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AKIKO YOSHIDA
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CULTURAL LAG, ANOMIE, AND SINGLE WOMEN IN JAPAN

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

Dr. Loretta E. Bass, Chair

Dr. Ann M. Beutel

Dr. Thomas Burns

Dr. B. Mitchell Peck

Dr. Elyssa Faison

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For Brian and Mia

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Increased singlehood among Japanese women was the subject I wanted to study when I enrolled in the Sociology Master's program at the University of Wyoming in 1992. I left Japan to do my master's that year, myself being single and in my late-20s – past *tekireiki,* or the age by which Japanese women were expected to marry. My parents opposed my plan to study abroad, wishing I would have just "settled down." Many of my female friends in Japan were also staying single at that time. We were what I refer to in this study as "women of the boom cohort" – the cohort of women for which marriage rates drastically declined.

Despite my initial interest, I did not choose this subject for my master's thesis. But ten years after completion of my master's degree, marriage rates in Japan continued to fall, and *all* my single friends in Japan were still single (though I had by then married my current husband, whom I met in the States). Some sociologists, as well as the popular media, gave explanations for the phenomenon of increased singlehood in Japan, but I was not satisfied with any of these explanations. I began my doctoral program at OU in 2005, determined this time to take on the subject of marriage decline for my dissertation.

Because I began my doctoral program with this determination, most courses I took directly or indirectly influenced my project, shaping research questions, theoretical framework, and research design. Working with some of my professors gave me opportunities to explore literature on relevant subjects. For their helpful suggestions along these lines, I would like to thank Dr. Loretta Bass, Dr. Ann Beutel, Dr. Thomas Burns, Dr. Martin Piotrowski, Dr. B. Mitchell Peck, all from the OU Department of

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As my committee chair, Dr. Bass spent many hours going through my early drafts, and provided many important suggestions. She excelled at pushing just hard enough to move me to complete good work in a timely manner. She was also one of my biggest supporters and cheerleaders as I undertook a job search. Further, thanks to Dr. Bass's support, encouragement, and stimulation, I was able to complete many other research projects and win awards. I cannot thank her enough for all of this help.

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Some of the individuals who gave me referrals went to great lengths to find interviewees and arrange meetings. As friends from days gone by, some went through great trouble even though all were busy with work or family, and one was dealing with a health problem. I was moved to rediscover these enduring friendships so many years after leaving Japan.

As typical Japanese parents of their generation, my parents expected me to graduate from high school, work a few years, marry, and become a stay-at-home

mother. Obviously, I defied their expectations, and I am aware that this caused much worry and stress for them. I would like to thank them for putting up with it all. I would also like to thank my mother for her quiet support during my field work. She prepared nutritious meals when I was pressed for time with interviews and transcriptions and thus neglectful of my own health. My father – a typically stubborn Japanese man from the wartime generation and tightfisted with compliments – recently told me how proud he was of me. As a stubborn Japanese daughter who was raised by parents of the wartime generation, it was too embarrassing and awkward for me to react to his compliments with gratitude. I would like to express here, though, how much his words meant to me.

Finally, the biggest thanks go to my husband, Brian, and our daughter, Mia. When I began my doctoral program, Mia was seven, and I swore to myself I would not allow the stress of graduate work and long commuting to spill into our family life. But I know I was often a grouchy mother, and sometimes unable to be there for Mia when she needed me to be. She, however, did a great job putting up with all the negatives, and on many occasions even cheered me up with her beautiful, big, happy smiles. Thank you, Mia, for everything you are.

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guidance helped me become a better writer, and he read the entire draft of my dissertation, patiently correcting errors I continue to make as a non-native English speaker/writer. Recently, he made the very difficult decision to leave his tenured, associate professor position in order to give me the chance to have an academic career. I am more than thankful for the sacrifice he made, and very grateful for his faith in me and his positive attitude towards this new phase in our lives as we head for Wisconsin.

I feel I would not have earned my doctoral degree without the support I received from Brian and Mia, and I dedicate this dissertation entirely to these two beautiful persons whom I dearly love and admire.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses Japan as a case study and seeks to contribute to a better understanding and theorizing of the phenomenon of marriage decline in the industrial world. Guided by a theoretical framework that synthesizes the life course perspective, William Ogburn's hypothesis of cultural lag, and Emile Durkheim's concepts of anomie and egoism, this study hypothesizes cohort differences in causes of increased singlehood. Employing mixed methods, four hypotheses that predict cohort differences in marriage age norms and conceptions of gender roles are tested by original, in-depth interview research with forty never-married and married women in Japan, and by statistical analysis of the 2005 Japanese General Social Survey (n = 1,167). The research findings support three of the four hypotheses and uncover other important factors such as cohort differences in views of parents' and peer marriages. Reasons for non-marriage differ by cohort, and important causal factors include changes in employment opportunities; lag, adaptation, and erosion of gender culture; and presence of other variables that impede marriage. This study contributes by empowering women, informing better social policies with the potential to enhance the lives of individuals in Japan, and constructing a more applicable theory of non-marriage

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The present study uses Japan as a case study and seeks to contribute to a better understanding and theorizing of the phenomenon of marriage decline in the industrialized world. Marriage rates declined significantly in Japan since the 1980s when its economy was booming. The rates continued to decrease after Japan entered a severe recession in the mid-1990s, and today unprecedented numbers of Japanese women are unmarried in all age groups, most of them living with parents (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2005, 2008a). As discussed in the following chapters, existing theories of marriage, which often assume ubiquitous patterns in all industrial societies, do not adequately explain the Japanese pattern. Past studies that examined Japan's marriage decline made important contributions by demonstrating the inapplicability of existing theories and suggesting other influential factors (such as relevance of the prevailing gender ideology of Japan), but do not succeed in building an adequate theory of non-marriage. Most of these studies are quantitative analyses of survey and demographic data.

In a quest to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon and improve sociological theory, this study employs two research methods: 1) in-depth, open-ended interview research with never-married and married women in Japan, and 2) statistical analysis of the 2005 Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS), a secondary data resource using a nationally representative sample. By combining two methods, this study minimizes risks related to *reliability* and *validity*, and seeks to understand why

singlehood increased among recent cohorts of women in Japan – as well as what this means to them.

This research takes both deductive and inductive approaches. A theoretical framework synthesized from the life course perspective, William Ogburn's hypothesis of *cultural lag* ([1922, 1950] 1966), and Emile Durkheim's concepts of anomie and egoism ([1951] 1979) guide both the qualitative and quantitative research. Applying these theories, this study expects to find that economic changes have a profound impact on the marital behavior of young Japanese women. Japan's economy boomed between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, entering a severe recession that has persisted since the mid-1990s. Marital behavior, therefore, may vary depending on cohort membership – whether women spent their young adulthood during the time of the boom or the recession. Reasons for non-marriage, views and feelings towards their own circumstances, and expectations about marriage may differ between unmarried women of the boom and recession cohorts. A set of hypotheses regarding cohort differences is tested in both the quantitative and qualitative portions of this research. Other factors that might be related to declined marriage rates are also explored in the interview research, which allows interviewees to voice their views, perceptions, feelings, and reasoning.

Japan presents an excellent case for study because current sociological theories fail to explain its pattern adequately. Increased singlehood largely accounts for Japan's plummeting fertility rates (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2003), and similar trends are observed in countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, South Korea, and Taiwan (e.g., Kiernan 2004; Tsuya and Bumpass 2004). Using

powerful and versatile theories in conjunction with two research methods, this project attempts to contribute to the construction of a theory of non-marriage applicable to a wide range of societies.

This research also aims to empower women in Japan. Gender scholars of Japan (e.g., Ogasawara 1998) have noted that traditional gender culture persists in Japan and that women achieved limited gains in economic power over the last few decades. Demographic changes such as increased singlehood are often theorized as reflective of improvements in women's social position, but this study underscores the importance of gender inequality in explaining demographic phenomena. Additionally, never-married Japanese women are likely to face problems such as financial and emotional insecurity, as suggested by the recent rise in the suicide rate among this group (Japan Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2004). Still, they are often teased and stigmatized as irresponsible and problematic in the popular media (e.g., Sakai 2006) and their issues are neglected by government policies (Roberts 2002; Zaiki 2000). This study attempts to contribute to the empowerment of this marginalized group through two channels: by a research process that allows women to raise issues they wish to discuss and define their situations using their own words, and by increasing social recognition of women's issues.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I first explain the phenomenon of increased singlehood in Japan along with related issues. Next, I present sociological theories of non-marriage and assess their applicability to the case of Japan, reviewing empirical findings. As discussed below, existing sociological theories are built based on observations of several Western societies and all fall short in explaining the marriage decline of Japan. Lastly, I review other empirical studies that highlight the relevance of Japanese cultural contexts to marriage decline.

TRENDS IN MARRIAGE AND RELATED ISSUES

Japan's marriage rates declined rapidly during the economic boom, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, and continued to decline after Japan entered a severe economic recession in the mid-1990s. Prior to the 1980s, in the postwar era, a majority of women in Japan married in their 20s. Today, not only has marriage in one's 20s become rarer, but large percentages of women in all age groups remain unmarried.

Table 2-1 shows the proportions of never-married women by year in Japan between 1950 and 2005. In 1970, only 18.1% of women between 25 and 29 and 7.2% between 30 and 34 were never married. These percentages have increased significantly since the 1980s, with the largest increase observed among the age group 25-29 between 1980 and 1990 (a 16.2% increase from 24.0% to 40.2%). Those staying single in their late-20s were once a minority, but are now mainstream (59.9% in 2005). For older age

groups, the proportions of never-married females have gone up as well. For the age groups 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, and 45-49, the rates increased from 7.2% to 32.6%, 5.8% to 18.6%, 5.3% to 12.2%, and 4.0% to 7.9%, respectively, between 1970 and 2005 (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2008a; Japan National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2005; Zaiki 2000).

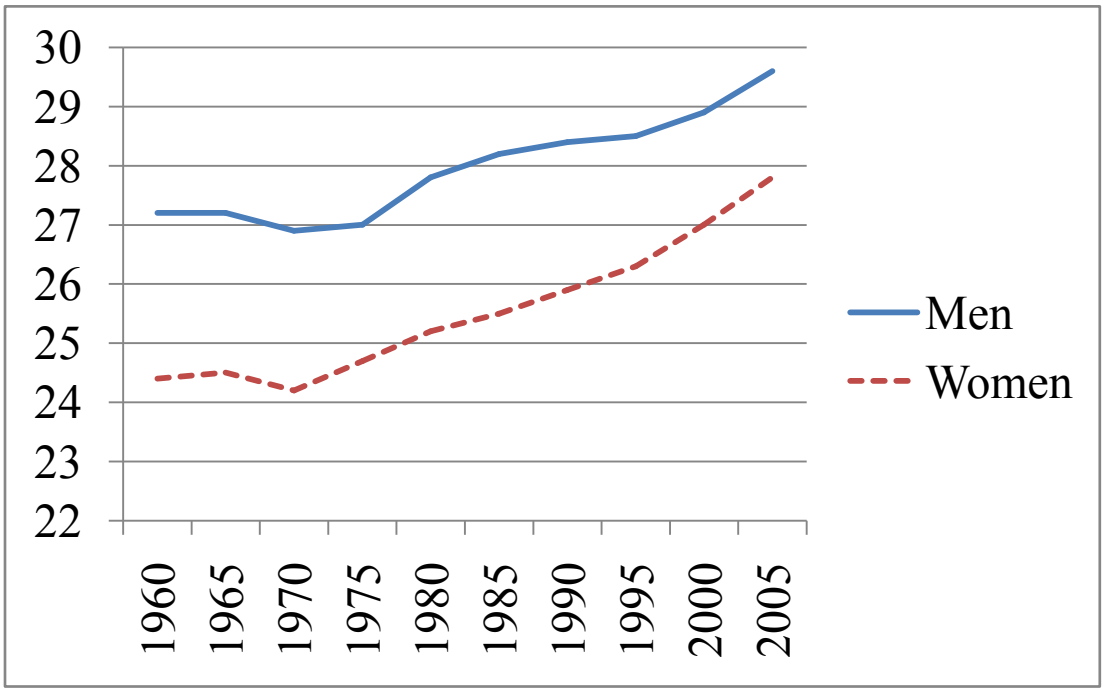
Looking at Figure 2-1, we see that part of the reason for increased singlehood is delayed marriage. The average age at first marriage for women rose from 24.2 years old in 1970 to 25.2 in 1980, 25.9 in 1990, and 27.8 in 2005. However, the significant increase in the proportion of never-married among people over 30 cannot be explained solely by postponement of marriage. Many women who did not marry in their late 20s remained single in their 30s. For instance, the age cohort of 25-29 in 1990 was 35-39 in 2000. The never-married proportion of this female age cohort was 40.2% in 1990 and 13.8% in 2000. This means that more than one third of single women who were never married in 1990 were still never married 10 years later, when they were in their late 30s. For more recent cohorts, the rate of remaining unmarried in one's 30s seems even higher. For cohorts aged 25-29 and 30-34 in 2000, the corresponding rates were 54.0% and 26.6% in 2000, which went down only to 32.6% and 18.6% in 2005 (see Table 2-1). This means that approximately 60-70% of single women of these age cohorts remained unmarried five years later, in their 30s. Assuming that the observed trends continue, in coming years Japan is expected to have, compared to the past, even larger percentages of women in their 40s and 50s remaining single.

Table 2-1. Percentages of Women Never-Married by Year: Japan, 1950-2005

Age/year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
20-24	55.3	68.3	71.6	77.7	85.0	87.9	89.4
25-29	15.2	21.6	18.1	24.0	40.2	54.0	59.9
30-34	5.7	9.4	7.2	9.1	13.9	26.6	32.6
35-39	3.0	5.5	5.8	5.5	7.5	13.8	18.6
40-44	2.0	3.2	5.3	4.4	5.8	8.6	12.2
45-49	1.5	2.1	4.0	4.4	4.6	6.3	7.9

Sources: For figures in 1950 and 1960, Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs, Statistics Bureau, cited in Zaiki (2000); for figures in 1970 and 1980, Japan National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2005); for figures in 1990, 2000, and 2005, Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2008a).

Figure 2-1. Average Age at First Marriage in Japan: 1960-2005



Source: Japan Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (2008)

The decline of marriage rates is not a phenomenon peculiar to Japan, but common to all industrial nations. Many researchers from the West point out that marriage decline is accompanied by increased cohabitation and unwed childbearing, and therefore, that non-marriage does not necessarily imply decreased interest in forming intimate relationships (Cherlin 2004; Kiernan 2000, 2004; Raley 2000; Smock 2004; Teachman, Tedrow, and Crowder 2000).

However, in the case of Japan, cohabitation and unwed childbearing remain rare. A great majority of single women (and men) live with their parents or siblings or live alone (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2005). According to Ato (1994), only 1% of single men and women cohabited in the early 1990s, and Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura (2001) estimated that only 4% of women aged 25 to 29 and 5% of those 30 to 34 have ever cohabited in Japan. Based on a survey conducted in Japan more recently, Raymo, Iwasawa, and Bumpass (2009) show that rates of individuals who ever cohabited are higher – average 15% – than earlier estimates for birth cohorts from 1954-84. Most of these cohabiting unions, however, resulted in marriage. Therefore, cohabitation in Japan is a "prelude to marriage rather than as an alternative to marriage or singlehood" (Raymo, Iwasawa, and Bumpass 2009: 800). The unwed birth rate has been around 1 to 2% of all births for the last 40 years (Ato 1994; Raymo 1998; Rindfuss et al. 2004; Tsuya and Mason 1995; Zaiki 2000). In other words, a majority of single Japanese women (and men) are, unlike their Western counterparts, not forming intimate relationships that involve co-residence with partners or children.

Does this mean that an increasing proportion of women (and men) has little interest in marriage and intimate relationships? According to the National Fertility Surveys (*Shussho Doko Kihon Chosa*) (Table 2-2) conducted regularly on nationally representative samples of single men and women, and other studies (Ato 1989, 1994; Ato and Kojima 1983; Ato et al. 1994; Kaneko 1994; Nakano 1994), individuals' intention of marriage has hardly changed during the period of the marriage decline. A great majority of men and women intended to marry one day. Slight increases (and fluctuations) in the percentage of those who had no intention to marry are observed, but these are not large enough to account for the large increases in rates of singlehood in Japan.

Table 2-2. Intention of Marriage among Single Men and Women Ages 18-34: Japan, 1982-2005

Men

	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2005
Intend to marry one day	95.9%	91.8%	90.0%	85.9%	87.0%	87.0%
No intention to marry	2.3%	4.5%	4.9%	6.3%	5.4%	7.1%
No answer	1.8%	3.7%	5.1%	7.8%	7.7%	5.9%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Women

	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2005
Intend to marry one day	94.2%	92.9%	90.2%	89.1%	88.3%	90.0%
No intention to marry	4.1%	4.6%	5.2%	4.9%	5.0%	5.6%
No answer	1.7%	2.5%	4.6%	6.0%	6.7%	4.3%
Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

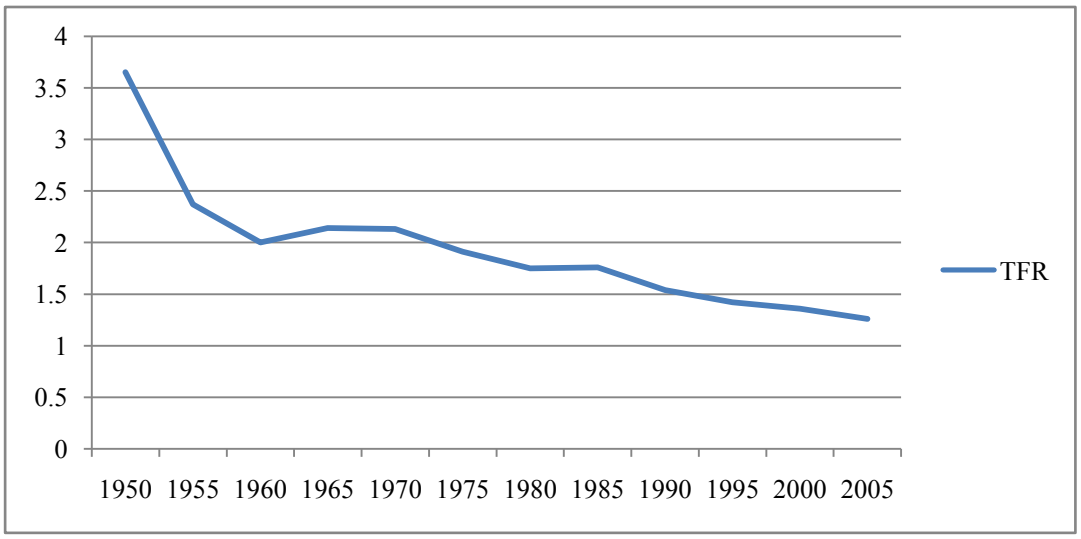
Source: National Fertility Surveys, Japan National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2008).

Notes: Single individuals include never-married, divorced, and widowed individuals.

The increase of singlehood has had serious consequences for Japanese society. Japan's fertility rate (Figure 2-1) began a declining trend in 1976, and hit the lowest ever-recorded total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.26 in 2005, though it rose to 1.37 in 2008 (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2009). According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2003), increased singlehood accounts for almost 90% of the fertility decline between 1975 and 1990 and 60% of the decline between 1990 and 2000. The TFRs in recent years are far below replacement level (i.e., TFR 2.1), and combined with increased life expectancy (e.g., 79.29 for males and 86.08 for females in 2008), Japan has been one of the most rapidly graying societies in the world (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2009).

In the late 1980s, the Japanese government formally framed plummeting fertility as a social problem – a threat to productivity and pension disbursement in the future – and since then has implemented new policies and programs with hopes to increase fertility rates. These policies and programs included provision of childcare subsidies and parental leave, as well as campaigning for paternal involvement in childrearing (Boling 2008; Gelb 2003; Roberts 2002; Zaiki 2000). These programs, however, primarily focused on giving incentives to increase fertility within marriage and largely neglected the issue of increased singlehood, despite its direct impact on dwindling fertility rates (Zaiki 2000).

Figure 2-2. Changes in Total Fertility Rates in Japan: 1950-2005



Source: Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Statistics Bureau (2009)

Increased singlehood has, instead, been treated as a symptom of problematic traits exhibited by individuals, particularly women. Women who remain single past the "appropriate age" of marriage have been stigmatized, for instance, by negative labeling widely used in Japanese society. In the 1980s, such women were called "Christmas Cake," meaning that they would not be able to sell themselves (i.e., marry) and so become leftovers (*urenokori*) after age 25, like a cake made to be sold Christmas day (December 25) that is not bought (Brinton 1993; Tokuhiro 2010). More recently, the term *Parasite Singles* came to be used to refer to single women and men. The term was coined by sociologist Masahiro Yamada (1999), who argued that individuals were not marrying because they preferred living "parasitically" with their parents so they could enjoy carefree lifestyles and consumption. Through the media's use of this term, single women were depicted as immature, irresponsible, dependent, selfish, materialistic, and refusing to take on family responsibilities.

Another recent term, "*Makeinu* (defeated dogs)," labels single women over 30 as "losers." The term originated from a book titled "*Makeinu no tooboe* (distant howling of a defeated dog)" written by Junko Sakai (2006), an unmarried woman who was, at that time, in her late 30s. The author's intention was to express the viewpoints of single women, and her use of the term "defeated dogs" was sarcastic. Yet the term began a life of its own after the media picked it up as a new, negative label for unmarried women.

Many single women in Japan are, however, likely to be facing problems such as economic insecurity and psychological distress (e.g., loneliness, depression, etc.). Japan is ranked lowest among developed nations in the United Nation's Gender

Empowerment Measure (Kerbo 2008) and, according to Shirahase (2005), in 2002 Japanese women's average earnings came to only about 65.5% of men's. The statistics on suicide reported by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (2004) showed an increase in suicide rates among never-married women (and men) in recent years.

