 20 % and in Denmark was 85 % (Cox, 2006). Everything about raising a child is very expensive in many developed countries, and there are fewer opportunities for women to work because of a lack of well-developed support systems. Compared with other East Asian countries, Japan has a lack of child care facilities and opportunities that can be found in places such as Taiwan and South Korea (Ochiai, et. al., 2008: 45-64). Taiwanese women tend to be more educated, and fewer women quit their jobs to become housewives and take care of children, because Taiwanese women and men share more responsibilities of child care together, and their parents and relatives are more involved in taking care of children. South Korean women share a similar pattern, but there is less sharing of child care responsibilities with their husbands, but their parents, like Taiwanese grandparents, help take care of the children (Ochiai, et. al., 2008). Married Japanese couples are now living separately from their parents and live, causing more pressure for Japanese women for child raising (see Chapter 4). Another top concern of financial issues after

marriage is housing.

Housing Expenses

It is very difficult for a Japanese person to afford rent without financial support from their employers (Nakata, 1998). Whether people decide to rent or purchase a home, most companies support their workers, except for part-time or temporary workers. According to the Institute of Labour Administration in 2011, 50 % of employees are receiving housing support (money) from their employers; other companies provide for a place to live such as house or flat. Some companies own apartment buildings ‘*shataku*’ which means ‘company’s house’; it is more like a university dormitory if they like employees can live there for a very reasonable price.

I lived in Shataku when I was single but it was good for me financially. I think I paid ¥20,000(£156) per month for all included bills. I saved a lot back then, but now I and my husband chose to get financial support from his company, not mine, because he wanted to be a man to be the main house-holder, ‘Setai-nushi’ and his company gave us better financial support for housing. I am sure received more support because he has worked for a longer period than me. He is already asking me to leave my job (Kazuko, married without child employed full-time).

Figure 26: Shataku



Source:

http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://codan.boy.jp/danchi/saitama/NTT_musashifujisawa/NTT_musashifujisawa026.jpg&imgrefurl=http://codan.boy.jp/danchi/saitama/NTT_musashifujisawa/index.html&h=533&w=800&sz=119&tbnid=2o8G3-uFh36xqM:&tbnh=87&tbnw=131&prev=/search%3Fq%3D%25E7%25A4%25BE%25E5%25AE%2585%25E3%2581%25AE%25E5%2586%2599%25E7%259C%259F%26tbm%3Disch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=%E7%A4%BE%E5%AE%85%E3%81%AE%E5%86%99%E7%9C%9F&u sg= OuyHtld5FXRb4vqTcQdEHk-NWYM=&docid=MWa-vzcnKYWQeM&sa=X&ei=8cYAUq6vAcaN0w WGuIGA Aw&ved=0CEMQ9QEwBw&dur=585

When Japanese couples who both work full-time marry, they have to choose whether the wife or husband will be the main house-holder '*setai-nushi*,' and register with the local council. The husband or wife then also have to register with the company who will be the '*setai-nishi*' to receive financial support for rent, and if they have a child, for child support also (see Chapter 6). In Kazuko's case, it was more financially beneficial to choose her husband's company's support rather than hers, because he might be able to have higher housing support from his company when he is promoted. There is no mandated standard level of support; companies themselves decide how by much to support their employees. According to a study conducted by the Asahi Shinbun (2008), employers on average provided ¥ 90,000 (£ 703) per month to their single employees and ¥ 120,000 (£ 938) per month to married couples for rental support, as well as ¥ 25,000 (£195) a month to those who owned their own dwelling. Another study shows that the average monthly supporting fees for renting are ¥ 30,114 (£ 235) and for house payments are ¥ 23,504 (£ 184) (Institute of Labour Administration, 2010). There is some disparity between the Asahi Shinbun in 2010 study and the one conducted by the Institute of Labour Administration, but the Institute of Labour Administration notes that employees are financially responsible for making up the differences in gaps of rent support, and larger companies support their employees more generously. Asahi Shinbun's study was focused primarily on large companies, where as the Institute of Labour Administration was a larger scale and more inclusive study.

I asked my respondents about housing support. It was a sensitive question, because it might reveal what kind of companies their husbands are working for, which is detailed private information. However, they did share the approximate amounts of support they were receiving, allowing me to derive an average amount of housing support received. The average amount of monthly housing support my married respondents had received was approximately ¥ 90,000 (£ 703), and the average amount the single respondents had received was approximately ¥ 40,000 (£ 313). All of my respondents are either working themselves, or their husbands are receiving housing support from employer. Most of my married respondents

who are renting a place said the support they receive would cover most of the rent, but the single respondents said that the support only covered some of their rent. Three participants have experiences of living in 'shataku'. Kazuko told me that *'actually, after I moved out from shataku, we bought a house. So I could not get my bank mortgage, it had to be in my husband's name to purchase a house and be the main house- holder 'satai-nushi'*. At this moment, her husband's company provides less than half of the housing support that it used to provide when he lived by himself. His rent was all paid. The resulting financial difficulties made them decide to buy an affordable house in a far suburb of Tokyo. Kazuko said, *'I know I would be same as my friends quit a job and rely on my husband soon because since marriage, we chose a place to live close to my husband's workplace, which is further for me to commute and do both an outside job and work at home, which is very tiring'*. Kazuko lived in 'Shataku' and her commute was only 10 minutes away from work; now her commuting time is over an hour and a half (see Chapter 1). Kazuko told me her daily schedule was very busy and all of her time off at the weekends is taken up by domestic work, and she cannot do so much longer. Her husband's commute is about an hour; however, he does not have responsibilities of unpaid work and even over the weekend he goes out with his colleagues for golfing, and explains to her how important it is to have relationships with his colleagues for promotion prospects, and a better life for her and him. Kazuko said *'I do not believe in a better future; I would prefer it if he would help me and we could share responsibilities of the finances and I could work too'*. If Kazuko and her husband were renting a flat, it would be more affordable than buying a house, and they could live closer to work. However, the majority of Japanese people dream of purchasing their own home, which is one of their main goals in life (Suzuki, Takayama, and Yamada, 2001; Rosenberger, 2001).

I found that most of my married respondents were saving money for their 'dream house'. *I have a child now, so I need to save some money for a house* (Kamiko, Married with a child and housewife). Kazumi's and Kamiko's desire to own a home seemed especially strong because of their desire to provide for their children. It is much easier for a couple to save money before buying a house because of

their employers' financial support for their living accommodations. After purchasing a home, however, the long-term mortgage makes it exceedingly difficult to save money. According to Hirata (2000), the average mortgage in Japan covers some 25 years, and some people continue to pay on their mortgages even after retirement.

An average of 61 % of houses and flats are owned by their residents. The proportion is higher in the countryside, while the lowest proportion is in Tokyo, with 41 % because the capital is most expensive (Census, 2010). One respondent, Saki (married with children, employed part-time), said that she and her husband had not yet decided whether to buy a house or not. Her husband was the only son of his parents, and so the possibility existed that they might move into his parents' house when they became older (see Chapter 4). It seems that buying their dream homes can cause women to worry more about finances, simply because women are taking care of most of financial matters.

Women's Responsibility for the Household Finances

The management of household finances between husbands and wives is a very sensitive issue that cannot be ignored and usually reveals the power dynamic of the relationship (Early and Lesh, 1998; Gallie and Vogler, 1994) with money management habits rooted in different economic and cultural ideas (Nyman, 2002; Roman and Vogler, 1999; Singh, 1997; Early and Lesh, 1998). Management of money in a marital relationship is based on shared trust, but it can also highlight the gap in equality between men and women (Singh, 1997). Pahl (1989: 66-77) identified and categorised five ways of managing family finances between women and men, but her classification may need to be updated since the pattern has changed. Pahl (2004; 2005) notes that studies conducted in the U.K. show that 1950s financial planning revolved around the male breadwinner system, but by 1980, more couples were pooling their financial resources, and by the 1990s family members were managing their finances independently; these patterns continue to change over time (Pahl, 2005; Vogler, 2005). The Partial Pooling

System has become more popular in recent years (Pahl, 1995; 2005; Kenney, 2006). However, Pahl's original classification is still useful in understanding household finances.

The first of Paul's types is the 'Wife Management' or the Whole Wage System, where wife is responsible for all payments and bills, except for her partner's personal expenditures. The husband gives all of his wages to his wife and receives an allowance from her, or else takes out his own spending money and then gives the rest to his wife. The main disadvantage of this system is a potential shortage of money, resulting in more financial pressure and stress for women with little or no money left over for themselves. In the Allowance System, the husband gives his wife a pre-agreed amount of money for certain expenditures, at the same time agreeing to pay for other expenditures such as basic bills. Main disadvantage is that it is difficult to save money and the wife has no money left over for herself. In the Pooling System or Shared Management, the husband and wife have a joint account from which they can both draw money. Both of their total wages go into the account, and each withdraws and uses the money as he/she sees fit. It gives the appearance of financial equality, and the lower-wage earner (usually the wife) may feel a sense of guilt or inequality, while the higher-wage earner may feel resentful. The Partial Pooling System is similar to the pooling system, but only part of each of the women's and men's wages go into a joint account, the rest going into their respective individual bank accounts. This has been very popular with cohabiting couples (Elisabeth, 2001). The main disadvantages is that women usually earn lower wages than their husbands and feel more financial stress and pressure after bearing a child. It is also difficult to buy expensive items together (Elisabeth, 2001). Finally, in the Independent Management System, both the wife and husband have jobs and each agrees to pay for certain bills and other expenses. They each have their own bank accounts. This system is usually more common for cohabiting couples or couples without children. The main disadvantages could be that couples may have problems when purchasing items together, such as a house or car, as well as deciding what is fair after children are born. It is unworkable that when women start having children they have to stop working yet

still have financial responsibilities, putting tremendous pressure on them. It is much easier for men to save up extra cash.

There are similarities and differences between Spanish and Japanese couples; couples in both countries believe the money belongs to the family, rather than to either of the individuals, but there are differences: the majority of Spanish couples use the Pooling System (Diaz, et. al., 2007), yet most Japanese couples use the Whole Wage System. Japanese women are in total control of the family budget (Lam, 1993; Hunter, 1993). However, I have found in my research that women are struggling to manage financial matters and they harbour negative thoughts about taking full responsibility for financial matters.

My husband doesn't have to worry about any financial issues in our family. I have been stressed and worried about our future because of our huge mortgage payments, car payments, and the education fund for our children. But he just shrugs and says, 'I can't give you any more than what my company gives me.' He seems not to care. I am talking to a stranger, so I no longer discuss such matters with him. I do it all on my own for my children. My husband has an easy life. He's got pocket money and he can do whatever he wants, going out and he doesn't think about anyone else. He's like another child, concerned only about his pocket money and going out his days off. (Kiriko, married with children and has a part-time job)

Women in Japan women are frequently pushed to take responsibility of financial matters when the budget is tight, causing many to seek employment outside the home (Ochiai and Molony, 2008). Kiriko has financial concerns and stress but she did not have any support from her husband. She explained that she had to take the initiative, and so she decided to take on a part-time job, even with her two small children. Her husband did not have to worry about the finances; his supportive wife took care of everything. He was concerned only about his pocket money to go out after work and on the weekends. Women tend to be practical and realistic, spending less money at the market in order to save more money for the future (Lundberg, Starz and Stillman, 2003). For instance, Kumiko felt spending money on herself was wasteful, as did Kamiko and Kiriko.

I haven't even a penny to spend on myself. Even when I buy cosmetics I have to buy them at a discount shop, but when my husband wants to buy a car or motorcycle, he gets what he wants. I feel that I am either a banker or a mother with an extra baby. I have to spend money from our savings, which I had been keeping for our children. (Kamiko, married with a child, housewife)

Kamiko and other respondents, especially those who are married with a child or children feel that they must restrict their spending on a day-to-day level, using their money only for family necessities (see Pahl, 1990). Men ignore the financial consequences of their spending, leaving it up to the wife to cope with the aftermath. In the west, Elisabeth (2001) found that money is often loaned between partners, but women borrow more often than men because of their lower wages; however, in my research, the same loaning of money between partners went the opposite way, with men seeking loans from women.

My husband goes drinking and occasionally spends more of his pocket money than he should, so he sometimes borrows money from me, but he must return it to me by the next month. We do not have any extra money, and we need it for the children. (Saki, married with children, has a part-time job)

Pahl (1995) argues that personal spending patterns reveal the power dynamic of the couple's relationship. In my participants' case, men use the power to keep control, taking whatever money they want or think they need, leaving women to worry over financial matters for themselves. Men do not seem to care about their behaviour and attitudes causing stress and financial crisis for their wives, taking more money from the family budget for personal use, even if this means nothing is left for their wives. However, among my married participants without children, Eriko's, Kayo's, and Kazumi's attitudes toward household finances were more relaxed because they have fewer worries: they do not have a child yet. Their husbands would borrow money from their wives but would often not return it. Eriko (married without a child, housewife) said, '*every month he loans money when they we have a child he said he will not do it, but I am not sure. But*

everybody has the same experience, so... (smile) .