Yet current government policy discussions not only neglect these women's issues (as discussed above) but are sometimes punitive, treating the women themselves as the *very cause* of Japan's population problem. In 2003, then Prime Minister Mori opined that single, childless women are unworthy of social security benefits because they do not contribute to society by bearing children (AtWiki 2009). On January 27, 2007, then Japanese Health Minister Yanagisawa made world news by referring to women as "birth-giving machines" (*umu kikai*) (CNN.com 2007; The Japan Times 2007). He made a remark at a local political meeting regarding the "low fertility rate problem" (*shoshika mondai*), saying "(the government) can only ask for (women) to do their best (i.e., to have more babies) since the number of *birth-giving machines* is fixed." The Japanese government's treatment of women as mere reproductive machines has entrenched historic roots (Faison 2007; Garon 1997; Miyake 1991; Nolte 1991; Ohki 1987; Shinotsuka 1994; Tomida 2004; Uno 1991, 2005) which, apparently, remains strong to this day.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF NON-MARRIAGE AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS IN JAPAN

As stated earlier, the decline of marriage rates is a common phenomenon in industrial societies, and there are several sociological theories that attempt to explain this change in marital behavior. These theories of non-marriage (in industrial societies) can be roughly classified into four perspectives: 1) economic, 2) cultural, 3) demographic, and 4) cross-national variation. I review each perspective below, and present empirical findings in Japan to assess the applicability of each perspective to the case of Japan. As discussed below, all of these theories fall short in explaining Japan's marriage decline.

Economic perspectives: changing economic positions of individuals as cause

There are three main camps within this perspective. Two focus on women's economic position as a factor that determines interest in, and timing of, marriage for women. The other calls attention to men's economic conditions.

Women's economic independence hypothesis – the specialization model

One of the most influential theories of the retreat from marriage comes from neoclassical economic theory. Gary Becker ([1981, 1991] 1993) theorizes that specialization by gender in marriage – wives specialized in domestic work and husbands in paid work – maximizes the benefits of marriage for individuals. When this specialization structure breaks down (i.e., when women become productive at paid

work and gain economic independence), the benefits of marriage are reduced for women, marriage loses its appeal, and fewer women marry or stay married.

Becker's theory is commonly referred to as the "independence hypothesis," and is an application of rational choice or the social exchange perspective to an arena of family-related behaviors. In this perspective, humans are viewed as rational actors who choose courses of action based on the calculation of perceived rewards and costs. Rewards in social exchange are not always clearly measurable, and therefore, the assessment of gains (and losses) is highly subjective (Blau 1964). In Becker's theory, economically independent women are expected to choose singlehood (or divorce), because they are more likely to figure marriage as more costly (or less rewarding). In societies with an increasing number of such independent women, the number of marriages is expected to decrease correspondingly.

Applying this perspective, Ohashi (1993) argues that Japanese women came to avoid marriage starting in the 1980s when they (allegedly) advanced their economic position. To support this argument, she presents census data that show increases in women's higher education attainment and labor force participation. She also cites closing gaps in starting salaries by gender and opinion polls in which fewer young women agree with the statement, "Marriage is the source of happiness for women." Ohashi did not test her hypothesis but made her arguments based on the timing of all these changes that coincided. She contends that Japanese marriage decline must have been due to women's declined interest in marriage, itself triggered by gains in economic independence.

Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura (2001) also list women's economic advancement as a cause of increased singlehood based on the timing of each event. They point out that labor force participation by women aged 25-29 dramatically increased between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, and that the wage gap by gender for individuals under age 30 narrowed from .74 in 1973 to .89 in 1999. This study is similarly limited due to an argument based on the simultaneous occurrences of these events, and fails to provide evidence for correlation or causality between independence and increased singlehood.

Other studies in Japan do not support the independence hypothesis. Instead, delayed or non-marriage has been found to be strongly associated with *cohort* (Hiroshima 1999; Iwama 1999; Raymo 1998, 2003a; Tsuya and Mason 1995). Within the cohort experiencing rapid marriage decline, rates dropped for *all* levels of education and occupation (Ato 1994; Iwama 1999; Tsuya and Mason 1995) and for both employed and unemployed women (Hiroshima 1999). In his earlier study (1998), Raymo found a negative effect of women's wages on marriage (i.e., support for the independence hypothesis), but he corrected his conclusion in his later analysis (2003a), reporting that for this cohort, the chance of marriage is lower for *both* women in the most prestigious occupations *and* for those in unstable or no employment.

Ohashi (1993) interprets women's disagreement with the "marriage as women's happiness" statement to be a reflection of lack of interest in marriage. However, as mentioned above, national opinion poll surveys do not show any decline in women's intention or desire to marry. In their qualitative studies, Kamano (2005), Nemoto

(2008), and Tokuhiro (2010) observed that most unmarried women had a strong desire to marry, and few claimed career ambition as a reason for non-marriage (Nemoto 2008).

Also stated above is that a majority of single women live with their parents and other family members, and that Japanese women as a whole remain disadvantaged economically in comparison to women in other industrial nations. According to Raymo and Iwasawa (2005), a great majority of young, unmarried women consider men's earning potential to be one of the most important criteria for spouse selection. These findings call into question the idea that Japanese women gained enough economic independence to forego marriage.

Career entry theory

Another economic perspective, represented by Valerie Oppenheimer's work, challenges Becker's independence hypothesis. She argues that the association between women's economic independence and marriage was falsely identified by Becker. She and her colleagues (Oppenheimer 1994, 1997; Oppenheimer, Blossfeld, and Wackerow 1995; Oppenheimer and Lew 1995) found that in the United States, women's economic independence, measured by education, earnings, or occupation, decreased the chance of marriage at young ages, but increased lifetime chances. In other words, independent women are likely to postpone marriage but actually marry at higher rates. They contend that women's careers and potential earnings are valued in the marriage market and increase chances of marriage.

Testing this hypothesis in the United States, Sweeney (2002) found support for it, but also a cohort difference. In the United States, for the younger cohort (born

between 1961 and 1965), higher economic prospects were *strongly, positively* associated with marriage, but this association was not statistically significant for the older cohort (born between 1950 and 1954). Earlier studies from the United States, on the other hand, found *negative* effects of women's economic independence on marriage (Bernard 1972; Preston and Richards 1975), or *no* significant effect (Cherlin 1980; Waite and Spitze 1981). These findings suggest that the effects of women's economic prospects differ by cohort, or by historic period.

As discussed above, however, earlier studies in Japan found no clear association between women's earnings (or potential earnings measured by education) and marriage rates. Cohort membership was the determining factor, and for the cohort in which marriage rates declined significantly, young women remain unmarried regardless of their education, employment, or urban-rural upbringing (Ato 1994; Hiroshima 1999; Iwama 1999; Tsuya and Mason 1995).

More recent studies, on the other hand, produced mixed results regarding the effects of education on marriage. According to Raymo's study (2003b), highly educated women are more likely to postpone marriage, but their lifetime marriage rates are no different from lower-educated women. In a more recent study, however, he and his colleague found that the marriage decline was slightly larger for highly educated women (Raymo and Iwasawa 2005). In contrast, according to Shirahase's study (2005), there has always been higher incidence of non-marriage among highly educated women (compared to those with less education), but rates of non-marriage did not increase significantly among women with higher education between 1985 and 1995 (i.e., during

the period of rapid marriage decline). Shirahase contends that during this time period, the decline of marriage was more pronounced among women with less education.

In consideration of the applicability of career entry theory, it is important to examine whether higher education attainment necessarily yields higher lifetime earnings for women in Japan. Brinton (1993) points out that the rate of becoming homemakers is higher among highly educated Japanese women (compared to those with lower education), and argues that women's education in Japan is primarily applied in the education of these women's own children, as opposed to career advancement. The highly gendered nature of Japan's labor market has been well documented by many scholars of Japan (e.g., Brinton 1993, 2007; Kelsky 2001; Kerbo 2008; Ogasawara 1998; Sugimoto 2003; Tokuhiro 2010). Women are typically placed in dead-end clerical positions in large corporations. The term used to describe such employees, "Office Ladies (OL)," demonstrates that these are female-track jobs.

Further, as Table 2-3 shows, there was little change in higher education attainment among women between 1975 and 1990, and the most notable increase in college enrollment is not observed until the 1990s. The rates more than doubled between 1990 and 2000, the time period after the marriage rates began to decline (in the 1980s). This increase in educational credentials among women seems to follow the marriage decline. It may have important effects on the timing and rates of marriage for more recent age cohorts, but it does not explain why marriage rates declined for the age cohort whose educational attainment was similar to the age cohort that came before it.

Table 2-3. Percentage of Women in Higher Education: Japan, 1960-2005

level of education/year	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
2 year college/vocational school	3.0	6.7	11.2	20.2	21.0	20.8	22.2	24.7	17.2	13.0
4 year college	2.5	4.6	6.5	12.7	12.3	13.7	15.2	22.9	31.5	36.8
total (post-secondary education)	5.5	11.3	17.7	32.9	33.3	34.5	37.4	47.6	48.7	49.8

Source: Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (2008)

Declined economic prospects of young men

The third economic perspective attributes delayed and foregone marriages to male economic conditions (Easterlin 1980; Edin and Reed 2005; Oppenheimer 1988, 1994, 2000; Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, and Lim 1997; Smock, Manning, and Porter 2005). In the United States, men with low economic prospects were observed to marry later, marry at lower rates, and cohabit at higher rates, compared to those in better economic positions. Easterlin theorizes that restricted economic opportunities for young men (i.e., lower incomes relative to their fathers) are the key cause of delayed marriage. Note that Easterlin attributes differing economic conditions to cohort sizes – large age cohorts face more competition, and thus relative economic deprivation. Poorer economic prospects among males in the United Stated observed by Easterlin, however, should be considered period effects – consequences of a period of economic downturn, rather than of cohort size (Kahn and Mason 1987).

A similar, economic argument was made for Japan's marriage decline by Yamada (1996, 1999) in his "parasite singles" hypothesis. According to him, parents of the cohort of increased singlehood were affluent and could afford to allow their grown children to reside with them. He argues that many young adults preferred co-residence with parents to marriage because they could enjoy free time and use their own income for leisure, thanks to affluent parents' provision of free residence and domestic service. He labeled such unmarried individuals "parasite singles" because they lived "parasitically" with parents. Yamada contends that the number of parasite singles increased after the downturn of Japan's economy since the mid-1990s, particularly among women with higher education and men with lower education and income. These

groups of men and women choose parasitic residence more often, he argues, because marriage for them means a lowering of living standards. He also assumes that parasite singles have close relationships with their parents, which further encourages them to stay dependent.

Empirical studies, however, do not support either Easterlin's or Yamada's theories. First of all, the most significant decrease in marriage rates was observed during the economic boom from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, and therefore, the economic conditions for young men were favorable (Tsuya and Mason 1995). During this time, marriage rates declined among men with both high and low income (Shirahase 2005). Parents of co-residing singles were not particularly affluent, earning average incomes at most (Shirahase 2005), and greater economic resources for fathers were not associated with daughters' marriage timing (Raymo 2003b).

The number of unmarried individuals who live with parents – "parasite singles" – increased most significantly during the economic boom (Shirahase 2005; Tsuya and Mason 1995). These co-residing children were found to have worse relationships with parents, compared to those who lived apart (Tanaka 2003). In addition, co-residence was found to be more common among eldest sons (Oishi 2004). Living with parents until marriage is a societal norm of Japan (Rindfuss et al. 2004), and it is particularly so for eldest sons, who are traditionally expected to live with their parents after marriage (White 2002). The increased number of "parasite singles" appears to be a mere consequence of increased singlehood since the economic boom. Male economic conditions and preference of co-residence with parents do not seem to explain why marriage rates declined in Japan during the economic boom.

For the more recent or 1990s economic recession cohort, however, marriage rates were found to be lower among men with lower education and income (Shirahase 2005), and the average income of men and women who live with their parents was significantly lower than those who live independently (Honda [2002] 2005; Kukimoto 2005). There was also higher incidence of co-residence among individuals who worked only part-time or were unemployed (Oishi 2004). These findings suggest that male economic conditions were perhaps relevant in more recent years, after Japan entered a severe recession in the mid-1990s. In summary, declined economic prospects of young males might explain increased singlehood for the cohort of the economic recession, but not for the cohort of the economic boom.

Cultural perspective: shifts in culture (declined traditionalism) as cause

Cultural theorists attribute marriage decline to a shift in culture. The second demographic transition theory (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006; van de Kaa 1987) predicts that individuals pursue self-actualization in affluent societies because mere sustenance is no longer a concern for them. This results in an increase in non-traditional lifestyles such as divorce, later marriage, cohabitation, and unwed parenthood – factors that lead to declined marriage. Similarly, others argue that the decline of marriage as an institution in the Western world is a reflection of ideational changes – more value placed on individual needs, desires, and happiness than adherence to tradition. For instance, Giddens (1991) contends that in circumstances of "high modernity," intimate relationships are no longer anchored in external social structure but become "pure relationships" that depend on self-reflexivity, mutual

commitment and trust, etc. (in contrast to more traditional marriage bound by traditions and tight-knit social networks). According to Cherlin (2004), the marriage institution is "deinstitutionalized" in societies such as the United States, and marriage becomes a symbol of personal achievement and self-development. Giddens acknowledges that individuals of lower socioeconomic status are relatively deprived of chances to form "pure relationships" – and Cherlin says the same thing of the chances for lower class people to marry – but the shift towards "pure relationships" and symbolic marriage are relevant to all individuals in (high) modern societies. Further, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2005) contend that individuals in industrial societies are currently in search of alternative ways to form egalitarian relationships because the marriage institution is inherently embedded with gender inequality. In essence, cultural theorists associate changes in culture, such as individualism and egalitarianism, with changes in intimate relationship formation, implying that cultural changes are inherent to modernity (or high-, post-modernity).

Tsuya and Mason (1995) tested the second demographic transition theory and rejected the idea that cultural shifts caused marriage decline in Japan. Using national opinion poll surveys, they show that attitudinal changes (i.e., to accept non-traditional ideas regarding marriage and gender roles) were observed *after* marriage rates decreased. They argue that the causal relationship may be opposite – behavioral changes caused attitudinal changes – and argue that the second demographic transition theory does not address how and why self-actualization necessarily translates into rejection of marriage.

The second demographic transition theory has also been criticized for its ethnocentric assumption that all societies develop, progress, or evolve in a uniform trajectory as in Western societies (Thornton 2005). Scholars such as Cherlin (2004), Giddens (1991), and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2005) base their arguments predominantly on observations of Western societies such as the United States, and Northern and/or Western European countries, but do not take non-Western societies into consideration. Similarly, Tokuhiro (2010) criticizes this line of theory that expects a uniform outcome of modernization across nations. She argues that modernization is often assumed to lead to individualistic mate selection practices, but evidence from Japan does not support this thesis. Japan's modernization in the Meiji Period (1868-1912) required citizens to select marriage partners through arranged marriage – the mate selection practice of the elite warrior class in the Tokugawa feudal period (1600-1868) – and "free" selection of spouses became widespread in Japan only since the 1960s.

Another critique of the second demographic transition theory is that young people are not necessarily losing interest in marriage. Attitudinal surveys from both Japan and the United States show consistently high interest in marriage among young people in these countries (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001; Tsuya, Mason, and Bumpass 2004). Additionally, as mentioned in the previous section, cohabitation and unwed parenthood have not increased much in Japan and, therefore, declined marriage in Japan does not seem to be accompanied by the individualistic pursuit of alternative lifestyles.

Attitudes of young Japanese people seem to be becoming more individualistic, however. For instance, according to nationally representative opinion poll surveys, younger Japanese are more likely to prefer to marry based on romantic love (as opposed to traditional arranged marriage), to view happiness in marriage as more important (than staying married for the sake of children), and to disagree with traditional gender roles (Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura 2001; Tokuhiro 2010).

In sum, there is evidence to show that the Japanese are becoming more individualistic compared to the past, but a causal association between such a cultural shift and marriage decline has not been established. This attitudinal shift may be a result of behavioral change. Given the consistently high proportions of individuals who intend to marry and absence of alternative lifestyles (such as cohabitation), increased singlehood in Japan may not be caused by a cultural shift to individualism or egalitarianism as cultural theorists predict.

Demographic perspective: imbalanced sex ratio

In understanding the odds of marriage for women, it is important to take sex ratios of a given society into consideration. Imbalance in sex ratios leads to an imbalance in the availability of potential partners in the marriage pool, unless society practices polygamy and/or same-sex marriages. When sex ratios are low (i.e., women outnumber men), women have difficulties finding marital partners because "men are reluctant to make a long-term commitment to one woman" (Guttentag and Secord 1983).

Sex ratios in Japan, however, were high throughout the postwar period when roughly 6% more male children born than female children (Tokuhiro 2010). Because birth rates declined rapidly between the 1940s and 1970s (see Figure 2-2 for the rates between 1950 and 1975) and hypergamy based on age was preferred (i.e., women prefer to marry men several years older), there have not been enough females who are several years younger for males in the marriage pool (Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura 2001; Tokuhiro 2010; Zaiki 2000). In other words, the imbalance in sex ratios was favorable for women in postwar Japan, and thus explains only why more *men* remain unmarried in recent decades, and not why more women do.

However, it may be important to consider sex ratios at the micro level, such as particular social settings individuals find themselves in. According to a case study of an electronic company by Kubo, Kawasaki, and Hayashi (1993), male employees in the engineering section, where the sex ratio was high, had higher non-marriage rates (31%) than those in the manufacturing section (17%), where the sex ratio was almost equal. The highly gendered workplaces of Japan may have caused imbalanced sex ratios in the workplace – a common setting for individuals to meet potential mates.

Cross-national variation perspective: interaction with social contexts

Rather than assuming ubiquitous patterns, some sociologists compare cross-national evidence and theorize that different cultural or institutional contexts affect associations between women's economic advancement and marriage differently. Blossfeld (1995) observed that the relationship between women's higher education and marriage rates was positive or insignificant in Sweden, West Germany, Hungary, and

the United States, weak and negative in France and the Netherlands, and strong and negative in Italy. In other words, the first group (i.e., Sweden, etc.) supports career entry theory while Italy supports the women's independence hypothesis. Considering that Italy is more traditional in family formations (e.g., little cohabitation), Blossfeld hypothesizes that cultural context affects the above causal relationships. In the least egalitarian societies like Italy, highly educated women marry less because of difficulties in balancing family and paid work (i.e., higher opportunity costs for educated women). In more egalitarian societies like Sweden, women's higher education has no or positive effects on marriage because work-family balance is possible, or marriage poses little opportunity costs.

Empirical support for Blossfeld's hypothesis is mixed. Analyzing data from Sweden, the United States, and Japan, Ono (2003) found support for the effects of cultural context on marriage rates of highly educated women. The relationship between income (potential) and marriage was positive for Sweden and the United States but negative for Japan. However, as already discussed, other studies show mixed results regarding the association between education and marriage rates in Japan (Raymo 2003a, 2003b; Shirahase 2005; Tsuya and Mason 1995). Blossfeld's conceptualization of "egalitarian" societies is also questionable. France and the Netherlands may not be considered less egalitarian than the United States and West Germany, depending on how egalitarianism is conceptualized.

Though empirical support is lacking for Blossfeld's theory, his perspective makes important contributions to our thinking by addressing the varying effects of the same variables in different social contexts. Walker and Cohen (1985) argue that all

universal theories can be falsified, and sociologists should reformulate conditional theories by limiting the scope of theories. In order to construct a theory of non-marriage applicable to Japan (and other societies), we need to understand what social contexts specific to Japan are associated with the increased singlehood.

EXPLANATIONS FOR MARRIAGE DECLINE IN JAPANESE CONTEXTS

In this section, I present empirical studies in Japan that focus on the effects of culture specific to Japan. These studies outline the relevance of hypergamy preference, gender role expectations, and anomie.

Hypergamy and marriage squeeze

The norm of hypergamy (i.e., women marrying men of higher status) is said to be strong in Japan (Raymo and Iwasawa 2005; Yamada 1996). Japanese men seek women whom they can control in marriage, and thus prefer to marry a woman who is younger, subservient, less-educated, earns less, etc. (Yamada 1996). Raymo and Iwasawa (2005) hypothesize that women's educational advancement led to a shortage of men for highly educated Japanese women to marry due to hypergamy preferences. They found that marriage declined among women for all levels of education, but from 1982 to 1997, the rates declined more among highly educated women aged 25 to 29. They suggest this is due to a marriage squeeze (i.e., less opportunities to marry due to insufficient numbers of potential mates) among women with higher education.

However, as already discussed in the above section, Shirahase's study (2005) shows the opposite effects of education. According to her analysis, marriage decline from 1985 to 1995 was the largest among lower-educated women and, for this cohort, men were more likely to remain unmarried when highly educated. Additionally, educational endogamy (i.e., marriage between equally educated men and women) increased among the college-educated. This means that a marriage squeeze was more likely to be experienced by lower educated women. Her evidence indicates that there was no shortage of educated men for educated women.

Shirahase's evidence, however, does not rule out the effects of hypergamy preferences. A woman's education is not the only trait considered by men searching for an easily-controlled wife. Nemoto (2008) conducted in-depth interviews with highly-educated, unmarried Japanese women, and found that some women thought they were not married because men found their high income and professional occupations unfeminine. Similarly, some of the interviewees in Kelsky's (2001) qualitative study on "internationalists" – Japanese women who associated with Western countries through schooling and/or work – said that men were afraid of them because they worked at foreign-invested (*gaishikei*) companies, where they speak foreign languages of which men have no mastery. As mentioned above, many college educated women take traditionally female occupations (i.e., positions as Office Ladies) and become homemakers (Brinton 1993). Thus, women's college education in itself may not intimidate men, but their occupations, income, and perhaps age may impact mate selection by men. Personality traits and self-presentation (e.g., dress) may also matter, but these are not typically assessed in quantitative research.

Gender roles

Other sociologists argue that the persistence of traditional gender role expectations is an important factor associated with Japan's marriage decline. Nationally representative surveys show that beliefs in traditional gender roles that require women to take primary roles of domestic responsibility are continuously strong in Japan, compared to Western industrial nations (Shirahase 2005). Qualitative studies also found that many single Japanese women in their 20s and 30s equated marriage to women's responsibility for domestic tasks (Kelsky 2001; Nemoto 2008), and single men in their 30s still clung to the traditional image of masculinity and gender roles (Tokuhiro 2010). Married women indeed shoulder most household tasks. According to the 2001 survey cited by Shirahase (i.e., data gathered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications), among two-income couples, Japanese wives on average spent 4 hours and 12 minutes per week on housework, whereas husbands spent only 25 minutes.

Despite the fact that a majority of unmarried women wish to marry one day, many of them view marriage as a loss of freedom. According to a comparative study of never-married individuals in Japan and the United States in 1994, 69% of young Japanese women listed "loss of freedom" as a cost of marriage while only 29% of American women did (Tsuya, Mason, and Bumpass 2004). Similarly, Nakano (1994) observes in the National Fertility Survey of 1992 that single women in Japan are more likely to list "freedom" as a merit of singlehood compared to single men. Single women under age 35 are found to be less eager to marry soon when they are socially

active and satisfied with their current lifestyles (Iwama 1999). In addition, in their case study of male employees in an electronic company, Kubo, Kawasaki, and Hayashi (1993) found that non-marriage rates were higher among first sons and only children. This may imply women's reluctance to become an eldest son's wife, whose traditional role is to live with and/or take care of her in-law parents.

From focus group interview research with 16 single women, Kamano (2005) observed that many of them had conflicting feelings towards marriage. They strongly wished to marry because they wanted a partner, but also anticipated that marriage would take away autonomy and/or lifestyles which they wished to retain. Based on her interview research with single men and women in their 30s, Tokuhiro (2010) points out that the intention of marriage expressed by the Japanese largely reflects a strongly internalized social norm of normalcy of marriage (i.e., it is normal and good to marry), not necessarily the desire for marriage as a means of fulfillment or personal happiness.

All these findings suggest the important influences of gender role expectations on marriage in Japan. There may be discrepancies between what women want and get realistically in marriage, and the "intention" of marriage seems to imply complex meanings.

Anomie

From focus group interviews with never-married men and women conducted collaboratively with Kamano, Ehara (2005) provides insight regarding young people's expectations of gender roles in Japan. She observed that gender role expectations held by men and women were actually similar, yet they viewed the opposite gender's

attitudes as if they were incompatible. Men accepted their future wife's employment and expected to share some domestic responsibilities with her, yet expressed a strong aversion to women who are *assertive* about equal sharing of the domestic role. Women, on the other hand, showed a strong negative view towards men who *refuse to discuss* such sharing, but they did not expect their future husband to take an equal share of domestic work – instead accepting they would do more than him.

Although both men and women expected their spouse to engage in non-traditional gender role behavior (i.e., women expected men to do housework and men expected women to earn income), they expected their partner to take primary responsibility for their traditional roles as well. Men expected wives to do more at home; women expected husbands to be the breadwinners. Based on the National Fertility Survey 2002, Kamano (2005) points out that women cited "economic security" and men "care by wife" as the merits of marriage, which indicates such traditional gender role expectations (from the opposite sex).

Ehara (2005) contends that these attitudes reflect a state of *anomie* – Emile Durkheim's concept (1979 [1951]), meaning a lack of normative constraints caused by rapid social change. Despite the fact that today many more young women are employed full-time in paid jobs, there are few norms that guide how a wife and a husband should relate to each other if she remains in the labor force. In this anomic state, men and women are uncertain about what to expect from each other, and focus primarily on their own desires – demanding more from others and less from themselves. Individualistic foci and a lack of cultural scripts, she argues, led to this inability to communicate effectively.

Uncertainty about their own roles was also documented by other researchers. Single women mentioned that they had no role model for work-family balance (Nemoto 2008) and had no concrete vision on their own role in marriage, despite their negative views toward their mothers' homemaker role (Kamano 2005). Single men in their 30s were also observed to be confused about the appropriate role of men because contradictory roles are expected of men in recent years (Tokuhiro 2010). According to Nakano (1994), in the late 1980s many never-married employed women in their 20s believed that women should be economically independent after marriage, but also that they should prioritize domestic tasks over employment.

There may also be a lack of cultural scripts for courtship practices. From the Meiji Period to the 1950s, most marriages in Japan were arranged by mediators through a mate selection system called *miai* (Ato 1994; Ito 1997; Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura 2001; Tokuhiro 2010). Whereas most individuals in recent decades prefer to marry based on romantic love, a large percentage (e.g., 40-50% in 1992) of single men and women ages 18-34 did not even have opposite sex friends (Ato 1994; Ito 1997). Culture regarding dating and courtship may be underdeveloped in Japan, and men and women may be having difficulties finding and approaching potential mates. Ato also discusses the possibility of weakened pressure to marry posed traditionally by parents. Parents of young adults may not know how to discuss prospects of marriage with their children due to a lack of normative scripts, as opposed to the past when parents were socially expected to help arrange potential marital partners for children through the arranged marriage system.

The studies above all indicate the important impacts of Japanese cultural contexts on the phenomenon of increased singlehood. None of them, however, address *how* and *why* traditional gender culture (i.e., hypergamy, gender role expectations) came to be weakened (i.e., anomie) or cause a retreat from marriage among the recent cohorts of Japanese women. Despite the same, traditional nature of culture, women of earlier cohorts married at much higher rates. Something must have triggered the recent cohorts to view the same tradition differently from past cohorts, or triggered the traditional gender role ideology to erode. As discussed in this chapter, women's increased economic independence and a cultural shift to individualism do not explain these changes. In order to construct a more applicable theory of non-marriage, the mechanism of change must be understood.

SUMMARY

Japan's marriage rates began to decline rapidly in the 1980s, and unprecedented proportions of women are unmarried in all age groups today. Existing sociological theories of non-marriage point out changes in economic conditions of women and men, a cultural shift to individualism and egalitarianism, and imbalanced sex ratios as causal factors, but these theories fall short in explaining the Japanese phenomenon. A cross-national variation perspective sees variations in cultural contexts as conditions that affect the association between women's economic prospects (i.e., independence) and marriage rates differently. Empirical studies in Japan show that cultural contexts specific to Japan, particularly in terms of gender relations, might have significant effects on increased singlehood. These studies, however, limit their scope to explaining

the Japanese phenomenon or criticizing universal theories that assume ubiquitous applicability. A theory of non-marriage needs to be reformulated in order to explain increased singlehood in Japan as well as other societies that have gone through or are expected to follow paths similar to Japan's. To accomplish this, we must understand how and why traditional gender cultures of Japan came to cause the increase in singlehood.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES: COHORT EFFECTS, CULTURAL LAG, AND ANOMIE/EGOISM

As discussed in Chapter 2, existing sociological theories of non-marriage do not adequately explain why singlehood increased in Japan. Empirical findings in Japan suggest relevance of cultural contexts, but fail to explain why and how the culture of Japan came to cause a retreat from marriage. I employ the life course perspective, William Ogburn's hypothesis of cultural lag, and Emile Durkheim's concepts of anomie and egoism as an alternative theoretical framework for this research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Life course perspective

The empirical findings (discussed in Chapter 2) point to the relevance of historic and social contexts on changes in marital behavior. For instance, in Western societies, effects of women's education on non-marriage differ by cohort (Sweeney 2002) and by country (Blossfeld 1995), and in Japan, men's economic prospects had different impacts by cohort (Shirahase 2005). The life course perspective provides a good theoretical framework for understanding *cohort* and *period effects*: Different historical contexts shape individual life courses differently. In his influential work, Glen Elder (1999) demonstrates that economic circumstances such as the Great Depression have a profound impact on the life courses of young individuals. Particularly in rapidly

changing societies, the life course varies significantly by cohort membership as the historical context changes during one's lifetime (Elder 1994).

Japan's marriage rates declined rapidly during the economic boom and continued to decline after the recession. Many researchers assume that this is one continuing phenomenon and search for the factors that caused it. However, the life course perspective predicts that the cause of non-marriage differs depending on whether young adulthood was experienced as a member of the boom cohort or recession cohort. Thus, this research divides individuals into the cohorts of economic boom and recession (and that of pre-boom in the quantitative portion of research) and assesses whether causes of non-marriage differ by cohort membership.

Cultural lag, anomie, and egoism

The life course perspective, however, does not explain the mechanism of social change – why and how the changing economic contexts in Japan led to increased singlehood. William Ogburn's hypothesis informs our understanding of the process of social and cultural change. According to Ogburn ([1922, 1950] 1966), changes in *material* (e.g., economic, technological) conditions are usually more rapid than *cultural* changes, and thus culture tends to lag behind. This causes a period of *maladjustment*, during which existing culture fails to prescribe appropriate behavior for individuals. This period may have devastating effects on individuals' lives, Ogburn contends. Culture, however, should eventually *adapt* as people adjust their conduct and views to the new conditions. The term *cultural lag* does not mean a lack of cultural change in Ogburn's theory. Culture changes and adapts, but at a slower pace than material

conditions. It is also important to note that cultural adaptation does not imply progress, such as liberalization. Culture could return to traditionalism if that synchronizes better with given material conditions.

Ogburn lists several causes of cultural lag ([1922, 1950] 1966). Among those, two causes might apply to the present study. The first cause is the heterogeneous nature of society. Because society consists of diverse social classes and groups, needs of change may be felt only by one social group, but not by another. The resistance (or obliviousness) to the needs of cultural change causes a cultural lag. A good example here is the slow spread of recycling culture in the United States. For decades, certain individuals and groups across the world were aware of environmental problems and needs of waste reduction, yet many continue the old habit of discarding recyclable materials in trash. However, with time, the culture would probably adapt and recycling would become normative in the future.

The second possible cause of cultural lag is due to interconnectedness among cultures (Ogburn [1922, 1952] 1966). Think of a situation that culture *x* is connected to both material condition *y* and culture *z*. Whereas changes in material condition y put pressures on culture *x* to adapt, culture *z*, which is static, inhibits changes in culture *x*, and hence, culture *x* lags behind changes in condition y. Ogburn illustrates this mechanism using women's position after industrialization. The changes in "industrial situation" for women due to industrialization should have changed women's role in family, yet the latter was also connected to the "family-husband-children situation" (i.e., culture related to how husband, wife, and children should relate to each other, or gender

and family roles) ([1922, 1950] 1966:262-3). This resulted in cultural lag, or a period of maladjustment, causing serious repercussions on individuals' lives.

Ogburn's concepts of cultural lag and the period of maladjustment are reminiscent to Durkheim's idea of *anomie* ([1951] 1979). Anomie is a state of weakened normative constraints in society caused by rapid social change. Individuals become less bounded by societal rules, and therefore, less controlled by society. Another social pathology Durkheim discusses is *egoism*, which describes the state of individuals not being well integrated into society. This can be also understood as an excessive level of individualism. Durkheim stresses that these two seemingly similar concepts denote two different states: anomie refers to societal condition and egoism to individual condition. But he also views that those two states are closely linked and likely to occur simultaneously, because weakened norms could mean weakened social ties (or vice versa).

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ehara (2005) argues that the ambiguity in role expectations and lack of communication among single Japanese men and women indicate anomie. She also discusses that the anomic state led to individualistic foci, which seems to imply egoism rather than anomie. Lack of clear gender role expectations can be understood as a symptom of culture lagging behind changes in the economic contexts.

JAPANESE WOMEN'S CONDITIONS AND CHANGES

Before forming hypotheses based on the above theoretical framework, I need to give a brief description of Japanese women's conditions prior to the economic boom and how the boom altered material conditions (i.e., employment opportunities) for women.

Normative life course of women prior to the economic boom

In Japan's modern history, motherhood was constructed and reinforced as the most important social role of women by the Japanese state (Garon 1997; Koyama 1991; Miyake 1991; Molony 2005; Uno 1991, 2005) as well as by some of the influential feminist activists (Kauchi 1984; Tomida 2004). Married women's employment in industrial sector was considered undesirable (Faison 2007; Miyake 1991), and prior to 1960, most of those women in the labor force were in farm labor or self-employment (Ochiai 1997; Shirahase 2005; Tsuya and Bumpass 2004). During this period, many young unmarried women worked for factories, but they were expected to quit their jobs upon marriage and devote their lives to the care of the household and family members (i.e., husband, children, and in-law parents) (Brinton 1993; Faison 2007; Kelsky 2001; Long 1996; Miyake 1991; Ohinata 1995; Uno 1991).

During the postwar economic growth in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Japan's industrial sector grew and the labor market became highly gendered (Brinton 1993, 2007; Shirahase 2005). Young women were hired into a female track – dead-end clerical positions that were replaceable – and expected to leave the labor force upon

marriage (Brinton 1993, 2007; Kelsky 2001; Kerbo 2008; Lebra 1984; Ogasawara 1998; Sugimoto 2003; Tokuhiro 2010). The housewife role became normalized and idealized during this time (Nemoto 2008; Ochiai 1997). Women with a high school education, and also with a junior college education since the 1970s, were preferred to fill these women's positions (over those with college and higher education) (Brinton 1993, 2007; Kelsky 2001; Ogasawara 1998; Shirahase 2005).

Since the 1970s, part-time employment of mothers became socially acceptable for those whose children had entered school, and the number of female part-time workers grew remarkably (Brinton 1993, 2007; Kondo 1990; Lebra 1984; Lock 1996; Ueno 1994; White 2002). The normative life course for women in the 1970s was, therefore, to participate in the labor force until marriage, stay home to take care of domestic tasks, and then perhaps take a part-time job after the last child entered school. Women were expected to marry during *tekireiki* – marriageable ages which were in early 20s – and even when women of this age group did not have plans to marry, they often faced pressure from relatives and employers to quit the paid labor force and marry (Brinton 1993, 2007; Kelsky 2001; Kerbo 2008; Ogasawara 1998; White 2002).

Such normative expectations were well reflected in the female labor force participation rates of Japan in the 1970s. Described as an "M-shaped curve of labor force participation," employment rates increased steeply as women reached their early 20s, decreased between the mid-20s and mid-30s, rose gradually towards the late-40s, and then declined (Brinton 1993, 2007; Ogasawara 1998; Shinotsuka 1994; Sugimoto 2003; Tokuhiro 2010). Among the birth cohorts 1926-70, the trough of the M was the

deepest for the birth cohort 1946-50, or those who were in their 20s in the 1970s (Ochiai 1997).

The economic boom and changes in material (employment) conditions for young women

Japan's economy boomed from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. The boom led to a serious labor shortage and expanded employment opportunities, particularly for previously undesired individuals: women with a college education and those in their late 20s (Ato 1989). Employment rates of female college graduates jumped from 65.7% in 1980 to 72.4% in 1985 and 81.0% in 1990, while there was little increase for male college graduates (Tsuya and Mason 1995). The labor force participation rates among women ages 25 to 29 rose from 47.5% in 1980 to 61.8% in 1992 (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2008b). Types of jobs taken by female college graduates also diversified. Before 1980, most female college graduates became teachers. However, since the 1980s, more entered other white-collar and professional occupations, and less than 20% of college graduates became school teachers (Hiroshima 1999; Shirahase 2005). As mentioned in Chapter 2, more women entered four-year colleges during the 1990s; female college enrollment rates increased from 15% in 1990 to 32% in 2000 (Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology 2008).

Though women earned less than 60% of men's earnings, the gender gap in *starting* salaries began to close since the mid-1980s. According to Ohashi (1993), in 1990, women starting work with college degrees earned 96% of what men starting work

with the same credentials did; this figure was 94.5% for high school graduates. Even though many women were in the female-track, "Office Lady" positions, the level of expendable income was high and "left them … the 'wealthiest' sector of Japan's mainstream population, and one of the wealthiest groups in the world" (Kelsky 2001:85).

This should not be confused with gained economic independence. The large corporations in Japan practice the seniority system – the system that gives raises and promotions according to the lengths of services – but female workers are often excluded from it (Brinton 1993, 2007; Kerbo 2008; Ogasawara 1998; Sugimoto 2003). Another typical employment system called the lifetime or permanent employment system discriminates against those who leave the work force in the middle of a career. By leaving the labor force temporarily for marriage and/or childrearing, older women have little opportunities to attain full-time, high-paying jobs, and succumbed to low-paying jobs with little job security. Women are scarce in authority positions in Japan (Brinton 1993, 2007; Kerbo 2008; Molony 1995; Ogasawara 1998; Sugimoto 2003; Yu 2002).

Although women's economic positions showed little progress in actuality, young women during the economic boom may have *perceived* that new opportunities opened up for them. In the mid-1980s, the Japanese government passed and enacted a new law, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law. This law contributed little to the improvement of women's employment opportunities (Molony 1995; Sugimoto 2003), but it may have caused young women to feel optimistic about their future opportunities. The most important impact of this law is considered to be an increase in college

enrollment by women in the 1990s (Molony 1995), which appears to be a reflection of such optimism.

In short, during the economic boom, young Japanese women were encouraged to remain in the labor force after passing the traditional marriageable ages in the early 20s, enjoyed expendable incomes, and probably felt something new and different opened up for them. In contrast to these changes in material (i.e., employment) conditions of women, there seems little change in marital role of women. For instance, the pattern of labor force participation for married women has not changed much. Women who continued to work after the first birth increased from 14% in 1965 to 20% in 1995 and 30% in 1998 (Retherford, Ogawa, and Matsukura 2001), but a majority of employed mothers were part-time or temporary workers (Iwai 2005 [2002]; Yu 2002). The trough of the M-curve of female labor force participation became flatter during this time, but it is largely explained by the increases in the number of single women and the labor force participation by childless married women (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2002). These indicate that women's role in marriage has not changed much after the economic boom.

Further, Japan's economic boom did not last. Japan entered a severe recession in the mid-1990s. Female four-year college graduates were the first to be hit. They suffered higher unemployment rates than male college graduates and even women with a two-year college education (Oishi 2004; Shirahase 2005). The recession subsequently affected young men and women regardless of educational backgrounds, and unemployment and underemployment among young individuals of all levels of education (Japan Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare 2005).

HYPOTHESIS:

A LAGGED GENDER CULTURE AS A CAUSE

OF INCREASED SINGLEHOOD IN JAPAN

The boom produced an alteration in material conditions for young women in Japan: Women were welcome to remain in the work force, and earned better incomes. Some may have taken more stimulating jobs that were traditionally assigned to men, and perhaps perceived the future with optimism. Yet norms demanded that women quit paid work in their early 20s and dedicate their time and energy to domestic life. Such norms matched only the conditions of women of the pre-boom era, who had to marry while in demand because there were few ways for them to obtain income as single women. No norms guided the new women remaining in the labor force past the traditional marriageable age. When should they stop working and marry? Should they "settle down" at a certain age? Could they have both marriages and jobs? If so, how? These women may have questioned the traditional women's role, or been confused about what roles they should take. Because changes in material conditions occurred only for young women, men of their cohort as well as the rest of society may not have changed their views toward women's role in marriage. Such discrepancies in gender role expectations between men and women may have contributed to increased singlehood among the cohort of the economic boom.

For the subsequent cohort of men and women, however, culture may have adapted. For instance, later age at marriage may have become normative, wives' and

mothers' employment more socially accepted, or male participation in domestic responsibilities more expected. Women and men may have come to more consistent and realistic expectations regarding gender role allocation, and found ways to communicate better with each other. It is also possible that this cohort of women has more conservative expectations of marriage. Unmarried older women with limited economic power may have provided a cautionary tale for them, and this young cohort of women may have adjusted their views to accept the traditional wife's role so as to increase their chances in the marriage market.

A similar argument was made by O'Conner (1981) regarding the cycle of economic crises and booms. According to him, external forces such as economic crises compel qualitative changes such as reorganizations of capital-labor relationships, and subsequently lead to economic recoveries or booms. Likewise, Japan's booming economy should compel changes in gender relations to adapt to expanded employment opportunities for women. But because such qualitative changes in culture lag behind (Ogburn [1922, 1950] 1962), the cohort of the boom is likely to have suffered from a period of maladjustment.

I argue that this lag in gender culture caused the increased singlehood among this cohort. Women and men of this cohort were unable to communicate with each other, and/or were confused about proper roles due to lack of cultural prescriptions, and this lag and anomie led to non-marriage. For the subsequent cohort, however, culture might have adapted. For this cohort, declined marriage rates may reflect only delayed marriages, which may have become normative, and as they marry at older ages, the marriage rates of this cohort may rise higher than the cohort of the boom.

On the other hand, the long-lasting economic recession that deteriorated employment conditions for both young men and women in Japan may have influenced their marital behavior. Poor economic prospects among young males may have a few effects; it may facilitate the adaptation of culture – for instance, a new norm that accepts maternal employment due to its increased necessity. Or, as Easterlin and others theorized, the declined economic opportunities of men may reduce their attractiveness in the marriage market. These men may suffer from another sort of cultural lag as well: the change in material condition (i.e., lower income) contradicts the primary expectation associated with the male gender role (i.e., the breadwinning role). In this period of maladjustment, young men may be confused about their proper role. Additionally, young women of this cohort, who also suffer from poor employment conditions, may be less attached to employment (compared to young women during the economic boom) and adjust back their role expectation to the traditional one. These new conditions and cultural lag may either increase or decrease marriage rates for this cohort. In either case, causes of non-marriage are expected to differ between the cohorts of economic boom and recession.