Eriko's story was more surprising because her husband secretly bought a car and she said he borrowed money from her. At first I was confused; I could not understand how it worked. She smiles and explained it to me: '*we had money in the bank account; he used it and he would repay me every month from his pocket money*'. At first I could not tell if she was smiling because it was a funny experience for her, or for some other reason. But after she told me, she was embarrassed to tell me about financial matters, so the story she told me was not funny. Eriko's experience was similar to Kazumi's, saying she became a 'banker' at home. Whereas men can unilaterally decide on making large purchases such as a car without any qualms.

Smith found that in an equal and controlled pooling system, women feel more comfortable when the financial management is shared with their partners (Smith, 2006). Only one of my respondents, Kiyomi, has been using even the Partial Pooling System with her husband, which is very rare.

My husband and I have separate bank accounts. I pay a certain amount and he pays a certain amount; we pay nearly the same amount for our expenses. So far we haven't had any problem with this system. I have security in my own bank account, and I like it. (Kiyomi, Married with a child, has a part-time job)

Kiyomi had grown up in a wealthy family. Although her mother did not work outside the home, she urged Kiyomi to be independent, which she was. She was very careful and fiercely protected her security. She did not feel financially stressed, not only because of her comfortable university teaching job but also because she did not have to worry about her family's financial matters alone. Her partner did his share and that was a great help to her. Sakiko and Suzuko, both living in the UK, felt similarly. Sakiko also said that she did not have to deal with financial matters by herself, and Suzuko expressed her preference for having a separate bank account from her partner for her own security. Women could have

better jobs be more independent and more opportunities if more and better support systems existed, and also if more men participated in child-rearing and housework (Saul, 2003).

Summary

In order for the status of women to improve, women need be able to have unobstructed access to paying jobs, though this in itself is not enough. Even during the time when Japanese women are young and beautiful, they do not have the same opportunities as men. When women are blocked from equal opportunities with men, it is hard for them to enjoy their jobs (Smith, et. al., 2003). Women cannot imagine a bright future in their careers, for there is little for them to look forward to. Even if Japanese women can work and stay for a long time at the same workplace, they are typically viewed negatively or with jealousy by male co-workers and society, and women may feel uncomfortable staying there. In the meantime, women feel the pressure of time limits of marriage and having a child if they decide to marry Japanese men. In my research, I have found that it is more difficult for women to keep a job because they have to do all unpaid domestic work at home. Women lose substantial personal income as well as their autonomy and independence, their connections to their social networks, and their self-esteem, while their knowledge and skills atrophy to a certain degree. Many highly-educated Japanese women come to the conclusion that the price of sacrificing everything they have to raise children would be too high (MacDonald, 1997; 2002). Women bear the responsibilities of household financial matters, which makes them more worried and stressed, because most of the time money is tight or they are saving up for major expenses, such as the cost of raising children or the dream of purchasing a house, without the husband's support or help. Japanese women's indirect costs and direct costs are steep. Japanese women are impacted in both ways: they could contribute to the family finances, as well as earning extra pocket money and savings, but it cannot be achieved with nothing more than a part-time job, and the unpaid work of supporting and influencing a

family. These patterns have been passed generation to generation, and many of my participants feel it is unequal and unfair; however, they are trapped in a cycle of discontent and dependence that cannot be broken because of strong family ties and the male-dominated patriarchal structure in Japan.

According to Knudsen and Wærness (2009: 41), Nordic countries were pioneers in making gender equality part of law. Nordic marriage law has tried to dismantle the patriarchal family model as early as the 1920s, attempting to redefine marriage away from the traditional roles of a male breadwinner and a housewife. In the 1970s, Nordic welfare laws concentrated on returning mothers to the workplace rather than special benefits for housewives, though Norway was slower to adopt the reforms (Knudsen and Wærness, 2009). Those are very important points, but Japan has deeper issues; Japan needs to make it possible for women to keep a job, and the next step should be supporting employment for mothers rather than benefits to entice them to become housewives. Giving women a greater share of participation in the labour force, and allowing women to continue their careers after motherhood, has been central to Nordic welfare policy (Knudsen and Wærness, 2009). Giving women independence from the male-breadwinner model has become a key part of gender equality. When women have greater participation in the workplace, it is a major step toward the goal of gender equality (Knudsen and Wærness, 2009). Improvements in the workplace and in government programs are accordingly necessary in order to support Japanese women and their children (MacDonald, 1997). Pahl (1995) suggested that a better system would allow both parental leave and flexible work hours for both parents. The next chapter covers Care and Welfare Policy. It explores what Japanese women would like and need from support in terms of support and welfare.

Chapter 6: Care and Welfare Policy

The nature of care work should be defined as a labour in its own right, and should be defined so we can examine how the work itself, and the responsibility to undertaking it, has helped to keep women in a disadvantaged position. (Daly and Lewis, 2000: 283)

Introduction

Daly (2002) explains 'care' as a system that looks after the needs of the ill, the elderly or young children which involves women more than men in three areas: moral orientation, life course and economic and social relations. In the West, the criticism of unpaid care work is well-entrenched in feminist literature, and has been the focus of much feminist research (Lewis and Daly, 2000: 281). Daly and Lewis points out that care work is often pushed onto women, and will remain at the center of women's responsibilities if attitudes regarding gender inequality are not changed. Women and men have always worked, but in the past it was for the necessity of daily living and maintenance. After the Industrial Revolution, the focus of work became financial payment, and paid work began to be considered more valuable than unpaid housework (Cleveland, Stockdale and Murphy, 2000; Crompton 1999; Lewis 2001). Many European countries are welfare states, yet career women in those countries still face a predominately male breadwinner system (Kremer, 2006). Care work is usually low paid or unpaid showing that those tasked with child care are not treated as important, such that the majority of women engage in more care work, which means fewer important jobs for women (Kremer, 2006).

The degrees of importance placed on paid work among women and men has changed over time, with women adding more unpaid care work to their paid work as men have added relatively few household or care duties, despite the fact that the amount of time they spend on paid work has decreased (Gershuny 2000; Pascall and Lewis, 2004; Gardiner, 1997). Reactions vary greatly within academia

to the gradual shift from the ‘male breadwinner’ model toward a model in which both adults in the family work (Giullari, Lewis, 2005:3; Lewis, 2007; Nyman and Reinikainen, 2002). Giullari and Lewis (2005) argue that the distribution of care work in a family in which both adults work full-time is a major issue, claiming that women who work full time will still put unpaid care work first (Duncan and Edwards, 1999; Barlow and Duncan, 2000).

In Japan, providing care is mostly the responsibility of families, though very strong family ties ensure that women still assume the majority of the responsibility of care (Eto, 2001), and that families feel ashamed to ask for help by relying on care (MacDonald, 1998: 2002). Japan’s case is one which places more responsibility upon women as part of the norm of male-dominated society. In most countries, there is still a belief that care work is a huge emotional investment undertaken by women because of their natural love for their children, and men are still not expected to be deeply involved in child care (O’Brien, 2007: 159). Norway was among the first to legislate gender equality in an effort to help women increase their participation in the work force. Introduced in the 1920s, the Nordic welfare system set out to abolish the traditional patriarchal family model (see Chapter 5) and to share welfare and care responsibilities among families and government agencies, allowing women and men to share both care work and participation in the workplace (Knudsen and Wærness, 2009: 41). Norway is a pioneer welfare state, however in Japan it would be difficult to abolish or even weaken the patriarchal family model, bringing about de-housewifeization (Ochiai, 2008); instead of that, Japanese welfare policy is more focused on financial support.

Financial Support

In 1972 the Japanese government issued a policy of support for raising healthy and better balanced children after the second child. With the birth of the third child the family was entitled to receive ¥3,000 (£23) a month up to the age of five. In 1986 households received ¥2,500 (£20) monthly for a second child, and ¥5,000

(£40) for the third child up to the age of five. In 1992 this was increased to ¥5,000 yen (£40) for both the first and second child and ¥10,000 (£80) for the third child, again up to the age of five. These figures remained unchanged for some years but in 2004 a household could receive support for each child up to the age of ten; this changed again in 2006, such that children receive support up to the age of twelve. In 2007 all children received ¥5,000 (£40) of support up to the age of three, and ¥10,000 (£80) afterward. In 2010 all children received ¥13,000 (£102) of support annually until they were fifteen years old (MHLW, 2011). The Japanese Ministry of Health thus encouraged families to have more than two children by offering families extra money, yet the policy has not worked. During the interviews I have found that most of the respondents were not sure what kind of support they had received, nor could most of them recall how much money they were receiving from the government.

I believed and I still believe children are the responsibility of their parents. It would be nice if the government offered more help and child support, especially financially, because I cannot make money like when I was single, but I do not expect they will change things dramatically. I wish I could have a career job; now I do not hope to get money from anywhere. I am sure I am receiving some financial support, but it is a very small amount of money because I do not even remember it. I have never had any concern about it and I don't want to rely on it. (Keiko, married with 2 children and housewife).

Historically in Japan, it was believed that children are the responsibility of the family and parents, and so naturally people do not rely on financial support from the government (Yamada, 2000). However, a small but growing number of Japanese people believe that raising children is now not only be the responsibility of parents, but the responsibility of Japanese society as a whole if it hopes to resolve its low fertility issue (Obuchi and Okazawa, 2010). Keiko is one of my typical respondents: a 'mix' of traditional and contemporary, she feels that the responsibility of taking care of children falls to the parents and family; however, if she could receive some more financial support, it would be better than nothing, but on the other hand she feels ashamed to rely on to benefits. Keiko did not believe that the Japanese government would make any changes to welfare support

anytime soon, allowing women to maintain a career. She and other participants were looking for financial independence for themselves as individuals, rather than taking money from the government.

Historically child support and benefit was established for poor families in Sweden in 1937, but in 1948 they were expanded to all families. As of 2010, approximately 2,000 Swedish kroner per month (£178)²⁷ is provided for all children (Bettio and Plant 2004), unlike Japan, where different amounts of financial support are provided based on how many children a family has. In Japan child support started fairly recently in 1972 and developing very slowly (Segawa, 2000). However, one of my respondents told me her positive opinion of in the UK.

I think it is much better in the UK in regard to child support and policy, because I have lived here over one year and have found that women have less pressure and fewer worries in raising children. They are treated as individuals and have more job security, and so women can have more children more easily. I am sure there are still problems in the UK, but it is better than in Japan. I also know that Scandinavian countries have it even better than the UK. (Suzuko, living in the UK and single)

In Suzuko's opinion, Japanese women face more responsibilities in having children than in the U.K. Her experience in the U.K. has shown her that women have more opportunities and greater equality and are treated as more fully-realized individuals than in Japan. In Japan, single mothers are rare about 2 % (see Chapter 1), and teenage single mothers are even rarer; out of all single mothers in Japan, it is estimated that only 0.3 % are teenage single mothers (Ministry of International Affairs and Communications in 2010). However, 81 % of all single mothers are working and only 14 % of single mother are claiming benefits²⁸ in Japan (MHLW, 2012). In the traditional family and 'ie' system in Japan, single mothers are against Japanese tradition, so they too need the ability to work. A study by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare shows that High proportions of women

²⁷ 1 pound equalling 11.24 SEK as of 9 May 2012.

²⁸ Benefits excluding child support.

who participate in the labour force feel shame to receive benefits to raise a child or children. Keiko also told me *'My friend is a single mother and she feels very ashamed for her family to be a single mother, and she would be more ashamed if she received benefits from the government. She is working so hard.'*

Japanese people perceive the family unit in the context of the *ie* system (see Chapter 1). Because Japanese people think that children are the responsibility of the family they have given up on relying on the government for child care policy changes. Any financial support they may receive is seen as negligible. Japanese parents cannot count on that money alone to be able to raise children. It is also worth mentioning that when I was interviewing Keiko, she always used *'I'* instead of *'we'* when referring to receiving financial support from the government. This indicates that most of the responsibilities for children were undertaken by the women, rather than these responsibilities being shared between the mother and father (see Chapter 5). At first only a small amount of financial support was offered to have another child (see above), but women need more than that to be independent and treated equally.

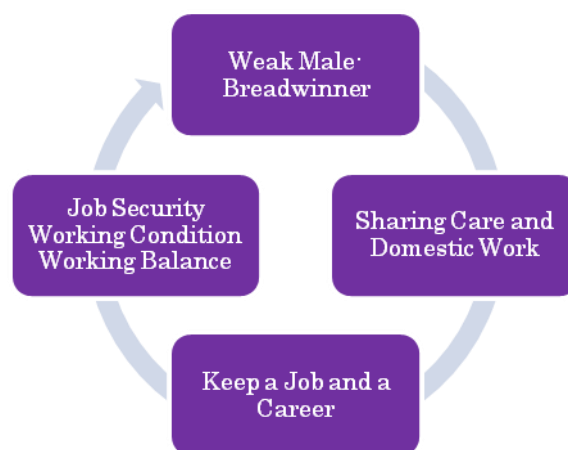
I would love to have children but I want to keep my job if at all possible. I would not say my job is an ideal job, but at least I know what I am doing. I really do not want to quit my job, have children and then go back into the labour force, since working in a factory is something I've never done (Chiho, single, full-time job).

The Japanese government wishes to see more children born in Japan, but they think only in terms of direct financial support without establishing a social security system that will directly benefit women (Ato, 2000). It is very difficult to change the system and the laws to counter this discrepancy. In Japan, women account for only 11.3 % of the seats in the National Diet, which is very male dominated and cannot focus on women's needs (Statistics Japan, 2012). Japanese men, moreover, since they do not take part in the care work at home, do not know what is wanted of them or what needs to be changed.