In her qualitative study of female executives in the U.S., Mary Blair-Loy (2003) divided her sample of the "career-committed" group – those who uninterruptedly worked in full-time professional occupations and climbed to elite positions – into three cohorts based on whether these women graduated from college before, during, or after the women's movement of the early 1970s. She found important differences (as well as similarities) in the life experiences and gender ideologies of the three cohorts. Many members of the oldest cohort in her study forewent marriage and/or childbearing

because they viewed their professional career to be incompatible with marriage and/or motherhood – an implicit acceptance of the traditional gender ideology. On the other hand, women of the youngest cohort were more egalitarian, expecting their husbands to share domestic tasks and/or outsourcing care work to nannies, etc. Her study shows the important qualitative cohort differences in gender ideology and behavioral patterns among women of the similar status (i.e., female executives). Likewise, this study expects differences in the gender ideology held by two cohorts of Japanese women, which may have had important effects on marital behavior.

As discussed in the next chapter, this study employs mixed methods. This research explores why singlehood increased among recent cohorts of women in Japan and what this means to them, and aims to formulate a theory of non-marriage applicable to Japan and other societies. By taking both deductive and inductive approaches, this study is both exploratory (i.e., hypothesis-generating) and hypothesis-testing.

A set of hypotheses tested in this study is that there are cohort differences in terms of 1) ideal age to marry, 2) pressure to marry around the marriageable age, 3) conceptions of gender roles, and 4) gender gap in views of women's roles. The first three hypotheses are tested in the qualitative portion of research, and the last hypothesis is tested statistically. I assess whether the observed cohort differences reflect cultural lag and adaptation, and anomie and egoism, caused by the economic boom and recession.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

USE OF MIXED METHODS AND ITS JUSTIFICATION

This project employs mixed methods: qualitative interview research and statistical analysis of secondary data. For the former, I conducted in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with two cohorts (i.e., the cohorts of the economic boom and the recession) of never-married and married women in Japan. Interview research is crucial to this project for several reasons. First, this project seeks to identify the causes of increased singlehood by understanding life experiences of two cohorts of women as well as views, meanings, feelings, etc. they hold regarding marriage, singlehood, gender roles, etc. I hypothesize the influences of cultural lag, anomie, and egoism on marital behavior, and attempt to explore other related factors. This requires analyses of complex interactions among women's experiences, perceptions, economic circumstances, and marital behavior as well as other unforeseen, relevant factors. Qualitative research methods are more appropriate, not only for collecting in-depth, rich data, but to "make allowance for causal complexity, especially multiple conjunctural causation," in contrast to statistical methods that "often must assume … that the effect of a cause is the same across different contexts" (Ragin 1987:167).

Second, open-ended interviews allow women to define their situations in their own words and tell stories that are important to them. This method may uncover relevant factors that were not hypothesized or previously noticed by researchers, and

thus help generate new theories. Third, by meeting with interviewees, researchers are able to observe other important information such as appearance and self-presentation. Women's looks and personality traits could affect their chances of marriage, and thus need to be taken into account in order to understand the causes of non-marriage. Face-to-face interview research also enables researchers to observe attitudes and feelings that may reflect the meanings of interviewees' accounts (Berg 2007).

Fourth, interview research outperforms survey data analysis in terms of *validity* (Babbie 1989; Neuman 2006). Surveys make respondents pick answers from limited choices selected by researchers. The answers chosen may not necessarily represent respondents' ideas, views, and opinions, and thus survey questions may not measure what researchers intend to measure. There may be subtle differences in meaning among respondents who mark the same answer to a particular question. For instance, one person may choose the answer enthusiastically, and another cynically or reluctantly. In interview research, researchers are also able to ask interviewees to elaborate on their answers in order to elicit or clarify meanings behind answers (Ambert et al. 1995; Berg 2007; Goodwin and Horowitz 2002). Because the present project seeks to understand the meanings of singlehood held by women, interview research is desirable.

Fifth, from a feminist standpoint, a research process that allows the researched to choose their own answers and express their thoughts gives agency to them, and this process in itself is empowering (Acker, Barry, and Esseveld 1983; Thompson 1992). One goal of my research is to contribute to the empowerment of women via the research process. Because single women are often stigmatized socially (as discussed above) and their issues possibly misunderstood, it is crucial to give them opportunities

to voice their views, opinions, and concerns. I wanted women to understand that their issues and circumstances are important and worthy of society's attention. I wanted them to understand that by participating in this research, they would contribute to solving social problems.

Despite these advantages and the potential benefits of women's empowerment, interview research conducted by sociologists on never-married women in Japan has been rare. As discussed in the literature review chapter, there have been only a few studies that involved qualitative interview research on this subject, and these studies are limited in scope. Nemoto's study (2008) uncovered important insights for single women's perceptions of their single status, but her interviewees were limited mostly to highly educated, single women in professional occupations; such a demographic is hardly representative of single women in Japan. In studies by Nemoto and Tokuhiro (2010), the age range of interviewees is limited (mostly) to those in their 30s. A great majority (or all) of their research subjects are younger than the cohort of the economic boom. Ehara (2005) and Kamano (2005) jointly conducted focus group interviews with four groups of unmarried men and women. Both studies provide rich data and insights on single people's views toward gender roles, but focus group interviews may not have uncovered minority opinions because Japanese individuals are likely to feel pressure not to contradict others when they are in group settings (e.g., Condon 1984; Kerbo and McKinstry 1995, 1998; Lebra 1976; Peak 2001). The present study attempts to contribute to sociological understanding of the phenomenon of increased singlehood by investigating accounts of both married and unmarried women who spent their young

adulthoods during either the economic boom or the recession. It also attempts to control for the effects of conformity by conducting one-on-one interviews.

Though in-depth interview research excels in providing rich data and overcoming the *validity* issue, this method has weaknesses related to *reliability* and *generalizability* (Ambert et al. 1995; Babbie 1989; Goodwin and Horowitz 2002). In order to overcome these issues, this project employs statistical analysis of secondary survey data (Japanese General Social Survey 2005) to test the hypotheses of cultural lag and cohort effects. Details of both research methods are discussed below.

METHOD: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Sampling method

I conducted in-depth interviews with 40 Japanese never-married and married women in the Greater Tokyo Area between May and July of 2009. Because there is no systematic list of never-married and married women from which to draw a probability sample, I used purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling methods. Several months before the field research, I began to contact several acquaintances I had in Japan via email, and asked whether they could introduce me to potential research participants. I explained what my research was about, attached a copy of the "information sheet for consent" (in Japanese), and requested referrals to women who were either never married or married and aged between 25 and 50.

I am a native of Japan, in my 40s (i.e., the boom cohort). I spent the first 28 years of my life in Japan, and maintained a personal network with a range of

individuals I met through schooling, work, social organizations, and academic activities. Additionally, just about a year before I launched this research project, I happened to become reconnected with my cohort of elementary school graduates through an internet social networking site. This allowed me access to individuals from diverse backgrounds. I diversified my network of acquaintances, in terms of educational and occupational backgrounds, in the hopes that this would lead to referrals to women with different levels of education.

I asked each of my acquaintances to forward or hand the information sheet, which includes my e-mail address and other contact information, to potential interviewees, and to tell them to send me an e-mail message or to provide me with their e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers so that I could contact them. I secured 13 volunteers and scheduled interviews with them before I landed in Japan.

After arriving, I continued to recruit research participants by asking interviewees and other acquaintances for referrals. Many interviewees enjoyed the interviews and were willing to give me referrals to their friends, co-workers, etc. Because I wanted to have approximately equal proportions of interviewees in the three age groups (20s, 30s, and 40s) and a larger sample of never-married women than married women, I sometimes gave specific requests for referrals (e.g., "Can you introduce me to an unmarried woman who is in her late 20s?").

Sample size

I interviewed 40 women in total, but I had no pre-set number for the sampling size. Qualitative researchers recommend that the sample size be determined in the

course of research (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Data collection should end when findings reach a saturation point in which no new themes appear to be emerging from additional interviews. Interviews with women in their 40s reached a saturation point after six or so interviews. There were remarkable similarities in their accounts, regardless of marital status, in the hypothesized themes and others that emerged. On the other hand, there was more diversity in patterns among women in their 30s and 20s, and thus, larger samples were required for them. In order to have an approximately equal proportion of interviewees in each age group, I continued interviewing women in their 40s despite saturation. In other words, the total sample size of 40 was more than what I needed. I turned down a few volunteers for this reason.

Characteristics of samples

Among the 40 interviewees, 28 women were never-married and 12 were married at the time of the interviews. There were 15 women in their 40s (10 never-married and 5 married), 16 in their 30s (12 never-married and 4 married), and 9 in their 20s (6 never-married and 3 married). Because I was not certain about which age would be a reasonable divide between the boom and recession cohorts, I tried to even out the ages of study participants so that I would have an approximately equal number of interviewees in two cohorts.

The age of interviewees ranges from 25 to 46 (i.e., born between 1962 and 1984). The upper age limit for participant recruitment was 50, but I had no volunteers aged 47 and over. The number of participants in their 20s is smaller because they represent only ages between 25 and 29. I excluded women younger than 25 because the

mean age at first marriage for Japanese women was 28.5 in the year 2008, and a great majority of women of this age group is never married (Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2008a). Being single in one's early 20s is normative in Japan today, so it is not meaningful to interview that group of women for the purpose of the present research since my purpose is to discover causes of non-marriage.

Interviewees are diverse in terms of their levels of education, though women with high school only are relatively underrepresented. There are 4 interviewees who had graduate degrees, 18 with college degrees, 15 with two-year college or vocational schooling, and 3 with high school education. Interviewees are also diverse in terms of occupation and income and, for the cases of single women, patterns of residence and current relationships. More detailed information on the study participants are provided in Table A-1 in Appendix. All the interviewees were living in the Greater Tokyo Area at the time of the interview, but some of them were originally from other areas, including rural regions.

Interviews

The interviews were in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face, and conducted in Japanese. I am a native of Japan and speak Japanese as a first language. With interviewees' consent, all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by me. I followed the prepared interview guide, which was a revised version of the initial set of questions pretested with four volunteers in November, 2008. The interview guide is provided in Appendix, in the original language as well as its English translation.

I began most interviews with questions on background information such as age, level of education, year of graduation, and residence pattern. This is recommended by some qualitative researchers (e.g., Berg 2007) as an effective way to establish rapport with the researched, and this proved to be the case, as discussed below. Subsequently, I asked questions regarding job history, parents' marriage, past and current relationships, ideal life course, marriage, singlehood, ideal marital partners, gender roles, leisure time, friends and social life, future plans, etc. I asked follow-up questions to clarify or elaborate upon answers and comments, and also encouraged interviewees to talk freely if they felt like doing so.

Because the never-married status is stigmatized in Japan, I never asked women direct questions on why they remained single, which could have made unmarried interviewees feel uncomfortable or defensive. Instead, I asked various questions on life circumstances, views, etc. (see Appendix). Interviewees' intention to marry typically was revealed or stated in the process of the interviews, but in case it remained unclear, the direct question (i.e., "Do you want to marry?") was asked only towards the end of interview. In the information sheet initially provided to interviewees, the purpose of my research was explained as an attempt to understand what marriage means to Japanese women. At the end of the interview, I debriefed my interviewees by informing them that this research attempts to understand the causes of increased singlehood. I encouraged my interviewees to discuss anything they wanted in reference to this phenomenon.

Some of the questions in the interview guide were dropped, as I found them to be uninformative after running several interviews. Detailed questions on ideal divisions

of household labor are examples of such cases. The order of questions in the interview guide was not always followed, depending on the flow of conversations.

Though some qualitative researchers recommend that interviewers take notes during interviews, I purposely chose not to because I felt the gesture of taking notes might make interviewees nervous and self-conscious about what they said. Culturally, the Japanese are expected to be attentive to other people's reactions (Azuma 2001; Condon 1984; Lebra 1976). Seeing me take notes could prompt interviewees to interpret my motives, perhaps leading them to think what they said was inappropriate, unusual, strange, etc. I wanted to minimize the risk of interviewees censoring themselves. As it turns out, after the interviews, two of my interviewees mentioned that they anticipated I was going to take notes, but were glad that I did not because it would have made them nervous and self-conscious. Thus, I believe the decision to refrain from note-taking was more sensitive to Japanese culture and communication patterns. Additionally, I believe it allowed me to pay closer attention to interviewees' words, facial expressions, and body language, as well as the flow of conversation. I took mental notes on important non-verbal cues (e.g., tone of voice, facial expressions, body language) that might indicate respondents' perceptions and feelings, and other important visual information (e.g., dress, attractiveness), and recorded these as field notes as soon as I parted with interviewees.

The length of interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 4 hours and 33 minutes, with an average of 2 hours and 13 minutes. The portion of the interview that went along with my interview guide was usually completed in 50 to 90 minutes. Interviews with older women, especially single women, typically took longer because most of

them had longer work histories and more romantic relationships. One interview that lasted only 40 minutes was an unusual case. She worked in the same office as another interviewee who gave a referral to her, and had only one job and one brief relationship with a man to discuss.

At the end of each interview, I asked interviewees whether they had anything to add, any issues they wished to discuss with me, or any questions they wanted to ask me. All but one interviewee asked me at least one question, and with some women I spent one or more hours on this portion of the interviews. My interviewees asked me a great many interesting questions, ranging from whether I am happy in my marriage to whether American TV dramas accurately portray dating/courting patterns of Americans. It turned out that the questions and conversations I had after the guided interviews provided great insights for my research, as I will discuss in the concluding chapter.

Interviews were most commonly held in coffee shops and restaurants chosen by interviewees due to their close proximity to home, work, or other locations. Interviews in these places were rarely interrupted by wait staff, probably because chatting for hours over a cup of coffee is a common social scene in Japan. The presence of two digital recorders on the table may also have defined the situation as one in which disturbances were unwelcome. Other interviewees prepared quiet meeting rooms at their workplaces. Still others I met at their own apartments or houses, or at the homes of individuals who gave referrals. Privacy was strictly protected in all interviews, regardless of interview location. It is customary in Japan to bring gifts when visiting someone at home, to express gratitude by giving gifts, and to cover the cost of meals for guests. I spent about ten US dollars per interviewee and expressed my appreciation in

different ways that were appropriate to each meeting arrangement. These included giving a box of sweets or a gift card and/or by picking up the check at a restaurant.

Despite my initial concerns, arranging meetings with interviewees whose faces I did not know and completing the necessary number of interviews within a short time frame turned out be non-issues. Meetings were scheduled and arranged with incredible smoothness thanks to the prevalence of cell phones and e-mail, as well as the punctuality and cooperativeness of all interviewees.

Other methodological issues related to field research in Japan

As mentioned above, I prepared basic demographic questions (e.g., where they are from, number of siblings, jobs, residence, etc.) to open the interview, since this type of easy-to-answer question often helps interviewees relax and allows the establishment of rapport. What I immediately learned about the Japanese interviewees was that many of them were humble and worried that they might not be able to contribute to my research because they were very "normal (*futsuu*)." They thought they had nothing special to tell. It seemed that the opening of interviews with easy-to-answer demographic questions helped them realize and feel relieved that they actually had a lot to tell. This humble attitude – "I am no one special" – was probably a reflection of Japanese culture, which emphasizes the virtue of humility. These questions not only helped establish rapport, but proved to be useful tools for convincing humble Japanese interviewees that their stories were worthy of attention.

In interview research, power inequality between researchers and researched is an important issue to consider and overcome (Ardell 1997; McCorkel and Myers 2003;

Ortiz 2005). Power inequality based on gender, race, and ethnicity was not an issue because I (a female) was to interview women, and the Japanese are racially and ethnically homogenous. However, my being older than most interviewees posed a potential problem of power inequality, as age is one of the most important dimensions of status inequality in Japan. For instance, younger individuals are expected to show respect to older ones by deferring more and speaking less (e.g., Condon 1984; Kerbo 2008; Kerbo and McKinstry 1995, 1998; Lebra 1976; Nakane 1970; Reischauer [1977] 1988). I needed to take special precautions in order to minimize the influence of age inequality.

Interviewees in their late-30s and 40s who did not know my age assumed that I was either equal or lower in age status. This was reflected in the level of speech and body language they used, and so age differences between myself and them did not become an issue. With younger interviewees, however, I made deliberate efforts to create a relaxed atmosphere. I dressed myself in relatively casual attire, such as jeans, unless I was visiting interviewees' workplaces, began our conversation in the casual form of language, told light jokes to make them laugh (which always helped them relax), and sometimes explicitly told them that I expected no expressions of respect, joking such that I would like to think of myself as being as young as they were. Even when some of my young interviewees themselves appeared to be outspoken and not afraid of initiating talk, I was mindful of managing the impression that I was not the kind of older woman who would frown upon or reprimand young individuals for not deferring to their elders. I sometimes gave compliments to them, for instance, that I admired them for being outspoken and expressive of their own views.

Some qualitative researchers find certain levels of deception to be necessary whereas others, especially those from feminist camps, recommend full disclosure as a way to establish genuine relationships (e.g., Acker, Barry and Esseveld 1983). My field research experience in Japan convinced me that research should be done strategically, taking cultural contexts into consideration. The concealment of my true age was important for younger Japanese interviewees to present their more honest selves. When I revealed my actual age to young interviewees at the end of interviews, they were apologetic and began to act with due respect, such as bowing to me and changing their speech level to the more polite form. Given the cultural context of Japan, I believe this "misrepresentation" of self worked better to create an atmosphere in which interviewees could tell more honest stories.

There was another status inequality I needed to be wary of. It was my married status when I interviewed unmarried women, especially those in older age groups. Singlehood at older ages is socially stigmatized and can be a sensitive issue for some. My marital status could make them feel marginalized or defensive in speaking of their life experiences. I decided not to reveal my marital status until the end of interviews, though I felt removing my wedding ring would be too deceptive and chose to leave it on.

In some cases, single older women knew my marital status and my research was about singlehood because they learned it from the referrers. A few of them asked me, at the beginning of the interview, why I took interest in studying single women despite that I myself was married. I gave a brief but honest explanation that I was single when I lived in Japan, married in the U.S. at age 30, and many of my friends in Japan

remained single. I told them that I wanted to understand the phenomenon because I felt I had a better grip on this issue as an insider. All the older, single interviewees spoke comfortably and eagerly. I am confident that my marital status posed no discomfort or threat to these participants.

Data analysis

The data (i.e., transcripts and field notes) were analyzed in the original language (i.e., Japanese), only by me. No computer software was used for the analysis because the transcripts are in Japanese. Several steps were taken to analyze the data, both deductively and inductively, following strategies recommended by field researchers (e.g., Berg 2007; Lofland et al. 2006). First, I carefully read transcripts and took notes on themes that were relevant to my hypotheses (i.e., perceptions of ideal age for marriage, experience of pressure to marry, and conceptions of gender roles) as well as other themes that emerged from the data. I gave tentative categories to these emerged themes. There were several themes from the data that appear to be associated with interviewees' conceptions of gender roles (e.g., ideal and expected life courses, views toward the role of housewife, maternal employment, men's role, etc.), and thus, I divided this category into several.

As an initial coding process (i.e., "open coding") (Berg 2007; Neuman 2006), I coded the data for each category (e.g., strong, ambiguous, weak, no interests in marriage). Several other themes emerged during the initial coding, and I wrote them down, categorized them, and coded the data under these new categories. Codes were then organized into analytic categories (i.e., "axial coding") (Glaser and Strauss 1967;

Neuman 2006). I read over the data several more times and repeated this process until I was satisfied with coding and categorization.

METHOD: SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative portion of the research tests the fourth hypothesis presented in Chapter 3: the gender gap in views of women's roles is larger in the boom cohort than in other cohorts.

Data

The data set used for the quantitative portion of the analysis is the Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS) 2005, collected by the Institute of Regional Studies at Osaka University of Commerce with the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo.[1] The survey was administered between September and November of 2005 to a nationally representative sample of 4,500 adults aged 20 to 89 (with a response rate of 50.5%). The sampling method used was a two-staged stratified random sample – stratified first by region and then by population size of cities and districts. The sample was drawn from the Register of electors.

[1] The Japanese General Social Surveys (JGSS) are designed and carried out at the Institute of Regional Studies at Osaka University of Commerce in collaboration with the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo under the direction of Ichiro TANIOKA, Michio NITTA, Noriko IWAI, and Tokio YASUDA. The project is financially assisted by Gakujutsu Frontier Grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for 1999-2008 academic years, and the datasets are compiled and distributed by SSJ Data Archive, Information Center for Social Science Research on Japan, Institute of Social Science, the University of Tokyo.

Sample

In testing the cohort effects, I compare three cohorts, distinguished by whether young adulthood was spent before, during, or after the economic boom between the mid-1980s and early 1990s. By comparing the other cohorts to the pre-boom, the impact of the economic boom and recession can be assessed more clearly. This study uses a sub-sample of the above data set, excluding the respondents who were born before 1947. One of the reasons for the exclusion is that life experiences of individuals during and several years after World War II differed significantly from those of individuals who lived most of their lives thereafter (Sugimoto 2003). Also, the inclusion of these respondents in the cohort of the pre-economic boom would produce too wide an age range, both wartime and postwar generations. I operationalized the boom cohort as those born between 1960 and 1972, and the recession cohort as those born from 1973 to 1985 (please see below for operationalization of three cohorts). In order to give an equal range of birth years to three cohorts, I chose the birth year 1947 to determine the start of the cohort "before" the boom. Thus, this study uses a sub-sample of respondents who were born between 1947 and 1985 (aged 20 to 58 at the time of the survey). The sample size is 1,167 after eliminating 9 cases with missing data on the item used for the education variable.

Dependent variable: rejection of traditional wives' role

The dependent variable, *rejection of traditional wives' role*, was constructed from three items in the JGSS 2005 that ask respondents whether they agree or disagree with statements regarding the wife's role. These statements are (1) If a husband has

sufficient income, it is better for his wife not to have a job, (2) A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family, and (3) It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself. Cronbach's alpha for these three items is .747.

These items are scaled at four points (1 = agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = somewhat disagree; 4 = disagree). Because "no answer" implies that the respondent does not either agree or disagree with the statements, I gave this response a score 3 (neutral) and recoded the original scores 3 (somewhat disagree) and 4 (disagree) into 4 and 5, respectively (i.e., the scale was changed to five points). Individuals' scores on these three items were added and averaged (ranges from 1 to 5).

These average scores are not normally distributed, and thus are not appropriate for ordinary least square regression analysis. Because this study attempts to examine gender and cohort differences in views towards women's role in marriage, I use a logistic regression analysis and assess whether gender gap in views is larger for the cohort of economic boom compared to that of pre- and post-boom. I created a dichotomous variable, *rejection of traditional wives' role*, by recoding the average scores 3 and below into 0, as an indicator of acceptance of traditional wives' role, and the average scores above 3 into 1, as an indicator of rejection of traditional wives' role.

The point at which I chose to dichotomize is reasonable considering the characteristics of Japanese culture and communication. In general, the Japanese are discouraged to communicate their thoughts and opinions in a direct, straightforward manner, especially when they express disagreement with commonly-held views, as numerous scholars of Japanese culture have pointed out (e.g., Condon 1984; Lebra

1976; Nakane 1970; Reischauer 1988[1977]). Japanese respondents may have a tendency to choose "somewhat disagree" rather than "disagree," or the choice of "somewhat disagree" may reflect a stronger resentment than it appears to. Dichotomizing scores between "3 and below" and "above 3" is a logical divide, because average scores above 3 are likely to indicate that respondents firmly disagree with traditional roles in at least one of the statements. Among 1,167 cases, there are 464 cases (39.8%) that accept the traditional wives' role and 703 cases (60.2%) that reject it.

Independent variables: gender, cohorts, and interaction terms

The focal independent variables of this study are *gender, cohorts,* and their interactions. *Gender* is a dummy variable, with female coded 1 and male 0. There are 654 women (56.0%) and 513 men (44.0%) in this sample.

Because Japan's economic boom is considered to have begun in the mid-1980s and ended in the early-1990s (Sugimoto 2003), this study operationalizes the economic boom period as the years between 1985 and 1992. *Cohorts* are determined by whether individuals spent most of their young adulthood (ages between 18 and 25) before, during, or after the boom. The three cohorts are labeled as the *preboom cohort*, the *boom cohort*, and the *recession cohort*. The preboom cohort is operationalized as individuals who were born between 1947 and 1959 (aged 46 to 58 at the time of the survey), the boom cohort between 1960 and 1972 (aged 33 to 45), and the recession cohort between 1973 and 1985 (aged 20 to 32). As discussed in the above section, the

birth year range of 1947 to 1959 is used for the preboom cohort in order to control for the effects of war experiences and to give it a year range equal to the other two cohorts.

There are 487 cases (41.7% of the sample) in the preboom cohort, 382 cases (32.7%) in the boom cohort, and 298 cases (25.5%) in the recession cohort. In the logistic regression analysis, the preboom cohort is the reference category and boom and recession cohorts are compared to it.

Control variables

Individuals' views toward gender roles are likely to be affected by education, region of origin, employment, marital status, presence of young child/ren, and number of children in the household (e.g., Davis and Robinson 1991; Kane and Sanchez 1994; Morgan and Waite 1987). Micro-level sociological theories and studies suggest that parents' role taking also affects individuals' behavior and attitudes regarding gender roles (e.g., Cunningham 2002; Goffman 1977). Further, analyzing longitudinal data, Kroska and Elman (2009) found that individuals change their gender ideology according to their family circumstances (e.g., married women who stay at home might support conformity to traditional gender roles even when they believed in egalitarian roles at younger ages). In light of these theories and empirical observations, *respondent's father's and mother's occupations*, *rural upbringing*, *years of education*, *occupation*, *marital status*, *number of children respondents ever had*, and *presence of preschool children* are controlled for.[2]

[2] Income is not included as a variable in this analysis because there is a large number of missing cases in the item for household income in the JGSS 2005.

For the occupation variables (of respondents as well as those of their parents), I created several dummy variables from items that ask respondents to choose their current occupation, and their father's and mother's occupations when they were 15 years old.[3] Based on these items, I created 6 occupational categories: a) managerial or professional full-time occupation, b) non-managerial or non-professional full-time occupation, c) self-employment, d) part-time or temporary occupation, e) unemployment, and f) others. The category "others" is only for parents' occupations (i.e., not respondent's), and this includes not having a father/mother at age 15, not knowing their father/mother's occupation, and no answer. A very small number of respondents had a father who was unemployed (n = 11) or had a part-time or temporary job (n = 9) when they were 15. For this reason, I included these answers in the "others"

[3] The JGSS 2005 provides the following 14 answer choices for the item on respondent's employment status: 1) executive of a company or a corporation, 2) regular employee with no managerial post, 3) regular employee – group leader, foreman, 4) regular employee – sub-section head, 5) regular employee – section head, manager, 6) regular employee – department head, general manager, 7) regular employee – other managerial post, 8) regular employee – managerial status unknown, 9) temporary worker, daily worker, part-time temporary worker, 10) dispatched worker from temporary personnel agency, 11) self-employed, 12) family worker, 13) doing piecework at home, 14) don't know, and 88) not applicable (including unemployed, retired, student, housework, and others). I collapsed these categories into 5 occupational categories by recoding answers #1,5,6,and 7 as "managerial or professional full-time occupation," #2,3,4,and 8 as "non-managerial or non-professional full-time occupation," #11 and 12 as "self-employed," #9, 10, and 13 as part-time or temporary occupation, and #14 and 88 as "unemployed. There are 15 choices of answer to the item on respondent's father's occupation. The answers #1 to 9 are the same as those of respondent's occupation, and 10) self-employed, 11) family worker, 12) doing piecework at home, 13) he was not working, 14) I didn't have a father at that time, and 15) don't know. Father's occupation is classified into 6 categories by recoding answers #1,5,6,and 7 as "managerial or professional full-time occupation," #2,3,4,and 8 as "non-managerial or non-professional full-time occupation," #10 and 11 as "self-employed," #9 as part-time or temporary occupation, #13 as "unemployed, and #14, 15, and "No answer" as "Others." There are 12 choices of answer to the item on mother's employment status when a respondent was 15 years-old: 1) she was not working, 2) temporary worker, daily worker, part-time temporary worker, 3) regular employee – non-management, 4) regular employee – managerial position, 5) regular employee – professional (nurse, teacher, etc.), 6) regular employee – don't know about occupation, 7) self-employed/family worker – agriculture, 8) self-employed/family worker – other than agriculture, 9) doing piecework at home, 10) executive of a company or a corporation, 11) I didn't have a mother at that time, and 12) don't know. I collapsed these categories into 5 occupational categories by recoding answers #4,5, and 10 as "managerial or professional full-time occupation," #3 and 6 as "non-managerial or non-professional full-time occupation," #7 and 8 as "self-employed," #2 and 9 as "part-time or temporary occupation," and #11, 12 and "No answer" as "others."

category for respondent's father's occupation. All respondents chose one of the categories of occupation listed for their own occupations, and thus the category "others" is unnecessary for this variable.

Rural upbringing is a dummy variable created from an item that asks whether respondents lived in a farming or fishing village at age 15. Those who answered "yes" to this question are coded 1 (meaning rural upbringing), and "no" are coded 0 (meaning non-rural upbringing).

Years of education is a continuous variable created from two items that ask about the last level of school respondents attended and whether they graduated. The JGSS 2005 does not include data on years of education respondents received. Because the Japanese school system was standardized to a 6-3-3 system (i.e., 6 years of elementary, 3 years of junior high, 3 years of high school education), the values 9 and 12, respectively, are given to those who graduated from junior high and high school. For those who graduated from a two-year college or technical school, four-year university, or graduate school, values of 14, 16, and 18 were given, respectively. Those who had graduate school education may have had subsequent years of education, but there were only 25 cases (2.1% of all cases) with graduate school education and, therefore, this value is not likely to affect the analysis significantly.

For those who did not graduate from the last school they attended, the values 8, 11, 13, 15, and 17 are given, respectively, as approximate years of education they received. A great majority (94.1%) of respondents graduated from the last schools they attended and, therefore, these approximate values of years of education for non-graduates are unlikely to distort the results of data analysis for the present study.

Marital status is a dichotomous variable (1 = never-married and 0 = ever-married). The numbers of respondents who were divorced or widowed at the time of the survey are small. There were only 41 divorced (3.5% of all cases) and 15 widowed (1.3%). Although differences in views of gender roles by marital status are likely, due to the size of the samples I combined divorced and widowed, with married, into the "ever-married" category.

The variable, *number of children respondents ever had,* is a continuous variable, the value of which indicates the number of biological, adopted, and/or step children respondents ever had. The number includes children who are deceased or left home. There were three cases that chose the "not applicable" category. I interpreted this response to mean no children and gave it a value of 0.

Presence of preschool children is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether the respondents live with children ages 5 and under (1 = yes; 0 = no). I created this variable from questions regarding the ages of all children respondents lived with at the time of the survey. Table 4-1 shows frequencies for all the variables included in the analysis.

Table 4-1. List of All Variables and Frequencies

	Frequency	Percent
Dependent variable		
Rejection of Traditional Wives' Role		
Yes (coded 1)	703	60.2
No (coded 0)	464	39.8
Independent variables		
Gender		
Female (coded 1)	654	56.0
Male (coded 0)	513	44.0
Cohort		
Preboom cohort	487	41.7
Boom cohort	382	32.7
Recession cohort	298	25.5
Control variables		
Father's occupation		
Managerial/professional full-time	175	15.0
Non-managerial/professional full-time	477	40.9
Self-employed	390	33.4
Others (unemployed; no father; unknown; no answer)	125	10.7
Mother's occupation		
Managerial/professional full-time	38	3.3
Non-managerial/professional full-time	147	12.6
Self-employed	353	30.2
Part-time/temporary	261	22.4
Unemployed	332	28.4
Others (no mother; unknown; no answers)	36	3.1
Respondent's occupation		
Managerial/professional full-time	123	10.5
Non-managerial/professional full-time	468	40.1
Self-employed	128	11
Part-time/temporary	225	19.3
Unemployed	223	19.1
Rural upbringing		
Yes (coded 1)	436	37.4
No (coded 0)	731	62.6

Years of education		
8 years	2	0.2
9 years	73	6.3
11 years	23	2.0
12 years	536	45.9
13 years	8	0.7
14 years	237	20.3
15 years	34	2.9
16 years	228	19.5
17 years	1	0.1
18 years	25	2.1
Marital status		
Never-married (coded 1)	284	24.3
Ever-married (coded 0)	883	75.7
Number of children respondents ever had		
No child	368	31.5
1 child	165	14.1
2 children	444	38.0
3 children	168	14.4
4 children	19	1.6
5 children	3	0.3
Presence of preschool children		
Yes (coded 1)	194	16.6
No (coded 0)	973	83.4
	1167	100.0

Source: Japanese General Social Survey 2005

Analytic approach

This study employs binary and multiple logistic regression models to analyze the log odds of rejecting the traditional wives' role. Models 1 and 2 are binary analyses, Model 1 for the independent variable *gender* and Model 2 for the other independent variable *cohorts*. Model 3 is a multiple model that includes both independent variables and control variables. In Model 4, interaction terms (gender*boom cohort and gender*recession cohort) are added to test whether the effects of gender differ by cohort. Male, preboom cohort, non-rural upbringing, ever-married, and no presence of preschoolers are reference categories. For occupation variables, reference categories are "unemployed" for mother's and respondent's occupations and "others" for father's occupation.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

PART I

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of the quantitative portion of my research are presented. This statistical analysis tests one of the hypotheses: that the gender gap in views of wife's role is larger for the boom cohort than for the pre-boom and recession cohorts.

Table 5-1 shows the frequency and percentage crosstabulation of views toward the traditional wife's role by gender by cohort. Not surprisingly, for all cohorts, larger percentages of women, compared to men, reject the traditional wife's role. Men have almost identical proportions that agree and disagree with the traditional role across cohort – 56.5%, 56.6%, and 53.2% of men of the preboom, boom, and recession cohorts, respectively, disagree with the traditional wife's role. Interestingly, the percentage is lowest among the recession cohort (53.2%), though the differences from the two other cohorts are small. These data imply few cohort effects on men's views of wives' roles. Slightly more traditional views among the youngest cohort may reflect age effects; younger individuals are more likely to hold a traditional gender ideology (Glenn 2003).

On the other hand, cohort differences are more pronounced among women. The proportions of women who disagree with the traditional wife's role are 59.4%, 70.6%, and 62.1% for the preboom, boom, and recession cohorts, respectively. The percentage is highest for the boom cohort. Considering the small cohort differences among men, a

larger gender discrepancy in views toward wife's proper role is more likely for the boom cohort.

Table 5-1. Frequency and Percentage Crosstabulation of Views toward Wife's Traditional Role by Gender by Cohort

Cohort	**Preboom** (born 1947-59)		**Boom** (born 1960-72)		**Recession** (born 1973-85)	
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agree	108 (40.6%)	96 (43.4%)	63 (29.4%)	73 (43.5%)	66 (37.9%)	59 (46.8%)
Disagree	158 (59.4%)	125 (56.6%)	151 (70.6%)	95 (56.5%)	108 (62.1%)	66 (53.2%)
Total	266 (100.0%)	221(100.0%)	214(100.0%)	168(100.0%)	174(100.0%)	124(100.0%)

Source: Japanese General Social Survey (JGSS) 2005

Table 5-2 shows the summary statistics of the logistic regression analysis for variables predicting rejection of the traditional wife's role for Japanese men and women aged 20 to 58. The odds ratios indicate the "change in the predicted logged odds of … having a characteristic for a one-unit change in the independent variables" (Pampel 2000). The odds ratio 1.00 means that there is no difference in odds for the unit change in the independent variables, and the odds ratio larger than 1.00 means more likelihood (and one smaller than 1.00 means less likelihood) of having a characteristic for the independent variables in question (compared to the other group). In this study, the odds ratio larger than 1.00 means that individuals of a given group have higher odds to reject the traditional wife's role, compared to those of the reference category (and one smaller than 1.00 means the opposite).

Model 1 is to test the binary association between gender and the view of wife's role. The odds ratio for *female* is 1.397 and statistically significant at $p < .01$ level, meaning that the odds of women to reject the traditional wife's role are 39.7% higher than men. As in the crosstabulation, overall, women are less likely to support the traditional role compared to men.

Model 2 shows the effects of cohort on the view of wife's role. The odds ratio for *boom cohort* is 1.304, which is marginally statistically significant ($p < .10$). On the other hand, the odds ratio for *recession cohort* is 1.012 and this is not statistically significant. These mean that the odds of the boom cohort to reject the traditional wife's role are 30.4% higher than the preboom cohort, but the odds are not significantly different between the recession and the preboom cohorts.

Table 5-2. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Rejection of Traditional Wife's Role (*n* = 1,167)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
Predictor	*B*	OR		*B*	OR		*B*	OR		*B*	OR	
Independent variables												
Gender (R = Male)												
Female	0.334	1.397	**				0.386	1.471	**	0.152	1.164	
Cohorts (R = Preboom)												
Boom				0.265	1.304	†	0.265	1.303		-0.073	0.930	
Recession				0.011	1.012		0.054	1.056		-0.094	0.911	
Interaction (R = Male x Preboom)												
Female x boom										0.591	1.805	*
Female x recession										0.208	1.231	
Control variables												
Rural upbringing (R = No)												
Yes							-0.047	0.954		-0.054	0.947	
Father's occupation (R = Others)												
Managerial/professional							-0.123	0.885		-0.125	0.882	
Non-managerial/professional							-0.039	1.040		0.031	1.032	
Self-employed							0.000	1.000		-0.004	0.996	
Mother's occupation (R - Unemployed)												
Managerial/professional							0.158	1.171		0.181	1.198	
Non-managerial/professional							0.292	1.339		0.294	1.342	
Self-employed							0.083	1.086		0.067	1.069	
Part-time/temporary							0.017	1.017		0.015	1.016	
Others							0.385	1.470		0.379	1.461	
Years of education							0.159	1.172	***	0.160	1.174	***

Respondent's occupation (R = Unemployed)								
Managerial/professional				0.279	1.322		0.268	1.307	
Non-managerial/professional				0.365	1.441	*	0.396	1.486	*
Self-employed				0.011	1.012		0.015	1.015	
Part-time/temporary				0.441	1.554	*	0.457	1.579	*
Marital status (R = Ever-married)									
Never-married				-0.423	0.655	†	-0.416	0.659	†
Number of children ever had				-0.070	0.932		-0.076	0.927	
Presence of preschoolers (R = No)									
Yes				-0.416	0.660	*	-0.390	0.677	†
Constant	0.231		0.327	-2.031			-1.910		
df	1		2	20			22		
-2 log likelihood	1560.818		1564.376	1510.970			1506.899		

Source: Japanese General Social Survey 2005

OR = Odds Ratio (Exponent *B*) R = Reference Category †p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Note: Gender (female), Cohort (boom, recession), Rural upbringing, Father's, Mother's, and Respondent's occupation (managerial/professional, non-managerial, self-employed, part-time/temporary, others), Marital status (never-married), Presence of preschoolers coded as 1 for yes and 0 for no.

Model 3 includes the two focal independent variables (i.e., gender and cohort) and control variables in the analysis. With inclusion of other variables, the odds ratio of *boom cohort* loses statistical significance. On the other hand, *female* remains statistically significant and its odds ratio is larger (1.471) than Model 1. This means that, net of other variables, women are 47.1% more likely to reject the traditional wife's role than men. Among the control variables, statistically significant positive relations are found with *years of education* ($p < .001$) and *respondent's non-managerial/non-professional* and *part-time/temporary occupations* (both $p < .05$). Two other variables, *never-married status* and *presence of young children*, are found to have lower odds to reject the traditional wife's role, which are statistically significant (at $p < .10$ and $p < .01$ respectively).

Finally, in order to assess the cohort effects, interaction terms are introduced in Model 4. The interaction terms of gender (*female*) and cohorts (*boom* and *recession*) assess whether the effects of gender differ by cohort. The odds ratio of the interaction with *boom* is 1.805 and statistically significant at $p < .05$. The odds ratio of the interaction term with *recession* is, on the other hand, 1.231 and not statistically significant. With inclusion of interaction terms, the odds ratio of the variable *female* is reduced to 1.164 and no longer statistically significant. These results indicate that compared to men of the preboom cohort, the preboom women are 16.4% more likely to reject the traditional wife's role (but not statistically significant), the boom women are 80.5% more likely to reject (and statistically significant at $p < .05$ level), and the recession women are 23.1% more likely to reject (but not statistically significant), controlling for other relevant variables.

This supports the hypothesis: The cohort membership has significant effects on women's views toward the traditional wife's role. The boom cohort women are found to be the least favorable towards the traditional role, controlling for other effects. This means that the gender gap in views toward wife's role is larger for the boom cohort than for the two other cohorts.

Among the control variables, *years of education* and *respondent's non-managerial/non-professional* and *part-time/temporary occupations* have robust positive effects on views toward wife's role. Each additional year of education respondents received increases the odds to reject the traditional wife's role by about 17% ($p < .001$). Compared to the unemployed, respondents who are in non-managerial or non-professional full-time occupations and those in part-time or temporary occupations are more likely to reject the traditional wife's role. The odds ratios are 1.486 and 1.579 respectively for these two dummy variables and both are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Although statistical significance is marginal ($p < .10$), never-married status and presence of preschoolers are lower than 1.00 (0.659 and 0.677 respectively), which means negative associations between these two variables and rejection of the traditional role. Never-married individuals are 34.1% less likely to reject the traditional role, compared to ever-married individuals, and those who had preschool-age children are 32.3% less likely to reject than those who did not have young children. Other control variables – rural upbringing, parents' occupations, and number of children respondents ever had – have no statistically significant associations.

This analysis uses a cross-sectional data set and examines views of gender roles among individuals who are in different life stages. The recession cohort (aged between 20 and 32 in the year of survey) includes many individuals who were several years younger than the mean ages at the first marriage, 29.6 for men and 27.8 for women in 2005 (Japan Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare 2008a). The lower odds of rejection of the traditional role by the recession cohort women (relative to the boom cohort) may reflect age effects (or a combination of age and cohort effects) (Glenn 2003). For instance, young individuals, for whom marriage is not yet a real part of day to day life, may hold more traditional role expectations as ideal, but change their views as they get older (and marriage becomes more relevant to their lives).

On the other hand, the boom cohort consists of individuals aged 33 to 45, the preboom aged 46 to 58. Considering the age ranges, the observed differences in views between these two cohorts are more likely to be cohort effects, rather than age effects. In other words, whereas the relatively traditional views held by the recession cohort may be a reflection of age effects, the higher odds of rejection of the traditional role among the boom cohort women are likely to be cohort effects. The historical context unique to the boom cohort – expanded employment opportunities for young women due to the unprecedented level of economic growth – might have had significant impacts on women's views toward wife's role and employment.

In terms of the hypothesis of cultural lag, my original expectation was that single men and women of the boom cohort may have faced difficulties finding marital partners because of mismatches in views toward gender roles (e.g., men believed in the traditional roles whereas women accepted wife's employment). This implies that single

men and women have a larger discrepancy in views than those who had ever been married. Interestingly, however, the above analysis found that never-married individuals hold more favorable views towards traditional gender roles than those who are ever-married. As discussed by Kroska and Elman (2009), individuals often change their views of gender roles depending on the life circumstances they are in. Married, divorced, and widowed Japanese women of the boom cohort, especially those without young children, may be more resentful toward the traditional wives' role (that requires them to stay at home), compared to never-married women who are free to remain employed.