Most members of Parliament and were born into wealth, especially if they are men. They do not know what we need, they think a little bit of money would help in having more children or something, but there are many more issues: women's rights, job security and the difficulty of raising children. If I did not have to worry about the essentials of raising a child, personally my ideal number of children would be higher, but there are too many things I have to worry about. Even though I am married, I have not even had one child yet (Kazuko, married without a child, has a full-time job)

There are obvious gaps between the wealthy, women and men, and the majority of the population. Moreover, women lack a political voice in Japan. The Japanese parliament feels they know what the people need, and the government offers financial support thinking it might help, but this has not been working. They do not know what women want because of the male-dominated social structure everywhere in Japan. For instance, 60 % of single mothers have never received child support from their children's father (MHLW, 2012). It is shocking that women are neither protected nor supported by men or by the government. Japanese authorities want women to have more children, but do not want to work toward change; instead, they hand out money and wait for changes to happen. At what point are women bearing too many responsibilities? When I asked myself this question, I remembered the rare example of Kiyomi, who is happy with her marriage. Her virtuous circle is working.

Figure 27: Kiyomi's Virtuous Circle After Marriage



The key to Kiyomi's happier life is job security, which would help women to enjoy more and better jobs, as well as enjoying being parents. Ato (2000) states that financial support alone will not encourage Japanese women to have children, but rather more child care policies, men's support and gender equality are needed, while reducing women's responsibilities could help to resolve Japan's low fertility rate. I would call this Kiyomi's virtuous circle, to follow how my other participants have a different circle to Kiyomi's virtuous circle. Government support of non-traditional bread-winner structures, sharing the responsibilities of care with a partner, could help women keep their careers and give them the support they need to raise children together with less pressure. Doing this would set an example of gender equality and change relationships between women and men for the next generation. The starting and key point is the male-dominated society (see Chapter 3), which is different for Kiyomi than it is for other participants.

Male-Dominated System

Breadwinner

Within McDonald's (2000) 'equity theory', low fertility can be attributed to increased gender equality in institutions serving individuals, combined with less gender equality in institutions focusing on families, perpetuating the male breadwinner family structure. McDonald (2000) also claims that traditionally structured families resist any attempt to even the workload of domestic work and child care among the parents. Lewis (1992) categorised three types of breadwinner countries. The first, the strong male-breadwinner state, has an unequal tax system, with few low-tax or tax-free allowances, and very few allowances for child care (Lewis, 1992: 162-165). Historically, in strong male-breadwinner states, women are wives and mothers, and rely on their husband and partner. They are in support roles, which mean less of everything for them: lower wages, fewer benefits and less support from others (Lewis, 1992). This continues to be the case in Japan. Second, in modified male-breadwinner

countries (Lewis, 1992: 165-167), women's participation in the full-time labour force is strong, and participation is focused on benefiting families with or without children. Third is a 'weak' male breadwinner society which, with more women gradually entering the paid workforce, has evolved into a dual-breadwinner one with separate but equal tax and child care benefits (Lewis, 1992).

In Japan, however, there is a family tax system. If a wife and husband separate, they have to pay higher income taxes and lose various forms of support from companies and the government. The system helps to maintain and further perpetuate gender inequality (see Appendix IV). As a result, women are working only part-time jobs, which is commonly undertaken to support the family financially. The government policy favours having women work and earn less than ¥1,000,000 (£7,813) per year, which means they pay fewer taxes and virtually belong to their husbands (see Chapter 5 and Appendix IV). Nordic countries, on the other hand, focus on supporting women, not only financially but in helping women maintain a job, and by introducing and expanding maternity leave, flexible time, reducing gender inequality and encouraging women's partners to share the responsibility of care with help from government authorities (Knudsen and Wærness, 2009: 41). But rather than focusing only on women's needs in the labour force, the Nordic system focuses on the children's needs also (Lewis, 1992), which has not occurred in Japan. In strong male-breadwinner states, lack of shared responsibilities and ties to gender roles push domestic work onto women, causing them to lose opportunities to work and gain independence (Daly and Lewis, 2000), as in Japan. Financial support is the easier option: just give money and help financially, which has not working in Japan (see Chapter 5); however, it is more difficult for men to share responsibilities in countries with a strong male-dominated patriarchal structure.

Lack of Shared Responsibilities

Within a short span of history, the shape and traditions surrounding the family have undergone dramatic changes throughout western Europe. Lower fertility

rates, aging population, rising employment among mothers and higher proportion of divorce and separation among parents have raised questions about the future of the traditional family (Ellingsaeter and Leira, 2006: 2). Changes in cultures and economies lead to changes in welfare needs and risks, which also raises questions about the degree to which a welfare state should intervene on behalf of parents with young children (Ellingsaeter and Leira, 2006). Japan is a strong male-breadwinner state, more men work outside and women do care work after marriage (see Chapter 1). However, many women are now working outside the home, but Japanese men have not changed their habits as quickly as more Japanese women have been joining the labour force. The welfare system has not changed, however, so despite the changes in the nature of child care, Japanese women are receiving inadequate help, leading them to decide to have fewer children or none. After having a child, who is taking care of the child? There are fewer people living with their parents after marriage nowadays in Japan (see Chapter 4). Japanese husbands are spending very little time on unpaid domestic and care work (see Chapter 1 and 3). It is vital to maintain domestic tasks, but these demands are often ignored (Anderson, 2000). Gerstel (2009) found that working-class families might arrive at arrangements for child care that increased men's parenting time, but that study did not include men taking on such chores as cleaning, laundry and grocery shopping. Even my research found that my respondents' husbands were not helping with child care, even on their days off if their wives were working outside (see Chapter 2 and 3). Do Japanese women 'naturally' want to do care work and stay at home? My respondents said 'No' to this question (see Chapter 2); however, they are doing it because it is necessary, and they fear the work will not be done if they do not do it themselves. It might be because they feel guilty not to be the ones taking care of their children. One respondent was struggling without help from other family members, specifically without help from her husband without either welfare or child care, to work outside the home in an attempt to gain freedom and independence.

I want to go outside the home and work because I want to do different things rather than always staying at home, and to be more active and socialize with people other than my family. I also think it is good to have

your own money. But that is very difficult because I have three children and lack my husband's support. I do not think he would be happy if I worked away from home, and so he would not help me at all. He might even make it difficult for me to find work. No one will help to raise children; I have to by myself. (Kumiko, married with 3 children and housewife)

There are two issues that need to be addressed. First, Kumiko wants to work outside the home to gain confidence and feel that she is a part of society. The other issue is that her desire to do paid work has been thwarted and she cannot do so because she lacks support. Her entire world is comprised of her family and home, which has caused her to lose her self-esteem and self-confidence. Self-esteem, self-confidence and a purpose in life is important for people to be involved in their societies (Martinez and Dukes, 1997). Losing a job can also have a major effect on self-esteem (Waters and Moore, 2002: 172). Women are more likely than men to lose a job in Japan because of being pregnancy or raising a child (see Chapter 3). Moreover, there are still many women having difficulties maintaining a full-time career because of the lack of support. One of the respondents mentioned to me that she had lost her confidence and her self-identity:

When I was working full time outside the home, I felt I was needed in society and that I really existed, but now I feel that I am not needed and so do not exist. (Keiko, married with children, housewife).

When women are working under the same conditions as men they have more confidence, but when they lose their equal positions they are more likely to lose confidence. One study indicates that after childbirth many women experience depression and lose self confidence because most of them have quit their jobs to stay at home and have thus begun to feel unnecessary (Beghi, et. al., 2004). I was surprised to discover how hard it is to find Japanese literature mentioning the effects of losing a job, such as a loss of self-esteem or confidence, but many respondents in quantitative research believed that this was because it is thought that Japanese women are satisfied and want to raise children and stay at home (see

Chapter 3). The correlation between the loss of self-esteem, child-bearing and child care, and the dissatisfaction Japanese women experience in their lives, has not been studied due to the lack of qualitative research, and should be examined more closely.

I wanted to ask my respondents for their ideas about keeping a job after marriage or having a child, as in Kiyomi's case. Some participants had already left their jobs, so I felt it would be a better idea to use vignettes to depersonalise the questions, so they could answer honestly using their experiences to say what they felt would be best for women. I used the following vignette as an example:

'Miss A' cannot decide if she wants to marry or not because she likes her job and wants to keep her job even after marrying or having a child, but it will be difficult for her to do that.

After I used this example, one interviewee started to talk about her past experiences, telling me, 'I was like "Miss A."'

I would say it is not a good idea to quit one's job if she likes it and wants to keep it, so she should do it until she feels she is ready for everything, because after getting married and especially having a child, she would regret and not feel satisfied to lose almost all, like me. I now feel nothing. (Eriko, married without children, and housewife).

Eriko felt a profound lack of confidence because she used to have a job and was happy, but she felt she had lost nearly everything she had after marrying and having her child. She also mentioned to me that she felt 'so guilty': she was happy to have her child, but she was not completely happy or satisfied with her own life. One of her friends had been trying to become pregnant but without success, so she felt that she was in a better situation than her friend was. During the interview I at first felt that Eriko's situation was totally different from her friend and that her friend was not happy being childless. But the big issue was that she had quit her job and was not happy, yet she had tried to adjust and accept her choice to have a child at the sacrifice of her job, unlike her friend.

Another issue is wives who cannot take paid work (see Kumiko's quote above) because like Kumiko their husbands do not want them to work, and deliberately withhold support and help. I have found in this research that Japanese men are afraid that if the wife goes outside, likes her job and keeps on working, then the housework and care work will have to be shared between the two of them. '*My husband told me if you need work, do a part-time or Naishoku²⁹ at home which does not affect domestic and child care work*' (Keiko, married with children, housewife). The attitude of Japanese men has been changing toward women's work choices; where men once preferred for women to stay at home, more Japanese men now prefer their wives to work outside. 39.1 % of Japanese men are hoping women will contribute to work outside 'after having children' (MHLW, 2010). Although, according to this government study, Japanese men prefer women to work outside, after having children women are expected to take up part-time or temporary work. And, Japanese men do not help with or share domestic work with their wives, so Japanese women cannot continue to keep a job even if their husbands wish for them to contribute financially. Japanese women are following Japanese men's desires. In my research, I also discovered that even when employers or the government try to reduce working hours so men can share the responsibilities of care work, domestic work and child raising, my respondents' husbands still would not do their share of that work even if they came home earlier or had more days off (see Chapter 4). '*Money talks:*' theoretically women who become more financially independent and can earn the same amount as their husbands are responsible for half of the housework, and many researchers in Japan have found that this does have a small effect on the sharing of housework responsibilities (see MacDonald, 2000, Ochiai, 2008; Kyogoku and Takahashi; 2008). When men earn much more than their wives, however, there is a dramatic effect on the wives' housework responsibilities (Bittman et al, 2003). In my respondents' cases, women are permitted to work outside part-time, but it should not influence care and domestic work, and this means double the workload for Japanese women.

²⁹ See Chapter 4

I am working both at home and outside the home but my husband does not help or support in the housework at all. He has not changed since I started working. There is so much work to be done, but what I can I do? I cannot get back the job which was in my field and was my career before I had my child. Too much time has been lost in taking care of my family.
(Saki, married with children, employed part-time)

Pascall and Lewis (2004) point out that in the west women with children have to spend time balancing the family finances, exerting themselves physically and emotionally, but that men do not. It would be necessary to maintain that a strong welfare system to protect women who are bringing up children (Pascall and Lewis, 2004). Only women seem to be at a disadvantage when it comes to having a child. In Japan current policies, however, have changed nothing: only women are suffering and spending all their efforts on raising their children. There are still many countries and many workplaces that do not ensure job security and where women are not treated the same as men, as especially reflected in women's lost time and wages (MacDonald, 1998). Macdonald (1998) points out that many women lose both their pensions and unemployment insurance and are granted no maternity leave during pregnancy, leaving them socially insecure.

Who can reconsider our women's rights? I do not think the Japanese government will change so quickly so as to pass laws enabling our rights. I will probably be dead before the day women have more rights. (Sakiko, living in the UK)

Thus Sakiko gave up on the possibility of the Japanese government's changing the law to further women's rights. During my interview with Sakiko, I was reminded of how many participants commented that they had already given up hope that their husbands, or government support for women, would change, thinking it impossible. Both single and married participants were willing to work outside. Married women wanted to go back to a job or regretted leaving a job they had before marrying or having a child (see Chapter 3). This vicious circle is created by men, because men do not want to deal with care and domestic work, apart from Kiyomi's husband. Feminists have a tendency to regard domestic work as 'the

great leveller', a burden imposed on women by patriarchal society and lazy men (Anderson, 2000: 1). None of my married respondents other than Kiyomi maintain a career because it was difficult to do so without any support or help, and there are no laws to protect women's job security (see Chapter 3).

Women's Job Security

Difficulty of Keeping a Job and Career

In Europe it has been realised how important it is to offer support and institute better policies for women to balance to work and family, yet there are still not enough policies to support women (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004). In fact, in Europe most welfare policies have concentrated simply on child care rather than encouraging or supporting women who are willing and desire to work outside the home (Bashevkin, 2002). Many of my respondents mentioned job security as a major concern.

If I still had my former job, which I had when I was single, it would be wonderful, because I could see to the responsibility of being a parent and also enjoy what I was doing at my job. Soon I am going to look for a part-time job, but I'm afraid it will only be a meaningless, boring job. I definitely want my daughter to have a better education, something that can carry her throughout her life. (Kimiko, married, one child and housewife)

Kimiko had decided to quit her job because it was impossible for to stay on at work when she became pregnant. Japanese companies want to keep skilled and knowledgeable people, yet there are still many talented women who give up their jobs and cannot return to them after having their children. Their skills and training are wasted, which is not beneficial for anybody. Mizuno (2004) describes how important it is to have an education and for women to have rights. She argues that full-time Japanese housewives, because they share similar backgrounds (such that educated women meet educated men), face a serious loss of time, money and effort in seeking to realize their educational achievements. Moreover, an OECD (2008) study revealed that Japan ranks lower than the OECD average in child

poverty. Yet Spain and Italy are ranked lower than Japan, which indicates that women's job security does not compare favourably in those countries with that in other developed countries. Just as women stand a greater chance of losing their jobs when they have a child, such that their financial independence suffers, so there is also a greater chance that their children will, in turn, be poor. The UK, on the other hand, ranks just above the OECD (2008) average in child poverty, while Denmark has the at least child poverty. Denmark is reportedly the happiest nation, because of the best balance of work and life (see Chapter 1 and 3).

I could think more about marriage and having a child if I could keep my job securely, but that is doubtful because my company is small. After marrying or having a child, every woman leaves her job. Even if I had the right to stay on, I would be uncomfortable staying there, especially after having a child. I know that it is not the best job, but it is better than losing everything by going back to the labour force after my children are in school and so on. (Chiriko, single, has a full-time job)

Leira (1992) described the mother as both earner and career woman, and stated that welfare states provide financial support and show a commitment to childcare arrangements. Bettio and Plantega (2004) stated that better family support policies can offer more support for women to become independent by providing nurseries and more jobs so that women can both work full-time and take leave time while caring for their children; this is a better arrangement than in the countries in Europe at present. Szelewa and Polakowski (2008) explain that, during the time of Communist rule in eastern Europe, women worked equally both in the home and outside, and so the former communist countries had better job security. Japan prior to the Meiji period was similar to how Szelewa and Polakowski described Communist rule in eastern Europe, because most women were working (see Chapter 1 and 4). This is another issue that Chiriko mentioned, admitting that she would feel uncomfortable staying on at her job even if she could, because most work places are not welcoming to women combining work and raising children same time because of male-dominated attitudes (see Chapter 4); this makes it very difficult and uncomfortable for mothers to ask for maternity leave or more flexible hours. Women like Chiriko cannot think of any positive advantages to choose marriage and having a child, so she is postponing her

decisions regarding marriage and fertility, rather than changing her life style, because of the difficulties and working condition she would face at work.

Working Conditions: Inequality, Tax System and Part-Time Work

Lewis (2002: 338) argues that women are pushed out of the labour market because of social security entitlements and the tax system, so that women have to do both paid work and unpaid work without public support. There is no ideal model of equality between women and men yet. Nowadays in Japan many women work outside the home for financial support, such as at part-time jobs, because the majority of women have to take care of the household finances (Aoyama, 2004; MacDonald, 2002). Many Japanese women are not satisfied with working part-time jobs, which they have to tolerate due to their inadequate financial situations and lack of social support (see Chapter 5). As childcare givers, women must endure meaningless and boring jobs in order to be able to work close to home and have enough time to raise children (see Chapter 3). While single mothers in the U.K. have incentive to work part-time (over 16 hours for tax credit eligibility), they do not have much financial incentive to move up to full-time work (30 hours per week) (Tomlington, 2006).

In Japan there are four types of tax systems for working wives. One is under ¥1,000,000 (£7,813), the second is between ¥1,000,000 and ¥1,030,000 (£8,047), the third one is between ¥1,030,000 and ¥1,300,000 (£10,156), and the last one is over ¥1,300,000. If the wife earns less than ¥1,000,000, the wife does not have to pay any tax. Under the second option, between ¥1,000,000 and ¥1,030,000, she has to pay, but must pay only the council tax which is a relatively small tax (see Appendix IV). In the third tax bracket, she has to pay both income tax and council tax. And in the fourth and highest category, she must pay full taxes completely separate from her husband. This is very complicated, so I made a sample calculation of full-time wife's tax deduction system and a table to compare all four types for wives. When a wife works, both her husband's taxes and family support from his company might be affected. When wives earn less than

¥1,000,000, their husbands can receive dependent credits for their spouse and children from the company (varying depending upon the company). The mean dependent's payment for a wife is ¥212,400 (£1,659) per year and per child dependent money is ¥96,000 (£750) per year (MHLW, 2012).

Table 15: Annual Taxation for Wives³⁰

Wife's income Per year	Under ¥1,000,000 (£7,813)	Between ¥1,000,000 (£7,813) to ¥1,030,000 (£8,047)	Between ¥1,030,000 (£8,047) to ¥1,300,000 (£10,156)	Over ¥1,300,000 (£10,156)
Sample Wage	¥1,000,000 (£7,813)	¥1,015,000, (£7,930) ³¹	¥1,165,000 (£9,102) ³²	¥2,679,000 ³³ (£20,930)
Income Tax	¥0	¥0	¥119,700 (£935)	¥215,600(£1684)
Council Tax	¥0	¥57,200 (£447)	¥123,700 (£966)	¥219,600 (£1,716)
National Pension	¥0, however eligible to receive a national pension	¥0, however eligible to receive a national pension	¥0, however eligible to receive a national pension	¥280,000 (£2,188)
National Insurance	¥0	¥0	¥0	National Insurance ¥100,000 ³⁴ (£781)
After Tax: Income	¥1,000,000 (£7,813)	¥957,800 (£7,482)	¥921,600 (£7,200)	¥1,863,800 (£14,561)
Husband's income influence	¥0	¥0	¥0	Lose or reduced financial support money for wife and children from company. ³⁵ Might affect housing support from company and tax increase for husband. ³⁶

Source: Japanese Tax Agency
<http://search.nta.go.jp/cgi-bin/issearchs.cgi>

³⁰ See a sample calculation in Appendix.

³¹ Mean of between 1,000,000 to ¥1,030,000 and used for a sample of calculation.

³² Mean of between ¥1,030,000 to ¥1,300,000 and used for a sample of calculation and used for a sample of calculation

³³ Mean income for women in 2012 in cities which use guidelines from the Japanese Tax Agency

³⁴ Depends on workplace; see chapter 1.

³⁵ See a sample calculation in Appendix IV

³⁶ See chapter 5

After the age of 20, all Japanese citizens have to pay a national pension, even for a student (which it usually the parents' responsibility). However, if a woman stays at home as a housewife or earns less than ¥1,000,000 (£7,813), she is automatically eligible to receive a national pension even if she does not have to pay, which is not offered to women who work full-time or earning more than ¥1,300,000 (£10,156). If the wife earns more than ¥1,000,000 (£7,813) she has to pay a council tax, from which she would not benefit if she earned more than ¥1,000,000 (see Table 15). The Japanese tax system is very complicated and makes it difficult for women to gain independence. Simply put, it provides that a married woman has the automatic right not to pay taxes when she is a housewife or being supportive wife to have only part-time work (see Appendix IV). This system is supporting the sole male bread-winner system and male-dominated society.

I feel that I am being punished after marriage. I do not have a child yet, but my tax has become heavy and my husband's tax went sky high after our marriage; it would mean losing even more when we have a child. It would be the same or better if I would be a housewife. I am going to work until I have a child (Kayoko, married without a child, employed full-time)

Over ¥1,300,000, she must pay full taxes, which sometimes means it is not worth trying to earn (see Table 15 and Appendix IV) or it will affect not only her income, but her husband's income also. Kayoko is a member of a dual worker family, a family which is at a disadvantage under the Japanese tax system. Kayo told me '*It is better, if you are thinking only of money, to be a part-time worker and make less than ¥1,000,000 (£7,813) but I want to earn my money! That's why I am not quitting yet!*'. Kayoko's true voice is that she wants to work even though she is aware of the benefits provided to those who are not working. I felt so strange because Japan needs work power and economic power, and yet they do not want women to join in the work force. Yes, of course they need women to work; however, the male-dominated society does not want to risk women becoming the main provider or gaining higher positions, out of worry that it could destroy the

male-dominated patriarchal structure. If I can borrow Kayoko's words: '*women are punished*' because women are not following what men want them to be. A family with a sole-breadwinner or wife making less than ¥1,300,000 (£10,156) entitles the family to receive Dependents support ¥212,400 (£1,659)³⁷, might lose also child Support (Dependents support from husband's company) ¥96,000 (£750)³⁸ per child from husband's company. Also, in dual worker families, the husband has to pay an extra 20%³⁹ in additional council tax from his wages (see Appendix IV). Plus those dual families might lose housing support from the company (see Chapter 5). In Japan Dual worker family have a lot to lose it is not individual tax system.

When the wife earns more in order to be able to receive the national pension and so have extra money when she retires, it makes very little difference for dual and single worker families. For instance, for 40 years a husband worked and retired at the age of 65, and a wife was a housewife or part-time, earning less than ¥1,000,000 for 40 years; their mean national pension is ¥233,000 (£1,820) together (a husband for ¥167,000 [£1,305] and wife for ¥67,000 [£423]). A family with dual workers who both worked 40 years full-time would receive approximately ¥300,000 (£2,344) together per year (The Japanese Tax Agency in 2010).

My respondents wanted to work, but after marriage and especially after having children, this tax system made it financially advantage not to work, and in any case their hope for support from their husbands support would be diminished. There might be three types of wives who are willing to work, but have reasons to stop working: (1) they want to work but they cannot because lack of support from husband and society; (2) the tax system makes it preferable not to work; or (3) both of the above reasons.

³⁷ Mean Dependent support (The Japanese National Tax Agency in 2012)

³⁸ Mean child support (The Japanese National Tax Agency in 2012)

³⁹ Under ¥5,000,000 extra 10% over is 20%.

One of my respondents, who has a part-time job, said:

If I work (part-time) more than now, it will affect us in many ways. Who will take care of the children? Who will take care of my husband? Who will take care of the housework? There will also be an effect on the tax allowance. I would be an independent taxpayer because now I am paying a small amount of tax because I am dependent on my husband. It would be my responsibility before I work more than I do now; I have to be concerned: can I do it or should I do it? (Kiriko, married with 2 children, employed part-time)

This tax system seems to help financially for a family or women to take advantage of tax deductions, however it does not allow women to be completely independent, creating the same inequality for Japanese women as before: their domestic work is an unpaid job, and yet they are still expected to do some kind of paid work. For Japanese men, it is better for women to do part-time work, because they believe women can do both jobs and the family will be better off financially. Also, my participants had little knowledge of child support, and did not know exactly how much they were receiving monthly from the government; however, their decisions were affected more by the financial support received from companies employing men with dependent spouses and children. It was interesting to find that, among my participants, children are believed to be their responsibility, not society's, so they would not be looking for help or support, even financially, even though they are looking for facilities such as nursing or protection of women's work rights from the government. They expect to rely on income from companies to help them raise children.

Burda, Hamermesh and Weil (2007) found in their research that in many developed countries, women work outside the home as much as men do, but because of the responsibilities of housework, women work even more. Women's work has been described as a 'benefit', yet women still have to perform the majority of housework (Cleveland, Stockdale and Murphy, 2000: 9). Legerski and Cornwall (2010: 457) also found, in their study, especially women who have a part-time job, since they are working much more than men. Women are working part-time outside as it helps financially, however husbands are not changing their

habits to help or support women at domestic and care work (Legerski and Cornwall, 2010).

I asked my respondents, *'If you were the prime minister, how would you encourage women to have more children?'*

I would say definitely that being a part-timer, but with the same rights and job security as for men, would help to encourage a woman to have one or more children, because in my case I am still lucky to have a great job. I might want to go back to work as either a part-timer or full-timer after having my child. But there is no place where women working part-time can have the same rights and same job security as full-timers, which would help encourage women to have more children (Ema, single, employed full-time job).

The two respondents who were living in the UK had similar responses:

I could not believe that in the UK, part-timers are treated nearly the same as full-timers. I would make it like that if I were a prime minister (Sakiko, single employed full-time).