How does the observed cultural lag of the boom cohort translate into increased singlehood? The above analysis does not test this hypothesis directly, but provides evidence supporting the existence of a larger discrepancy between boom cohort men and women's views toward the traditional wife's role. Women's views toward gender roles will be explored in the qualitative portion of this research project (as presented in the following chapters), and the impacts of these views on marital behavior will be discussed in the conclusion chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS

PART II

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: COHORT DIFFERENCES IN NORMS OF MARRIAGE AGE AND OBSTACLES TO MARRIAGE

This chapter presents findings from qualitative research regarding the first two hypotheses. The hypotheses are that differences by cohort will be found in (1) ideal marriage age and (2) the experience of pressure to marry around this age. Other related findings regarding life circumstances during the marriageable age period are discussed as well. Findings are presented first for the boom cohort, and then for the recession cohort. All interviewees' names are pseudonyms.

COHORT DIVIDE

For the statistical analysis presented in the last chapter, I operationalized the boom cohort as those born between 1960 and 1972 and the recession cohort as those born between 1973 and 1985. Based on interviewees' accounts of their experiences of job opportunities, I found this divide to be reasonable. Women who were born in the period, 1970-71, described their young adulthood as a time in which they enjoyed disposable income used for various leisure activities – a characteristic observed during the boom (Kelsky 2001). In contrast, women who were born in the period, 1972-73 discussed the hardship they faced searching for jobs when they were graduating from the last schools they attended. Midori, born in 1972, said the years 1994-5, when she

was on the job market, were considered to be the worst time to look, and described by the mass media as the "ice age (*hyogaki*)" for new hires. Hitomi, born in 1973, said she personally did not have difficulty finding a job, but identified herself as a member of the "post-bubble economy generation," frequently referring to women of the generation above her as "that bubble generation of women (*baburu ki no josei*)."

Thus, interviewees who were born between 1962 and 1971 (age 38-46 at the time of interview) are categorized as women of the boom cohort, and those born between 1973 and 1984 (age 25-36 at the time of interview) as women of the recession cohort. Nineteen interviewees (12 never-married and 7 married) belong to the boom cohort and 21 (17 never-married and 4 married) belong to the recession cohort.

BOOM COHORT: MARRIAGE WISH & AGE NORMS

Wish and intention to marry

At the time of the interviews, never-married women of the boom cohort had varying degrees of desire and intent regarding marriage. Some were eager to marry, others were passively wishing for that day to come (e.g., "I want to, but am not doing anything about it," "I think I want to marry one day"), still others were ambivalent towards marriage ("I probably should, but am not sure it's necessarily a good idea"), and one was determined to remain single. None of these women, however, intended to stay single for life when they were younger. "It wasn't like I had no intention to marry when I was young" was a frequent statement by these women during the interviews. Rather, all of them wanted to marry, or at least expected to marry, viewing marriage as

a normal part of the life course. In other words, their present single status does *not* appear to be the result of deliberate choices made by these women.

The degree of eagerness to marry when these women were younger is not easy to assess based on interviewees' accounts. Because they were in their late 30s and 40s at the time of interviews, it is unreasonable to expect these women to recall accurately how much they wished to marry over a decade ago. It is also possible that these single women might downplay the desire they had, in order to justify their current marital status. For example, the sentiment that they did not take marriage seriously when they were young could be a rationale for their present singlehood.

One of the single women, Kozue (45 years old), first told me that at no point in her life did she want to marry. In the part of the interview that asked questions regarding her past romantic relationships, however, a past interest in marriage was uncovered. There was a man she wanted to marry when she was in her 20s. She seemed genuinely surprised when she rediscovered her past self, so passionate about this man and the prospect of marrying him. She corrected her initial statement with a laugh, "So it wasn't like I was always against marriage!"

I did not take women's accounts of intent at face value. Instead, I explored their life stories and measured their intention to marry in their younger days from these stories. I did not observe any of the unmarried women of this cohort expressing an intention to stay single, let alone making a deliberate choice to remain unmarried.

Interestingly and ironically, a lack of interest in marriage (while younger) was expressed by three *married* women in this study. Two of them – Eri who married at 25 and Harumi who married at 31 – explicitly said they thought they would never marry

because they held negative images toward marriage when they were young. Another woman, Chie, who married at age 24, said when she was a teenager she planned to remain single because she wanted to become a school teacher – and she felt marriage was incompatible with this. There was, however, an important difference between "intention" of marriage and "views" towards marriage. Many women from this cohort held negative views toward marriage, regardless of their current marital status. This finding will be discussed more in Chapter 7.

Appropriate age for marriage: awareness of **tekireiki** *(marriageable age)*

Most women of this cohort, regardless of their present marital status, expected that they would marry one day, and marriage was viewed as a very natural, normal course of life. Vaguely or explicitly, most of them envisioned that their future marriage would occur during the time called *tekireiki*, the marriageable age or appropriate age for marriage, which was the early 20s (for women). This norm of *tekireiki* marriage was well-internalized among them, as the following accounts by three single women illustrate:

> *Author: When you were young, did you have ideas about the right age to marry?*
> Saori (45 years old, never-married): [With no pause] Yeah, 24.
> *Author: How old were you when you thought so?*
> Saori: Around 21 or 22. I never imagined I'd be single at 25. I thought that I would automatically marry when I turned 24. With no logical reason.
>
> When I was in high school, in the home economics class, there was an assignment where we had to write about our future life course. I wrote I would marry at 24 or 25 [chuckle]. I now wonder why I thought so.
> (Teruko, 41 years old, never-married)
>
> [When I met this man and thought I would marry him] I was around 26 or so, around *tekireiki*, everyone else got married, and I thought it was my turn. ... I

> was the last one [to marry among my friends]. … "Now, finally it's my turn!" was what I thought. So it wasn't like I thought I would never, ever marry. I wasn't thinking I would really want to marry, either. Just naturally, I thought, "Ah, now it's my turn to marry."
> (Kozue, 45 years old, never-married)

The age of 25 seemed to have had a particular importance for many women. Approximately one half of women of this cohort said they either wanted or expected to marry before they turned 25, or by 25 at the latest. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the 1980s single women past age 25 were called "Christmas Cake" because they would not be bought (i.e., married off) after age 25 – like a cake made to be sold on Christmas day (the 25th of December). The norm of "Christmas Cake" was mentioned by several. A married woman, Sonoko (45 years old), said, "I believed that *tekireiki* was 22 or 23. You know, they used to say 25 is the 'Christmas Cake,' didn't they? So I married during *tekireiki*. … I think I wanted to marry while I was in [*tekireiki*]."

When they were in dating relationships, the age of 25 marked the next step for some women – the time to give serious thought to marriage prospects, as described by the following three women:

> After I started working [as a non-tenure school teacher] and then 3 or 4 years later, [when I was around 25], I wondered about my future. I had no secure job, living with my parents. I had a boyfriend, but didn't know if we were going to marry. Everything was like, pending. So, I thought, "What am I going to do?" [and asked my current husband whether he intended to marry me].
> (Fujiko, 38 years old, married at 27)

> Yes! [Marriage] by 25! That was normal! ... I was dating this guy [when I was around 25], and believing that I would of course marry him!
> (Rumi, 45 years old, never-married)

> [I was dating] a boy two years younger than me. And I was 25 or 6. He thought he'd have to marry me soon, just because he was dating this age of woman.
> (Tomomi, 39 years old, never-married)

When they were in their early 20s, many women of the boom cohort observed that older women who remained single past *tekireiki* were viewed negatively in their workplaces. These older single women were stigmatized as old maids who lost their chance to marry or gave up on marriage – someone who no longer possessed the ability to form intimate, romantic, or sexual relationships with men. My interviewees recalled:

> When I started working, there was a woman who had been working there for 5 years. She was called "*Okkasan* (Mamma, insinuating an old mother who is asexual)." … Only 27 or 8, but called "*Okkasan*."
> (Kozue, 45 years old, never-married)

> People said Makiko-san, a woman in my department, gave up [on marriage]. … People used to say that kind of thing about women who were over 30 and unmarried.
> (Eri, 46 years old, married)

> Rumi (45 years old, never-married): It was normal to marry and quit [work] by around 25. There were women past 30 [in our office] but ... they were regarded as a bit weird. … I was only 20 back then, you know? I wondered what I should talk about with this woman [who was past 30]. I thought I shouldn't talk about dating and things like that. [laugh] I remember I felt really nervous when I faced this woman one on one because I didn't know what to talk about.
> *Author: So when women were past 30 and single, were they assumed to have no one to date?*
> Rumi: Yup! People assumed so.
> *Author: Without knowing that was really the case?*
> Rumi: Right, right, right! We don't talk about such private matters, you know? So I had absolutely no idea. Women who didn't marry past 25 were weird or old maids. It was that kinda time. When a woman was single at 30, back then, people said, "Oh, no!"

Account after account indicated that interviewees grew up during a time when women's single status past 25 was believed to be a problem that needed to be resolved before age 30. If women had no concrete plans of marriage after age 25, they should do something about it, as Saori (45 years old, never-married) used to think about her friend:

> One of my friends went to Australia for [a program called] Working Holiday when she was 25. I thought, "What are you thinking? You're 25!" You know,

> that age of woman shouldn't [do such a thing]. Because it's "Christmas." I was saying that. Well, I ended up not marrying myself, but still [I was saying that back then]!

Indeed, some women did take action to resolve the issue of their mid-20s single status. As already mentioned, Fujiko, 38 years old, confronted her then-boyfriend about their future prospects when she was in her mid-20s, and married him at 27. After years of dating, Nozomi, 40 years old and married, pressured her boyfriend to become engaged with her at age 25, though she later broke up with him and married another man at 29. When Mari, who married at 29, first met her current husband, when she was 27, she made it clear to him that she would not date him unless he would seriously consider the possibility of marriage. In her words:

> Mari: Because I was already 27, immediately, ah, I, [laugh] I think I told him, 'If you have no intention to marry, please don't see me. If you have no intention, I'd like to look for someone else, so, if you have no intention, please don't call me. ...
> *Author: Did he say he intended to marry you?*
> Mari: He is two years older, he was 29 already, so he was like, "Well, it's not like I have no intention" or something like that. So I started dating him.
> *Author: So you discussed the possibility of marriage fairly soon?*
> Mari: Yes. It was like, it was the condition (*joken*) [to date]. [chuckle]

Another married woman, Harumi (39 years old, married at 31) said she felt pressure to marry when she was around 30.

> Harumi: I didn't have a positive image [about marriage] so if it was at all possible, I preferred this [singlehood], but … I felt pressured to marry.
> *Author: Is that because you felt financially insecure?*
> Harumi: No, because of others. Everyone else was marrying, so I felt I'd better hurry.

These four married women were single past *tekireiki*, but married because they felt compelled to do so. But what about other women? Did they also feel pressure to marry or do "something" about their situation when they were passing *tekireiki* and

approaching the age of 30? Did their parents pressure them to marry soon? What about their bosses and colleagues? As discussed in Chapter 3, single women were pressured to marry – and to quit work if employed in large corporations. Like my interviewees observed of their predecessors, single women past *tekireiki* were stigmatized, which informally placed pressure on them to quit. Many companies exercised other sexist practices, commonly called *katatataki* (lit. knocking on a shoulder), in which "old" single female employees are transferred to unappealing, unnecessary positions, sending the message that their services were no longer needed (Ogasawara 1998). Did these women face such mistreatment and feel they had to quit and marry?

The answer to these questions seems to be "not so much." Regardless of marital status, most of the women of the boom cohort were not pressured to marry by fellow workers or their parents. Kozue, 45 years old and never-married, said her company used to expect women to marry and quit in *tekireiki*, but when she was passing *tekireiki*, the norm was shifted to "if you're marrying then quit, but if you're not marrying, stay." In other cases, women were explicitly told by their bosses not to quit or marry yet because they wanted these women to continue working for them. Some other women worked for companies that still held these traditional sexist practices, but they were able to quit these jobs and find other jobs elsewhere.

In terms of parental pressure, only two women, both single, said their parents pressured them to marry by 25. Seiko, 43 years old, said her father constantly nagged, noting that her late mother married at 24, and made her meet a man through *miai* – the traditional mate selection system which introduces potential marital partners through mediators. Tomomi, 39 years old, recalled her mother complaining about her being

single when she was around 24 or 25. For others, however, parents said little about their mid-20s singlehood. In such cases, parents began to nag or express sincere concerns when women were single around 30. After then, parents were rather "afraid to bring up" the subject to their children. The unmarried did not perceive parents' comments to be compelling. These were just words, "not like she [my mother] would go and look for a *miai* partner." Some of the single interviewees left parents' homes and lived alone so that they were freed from parental pressure.

Rather than pressure, a couple of never-married women received ambiguous messages from their mothers. A professional artist, Kazuko, 45 years old, whose mother also studied art, said her mother was always "saying like, uh, 'in the long run, it'd be easier if you're not single. But if you marry someone who doesn't let you do art, that wouldn't be good. So if you don't have anyone [you want to marry] right now, I guess you can't do anything about it.'" Izumi's mother had a teaching certificate yet gave up on becoming a teacher because she married at 24 and got pregnant soon after. Izumi perceived that her mother "wanted to work. So, she was sending me mixed messages, 'Have a good career,' and 'You should marry.'"

Overall, I observed that parental pressure to marry was either absent or weak for most of the women of this cohort. Some women met potential marital partners through *miai* but did not marry them, finding them undesirable – or just not thinking seriously about marriage. These *miai* were arranged by third parties. such as relatives or an insurance agent who comes to the workplace, rather than by their parents.

Many of the unmarried women appeared to be rather laid back when they were passing 25 yet still single. For instance, a 39 year-old single woman, Teruko, believed

she would marry at 24 or 25 when she was in high school, as mentioned above, but she was not in a hurry:

> *Author: When you were 24 or 5, did you think you would have to marry soon?*
> Teruko: No, I didn't. Well, people were saying "Christmas," so I think the general climate was [I should marry soon]. But I wasn't dating anyone at that time, so I was just hoping to meet a nice guy.

Leisure and jobs more appealing than dating and marriage

Like Teruko, many never-married women said they felt "okay" about staying single in their post-*tekireiki* years. This was because "there were many other single women around" them, especially in the workplace. Rather than marriage, these women had other things they enjoyed when they were in their 20s. These included various leisure activities (e.g., travel, skiing, golfing, scuba diving, etc.), consumption, socializing with female friends, and jobs. Traveling abroad was very common, which became accessible with help of strong Japanese currency during the boom. These were exciting days of their lives for many of the single interviewees, as illustrated in stories told by two single women, Saori and Rumi, both 45 years old.:

> Saori: It was so much fun. … I was about 22 and there were other women [in my office]… one 26 ... one the same as me, and ... two others joined – one a year older than me and another a year younger than me. It was like a school. ... After work, we always went to drink. We probably went out to eat three nights a week. ... [The next company I worked] was also fun. I started when I was 26 … My hobby was traveling. I loved traveling more than men. So … [I traveled] every year, twice or three times a year.
> *Author: Abroad?*
> Saori: Yes. ... I went to Europe – Spain, Italy. I went to Korea twice. Spain, how many times did I go? Spain twice, Italy once. And Bali, Thailand. I don't remember, I went to many places. I spent most of my time [traveling]. Money and time.
> *Author: With whom did you travel?*
> Saori: My friends from work. ... So, I didn't date much. I was just having fun. It was really fun. .. It was so much fun going to work. We played [a game called] twenty-five during work. Isn't that silly? We did such a thing during

work. That was totally leisure time. I didn't feel I had to have a boyfriend, not at all. It was fun every day. And I went to Hawaii [for my first trip abroad]. Oh, my, Hawaii was so much fun. Wow! I didn't know how fun it was to go abroad! So every year since then. I went to Hawaii, New Caledonia, and, I can't remember all. Well, maybe like 15 or 16 times? ... I saw this woman on TV, she said, "I would go on a trip abroad as many times as my age." I thought, "that's it!" So I would have gone 30-something times when I turned 30-something. Wasn't I a fool? I wasn't thinking about men at all.

Rumi: [After changing to a new job at a small advertising company from a large insurance corporation in which she worked as an *OL* (Office Lady), a typical replaceable female employee] Gradually, I began to enjoy my work. First, it was only assisting. Well, when I was an *OL*, there was a manual. We just do work according to it, so we can do all the work without having any knowledge of insurance or studying it. In other words, a boring job. …

But when I started to work for this [advertising] company, well, the pay was low and I had to work until really late [at night], but I could make something out of what I thought of, or I could improve something with my own efforts, and I also loved photography and I could make use of it, and I started enjoying that kind of thing a lot. A lot of time, I went home taking the last train, or couldn't go home and stayed at the company overnight. …

When I was talking with my boyfriend, well, I will not forget this for the rest of my life. When shall we marry? Next year? We started talking about marriage concretely, and I was thinking that I'd want to work, and so we'd both work, right? And that was fine with him. But then he started saying things like, he wouldn't like it if I'd not be home when he comes home, or he has never run a washing machine. Then suddenly, the reality hit me. Well, how should I put? I felt, ah, forget it! Uh, you know, I felt I didn't want to think about things like "I have to go home now," "I have to go to cook dinner," or "My husband would say this and that" when I'm working.

He was a real nice guy. I still think he was nice. We shared the same values and he was fun and I really loved him. But when I thought about life with him, I thought, well, marriage seemed just too much trouble, then my feelings [toward him] cooled down, then I had a crush on another guy, so we broke up.

Author: Do you think your new job influenced you a lot?

Rumi: [With determination] The job changed me. So, if I didn't know anything, if I kept working for that insurance company, I'd probably have married and divorced [laugh]. I'd probably have thought, boring [referring to marriage]!

Karen Kelsky (2001) describes Japanese single women during the economic boom as the "wealthiest population." Indeed, many single interviewees of the boom cohort indulged themselves traveling abroad, eating out at gourmet restaurants,

engaging in expensive sports such as golfing and skiing, taking lessons in arts and foreign languages, studying abroad, consuming imported goods, etc. Women could afford to travel abroad a few times a year, working half-heartedly (like Saori playing games during work). Some women like Rumi (and others in this interview) landed jobs in smaller companies, which were more stimulating than "boring" OL jobs in large corporations. It is understandable that many young single women were excited about newly gained affluence and job opportunities. But why did this lead to the neglect of romantic relationships? Rumi broke up with her boyfriend, perceiving her employment as incompatible with marriage to him. She did not bother to negotiate, but just "snapped at him, saying 'well, that's just plain wrong'" when he expressed his expectation that she would do the laundry. She did not negotiate because the traditional role of women was deeply internalized in her as well as other women. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. On the other hand, Saori and some other women prioritized leisure and other activities over relationships with men. Why did they put romance on hold? Why did they not travel abroad with their boyfriends? Why did they eat out at gourmet restaurants with female friends rather than romantic partners?

Women's preference to hang out with female friends probably reflects various aspects of Japanese culture and society. First, social lives of the Japanese have been historically highly gendered. Many go to girls-only or boys-only high schools and work in highly gendered workplaces. Even married couples have separate social lives, socializing with same-sex friends separately from their spouses (Kerbo and McKinstry 1998; Lebra 1984). The second issue is power inequality by gender. In boyfriend-girlfriend relationships, women are expected to be subservient and, therefore,

boyfriends could pose obstacles to women's enjoyment of leisure. This point is insinuated by a married woman, Mari, currently 38 years old who married at 29, when she explained why she had little interest in marriage when she was in her early 20s:

> For example, going skiing [with my friends] meant staying overnight. Men could make a fuss over it. That kind of thing is tiresome. I went skiing and traveled abroad with my [female] friends from work. I had a lot of unmarried friends, and I didn't want my friendship to be disturbed [by boyfriends], either. ... When I was in my early 20s, I didn't want to marry. It was much more fun to go skiing, golfing, traveling, that kind of thing.

Her story reflects the issue of control. Women might have to get permission from their boyfriend to take an overnight trip, or feel they would lose freedom to schedule their daily plans such as going out with female friends. They might also feel they would have to cater for men's needs once they are in relationships.

Although no interviewee articulated this point, it is also possible that single men were largely unavailable for women to share leisure time with. In the gendered labor market of Japan, men are expected to devote their time and energy to the company, particularly through excessively long overtime work hours (Boling 2008; Sugimoto 2003). Many single women across both cohorts indeed commented, "Where are the men, anyhow?" This research reveals the important effects of Japan's corporate practices on increased singlehood, which will be discussed briefly in the concluding chapter.

In summary, when they were younger, all the single interviewees of the boom cohort intended to marry one day, and the traditional marriageable ages were well-internalized among them. Despite this internalized norm, when they passed the ideal age for marriage, these women felt little pressure to marry and fine about staying single. Pressure from work and parents was absent, weak, or escapable, and there were many

other never-married women around. These women enjoyed the fruits of a booming economy, spending their incomes on leisure, consumption, cultural activities, etc., with some taking more stimulating jobs. Single women did not prioritize romantic relationships over new opportunities, perhaps because of the gendered nature of social life, power inequality by gender, and long work hours required of men.

RECESSION COHORT: AGE NORMS & DESIRE FOR MARRIAGE

Desire and intention to marry, and marriage age

Just like women of the boom cohort, a great majority of women of the recession cohort expected that they would marry one day, although the strength of this wish varied among them as well. The only exception was Maya who was in a lesbian relationship. Due to her sexual preference, for most of her life she had not imagined marriage as an option, though at the time of the interview she strongly wished to marry her European partner because same-sex marriage was legalized in her country.

Striking differences from the boom cohort were, however, observed in terms of ideas regarding appropriate ages for marriage, or *tekireiki*. Most women in the recession cohort answered that a good age for marriage was the late-20s or "by 30," or that there was no ideal age that applies to all women uniformly. Only two women in this cohort married during the traditional *tekireiki* – Rika at 24 and Kimi at 25. Rika (29 years old)'s marriage was a so-called *dekichatta kekkon* (equivalent to the English expression, shot-gun marriage, or marriage due to premarital pregnancy). She expressed regret for marrying "too young" and "I really think I should have waited until

32 or so. Really." Kimi, 25 years old, who was a newlywed at the time of interview, said her marriage came earlier than she expected due to her husband's job transfer. All the women of this cohort viewed marriage before age 25 as "too early."