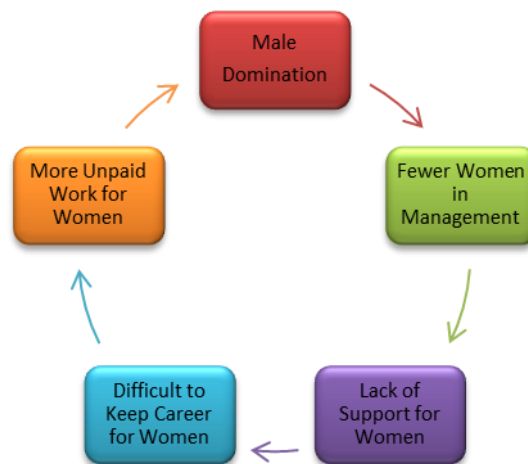
I would make a gap between full-time and part-time worker like the UK, and more protected. It is easier to return to a workplace in the UK, and to be a part-timer and be more flexible (Suzuko, single, employed full-time)

It was necessary to use a *'if'* question to bring this point out, because none of the respondents were willing to say at first what they really would like to see happen in terms of changes to job security, society and governmental policy in Japan (see above).⁴⁰ In Japan part-timers are treated as subordinates of full-time workers, 'tools' to help and support the full-timers. They normally do not have any rights to holiday pay or maternity leave, and they frequently do manual work assigned to them by the full-time workers (see Chapter 1). My respondents seem to want to have the ability to rejoin the labour force after having child to keep their careers as

⁴⁰ If you were the prime minister, how would you encourage women to have more children? Before I was asking this 'if' question, my respondents complained about women's working patterns and how difficult it is to keep a job, and the disadvantages of having a job, but they often used 'giving up' and 'be silent'. So I decided to use this 'if' question; I thought I could hear what women really want, and what they need if they could change the system, and what makes them struggle: I wanted to find out. So I used this question.

a part-time job at first, and want to have the same opportunity as a full-time worker to return to full-time eventually. Moreover they are looking for an ideally flexible work arrangement. Multinational public accounting firms have been trying to meet ethical obligations by allowing for flexible work arrangements (Cohen and Single, 2001: 317). In the U.K., ‘flexible work arrangements’ or ‘family-friendly working arrangements’ began as programs focusing on female employees (Dex and Scheibl, 2001: 412). Dex and Scheibl (2001) point out that employers in Britain, particularly banks, began to be more creative and flexible in an effort to retain skilled women; the policies they adopted were then applied to men in an attempt to promote a better work-life balance. These flexible policies allow for part-time work and job-sharing (Dex and Scheibl, 2001: 412). Lyness and Kroft (2005: 53) noted an increase in policies promoting work-life balance in companies with more women in the management ranks. Their greater sensitivity to gender equality issues inspires them to adopt policies promoting work-life balance, particularly for women (Lyness and Kroft, 2005). In Japan this has the opposite effect of Lyness and Kroft’s findings.

Figure 28: My Other Respondents’ Vicious Circle (except Kiyomi) Due to Male-Dominated Structures



This Vicious Circle is my other participants, opposite to Kiyomi’s (see above: Figure 26), because of the lack of support and protection to keep a job or go back to the labour force. There are two issues caused by the male-dominated structure of Japanese society. One is, as Lyness and Kroft’s found, a lack of women’s

management positions in Japan (see Chapter 1), and a limited amount of support to protect women's jobs by law. My single respondents (see above quotes) wanted to keep a job and wanted the opportunity to go back to their careers after having a child, but no flexible working arrangement exists. Second is the lack of husbands' support and the strong breadwinner structure. Both issues make my respondents unhappy after marriage (except Kiyomi). Single women are hesitating to marry, or are postponing marriage or remaining single, which leads to low fertility.

The Japanese male-dominated society's tax system penalises women who attempt to be independent of their husbands' support. Women only have access to meaningless, non-career jobs; instead, women really want to have flexible working arrangements, to be able to keep their careers, and to return to work part-time or full-time, receiving equal treatment after their absence. Many countries still prevent women from becoming 'individualised' by making them work on a part-time basis, leaving them to rely on their husbands with no independently accounted tax system for women (Lewis, 2002). The welfare state has not allowed for women to become fully independent and individualised, because there are still no comprehensive protections for women's rights, especially when women are pregnant or already have children.

Maternity Rights and Protection

The first maternity leave policy was set up in Germany in 1883 (Burgess and Russell, 2003). Other countries gradually followed. When such policies were enacted in Britain, they allowed women to stay at home for a longer period of time after having children, with full rights to return to their former jobs and protection of wages during pregnancy and after giving birth. Recently the U.K. extended paid and unpaid leave during pregnancy and after giving birth (Burgess and Russell, 2003). The International Labour Organization (ILO) recommended more than 14 weeks of paid maternity leave should be given after giving birth (2008). Ruhm (1998) mentions that most countries did not follow the ILO's

recommendations until the late 1960s. Table 1 reveals the duration of paid maternity leave and other benefits for a select number of countries.

Table 16 : Maternity Leave and Paternity Leave

	Maternity Leave Entitlement (in Weeks)	FRE⁴¹ Paid Maternity Leave	Max Length of Leave for Women (weeks)	Paternity Leave Entitlement (weeks)	FRE Paid Paternity Leave
OECD Average	18.9	14.5	78	4.8	3.7
Italy	20	16	44	N/A	N/A
Japan	14	9.2	68	N/A	N/A
South Korea	12.8	12.8	58	0.4	0.4
Spain	16	16	172	3	3
Sweden	10	8.0	70	10	8
UK	52	12.7	65	2	0.4
USA	12	0	12	N/A	N/A

Source: OECD: Calculating full-rate equivalent of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave 2011/2012. Children-related leave periods by duration of unpaid leave and the duration of the full-time equivalent of the leave periods if paid at 100% of last earning 2011/2012
http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2.1_Parental_leave_systems%20-%20updated%20%2018_July_2012.pdf

According to OECD (2006), only the U.S. and South Korea provided unpaid maternity leave. However, the OECD research in 2011 and 2012 showed that the USA has not changed its policy on maternity leave; however, the length of South Korea's maternity leave is lower than both the OECD average and Japan, but South Korea's FRE paid maternity leave is higher than Japan. South Korea's maternity and protection rights have been increased. In Spain, there is an arrangement similar to South Korea: maternity leave entitlement, paid maternity leave and even paternity leave are matched exactly, but Spain has a very low possibility that women will use the maximum length of their paternity leave. In U.K, Maternity Leave Entitlement is longer than in other countries; however, paid maternity leave is not lengthy. In Sweden, both parents can work part-time for 6½ years to be flexible and share responsibility between women and men. In Japan

⁴¹ FRE = Duration of leave in weeks' payment (as per cent of average wage earnings) received by the claimant

there is no paternity leave; it is dependent on individual companies' regulations (see Chapter 3), however the aim to share responsibility of child care is called 'Papa Mama Kyuka plus', which means a combination of mother and father's leave. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2012), by law, women in Japan must take off the 6 weeks before giving birth and 8 weeks after giving birth (6 weeks with a doctor's permission). After those entitlements expire, the wife and husband can decide how long the wife can leave and how long the husband can, but the total cannot add up to more than a year. If even there are entitlements such as paternity leave and encouragement to use it, it is very difficult to find men willing to use paternity leave for more than a couple of days in Japan (see Chapter 3); it would require dramatic change to convince men to take paternity leave. In my research, only one participant's husband, Kiyomi's, took paternity leave; however, it was only 3 days. Others participants' husbands did not even take any days off for paternity leave, even though most of them are working for well known large companies. All single women think that it is very difficult to keep a job after marriage or having a child.

I do not think I could stay at this company after I become pregnant, even if I want to, because all my colleagues who became pregnant left and were not made welcome to stay after having a child. It would be very difficult to ask my boss for maternity leave. No one is allowed to have maternity leave and flexible time. How can I for this for myself? (Akiko, single employed full-time)

Akiko also acknowledges that there is a law to protect women; however, it depends on environments, atmosphere, and a supportive system at work. Akiko's company is not supportive for women to remain at work (also see Chapter 3). I have found in my research that my respondents could not keep a job because there are no protections to help women keep a job; even the law is not enough - it seems that the male-dominated society is stronger than law. One of my respondents even lost a job after being blamed for past mistakes of hers after she announced that she was marrying (see Chapter 3). The male dominated society wants to keep younger women in the workplace (see Chapter 3). In reality, entitlement is not guaranteed by law, it all depends on where women and men work; workers in large

companies, teachers, and civil servants all receive more entitlement for themselves and their family compared to workers in other fields, which includes insurance.

The Japanese insurance system is very complicated (see Chapter 1). All Japanese people have national insurance, and there are three different kinds. The insurance system decides workers' entitlements. Self-employed people, unemployed people, and families are enrolled in the '*Kokumin Hoken*' (National Health Insurance) plan, totalling approximately 28 % of the population (MHLW, 2011). Most employed workers are on the '*Kokumin Hoken Kiyukai*' (Japan Health Insurance Association) plan; 50 % of population belong to this plan (MHLW, 2011). Teachers, civil servants and their families are enrolled in the '*Kyosai Kumiai*' (Benefit Society) plan, accounting for approximately 7 % of the population (MHLW, 2011). 15 % are wives who do not pay taxes, however this makes them dependent, since they do not pay tax but are covered under tax and pension (MHLW, 2011). The basic regulations for all of them are the same; when anyone sees a doctor, they must pay 30 %, with the remainder covered by the insurance plan, except for children under 12 and people over 65, for whom it is free.

Japanese women are entitled to receive ¥ 390,000 (£3,047) in child birth support. However, the average cost of child birth is ¥ 423,957 (£ 3,313) (Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Medicine, 2010). The actual cost varies from hospital to hospital. The least inexpensive place is Kumamoto, which costs ¥ 346,000 (£ 2,703), and the most expensive is Tokyo, which costs ¥ 515,000 (£ 4,023), 1.5 times more expensive than the least expensive city (Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Medicine, 2010). In addition, expenses must be paid out of pocket at the time of giving birth; people receive their reimbursements afterward. It is large amount of money for low income women and men and families to pay up front for childbirth. If single women do not have that kind of money, it is far more difficult for them to have children. This is a clear illustration of gender inequality and can cause many women to decide they are not able to have children (Shirakawase, 2005).

Other policies and protection plans vary depending on where someone lives and other circumstances. It is usually advised to ask each council to ensure all payments are from insurance companies (MHLW, 2012). ‘*Kumiai Hoken*’ (Health Insurance Association) and ‘*Kyosai Kumiai*’ (Benefit Society) have better social security to protect women and children, but different companies offer different benefits. This unequal and inconsistent welfare system creates all the more pressure for women when they have a child (Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Medicine, 2010). Kiyomi’s case is ‘*Kyosai Kumiai*’ (Benefit Society), and she is well protected; when she retires, she will have a better settlement than others (see Chapter 5). Workers in larger companies enjoy higher wages and more benefits, but workers in smaller companies face the opposite situation. They worry far more about their lives and finances, especially during pregnancy (Kashiwagi, 2002). Larger companies provide more support for women to be able to have children, including flexible hours, more days off, and other support systems to extend maternity leave for women to encourage both women and men (see Chapter 4). Women who work in larger companies are happier, because of greater security and protection (Obuchi, 2008), but most are working in small or medium-sized companies with far fewer benefits, creating a greater inequality. This inequality of work place makes for a more competitive structure, and Japanese parents are focused on education to spend a large amount of money for education (see Chapter 5). The number of members larger companies and someone enrolled in the and ‘*Kyosai Kumiai*’ (Benefit Society) insurance plans is relatively small compared to the population of Japan, at only around 21 % (MHLW, 2012)

Lewis and Giullari (2005) consider it most important for welfare systems to offer flexibility and security for women. They state that if the welfare system offers more equality between women and men it will positively affect the work balance between the two genders, such that it will no longer be paid work on the part of the man and unpaid work on the part of the woman. Eventually it will affect individual attitudes toward shared work, even unpaid housework shared between husband and wife. One of the results of a welfare state is a higher rate of

economic activity among women, better child care services, and usually a generous state-sponsored support system for both maternity and family leave (Szelewa and Polakowski, 2008). However, there is still the question of who is taking care of the children while the parents work.

Nursery Facilities

It is now taken for granted that any married woman who engages in paid work also engages in unpaid work; for example, in the west many single mothers' 'jobs' now involve raising a child, while feminists point out that there are few nurseries available, and it is the cost of nursery care makes women choose to stay at home to raise their children (MacDonald, 1998; Lewis, 1997; Joshi and Davies, 1992). In Japan the government has considered establishing a family policy and a welfare support system for women. The Angel Plan in 1995 and the New Angel Plan in 2000⁴² were created to support women who with children, yet those support systems proved to have little effect in supporting women (Ikegawa, 2008). My respondents did not know anything about those Angel plans. *'The Japanese government likes names and making character logos for everything, but nothing changes'* (Kiriko, married with children, employed part-time). I could not stop myself laughing; I tried, because it reminds me of 'Kuromin' (see Chapter 3 Chiyomi's quote) which is a character logo, and like Kiriko, Chiyomi had similar negative opinions of that support system. It seems that logos or characters are not helping anyway, making my respondents upset enough to hold a negative opinion of them.

In Japan, to place a child in a public nursing facility, which is more inexpensive (see Chapter 5) women have to have a job first and then apply to the facility. Even then, there is no guarantee that, after women have a job and apply for a public

⁴² There is a focus on 8 categories: 1) more varieties (for example: short time nursery and longer time services, and increase number of nurseries), 2) support women to be back in the labour force, such as a job center to help find a job for women, 3) encourage workplaces to understand that women can have children and keep a job 4) offer financial support for infertility, 5) expand playgrounds and facilities for children, 7) financial support for raising children (example: more scholarships), 8) encourage each city to have better child care.

nursery place, they will be accepted because there are not enough facilities in Japan. This makes it rather difficult for women because most women quit their jobs after marrying or having a child, and yet they have to have a full-time job in order to apply for public child care.