Mothers of women of the recession cohort often took the normative female life course. Such a life course was described with disbelief by recession cohort women, as expressed by two interviewees below:

> My mother married at 22 or so. She graduated from high school, started working, married my father who worked at the same company, and quit [her job]. Then she had kids. [She married and had kids] so *early*.
> (Megumi, 31 years old, never-married)

> I'm now 26. My mom was married and raising a child at this age. Unbelievable!
> (Maya, 26 years old, never-married)

These two women once asked their mothers "why in the world" they married so young. Their mothers answered that it was normal and there was no other alternative for women back then. These two women appeared to have had difficulties imagining such a world. When they spoke of these things, they sounded as if they were sharing some unbelievable, unusual stories. I told some of the women of this cohort, including these two, that single women past 25 used to be called "Christmas Cake," and explained its meaning. These younger women reacted in disbelief – some laughed at the ridiculousness of it and others commented that it was "mean."

These stories and reactions clearly show changes in societal norms regarding women's marriageable age. The normative life course two or three decades ago now seems a puzzling way of life to the recession cohort. Indeed, a married woman of the boom cohort, Sonoko, expressed her frustration towards "misperception" by the younger generation. She herself married at 23 in the 1980s, conscious of societal

expectations of *tekireiki*. Yet "Nowadays, [people say] I married really early. I married during *tekireiki*!"

As mentioned above, a majority of women of the recession cohort set the ideal timing of marriage for women as the late-20s, by 30, or no later than 35. Most of them take (perceived) age limits for childbearing into consideration, as in the following account:

> *Author: Did you have an idea about by what age you want to marry?*
> Kimi (25 years old, newly-wed): Yes, 27.
> *Author: Any particular reason for the age of 27?*
> Kimi: Well, I was talking about this with my friends when we were in college. Uh, we had this [method of] "backward counting of ideal ages." It's best to have the first child before 30. So let's plan to have a child at 29. We want to have about 2 years of honeymoon period before having a child. Then [marriage at] 27.
>
> *Author: Do you want to marry by a certain age?*
> Ran (29 years old, never-married): No, not particularly. Well, but recently, well, if I'm going to have a child, maybe [I should marry] pretty soon.
>
> *Author: So, would you like to marry?*
> Yayoi (31 years old, never-married): Yes, very much! I want to marry by 35 at the latest.
> *Author: Why 35?*
> Yayoi: I want to have kids. I'm hearing from others of the higher the risks [of childbearing], the older you get. Also, you'd be 55 when your kids grow up to be adults [referring to the Japanese custom of "coming of age" at age 20]. I want to [live to] see my kids grow up to be adults.
>
> Momoe (30 years old, never-married, not dating): Ah [laugh]. I, [laugh] I'm just not married yet. I'm fully interested in getting married.
> *Author: Do you feel you want to marry by a certain age?*
> Momoe: Uh, right away, or any time [laugh].
> *Author: Do you have ideas about by what age you want to marry at the latest?*
> Momoe: Uh, well, by 35. When I turn 35, I may be saying "by 40," though [laugh].
> *Author: Any reasons for "by 35?"*
> Momoe: I love children, I want three, if possible, or at least two. I've been told that I should have kids while I'm still young, I'd need stamina to raise kids.

Not everyone applied the ideal age to their own life based on age limits for childbearing. Other considerations, such as financial conditions, were also important. Ryoko, a 26 year old woman cohabiting with her 20 year old boyfriend, was between jobs at the time of interview and said:

> *Author: Do you want to marry by a certain age?*
> Ryoko: Uh, now, uh, I'd like to have kids, so if possible, I'd like to have at least one by around 30, so.
> *Author: So, do you want to marry at 28 or 9?*
> Ryoko: Well, uh, hmmm, that's really soon, so that doesn't seem realistic. Uh, it'd be great if I can have one [child] by thirty, uh, thirty-two. [laugh]
> *Author: So you aren't planning to marry in the near future, correct? Is that because your boyfriend is young?*
> Ryoko: Yes, hmmm, uh, it [marriage] is not concrete yet. Well, I think any time is fine.
> *Author: So what determines the timing of marriage?*
> Ryoko: Hmmmm, good question. I think, that's probably when we have a prospect of making a living.

Women who passed the (perceived) age limit for childbearing sometimes lost an incentive to marry, as in 36 year-old Midori:

> I wanted to have children, so I wanted to marry by mid-30s. But I'm 36 already, and I think I may not be able to have children at this point. Now that I can't have children, I just want to marry once before I die. ... A year or two ago, I really wanted to marry [because of a desire for children]. But now I started feeling like, well, if I can't [marry], that'd be okay.

This heightened and then declined wish of marriage around the mid-30s was expressed by several single women of the boom cohort as well (though some of the women in their 40s were still hoping to have children and feeling an urgency regarding marriage). Note that none of these women found unwed motherhood (or adoption) as a viable option. In line with previous research (e.g., Rindfuss et al. 2004), childbearing outside marriage was not approved of by most of my interviewees.

It is important to take note of this wane and wax in desire to marry in one's 30s. Reproductive capacity is an important determinant of marriage, particularly in a society where fertility is largely confined to marriage. This is not just in terms of the value of women in the marriage market (i.e., men prefer to marry women who can bear children), but also incentives for women to get married. The age limits for childbearing are defined partly by social forces such as medical technology that allows safe childbearing in older age, or social norms that determine ideal age for childbearing, but it can be easily argued that biological forces limiting childbearing capacity are also relevant. In assessing women's intention and desire to marry, this point needs to be taken into consideration for women of this age group and above.

According to interviewees' accounts, the late-20s and early-30s are indeed the most popular time to wed for women of this cohort. The interviewees aged 28 to 31 (at the time of interviews) said that their friends were getting married right and left. On the other hand, interviewees aged 27 and under (at the time of interviews) said most or all of their friends were still unmarried. Some single women in their 30s began to feel bad ("*yabai*") about their single status, but such feeling was completely absent among those in their mid-20s. Singlehood in the mid to late-20s, once viewed as the time women should do something about marriage, is indeed mainstream today. Those who marry in their early 20s may be looked down upon for marrying "too early."

The popular age to wed is the time parents of some single interviewees began to express concern over their singlehood. Several women said their parents started asking about the prospect of marriage when they were around 30. Similar to the boom cohort, parental pressures were either weak or absent. The corporate practice of placing

pressure on women to marry and quit seemed to have almost disappeared. Two single women, Momoe, 32 years old, and Yuri, 30 years old, were in Office Lady positions at a large corporation. They said their male bosses "recommended that they marry" in their late-20s, but such comments were perceived as a "fatherly concern" rather than pressure. Their bosses, in fact, wanted to keep them in the company.

Recall that women of the boom cohort witnessed the social stigma attached to older single women at work. Such women were viewed as having little chance to marry due to staying single in their late-20s, and especially past 30. For women of the recession cohort, on the other hand, the number of older single women is much larger due to increased singlehood since the 1980s. How do they view these older single women?

Most women of this cohort personally knew women who remained unmarried in their late-30s and/or 40s. They were their senior workers or relatives. Views toward these older single women varied among women of the recession cohort. The most favorable view was to assume that older single women chose singlehood, prioritizing career or some other worthy cause over marriage. The following accounts illustrate this view:

> Well, probably, women of the generation above us, staying single and working, probably faced a lot of pressure to marry. So, someone who could push aside such pressures must have been in professional occupations.
> (Midori, 36 years old, cohabiting)

> Kimi (25 years old, newly-wed): Well, there are many single women [in my company], from early 30s to late 40s. ... I can't really ask why, but, those women have careers, they have advanced their careers, and it's hard to balance work and family, … so thinking about their careers, maybe they had to choose either one [between work and family/marriage]. I'm wondering if maybe they decided that they wouldn't need to marry yet.

Author: Have you heard of them saying something like that? Or are you just speculating?
Kimi: Just speculating. [laugh]

For some other women, older single women serve as negative role models whose path should be avoided:

Author: What do you think of them [referring to Shoko's co-workers who are older and single]
Shoko (29 years old, never-married): They wouldn't marry. … There's one, she's 38, I think. She's been living on her own, you know? She has lived a long life spending all [her income] as she pleases, so she doesn't want to marry and have a family at this point.
Author: Is it what you speculate about her, or does she say that's the case?
Shoko: She says so. She doesn't care about [men]. I've never seen her having a boyfriend. …
Author: What do you think of that kind of life?
Shoko: [with repulsion] What is she gonna do?! About the future! It's okay for now, but she'd be totally alone! She says she doesn't want to marry but wants to have a partner. Then, do something about it! I tell her so and that's what I think. She's not feminine at all. No make-up. I really don't want to be like her. [weak laugh] Well, I'm telling that to her, too.
Author: So, she's a negative role model for you?
Shoko: Oh, yes, a negative role model. … Now I'm almost 30, and many of my friends of my age are getting married and having kids. … Now I'm turning 30. I'm scared. What if I become like those *senpai* (older co-workers)! … Would I become like them?! I want to avoid that. I want to avoid it, but! [stopped talking, covering her face]

Some other women did not mind what others did, but viewed older unmarried women they personally knew with little respect. For instance:

Honoka (32 years old, never-married): Oh, yeah, there were a lot of women like that [at my first job, referring to older single women].
Author: What do you think about them?
Honoka: Hmmmm, well, I didn't have much interest in their private lives myself. But thinking objectively, well, they had money, so they could do anything on their own. Rather than being fed by someone else, maybe they had time and money to do something more fun than dating.
There were many women who had a lot of hobbies. For example, *okkake* (groupies). I knew someone who was following a figure skater all over the world. I also knew someone who was buying all the art work of this particular artist. Well, if you're into something like that, you can't be dating [laugh]. I saw a lot of real bad cases.

> Kyoko (29 years old, married): Some women chose not to marry. They love their jobs and devoted their lives. But there are those who gave up. They aren't enjoying the jobs, just being there because they have no other options.
> *Author: What do you think about that kind of women?*
> Kyoko: Well, being there [at work] means they are earning income. But those women, I feel, you know, rather than paying salary to them, I wish [the company] would pay more to others. Women who are just barely doing their work are always old [single] women. How shall I put this? They're valued only because they've been there for long. It's not like people can't do a good job because they're young. There are people who are inexperienced but better at work. So I'm really frustrated [with those older single women].

Thus, some thought single women of the boom cohort had good reason to stay single, and others saw their lives as undesirable or counter-productive. Regardless of their sentiments, none of the interviewees of the recession cohort looked up to their predecessors as role models. Even when younger women were sympathetic to and understanding of the single status of older women, they themselves did not want to follow the same path:

> Well, uh, I don't want to be like them, myself. But, uh, there are many [single women] among celebrities, you know? Really beautiful and doing well. So, that's not a lifestyle for me, but I don't see it negatively, I guess. If they really want to marry, and have done *miai* but still can't marry, I would feel sorry for them [laugh]. But if not, well, if those women worked hard to achieve their goals, I can now see that's admirable. I always thought everyone wanted to marry, so I was thinking [about those women], "Ah, they just can't marry." [laugh]
> (Megumi, 31 years old, never-married)

> Junko (27 years old, never-married): Ah, that's [referring to older single women at work] the image of my future self [burst to laugh].
> *Author: Why?*
> Junko: Because they're like me. They're so focused on their jobs. I think that's great! I feel I may end up like them, but at the same time, I tell myself, I've got to be careful not to end up like them. [laugh]
> *Author: So you think you may be like them but you don't want to be like them?*
> Junko: Yes, that's right. But I'd probably end up like them.
> *Author: In what way do you not want to be like them? Their focus on the job, or being single?*

> Junko: Well, it's okay for now [to be single], but it'd be awfully lonely when they turned 60 or so.

The prevalence of older single women seems to present a cautionary tale to single women of the recession cohort.

Jobs and leisure as no obstacles to marriage

For many women of the boom cohort, new opportunities – incomes, leisure, and fulfilling jobs – were more appealing than dating and marriage. Some women perceived men to be obstacles to enjoyment of these opportunities. On the other hand, experience of jobs and leisure were very different for women of the recession cohort. First, for many of these women, jobs were not perceived as a source of enjoyment, but rather things they had to do. Some even wished to quit their jobs, viewing them as painful burdens. For some others, jobs are "okay" or "good enough," but not something they felt attached to and wished to retain for life. A 36 year old single woman, Hitomi, identified herself as post "Bubble Generation" (i.e., post-boom cohort). She said she got along with older people, so most of her friends are from the bubble generation, or the boom cohort. She discussed the contrasting experiences of the two cohorts:

> It is my impression that people of the "Bubble Generation" … think in ascending terms. Well, they spent [their life] in the best time when the economy was upward, and are sailing through life with a favorable wind [*junpuu manpan no jinsei*]. … Those women [in their 40s] who have good careers tell me they love their jobs.
>
> I don't have that, so I'm really envious. I don't even understand why they can be so sure about their love toward their jobs. Is that because they got jobs at good companies when the economy was going upward? Our era was when no matter how hard we, every one of us, tried, we couldn't get jobs at good companies. So if we were born in that kind of time [referring to the "Bubble" economic boom], and we found jobs we'd love to take, then we'd have had that kind of passion towards jobs, perhaps. If so, I'd be so envious.

> If I have to remain single and have to work for the rest of my life, it'd have been nice if I loved my job.

Some women of the recession cohort did love their jobs, however. An interesting contrast is that these women did not view their love towards jobs as obstacles to marriage, like some of the boom cohort women did. Ryoko, 26 years old, was cohabiting with her 20 year old boyfriend, and thinking about changing her career from nutritionist to accountant:

> *Author: Do you not want to marry yet because you have other things you want to do?*
> Ryoko: Nope. I think I can do whatever even after I marry.
> *Author: Do you not think you may not be able to do certain things once you marry?*
> Ryoko: Nope. Wait, would I not be able to? [laugh] Did you give up on something [due to marriage]?

Kyoko, a 29 year-old married woman, was continuously working after marriage and was very proud of her exceptional ability at work. Her job was her "hobby," and she was very confident about balancing work and family. Many of the recession cohort women perceived marriage-work balance as a possibility. This was another contrast to the boom cohort, which will be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters.

Only exception here was Junko, a cheerful 27 year-old, who was planning to go back to school to acquire a teaching certificate. She had "a lot of things I want to do. I'd like to become a teacher, that's one. If possible, I'd like to study abroad, too. Well, study abroad is only if it's possible, but anyway, I have [things] I want to do, so it [marriage] is not the number one thing I want to do [right now]." Unlike many of the boom cohort women, Junko had a concrete and clear plan for her future. She wished to marry one day, but was concerned about the logistics of cramming in all she wanted to

do – schooling, study abroad, new career, and marriage – before she hit her mid-30s, the age limit she set for marriage.

Another, different experience of the recession cohort is with regard to leisure activities. Unlike the boom cohort of women, who enjoyed luxurious leisure such as travel abroad, the lives of recession cohort members were centered around much more modest and inexpensive activities, such as going to events held in the Tokyo area, window-shopping, and eating out (e.g., inexpensive food) with their friends. Interestingly, a great majority of women of this cohort did not see romantic relationships as obstacles for enjoyment of leisure or jobs in cases where they enjoyed them. Even Junko, who had a lot she wanted to do, was dating at the time of the interview. She did not plan to marry the man she was dating, but did not see him as an obstacle to the pursuit of her goals.

Male reluctance to marry as an obstacle

There was, however, a different issue brought up by several women of the recession cohort: men's lack of interest in marriage. As 36-year-old Midori, who was never married, put it:

> I have never met a woman who doesn't want to marry. There are many, many more cases of women wanting to marry, but their boyfriends have no intention to marry. So I think the problem [of non-marriage] is in men's mood.

Midori was cohabiting with her boyfriend and frustrated with his ambiguous attitude towards marriage. Other women shared their experiences of uninterested boyfriends, past and present. Still others shared their observations of men they knew, such as their friends, boyfriends of their friends, and co-workers.

I asked my interviewees why they thought those men were uninterested in marriage. Some thought it had to do with men's lack of economic security. Based on observations of their friends or friends' boyfriends, Ryoko, a cohabiting 26 year old, Junko, a never-married 27 year old, and Kyoko, a married 29 year old, said:

> Ryoko: There are quite a bit of men who don't want to marry, or don't want to marry yet. There are many couples like that, too.
> *Author: Do you know why?*
> Ryoko: I think they want to be free, for now.
> *Author: Is it also that they can't afford to marry?*
> Ryoko: Ah, I think that's the reason, too. Boyfriends are temp-workers. Probably boys are thinking they'd take on [financial] responsibilities [in marriage]. They're taking [marriage] more seriously than girls, in my opinion. Especially in terms of finances. Girls are thinking they [wife and husband] can both work, but boys aren't sure about it.
> *Author: Do you think boys feel they have to support the family?*
> Ryoko: I think that's how they think.
>
> Junko: There're quite a bit of men who want to marry, but can't marry with their salary. … I hear this from my friends. I tell them, go ahead and marry.
> *Author: Your male friends say they can't marry?*
> Junko: They do.
> *Author: Even when their girlfriends say they both can work?*
> Junko: When they say so, men, maybe they're only saying it to make themselves look cool, but they say they want to support [the family].
> *Author: What if you're in that kind of relationship?*
> Junko: If I love him and that's the reason [of non-marriage], I'd tell him, don't worry, I'd work, too.
>
> Kyoko: I saw boys change their jobs and other parts of life, and girls are very sensitive about it, and said, "I don't feel secure, I can't see a future with you," and broke up after dating for so many years.
> *Author: Did you say boys change their jobs often?*
> Kyoko: Yes, many. I think they feel insecure about their jobs so they think about changing them. I think they [women] should be patient and wait.
> *Author: Some say there are more men who are not interested in marriage. Do you know that kind of man?*
> Kyoko: I don't think they have no intention to marry.
> *Author: Do they feel they can't afford to marry, for example?*
> Kyoko: Yes. Also, hobbies and other things they [men] want to pursue, so they can't think about family yet. I saw that kind. … Girls fell in love with them [boys] who were chasing their dreams, but once they [girls] started

> thinking about marriage, it became obvious that the goals [of marriage and dreams] are not compatible.

On the other hand, some women felt that the reasons for men's hesitation were non-economic as well:

> Midori (36 year old, cohabiting): Well, part of the reason may be income [laugh]. I think in marriage, couples can share financial burdens fifty-fifty, but there are many men who think they can't afford to marry with their salary level, I think. Even when men earn enough to feed themselves, a lot of men, probably, think, "If I marry, I'd have to have this much income." I also think there are a lot of men who think, "I prefer to keep my present lifestyle so I can spend all my money on my hobbies."
> *Author: Does this apply to your current boyfriend?*
> Midori: I don't think not enough income applies to him. I've been living with him, and I know he's not someone who wants to be fed by me. He can spend his money on his hobbies, though. I don't know. Maybe it's that he may not have much adherence to marriage. We're living together, so maybe he's thinking we don't need to marry.

> Megumi (31 years old, never-married): Among my friends who married recently, men were indecisive and women pushed for marriage. In the past, I think, men probably said, "Let's get married."
> *Author: So, are you saying that it's not because men don't earn as much today?*
> Megumi: Not just that.
> *Author: How about your [male] friends?*
> Megumi: I don't think that's the case. They have jobs. No timing, no trigger to push, maybe. There are many who are cohabiting, you know? Maybe they are happy there, no marriage. But when women are turning 30, that should be the push, don't you think? I don't understand why they wouldn't say ["Let's get married"].

In Midori's and Megumi's views, insufficient income may be a factor, but not the sole, defining factor behind male reluctance to marry. Their accounts imply that men do not take steps toward marriage for some reason. Other women talked about indecisive men from frustrating past relationships. For example:

> Shoko (29 year old, never-married): [They're] Like women. Wishy-washy. Always like, "Where shall we go?"
> *Author: Don't you think it's nice that he'd let you decide where to go?*

> Shoko: Well, that's nice, but when it's so often, I get annoyed. I have to make decisions. That's no good. "Whatever is fine" means it doesn't have to be me. When they say "Whatever is fine," I hear "I don't care."
> *Author: Do you not hear "I'd love to go anywhere you want to go?"*
> Shoko: That's different. Every time we had a date, I asked, "What do you want to eat?" "Anything is fine." That's "I don't' care." It's different from "I feel like Korean BBQ today, so let's go to a BBQ restaurant." "Anything is fine" is "I don't care." That's feminine.
>
> [My most recent boyfriend was] younger, 6 years younger and, it [our relationship] became like counseling. Well, I've been working since I graduated from [2 year vocational] school, but he went to college and graduate school, so at age 26, he had only a year or so work experience. I have a long work experience, right? So I was listening to his troubles, and gradually, I started thinking, why am I listening to his troubles without being paid for it?
> … I had to make plans for him. I do that for my clients. I've always been making plans for others. But I do that [for my clients] because I get paid for it. But why do I have to make plans [for my boyfriend] without getting paid? I wanted him to make plans for me, too.
> (Honoka, 32 years old, never-married)

Other women shared similar stories about "men these days," who they perceived as unable to make decisions – not just in reference to marriage, but in general.

No women of the boom cohort mentioned men's reluctance to marry or the indecisive nature of men. Indecisiveness or reluctance to marry may be characteristics of recession cohort men, or all single men living during the period of economic downturn. Three women of the recession cohort – Yoko, Mutsumi, and Yuki – were in relationships with men of the boom cohort, and they too brought up their boyfriends' lack of enthusiasm about marriage or indecisiveness toward it. Mutsumi, 32 years old, was puzzled, saying, "He's 38. He said he never felt he wanted to marry. He had one woman he thought he could marry, but he never felt he wanted to initiate marriage. I wonder why. … He's like, 'no particular reason,' looks like he can't really explain. ... [chuckle] I wonder why. He earns pretty good, so he has no economic problems." Yoko, 36 years old, was quite determined to marry in the near future, and taking

initiative in every way with her "wishy-washy" boyfriend (of the boom cohort). Yuki, 26 years old, wished her cohabiting 40-year-old boyfriend showed eagerness to marry.