It is very difficult for me to work full-time because there are limited places to leave a child and day care centres are expensive. Also, I'm not sure of the situation of working outside the home. Is it worth it to do that? (Saki, married with 3 children, employed part-time).

Saki could not apply to use a public nursery because, where she lives requires a minimum of 16 working days per month for 4 hours per day. Saki works longer than 4 hours per day, but some weeks her company did not need her, so she worked 3 days where previously she had worked 2 or 3 weeks. This work record caused her application to leave her child in public nursery to be rejected. Saki's friend lost her job, and she was using public nursery; she was told if she did not find a job within 3 months, she is not entitled to use a public nursery, so she would have to find a private one. The number of public nurseries has been increasing alongside women's increasing participation in the labour force; however, it has not been enough to cover women who are working part-time, and it would seem that only selected women have access (Takahashi and Kyogoku, 2008: 86). Other participants told me similarly:

My part-time or Naishoku would be almost the same as expenses for nursery, so it is better to chose being a housewife. That's why I am a housewife and being a good mother is better for everybody, a win-win situation for everybody except myself. (Kimiko, married with a child, housewife).

Care services such as government-sponsored child care are much more difficult to obtain because women need to work in order to raise a child, and there are very few facilities in most of countries still (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004). Kimiko is a housewife because it is more beneficial, rather than earning a small amount of

money and paying for a much more expensive private nursery (see Chapter 5), and except her would be happy she is being housewife to take care of care work at home, her husband and perhaps her family and husband's family. To be a good mother, one is expected to stay at home, obey their husband, and to take care of family, as personified in 'Yamatonadeshiko' (see Chapter 3). Nagase (1999) argues that, in Japan, many women feel guilty working outside the home and feel that they are neglecting their families, especially their children. Care work is not simply a matter of love or charity; it requires regulation (Orme, 2002). However, many women still feel obligated to take on the responsibilities of child raising and being a good mother.

Responsibilities of Child Care: 'Good' Mothers and 'Bad' Mothers

There is a relationship between care work, society and public policy (Daly, 2002). In European countries there are five recognized types of care: full-time mother care, parental care, intergenerational care, substantial mother care and professional care (Kremer, 2006). Child care is defined as ordinary everyday caring for a child or children, whether done by parents, a day care centre or a child minder. 'Child care policies' and 'early childhood education and care' are interchangeable terms here, used to denote policies involving extra familial care in addition to home care, upbringing and socialization (Leira, 1992). Nevertheless, the family is still important as the main provider of care in Europe, however, the countries of Europe have been trying to redefine the division of care responsibilities and to share them not only within the family but also among national and local governments (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004). Despite this, in UK women (especially those with young children and heavy responsibilities) are more likely to face restrictions throughout their lives (Tomlinson, 2006)

In Europe, when women think of deciding to work outside the home, it is common for them to ask themselves, '*Who is taking care of the children?*' or '*Am I a bad mother?*' (Kremer, 2006) Is such a decision a bad influence upon children? Many

women still feel guilty about working outside the home (Kremer, 2006). Japan is similar and many women choose to stay at home after having a child because of the guilt involved in not taking care of their children especially up to the age of three, to be raised by their mothers, a belief that obligates Japanese women to stay at home for care work (see Chapter 1).

I work both outside and at home without any help from my husband. I have to calculate and think what is the best for my family, not for myself. Since I married my 'self' is gone, for family comes first. I cannot work full-time because without help, it would be a big job to organize child care. I would have to find the best place to leave the children and so on. Too much concern without help is hard. (Keiko, married with 2 children and housewife)

At first there was more than one issue for Keiko because everything she had was for her family and not for herself. What she wanted for herself did not matter as much as what was best for the family. She no help from either her husband or state programs whatsoever. She was struggling to raise the children herself, and she was also worried about being a bad mother. In the west the strain of maintaining a family and managing tight resources is made worse when parents are guilty about not being able to afford an idealised family situation (Rubin 1994). Keiko added that if she does not take care of children, who will? Some participants mentioned during the interview that they also worried about being bad mothers, or about not being there when their children were small. According to Tomlinson (2006: 365), in the U.K. when all women decide to work outside the home, they need to consider the balance between family life and work and be strategic in doing so. Tomlinson (2006) cautions that all mothers need to be aware of the consequences of maintaining their careers while also maintaining a household. Difficult though it may be, successfully balancing work and home duties underscores the diversity of women and what they are capable of (Tomlinson, 2006). In contrast, men do not need to consider Tomlinson's theories on women's choice when men work. Keiko (married with children, housewife) is concerned about child care when she returns to work. She would not have any help from her husband, and not much social support, which will make it difficult for her to have a job outside the home,

so she is thinking of working at home doing *Naishoku* to support her family financially (see Chapter 3). Most of my participants' mothers were working part-time when they were growing up, and they saw their mother was struggling to raise them.

My mother was a very hard worker. She had a part-time job and was doing Naishoku at home also. I did not want to follow her marriage style, so I went to University, but now I realise that I am going to follow or am already following the same as my mother's married life course: have children and go to a part-time job to be a good mother. (Eriko, married without a child, housewife)

Eriko said she was hoping she would be a bad example of motherhood, to work outside while her husband would cook and clean at home; however, after she married, her job changed because of the male-dominated structure of her workplace, and Eriko realised would not be able to have the same opportunity as men to maintain a career even after graduating University (see Chapter 3). She was pushed to leave her job and is now pushed to be a housewife, and soon to be a part-time worker. Like her mother before her, she is expected to be a wise mother and good wife, which is what the male-dominated and patriarchal structure of Japan wants and supports. Their strategy is working to keep women from maintaining a career.

Moreover, in the U.K. and Japan there are similarities there are high part-time worker women (see Chapter 5). In the U.K lower income single mothers must carefully weigh the options when considering welfare programs that offer financial incentives and resources for child care, which oftentimes make it more financially advantageous for single mothers to work on a part-time basis as opposed to full-time (Tomlinson, 2006). Japan's welfare policies are more similar to those in the U.K., which provide financial support to mothers, than they are to the support offered in Nordic countries.

Summary

Child care is meant to help and support parents while they are working, yet child care policies reflect the differences between different countries and different cultures, genders, classes and races, as well as being subject to a general fear of welfare state strictures (Mahan and Sonya, 2002). What kinds of policies can bring about gender equality? What do women really want? More specifically, what kinds of childcare policies will aid Japanese women in their fertility decisions? Will they be able to rely on such policies before deciding to have a child? What knowledge do they have about such policies? Those were my questions, and I have attempted to women's attitudes toward fertility decisions as influenced by child welfare policies. My respondents, however, did not have very much knowledge of child support policies. They exhibited two distinct attitudes toward child support policies. One was that they did not know very much about them because they were not interested, and besides they knew the limitations of what the Japanese government could offer in the way of change. The second attitude, however, was more natural: they assumed that children are the parents' responsibility, and thus they did not look for any support policies from the government. These women believed that if they could not afford to raise a child, then they should not, simply put. If Japanese women think that sharing more responsibilities with society will make it easier for them, the male-dominated culture will not easily change its attitude toward women needs. It has been mentioned that most of my respondents were giving up, or had a negative attitude toward their husbands' support and social support, because it has not changed dramatically. Women are still suffering and struggling to make any decision, let alone deciding to have a child. Women are already struggling by themselves, so why take on more responsibilities by having a child or children?

Children are now thought of in Japan as an expense. More and more parents focus on their children's education, and it takes more money than ever to raise children. Although public child support focuses on the care of the child, there are gaps between parents' needs and the care that is offered, so parents think it necessary to

make more money to raise their children, and thus more mothers join the labour force (Daly, 2002). Lewis (2002) says that it is not only state welfare policies that influence women's attitudes toward independence and reduce their care work; it is also important to acknowledge and promote the value of paid work and unpaid work including care work at the societal level.

The majority of Japanese women worry and suffer when they are working as part of the labour force. For in Japan there are still psychological blinds: women do the housework and take care of the family at home, but outside the labour market is still male-dominated (Mizuno, 2004). Mizuno (2004) explains that nowadays it is important for Japanese women to choose the type of man she wants to have the proper attitude toward taking responsibility for sharing the housework at home. Yet Japan still continues to be male-dominated and much gender inequality still exists, and it has not improved enough to positively change women's attitudes toward making fertility decisions. From this standpoint many women think it is better not to marry because, as already mentioned, Japanese women no longer receive any benefits from marriage, and most of the women who do want to marry only do so in order to have children.

The single respondents had also given up on finding husbands. The number of single Japanese men has increased dramatically (see Chapter 3). More Japanese men are staying single, but more men still want to marry. It has thus become more difficult for Japanese men to marry and have children, yet they have not changed their attitudes toward sharing in the housework and toward how women should be treated.

In Japan, childcare support is not what Japanese women focus on; they mainly want equality with men and job security, believing that marriage and child-raising only come with disadvantages. The lack of financial support and the male-dominated thought pattern have affected Japanese women's fertility decisions. In Japan this has directly affected the incidence of marriage and fertility decisions. In my research, I found that my respondents think it is easy to marry,

but difficult to meet an appropriate partner. Japanese women are resisting the traditional expectation to marry and have children, or are postponing marrying for as long as they can, because of the male-dominated social structure of gender inequality (see Chang and Song, 2010). This results in fewer children being born, thus affecting the fertility rate.

Nevertheless, interviews demonstrated that Japanese women do not expect much change in welfare policies. Yet they have a strong desire to improve their job security, especially during pregnancy to access to flexible work arrangement. Women are not treated equally: they handle the majority of unpaid work at home, earn lower wages, and have less security in the labour force. The aim should be to change this; unpaid work should be shared, women should be paid on the same basis as men, and more importantly, there should be a social security system to protect the entitlements of both women and children (MacDonald, 1998).

During the interviews some of the women compared themselves to some of those who were in a worse situation than themselves, in having to adjust to their choice of having a child; though they sacrificed their jobs to do so, in the meantime they tried to think positively yet privately, for they had lost their self-confidence. I was hurt to hear that so many of my respondents were suffering from lack of self-confidence, except for one, Kiyomi, who is married and could continue to pursue her career. Other than Kiyomi, all married women were in an opposite circle to Kiyomi's much happier circle. And other my single participants were worried about reaching anything like Kiyomi's virtuous circle, so that they were postponing marrying or having a child. Many family welfare systems support family members such as wives and mothers, but it is more important to have support and social security systems for all individuals (MacDonald, 1998). MacDonald explains that many countries' welfare and child support systems provide direct income or other support for children, but maternity leave is granted only to women who are working a full-time job. As many women have only part-time or temporary jobs, they do not have access to maternity leave (1998).

My Japanese respondents were unfortunate; they had given up on welfare support or any kind of government care. It is above all important to know that there are differences among different countries, customs, cultures, belief systems, and people's perspectives. Shim (1990) pointed out that many people believe that the Scandinavian countries' welfare model is the best system, but it must be remembered that there are many cultural, theoretical and political differences between the Scandinavian countries and other countries, such that the exact Scandinavian welfare model cannot necessarily be transferred to those other countries. Scandinavian welfare policies for women that enable them to work flexible hours and have access to job security have resulted in higher total fertility rates and a stable women's labour force (Rubery et. al., 1994 ; Meulders et. al., 1994). Although the low fertility rate has been one of the hot topics in the National Diet, Japanese men are still unable to change their attitudes and hence cannot help change the system, and so it will take a long time to for women to be have the same rights as men. There is more to analysing gender and justice issues than just focusing on the conditions of women, but recent examinations of feminism have revealed the varying and unequal ways in which moral and societal principles are implemented (Orme, 2002).

Conclusion

After World War II, there was a baby boom in Japan. Approximately 250,000 babies were born each year until the mid 1950s (Sato, 2008: 11). Between the mid 1950s and the early 1970s, the TFR was stable at 2 (Sato, 2008: see also Chapter 1). Since then, the fertility rate has been decreasing and Japan now has a super low fertility rate (see Chapter 1). Low fertility rates occur in modern rich developed countries mainly because of (1) the changing of the meaning and value of having children, and (2) changing attitudes toward marriage (Sato, 2008; Atoh, 2008; Lin, 2013; see also Chapter 1). In the past, the Japanese patriarchal system ensured a higher number of children, but today this is no longer the case. The state has been conducting various quantitative studies to review what is causing low fertility (see Chapter 1).

For whom is low fertility a problem? It is definitely seen as a problem for the state and has become a critical issue, because along with the declining fertility rate in Japan, which has caused the population to decrease since 2004, there is now an ever more aging society: over 40% of the population has been over age 65 since 2010 (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2012). By 2055, it is expected that the percentage of the population between birth and age 14 will be reduced approximately by half (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 2012). Having fewer younger people in a society results in a smaller labour force, which is seen as ultimately weakening the economy (Etoh, 2005: 117; Maruo, 2008; Masuda, 2008). These phenomena have been a major concern for Japanese society, and steps have been taken to try to reverse this trend (Etoh, 2005). However, the Japanese government's strategy of simply 'throwing money at the problem' has not been working to reduce housewifization and has not changed the system. For example, women are able to receive extra financial support when they have more children, and the beneficial tax breaks cause more women to choose to be housewives (see Chapter 6). This financial care and welfare support has been helping to perpetuate a male-centered society with a greater degree of housewifization (Ochiai, 2008).

Is low fertility a problem for women? It might be partially a problem for women. Women deal with many issues and get caught up in other problems which may affect their decisions to have children, such as gender inequality, not being able to keep a decent job or career, and a lack of support from the state, their workplace, and their husbands. The women I interviewed said that those issues are greater problems for them than not having children or choosing to have fewer children. However, all the state and men have done is to blame women who are pursuing higher education. More women are becoming independent. Who is having children? It is women. The state is not focusing on women's wants and needs. The low fertility rate has not changed because the state is not focusing on trying to change the patriarchal culture. Although the state might be aware of the needs and desires of women, it is not willing to change the system and risk destroying the patriarchal male-dominated societal system. In this social structure, men are mainly the sole breadwinners of the household, and the paid work that women are able to do is just at a supportive level. In addition to the paid work women do, they also have much unpaid work, which men do not share in, resulting in wider gender inequality for women (see Chapter 1). Under these conditions women are not willing to have more children.

Is low fertility a problem for men? It is more likely a direct problem for men because men have to keep their family name, so fewer children mean fewer chances to have sons to perpetuate the family name. This may also be seen as a problem by men's parents. Both men and women face potential pressure from the husband's parents to have sons to keep the family name. Not even women themselves can truly make their own decisions on the number and gender of children they will have. Kiyomi, for example, is happy she has a daughter and is satisfied to have only one child; she is not concerned about the gender. Yet, she feels pressured by her parents-in-law to give birth to a son in order to maintain the name of her husband's family. Kiyomi, however, wants to be able to keep her career and to be promoted. Her dream is to go to the USA and to work toward a Ph.D. and to be supported by her university, but the demands of her in-laws are working against her. There is still much gender inequality when it comes to

women's fertility decisions, even for Kiyomi. Women find themselves caught in many difficult situations, hampering their ability to make their own decisions, which is a problem for women. What women want is important, and they should feel free to be able to pursue their own desires, but things are simply not like that in Japan.

There seems to be a gap in Japan between the ideal number of children that women would like to have and actual number of children that women do have. My own research revealed the same results as several quantitative studies, where the actual number of children is fewer and the ideal number of children is three for both Japanese women and men (see Chapter 1). I have found that nearly all of my respondents would like to have a daughter or daughters. Some of my participants said that they grew up in a family with one brother in addition to themselves, but said they had always wanted to have a sister. This could be why they would ideally like to have two daughters, as well as a son to perpetuate the family name of the husband, and thus could be a reason why the ideal number of children that women choose is three. Although my questions were geared toward women's responses, some of my respondents mentioned that their husbands' ideal number of children were higher than their own, which means men are not achieving their ideal number of children either. It seems Japanese men limit the number of children they actually have based on financial and practical reasons, such as amount of income and house size (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 5). It should be noted that although Japanese women and men are saying their ideal number of children is three, it does not affect their decisions. Or it may be that the attitudes of women have been changing. Although my research did not show that, women seem to prefer to have a smaller number of children.

It might be that women are having fewer children than before because women do not have any support from their husbands or from society in general. It is still not clear that women are having fewer children even after marrying, because some quantitative studies have shown that Japanese married women have more than one child. Other quantitative studies have asserted that more women are choosing to have only one child or none (see Chapter 1). After conducting my research, I can

say that low fertility is a very deep and complex issue, and it needs to be researched more and studied from different angles. In my research, Kiyomi said she has been postponing her decision to have another child until she achieves her goals, but by then it might be too late. Similarly, other women may miss the opportunity to have children for similar reasons. Some women might not even want to have any children.

What would encourage women to have more children? Many of my respondents told me that providing more support in the form of social programmes and work benefits, including allowing part-time workers to enjoy the same benefits and job security as full-time workers, would be very helpful. Women having to leave their jobs and lack of support in raising children are problems the state does not help enough with. I also asked how many children they would like to have if finances were not a concern. Many women stated that the actual the number of children would depend upon their husbands. This did not mean that their husbands would determine how many children they would have, but rather meant how much support and help they could expect from their husbands in raising children. I have also found that Japanese men are not changing their patriarchal attitudes, necessitating women to assume all the responsibilities of keeping up the household and raising children (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 3). In short, even though Japanese men also want to have more children, just as Japanese women do, they neither want to make any adjustments nor assume any domestic responsibilities, desiring only to keep their patriarchal kingdoms intact. My research suggests the low fertility rate is perhaps a consequence of men's behavior (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 3).

In analysing the causes of low fertility in Japan, many quantitative studies found that most households still have a single breadwinner, either a husband whose earnings are enough for the entire family to live on, or a woman who prefers to take care of children herself. As a result, the number of women in the labour force has not been increasing compared with Western countries or other Asian countries (Akagawa, 2004; Yu, 2009). On the other hand, more highly educated women either choose to remain single, or to postpone marriage and childbirth, causing

some researchers to place blame on women's choice and to criticize their individualism (Suzuki, 2008; Hara, 2008). Moreover, if we only consider quantitative research, some may reach the erroneous conclusion that Japanese women do not want to work after marrying or while raising a child, preferring to rely on men (see MHLW, 2010; 2012).

However, my qualitative research reveals women may not be able to keep a full time career after marriage and childbirth, either mentally or physically. Women face tremendous cultural pressure and social guilt for not taking care of children when they are small; it is traditionally perceived that the natural inclination of women is to take care of the house and children (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 3). Women who do keep a full time job after marrying are given fewer responsibilities and less important jobs, and often face a negative reception and atmosphere at the workplace. Some of my respondents were forced to leave their workplace; others left because of the dead end nature of their jobs or because of the difficulty of combining domestic work and paid work for women without support and help from their workplaces and husbands (see Chapter 3).

There are very few legislatively protected women's rights in the labour force. Japanese women cannot physically keep a job because there is no help from husbands with domestic work. The tendency to view gender inequality as natural makes it easier for men to ignore it, and they continue to benefit from the patriarchal-oriented labour system (Lorber, 2010). The responsibilities that women are expected to handle, often 'invisibly', as well as the expectation to remain committed to the marriage, are indicative of 'a legacy of male dominance' (Hackstaff, 1999: 214). Japan also has a very entrenched working culture with very long work hours (see Chapter 1). Thus, I found that many Japanese women gave up their financial independence to become a part of their husbands' families and subsequently had no other options left. They would have preferred to keep their jobs, to be able to work outside the home and to be independent, to use their knowledge, education and skills, and not to lose any time or to miss opportunities in the labour force.

There are similarities among low fertility countries in Asia but also differences. In Japan and South Korea, over half of women become housewives after marrying or having children (Lin, 2013). However, after childbirth and a certain time of child raising, more Korean women are participating in the labour force as full-time workers, compared to Japanese women (Ochiai, 2008). There is also a similar pattern in Hong Kong and Taiwan where more women are participating in the labour force on a full-time basis (Lin, 2013; Yu, 2009; Cheung and Holroyd, 2009). Comparing Seoul to Tokyo, the number of women in Seoul who are working after having children is twice that of Tokyo (Lin, 2013: 42). In Asian countries such as South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan there are a greater number of nurseries and child care facilities and a better availability of support systems, and more family members such as grandparents, and more communities to support and take care of children than in Japan (Ochiai, 2008; Yu, 2009; Atoh, 2010). In Japan, women do not have access to inexpensive public nurseries unless they have full-time jobs. If a woman leaves one job, she must find another full-time job to be able to use public nurseries. This system makes it difficult for women to have access to nurseries, which means more women are choosing to be part-time and not to be fully independent (see Chapter 6). In Japan, the number of people living with parents after marrying has been decreasing, and today more young people are working in large cities far away from their parents, which makes harder for grandparents to take care of grandchildren (see Chapter 5). In Chinese territories including Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, more women are financial providers compared to other Asian countries (also see Lin, 2013). Moreover, especially in Hong Kong, professional women are hiring immigrants to do housework (Lee, 2003; Sim, 2010).

However, in Hong Kong and Taiwan, fertility has been declining (see Chapter 1). Simply being able to keep a job does not make women want to choose to have more children and in itself is not a solution to low fertility. It might be that women prefer to have smaller families (Morgan and Taylor, 2006; Ochiai, 2008; Yu, 2009) or increasingly women are not choosing to have a child at all. This is not clear and needs to be addressed and studied more closely. My research also suggests it is

unclear whether independent women like Kiyomi would desire to have more children, even if they had a supportive work place, husband, and family. Even for Kiyomi, she is not completely independent and free to make her own decisions because of pressure from her parents-in-law. Asian countries need to focus less on maintaining the patriarchal social structure and should start focusing more on what women need (see Chapter 6).

Mason and Jensen (2003: 5) have observed that it is important to realise that the way people assess the value of marriage can change. For example, if women's economic opportunities improve, it may decrease the value of marriage when viewed through a more traditional prism of sociocultural sensibilities. In Western countries, as women's economic independence increases, the division of labour as the essential element of satisfaction in marriage is de-emphasised, shifting the focus more on sexual and emotional satisfaction or total income (Mason and Jensen, 2003: 6). In Japan, however, women are still stuck with the traditional division of labour and are unhappy with this and with the emotional side of their marriages. Japanese women still have a long way to go in being able to fully participate in the labour force. They are still thought of and treated as supplementary help. Compared to Western countries, Japanese women's economic independence is still low.

It would be very difficult for Japan to adopt a more Nordic-style system in which women could keep their jobs to support themselves (see Chapter 6) because of such strong family ties and the male-dominated patriarchal society structure. It would be too much to ask for instant equality on parity with men, but even small steps toward changing women's rights might change the attitude of women and men toward equality. It seems simple and reasonable to say that women should be able to keep their jobs, yet this is very hard to achieve in a male-dominated society like Japan. Now more than ever, however, Japan needs more labour power, to make to keep the economy stable. Men cannot continue to discount the importance of women's participation in the labour force and for them to be able to use their skills and knowledge in the long term as men do. In Hong Kong and

Taiwan, more women participate in the labour force, resulting in a greater balance of power offsetting some of the problems of low fertility (Yu, 2009). Wasting Japanese women's potential by limiting their participation in the labour force results in a weaker labour force. Women's talents should not be wasted. Women could and should be able to choose their own life course. As a feminist researcher, I am not indicating that women's reproduction is a necessity, but a right, and women should be able to choose if they want to have children or not while remaining in the labour force if that is their choice.

One bright spot in my interviews was Kiyomi, the only one of the married participants who was able to maintain a full-time career after marrying and having a child, and who is happy. She has nearly everything of which other women could only dream. Her parents were supportive of her as she pursued a higher education, and her workplace is very understanding and treats men and women equally. Her husband is also very helpful, and he even shares household and childcare responsibilities with her, and encouraged her to keep her career after having children. The other married respondents, in contrast, had an opposite experience. Married participants told me that their husbands changed after marrying. Before marrying, the men treated their girlfriends very well, and would do anything to pretend they would be supportive for their women. After marrying, the relationship dynamic would quickly evolve (or de-evolve, as it were) into a more traditional *ie* family structure which was more advantageous for men (Ochiai, 2008). Historically, this structure provided financial security for women (see Chapter 4), but today, in contemporary Japan, it tends to make women feel stuck in marriage, while men feel more secure.

The single respondents all saw their married friends become unhappy after marrying, which caused them to become negative toward marriage. However, single women in Japan face a great deal of pressure to marry, and are very aware of the limited time they have to marry and have children. Moreover, after marrying, women have to live for their families and focus on them, and are not able to enjoy themselves with so many responsibilities. Japanese women want to

avoid divorcing because of both their children and their parents (Hertog, 2008). When single women see and hear about those married women's experiences, it might in turn lead to the postponement of marriage or even no marriage, resulting in fewer or no children. Some of my respondents mentioned that once they pass the age at which it is desirable to have a child, they can see neither any point nor any advantages to marriage (see Chapter 4). Japanese women and men think marriage equals children, which is an advantage to being married (see Chapter 1). It is also important to note that in Western countries, when women can be financially independent, more women might choose to have children outside of marriage and to be a single parent. This could serve to inspire and encourage Japanese women to do the same. Perhaps eventually in Japan more cohabitation or unmarried mothers would be supported by the state and their workplaces, and removing the stigma and discrimination of being a single mother might help to increase the fertility rate (see also Atoh, 2008). At present, however, this is almost unthinkable in Japan.

One of the limitations of my research was that my respondents were only women. I do not know if men truly fail to acknowledge gender inequality, but according to my participants, men either do not care, or do not seem to want to change; their parents, culture and experiences have defined inequality as the norm. In most developed countries, more men are sharing financial and child care and domestic care responsibilities with women. Do Japanese men want to share the responsibilities of the household and finances? My research has indicated that they find it easier to work only outside the home and to relegate the housework and budgeting to women. In Japan, there is a culture of long working hours. However, I found in my research that even when the state tried to reduce men's working hours, men are still not participating in household duties to help support women, and are using their extra time for leisure activities (see Chapter 1, Chapter 3 and Chapter 6). I feel that Japanese men are using women more now than in the past. It used to be that men felt ashamed if they could not provide enough money for the family. However, some of my respondents told me that their husbands said that they could not give the women more than their employers pay (see Chapter 5),

and that they had to work meaningless part-time jobs in addition to all the domestic and care work at home, while the men changed nothing and worked the same number of hours. Japanese male-dominated society pushes many women to stay at home, to be more controlled and to lose their confidence. When women are forced to abandon their own ambitions and dreams, it takes a significant emotional toll. I thought about this more and more as I conducted interviews, analysed them and wrote my thesis, causing me to feel anger toward the male-dominated society and patriarchal social structure.

One thing that is important to remember is that Japanese women will eventually have to take care of both their own parents and parents-in-law. My respondents did not talk about it so much, perhaps due to their young age, but one day it will be their responsibility to take care of them. Family ties are strong in Japan, and there are not enough facilities to care for older people, so they must be taken care of by their families. The fewer children there are, the more responsibility each child will have to care for their parents when they become older. Most of the responsibility for elder care lies with women, which widens the gender inequality gap (Ochiai, 2008; Ishii, et., al 2012). Not only do women have to take care of their parents, but also their own children, making it difficult to hold on to their careers.

Japan is now at a turning point. Japanese women are having fewer children, although the male-dominated society would still prefer women to have more. Women should be able to have what they want for themselves, not what men want to give us. As various quantitative studies have shown, it is not beneficial for women when men try to give women what men think women need. Women's points of view need to be heard and to be taken into account, and we need more qualitative studies for that. Even well-known population demographer Peter MacDonald, who has been studying low fertility for decades in several countries including Japan, says he has realised using only quantitative research can limit how we understand fertility decline. He says that conducting qualitative research is important in order to understand the individual reasons behind women's

everyday decisions (MacDonald, 2000). I would hope that future qualitative research studies would be geared not only toward fertility decisions, but would also help to gain greater knowledge of gender inequality, and how that inequality directly influences women's fertility decisions.

If I had not conducted qualitative research, I would not have discovered many things. For example, many women might be financially comfortable after marrying, even though it means their loss of freedom, and they will often leave their jobs and will stay at home, isolated from society. Saki (married with children, employed part-time) said, *'I feel I'm living in a small world'*. Married women have lost the completely different life they once led before marrying. These women will naturally lose their self-esteem, but this factor is not studied or mentioned enough in Japanese society. Examining only quantitative research ignores the feelings of women that are revealed by qualitative research. To put it simply, such studies do not focus on Japanese women's identity, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Japanese women's feelings and depression have long been ignored.

Using qualitative research proved to be beneficial. I heard many surprising stories and uncovered some compelling opinions from the stories of the women I interviewed. Some of the women revealed insights I had never thought about. One was from a single woman who mentioned that she was truly afraid of experiencing the pain of giving birth, while others stated they did not want to go through the process of raising a child. I never expected that women, especially single women, could be so afraid of going through the birth process. I was able to understand a woman's becoming more anxious and worried about having her child after becoming pregnant, but the attitude of Japanese women seems to be different from that of women in other countries in that they are anxious and worried about the process while they are still single. Some single participants mentioned that they were worried about the risks of giving birth at a late age, and said that if they had to wait that long, they could not see any benefit in marrying.

The reasons for lack of qualitative research in Japan might be due to complicated privacy and cultural barriers. According to McKinley (2005), in his experience of trying to conduct research in Japan, he found that qualitative research is almost impossible, due in no small part to language and cultural barriers. Even Japanese people themselves experience cultural differences amongst different regions. McKinley experienced difficulties in trying to gather respondents' opinions and feelings, especially with sensitive questions. However, there are some non-Japanese researchers who have conducted sensitive qualitative research such as Nancy Rosenberger and Ekaterina Hertog (see Rosenberger, 2001; Hertog, 2008). Hertog interviewed Japanese single mothers and uncovered many interesting findings, which left me surprised and impressed.

Even though it can be difficult, it is possible to do qualitative research in Japan, even if the researcher is not a native Japanese speaker. However, throughout my research, I built relationships with participants and communicated with them as much as I could. Conducting the pre-interviews and main interviews with my participants proved to be not too difficult, and I used vignettes when there were sensitive questions or when respondents grew silent. I honestly would not say it was easy to conduct qualitative research, as I was a new researcher at first. As I progressed, the interviews went very well, and I gathered many rich stories, more than I had anticipated.

I wished I had had more time for my research. I did not want to waste women's stories, but I felt frustrated and felt as though my research would be endless. I was not able to chronicle all of the Japanese women's stories. I had to make the difficult decision to choose which stories were more important than others. As a researcher, I was very fortunate to have access to so much data. However, as a student, those abundant opportunities sometimes felt overwhelming.

Hopefully, this study could be used and expanded more in the future, encouraging researchers to conduct qualitative research and to add their findings to the growing base of knowledge. For example, at one time low fertility was blamed on

women, with many negative opinions surrounding them. Low fertility caused an imbalance in society with a greater aging population, resulting in fewer workers in the labour force and a weaker economy. Every country, including Japan, is focusing on trying to strengthen its economy, but if they want to make the country stronger, they cannot ignore the unequal treatment of the female half of the population. Many Japanese women are equally as educated, trained and skilled as men, and such a robust pool of talent should not be wasted; marginalizing women in the labour market exacerbates the labour shortage resulting from low fertility. At the beginning of my research even I asked myself: is low fertility women's fault? No, the answer is quite the opposite. I have found that the male-dominated patriarchal system has a negative impact on women's decision-making, which indicates low fertility.

Appendix I

Questions for pre-interview

- Tell me about your background.

_____ Age

_____ Where are you from?

_____ Marital status (e.g. single, married, divorced, etc.)

_____ Do you have any children?

_____ Education background

_____ Family background (e.g. wealthy or poor)

_____ How many people are in your family?

- Could you please describe the relationship between your mother and yourself?
- How do you and your mother differ in these areas?

_____ Education background

_____ Work

_____ Expectations

- Are you single or married? If you are single, do you have a steady boyfriend?

If yes:

Could you tell me about your partner?

_____ Length of relationship

_____ Satisfaction

_____ Partner's education

_____ Partner's profession

If no:

Could you please describe your ideal relationship?

_____ Last relationship

_____ Satisfaction

- If you are married, could you tell me about your husband?

_____ Length of relationship before marrying

_____ Length of relationship after marrying

_____ Where did you first meet?

_____ Husband's education background

_____ Husband's profession

_____ Satisfaction level of marriage

_____ Description of ideal relationship

- Could you describe to me your attitude toward fertility?

If you want to have children:

_____ How many

_____ Why

_____ Ideal number

_____ Actual number in reality

If you do not want to have children:

_____ Could you tell me the reasons why?

- What kind of contraception do you use?

Appendix II

Interview Question

Could you please describe what you consider to be upper class?

Interview questions for each group:

Single with steady boyfriend	Single with no steady boyfriend
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your boyfriend have a job? Full-time or Part time? • Is your image of marriage positive or negative? • How did you meet your partner? • Could you describe the relationship between you and your boyfriend? • Could you tell me the advantages of being single? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being single? • Do you want to get married? • Could you describe your ideal marriage? • Could you tell me the advantages of being married? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being married? • After getting married, what is your ideal share of housework? • Would you like to have any children? • How many children do you intend to have? ___ideal number ___actual number • Could you tell me ideal timing of having first child? • What are the challenges of having and raising children? • Having a child, do you think how much affect income? • What is your opinion of “shotgun weddings”? *1 • What kind of contraception do you use? • How do you feel about contraceptive oral pills? • How important for you is it to have a good sex relationship? *2 • What is your opinion of abortion? *3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your image of marriage positive or negative? • Could you tell me the advantages of being single? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being single? • Do you want to get married? • Could you describe your ideal marriage? • Could you tell me the advantages of being married? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being married? • After getting married, what is your ideal share of housework? • Would you like to have any children? • How many children do you intend to have? ___ideal number ___actual number • Could you tell me the ideal timing of having your first child? • What are the challenges of having and raising children? • How much do you think having a child would affect your income? • What is your opinion of “shotgun weddings”? • What kind of contraception do you use? • How do you feel about pills? • How important for you is it to have a good sex relationship? • What is your opinion of abortion?

Married with children	Married without children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you meet your husband? • Does your husband work? Full-time or Part time? • Is your image of marriage positive or negative? • Could you tell me the advantages of being married? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being married? • Could you tell me the differences between the reality of marriage and the ideal marriage? • Are you happier now than being single? • Could you tell me the advantages of being single? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being single? • Could you tell me ideal timing of having first child? • How many children do you have? • How many children do you intend to have? ___ ideal number ___ actual number • What are the challenges of having and raising children? • What was and is your ideal of sharing of household? ___ ideally ___ reality • How much do you think having a child would affect your income? • What is your opinion of “shotgun weddings”? • What kind of contraception do you use? • How do you feel about contraceptive oral pills? • How important for you is it to have a good sex relationship? • What is your opinion of abortion? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you meet your husband? • Does your husband work? Full-time or Part time? • Is your image of marriage positive or negative? • Could you tell me the advantages of being married? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being married? • Could you tell me the differences between the reality of marriage and the ideal marriage? • Are you happier than being a single? • Could you tell me the advantages of being single? • Could you tell me the disadvantages of being single? • Would you like to have any children? • Could you tell me when the ideal timing of having your first child was? Any differences between ideality and reality? • How many children do you intend to have? ___ ideal number ___ actual number • What are the challenges of having and raising children? • What was and is your ideal of sharing of household? ___ ideally ___ reality • How much do you think having a child would affect your income? • What is your opinion of “shotgun weddings”? • What kind of contraception do you use? • How do you feel about contraceptive oral pills? • How important for you is it to have good sex relationship? • What is your opinion of abortion?

- Remembering back to your own childhood, what kind of experiences would you like to give your child?
- If you did not have to be concerned with finances, how many children would you like to have?
- How do you or will you manage marriage, work and having children?
- If you know or remember any family and child support policies, could you tell me about them please?
- If you were the prime minister, how would you encourage women to have more children?

Appendix III

Vignettes

*1

- Opinion of having a child before marriage.

Example A: Miss B is 16 years old. She is a student. She has become pregnant. What should she do?

Example B: Miss A is 32 years old. She has a great career. She loves her job. She has a boyfriend, but their relationship is not serious. She has become pregnant. What should she do?

Example C: Miss C is 19 years old. She is working for a factory. She has become pregnant. What should she do?

*2

- Importance of a good sexual relationship

Example D: Mrs. A has a great husband. But Mrs. D is not sexually satisfied with her husband and their sex life. What should she do?

*3

- Abortion

Example E: Miss A is 32 years old. She has a steady boyfriend. She has a wonderful career. She has become pregnant and is planning to have an abortion.

Example F: Miss B is 40 years old. She is married. She has three children. She has become pregnant. She is planning to have an abortion.

Example G: Miss C is 18 years old. She has become pregnant. She is planning to have an abortion.

Appendix IV

Sample Tax Calculation

Example:

A wife who has two children earns (annual mean income of women working full time) ¥ 2,679,000 (£ 20,930)⁴³

A husband earns (annual mean income of men working full-time) ¥ 6,410,000 (£ 50,078)

Basic Deduction is ¥ 380,000 (£ 2,969)

Income Deduction ¥ 650,000 (£ 5,078)

Total: ¥ 103,000 (Tax Free allowance) (£ 8,047)

National Insurance ¥ 100,000⁴⁴ (£ 781)

National Pension ¥ 280,000⁴⁵ (£ 2,188)

Total: ¥ 380,000 (£ 2,969)

Wife's income Tax: ¥ 2,679,000 - (¥ 103,000 + ¥ 380,000) × 10%⁴⁶ = ¥ 219,600 (£ 1,716)

Wife's Council Tax:⁴⁷ ¥ 2,679,000 - (¥ 103,000 + ¥ 380,000) × 10% - ¥ 4,000 (City Tax) = ¥ 215,600 (£ 1,684)

Wife's After Tax earning: ¥ 2,679,000 - (¥ 219,600 + ¥ 215,600 + ¥ 380,000) = ¥ 1,863,800 (£ 14,560)

*The wife loses her entitlement of (Dependents support from husband's company) ¥ 212,400 (£ 1,659).

Child Support (Dependents support from husband's company) ¥ 96,000 (£ 750)⁴⁸ × 2 children = ¥ 192,000 (£ 15,000). In this case the husband has to pay an extra 20%⁴⁹ more council tax from his wages. This family might lose housing support from the company (see Chapter 5).

⁴³ The Japanese National Tax Agency in 2012.

⁴⁴ Depends on workplace; see chapter 1.

⁴⁵ Recruitment from the government for full-time workers.

⁴⁶ Below ¥ 1,950,000 is 5%, between over ¥ 1,950,000 to ¥ 3,300,000 is 10%, between ¥ 3,300,000 to ¥ 6,950,000 is 20%, between ¥ 6,950,000 to ¥ 9,000,000 is 23%, between ¥ 9,000,000 to ¥ 18,000,000 is 33% and above is 40%.

⁴⁷ Can be different in cities which use guidelines from the Japanese Tax Agency.

⁴⁸ Mean child support Can be different in cities which use guidelines from the Japanese Tax Agency in 2012.

⁴⁹ Under ¥ 5,000,000 extra 10% over is 20%.

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