Limiting interviewees only to women, this research can only speculate upon men's intentions and behaviors. It appears that single men "in these days" are different from those of the past. They may be unsure about marriage and marital roles because they feel they cannot fulfill the breadwinner role, or because marriage is more costly than singlehood. They may not know what determines the timing of marriage or how to communicate effectively with women in dating situations.

In sum, norms dictating marriageable age have clearly shifted to older ages for the recession cohort. Women of this cohort may have felt pressure to marry simply because they witnessed the marriages of peers, but faced little pressure from parents and workplaces. For this cohort, jobs and leisure posed no obstacle to marriage. Instead, male reluctance to marry was felt by several women. Reasons for male reluctance are not clear based on women's accounts, but poor economic conditions alongside continued acceptance of the traditional male role (i.e., breadwinning) may be associated with it.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RESULTS

PART III

CONCEPTIONS OF GENDER ROLES AND IMAGES OF MARRIAGE: THE BOOM COHORT

In Chapters 7 and 8, I present findings regarding the third hypothesis: cohort differences in conceptions of gender roles. Because ideas and beliefs held by individuals are often taken for granted, interviewees are not likely to be conscious of their own conception regarding proper roles of women and men. In order to tease out such taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs, I asked various questions. Those questions are: What type of life course do you think, or did you think in the past, is ideal? What life course do you expect to have in your real life? Can you think of any women with lifestyles you consider/considered as positive role models? If so, what are/were they like? Was your mother employed when you were growing up? What did/do you think of her employment status? What do/did you think of your parents' marriage (if they are/were married)? What do you consider to be ideal role allocations for husband and wife in marriage? What do you think the merits of marriage and singlehood are? How many romantic relationships have you had in your life? Did/do you consider marriage with any of them? Do you have friends who are never-married and/or married? What do you do with them? What do you think of your friends' marriages or your own marriage? For each answer, I asked follow-up questions to probe or elicit elaboration (e.g., Why do you think so? How do you feel about it?). I also encouraged my interviewees to bring up any subject they wanted to discuss.

Answers, comments, and stories told by interviewees revealed interesting cohort differences as well as some commonalities. In terms of conceptions of gender roles, there were sharp contrasts by cohort. In general, members of the boom cohort held very similar ideas regardless of background, such as marital status, education, and mother's employment status, whereas the recession cohort was more diverse. The cohorts also contrasted in regards to their views of parents' and peer marriages. I present the findings for the boom cohort in this chapter, and the findings for the recession cohort in the next.

CONCEPTION OF GENDER ROLES

One of the questions I employed revealed the most about women's conceptions of gender roles. It was a question regarding ideal and expected life courses. This question was formulated using a survey question from the National Fertility Surveys (NFS) as a template. The NFS, conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (NIPSSR), have been used to collect data on nationally representative samples of single men and women in Japan since 1982, and have asked questions on ideal and expected life course since 1992. This question asks respondents to choose their ideal (and expected) life course out of five life courses: housewife, *saishuushoku* (returning to work after staying home for a while), *ryoritsu* (literally "doing both," meaning having it all – employment, marriage, and family), DINKS ("Double Income No Kids," or *ryoritsu* without children), and singlehood. Among single women aged 18 to 34, "housewife" was the most chosen ideal life course in the

1992 survey, but in the 1997 and 2002 surveys, "return to work" was the most popular, followed by "having-it-all" and "housewife" (Japan National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 1983, 1998, 2004).

I used a similar question in my interviews for a few reasons. First, this categorization of women's life courses is reasonable, considering that Japanese women (and men) are socially expected to move through life stages almost uniformly according to age intervals (Brinton 1993; Kelsky 2001). Second, I can compare my interview results to survey findings that show a shift in women's perceptions, and explore why women's views differ by cohort as well as what the shift means to women. Third, I wanted to test the validity of this survey question because I felt women may not necessarily be able to choose one life course from among these five.

Because these five courses are not exhaustive, in my interview questions I added other life courses: "breadwinning with a househusband," "unwed motherhood," and "lifetime cohabitation." I also added complexity to the "singlehood" and "return to work" categories, specifying them into "singlehood living alone," "singlehood living with someone – parents, siblings, friends, and/or others," "return to work full-time," and "return to work part-time." I added "others" for interviewees who might feel none of the above applied to them. I made a small card for each of these life courses. During the interviews, I explained each as I showed these cards, and asked interviewees to choose which is closest to the ideal they hold currently, and to the ideal they held in the past. I asked the reasons for their choice, as well as for reasons they did *not* choose other courses.

Housewife as a normative life course

As young women, a majority of never-married interviewees of the boom cohort expected to take the normative female life course: to quit jobs upon marriage (or a few years after marriage), become housewives, and either continue to stay home or return to work as part-time workers. Some attributed this expectation to their mother's homemaker status (e.g., "Probably because I grew up watching my mother being a housewife…"), but interviewees who had an employed mother also expected to become housewives. For instance, Rumi, 45 years old, never-married, grew up with a working mother, yet she "assumed that I'd marry around 25, and then [become] a housewife. … So, back then, I thought I'd be a housewife primarily, perhaps working part-time occasionally at most. … I just assumed that [becoming a housewife] is the life for women who graduated from two-year college [like me] and wanted to marry."

This taken-for-granted view reflects societal norms of the time when these women grew up. As discussed earlier, Ochiai (1997) points out that normalization of the housewife role occurred in the 1960s and 70s, and that Japan's baby boomers (born in the late 1940s) stayed home as housewives in greater numbers than previous cohorts. During this time, "the state of being a housewife became … practically synonymous with womanhood" (Ochiai 1997:35). The interviewees of the boom cohort were born between 1962 and 1972, so most of their childhood was spent during the era of the normative and ideal housewife. Most mothers of the interviewees were indeed housewives, and interviewees "didn't think much of" their mother's stay-at-home status, but reported it "was just a very normal thing back then." Because becoming a

housewife was viewed as true womanhood, it makes sense that even young girls who grew up with an employed mother (like Rumi) also expected to become housewives.

But the normalcy of the role does not necessarily mean that women had strong desires to become housewives. Rather, for many it was a "vaguely" held expectation or assumption. As Seiko, 43 years old, never-married, put it, "I just had this vague expectation. It was just the way things were." About a half of never-married interviewees grew skeptical towards the supposed happy life of housewives after they entered the labor market and/or experienced a slice of life as housewives. Rumi's story illustrates such a shift in views towards this role:

> Rumi (45 years old, never-married): When I was totally intending to marry [in my early 20s], the only model of marriage was my (10 years older) sister. She was the model I could use to see what would happen once I married. My sister also used to work for an insurance company [as an OL], married her co-worker, around 25, then became a housewife and did nothing. I thought that's what marriage was about. An easy life. [laugh] …
>
> But once I started working [for a small advertising company after quitting the insurance company], my job became more interesting [than marriage]. I don't want to be a housewife, I can't stand to be a housewife, that's how I felt. …
>
> Once, my sister's husband got a disease called malignant lymphoma. … That was when I was working freelance [before taking a job at the advertising company], and her kids were still little – one first grader and two in preschool – and her husband got hospitalized. So I stayed in her house for about 3 months, dropping off and picking up kids and cooking. At that time, well, I sent out kids, right? Then, watched *waido shoo* (daytime TV shows equivalent to soap operas in the U.S.), read newspapers, had tea, and I thought, 'What's this? This is the life of a housewife. Wow, it's easy. I love it!' [laugh]
>
> But that didn't last even a month. I got so bored. 'Ugh, I can't stand this!' I started looking for part-time work when I was still helping them. I found some jobs like archaeological excavation [laugh], and begged my sister, 'You have to let me do this just a few days a week!' At that time, I started thinking I wouldn't be able to be a housewife. It was fun for a month or so. It was easy. I could read books. But then I couldn't stand it. Got so bored. Because all I did was pick up kids, cook, watch TV. It was a very unproductive life with no goal.
>
> *Author: How about perfecting housework to a professional level?*
>
> Rumi: No one will recognize it. No earnings, either.

Rumi's accounts summarize the shift in women's views regarding the housewife role. Other women who changed their views likewise described the lives of housewives as "boring," "unrewarding," and "living in a small world."

My married interviewees took the role of full-time housewife, except Tamami (45 years old), who continued to work after marriage and childbearing. Some of these housewife interviewees later worked part-time, but none returned to work as full-time workers. Five out of seven married, stay-at-home interviewees were content with their lives as housewives. They preferred to live "dependent on my husband's earnings" and enjoyed doing work around the house. Some of them had no interest in jobs and career and viewed the position of housewife as a privilege because "I can make a living without earning" income. Others worked part-time, or planned to return to work part-time, after they perceived their children were old enough.

Two other married interviewees, Eri and Fujiko, were not happy with the role of housewife. Eri (46 years-old) was married for 21 years with three children (in high school and college) and spent most of her married life as a housewife. At the time of the interview, she was working for her mother's law office part-time and studying to be a certified accountant. When I asked how she felt about being a housewife, she answered:

> Eri: It was booooring! I'd do laundry, then clean the house, then wait until my husband comes home. … Looking back, I could have thrown myself into cooking, but that's not really my thing [laugh]. … I had no idea how restrictive marriage was going to be. So restrictive.
> *Author: What restricted you?*
> Eri: Well, because I have kids. So, I couldn't do anything.
> *Author: Then, that's kids that restricted you, not marriage, isn't it?*
> Eri: If I didn't have kids, I would have had a divorce. [laugh] No way! [laugh] I can't imagine being married without kids!

Fujiko, 38 years old, was a full-time housewife with two young children (2 and 6 years old). Whereas Eri's story implies her marital relationship was not very good, Fujiko had a good relationship with her husband. She was, however, discontent with her lack of personhood and the smallness of her social circle:

> Fujiko: I have a self, only as a mother and a wife. I don't have my individuality. There's no one who knows me as me that is not a mother or wife. … I think I'm living in a very small world. …
> *Author: How many friends do you hang out with regularly?*
> Fujiko: How many friends? Well, I can probably list them all immediately. It's that small of a world. [laugh with a tone of self-pity]

The stories of Eri, Fujiko, and Rumi – and descriptions of the housewife role by some of the single interviewees – are reminiscent of the (white, middle-class) housewives in suburban America depicted by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Not all women can uniformly be content with a life focusing on domestic tasks. Yet I did not observe the seed of a collective feminist movement in their frustration. Both Eri and Fujiko were waiting for different opportunities to come. Eri was studying to become an accountant, which she saw as an opportunity to be economically independent. Fujiko was waiting for her children to grow older and hoping that her life would shift. Even single interviewees were not critical of the traditional gender ideology, as discussed in the following section.

The only interviewee who consciously resisted the traditional norm as a young woman was Tamami, a 45-year-old married woman. She worked as a social worker throughout her 20 years of marriage, raising two children (6 and 19 years old). When she was young and unmarried, she thought employment was a means of "self-actualization (*jiko jitsugen*)," and felt she "wanted to have a lot of drawers. Even when

I raise my kids, I wanted to have other drawers than ones for kids. I didn't want to be the kind of mother who can talk only about my kids." By "drawers" Tamami means multiple dimensions or depth in her life, persona, skills, and so forth. In other words, she did not want to possess a "self, only as a wife and a mother" as Fujiko's put it. Such wants appear reasonable for women in 21st century American society, but a maternal employment or "having-it-all (*ryoritsu*)" lifestyle did not win approval among most Japanese women of this cohort, as discussed next.

Resistance to ryoritsu (*having-it-all): impossible, too hard, or bad for children*

As discussed in the last chapter, this cohort of unmarried women enjoyed new opportunities due to the economic boom. Having given consideration to these newly gained employment opportunities which allowed more fulfilling jobs and income to spend on luxurious leisure, some single women were unsure about the role of housewife. One would expect that these women might have changed their views and advocated maternal employment and gender equality. Yet among women of this cohort, maternal employment, or the lifestyle of *ryoritsu*, or having-it-all, was viewed almost unvaryingly in a negative or disapproving light.

Many women thought maternal employment was "bad for children," based on their experiences growing up with a stay-at-home mother. For instance:

> *Author: What was your ideal life course when you were younger?*
> Natsumi (43 years old, never-married): You mean when I was in my 20s?
> *Author: [nodding]*
> Natsumi: Well, I thought I'd marry, and I thought I'd marry and work. Ah, after having babies, I'd take some break, and then go back to work, something like that.
> *Author: Like taking a parental leave for a year?*

> Natsumi: Hmmm, no, like 2 or 3 years. I think when kids are little, they're adorable. So 1 year is, uh, I'm not very *kiyoo* (skilled at balancing the demands of many tasks), so, well, maybe I need to spend more time [at home]. Ah, but when I was a kid, my mother was always home, and there were some occasions she wasn't there, you know? It was just once or twice a year. But when I was in elementary school, [when she wasn't home when I came home] I felt the house was dark and empty, and felt lonely, so I think kids would feel that way. I thought that wouldn't be good for kids (*kawaisoo*). So up until kids grow to be adolescents, when they feel annoyed about mom staying home, it'd be better to stay home.

Some women derived the idea of "bad for children" from their experiences with an employed mother as well. Chie, 45 years old, married with two children, had a mother who worked for life because "my father's earnings were too small, I think." As an elementary school age child, Chie never told her mother how lonely she felt about her mother's absence, but she was "so envious of other kids" who had stay-at-home mothers. She recalled the days she stood at a bus stop in the evenings, waiting for her mother's return. Chie was "thankful for my husband's income" that allowed her to stay home for her two children when they were young. For her, mothers work only when the family has financial needs:

> Chie: I didn't want to work when my kids were small. Even now, when I see [other] mothers putting kids in daycare, looking so unhappy, I wish they didn't need to put kids [in daycare]. They might want to take care of kids by themselves until they enter elementary school.
> *Author: What do you mean by "they didn't need to put kids?" When do they need to do so? Is it when they need money?*
> Chie: Yes, yes. Only for financial reasons. I don't see any other reason [for mothers] to work, leaving young kids behind. If women want careers, ah, that's why I said if I became a teacher [I would have remained single]. … To me, no matter what, kids can't be replaced with jobs.

Mothers are needed for children and motherhood is incompatible with career. Chie had a dream to become a school teacher but gave up on it when she failed the college entrance examination. She, instead, began to work for a corporation as an OL at age 18

and married her senior worker at age 24. When she dreamed about the career of teacher, she "just expected to stay single." Her thoughts reflect the idea of the incompatibility of career and motherhood, which is important for understanding increased singlehood.

The role of good wife and mother is indeed demanding. Mothers are expected not only to raise their children, but are ideally "supposed to get up earlier than anybody else in the morning, cook breakfast, always smiling, pay careful attention to nutrition, too, perfect housework, maintain good relationships with others in the community, and more" (Fujiko 38 years old, married). Balancing this role and employment seemed "too hard" or "impossible" to many women of this cohort:

> Hmmmm, probably, vaguely, I wanted to return to work [after childrearing]. I thought this [pointing to a card for "*ryoritsu* (having it all)"] is hard. … I knew some people doing it, but I have no energy to do that.
> (Izumi, 46 years old, never-married)

> I probably wanted to have it all. But I believed that was impossible. Raising kids is, watching my older sister and others, I thought it's impossible to work and to take care of kids. … I thought I'd have kids one day, and once a kid is born, I thought I couldn't do both.
> (Rumi, 45 years old, never-married)

> Ah, for me, [uncomfortable laugh], for me, it's impossible to work when my kids are little. [uncomfortable laugh] Well, others, ah, there are women who work, leaving kids in daycare, but, for me, kids, ah, it's impossible to raise little kids and work and do housework. It's too much, and I knew it was impossible for me.
> (Nozomi, 40 years old, married with one child)

> Fujiko (38 years old, married with two children): Well, of course, it'd be the best if I … can marry, keep working, and raise kids. But … I doubt I could do it without getting stressed. So it [having-it-all] is my ideal, but realistically, ah, how can I explain?!
> *Author: What part do you feel you can't do?*
> Fujiko: What is it, well, ah, you know, I can't be laid back. I'd have to be disciplined, making schedules. If I don't plan things well, it'd be impossible – that's what I think. And then, would I be able to live every day, smiling [if I do it all]? I have no confidence. Hurry, hurry!, you know? Ah, I couldn't do that.

Author: Now that you have kids, do you still feel that way?
Fujiko: I do.
Author: But did you think so before you had kids?
Fujiko: Yes.

The having-it-all lifestyle was perceived to be too demanding, both physically and mentally.

Most women of this cohort did not know employed mothers personally. Impossibility and undesirability were assessed mostly based on the demands of women's role in marriage. Some, however, witnessed the hardship of the having-it-all lifestyle hands on. Eri, who was 46 years old and married, had a mother who worked as a lawyer, earning more than her father. Despite her mother's constant preaching of the importance of women's economic independence in marriage, Eri showed a strong aversion to maternal employment. She became a housewife, though she was studying to be an accountant at the time of interview. To my question of why she did not follow the path her mother encouraged, she answered:

> Because she had a real <u>hard</u> life! I saw her having such <u>hardships</u>. Growing up, I always had to be so careful not to cause any trouble to her. She had to take care of her husband, and once she had kids, she had to take care of them, too. … She did all the housework. … My father never helped around the house. … No way [I'd have such a life]!

For single women who had some personal contact with employed mothers, this limited glimpse at them only contributed to the shaping of a negative view:

> Most of my married friends became housewives. There are only a few who have both career and marriage. Really a few. And, those friends are, how shall I put, they talk about their husband and money and, well, I don't really understand what they're talking about. Really stressed and I don't get along with them.
>
> On the other hand, my housewife friends have a totally different life [from me], but ah, it's still interesting [to talk with them]. Ah, now kids' schools are that way, ah, things have changed, like that. Hearing their stories, I learn some new things.

> But those who are working [and married] are so edgy. … I hate to get together with them.
> (Tsuneko, 43 years old, never-married)

A story of a having-it-all woman, Tamami, who was 45 years old, indicates this lack of social acceptance and support from another angle. Although Tamami was raised by a stay-at-home mother, she never liked to have her mother around the house when she was growing up. She married at age 25, had her first child at 26, and had another child at age 39. She had worked as a social worker, putting both of her children in daycare. When she worked while her fist baby was in daycare, Tamami faced difficulties and criticism:

> *Author: So, what did people say about you putting your child in day care?*
> Tamami: It was mostly a bit older women (who said things). You know, what's that called? You have to raise kids at home until they turn 3. I was told that constantly.
> *Author: From a bit older women only?*
> Tamami: Yes.
> *Author: How about women of the same age group?*
> Tamami: Same age group… back then, they probably didn't say anything [thinking hard]
> *Author: I remember my friend [who also had it all in the same era] complained that people assumed her husband didn't earn enough.*
> Tamami: Ah, ah, ah, yes. They said that kind of thing. "Problem with money?" "So sorry (*kawaisoo*) for your kid." I was told this kind of thing very often.
> *Author: How did you feel about it?*
> Tamami: Well, whatever! [laugh] It's none of your business! … I think I was seen as an outlaw (*autoroo*) by both housewives and unmarried women.
> *Author: One single interviewee said she can't get along with her ryoritsu friends because they're so edgy.*
> Tamami: [Bursts into laughter] We probably are.
> *Author: How was the daycare? I heard that many places didn't keep children past 5 o'clock back then.*
> Tamami: Yes, that was the case. It was called double daycare (*nijuu hoiku*). When kids were very young, daycare didn't keep them until late. So my child went to a home with someone called a "daycare mom" (*hoiku mama san*). She kept him for a while, and I went to pick him up there. So it was hard, yeah. …
> The quality [of the daycare] was also not so good. Just keeping kids. And it had high turnover rates. Daycare workers were young and changing constantly.

Tamami said she had forgotten about these negative experiences for a long time. She had another child in daycare at the time of interview and realized how much she took for granted that daycare quality had improved and that "maternal employment became more common." She reacted with amusement at her memories of those bad old days, which reflects a change in the social climate surrounding employed mothers.

As expressed in Tamami's words, employed mothers were viewed as deviants who neglected maternal duties and/or were in desperate financial need. The latter view is reflected in Sumire (45 years old, never-married)'s comment:

> Sumire: Well, I think, really smart, really smart women are not working. That may be because they married rich men, but in any case, they're not working. The smarter they are, the less likely they work. Maybe because they were smart, so they found good husbands. And women, who're … not as smart, I don't know if their husbands should be blamed, but they don't have money, so they're working. It's a rude thing to say about working mothers, and maybe it's just women I see at my workplace, but … I think the reason women work is just for money.

Further, some women even made a comment that revealed prejudice towards employed mothers. Rumi, 45 years old and never-married, as a vice president, did "not want good [female] employees to marry. I'm telling [employee X] not to marry but stay working. For other women, who don't have any special talents, I think they'd be happy if they married and quit and became housewives." Seiko, 43 years old and never-married, worked for an American firm as an accountant, but was critical of the company's progressive policy that encourages married women's employment.

> Seiko: My company is saying "diversity" and trying to promote women. But I think they shouldn't do anything special for women.
> *Author: Are you saying that you're critical because your company promotes women who don't deserve to be promoted?*

> Seiko: No, that's not it. Women, uh, quit when they have a baby or that kind of thing. My company gives training [for women] to encourage them to stay. It's trying to help women.

These comments reflect a belief against maternal employment in career positions.

Contradictory ideas

The findings presented above may have portrayed these women as clinging to traditional gender ideology. However, views toward women's marital role were not completely firm; there were some ambiguous and contradictory elements. Some women felt very angry when they were expected to conform to the traditional woman's role:

> Sumire (45 years old, never-married): Once I had a *miai*, and … he [the man she met at the *miai*] said that kind of thing.
> *Author: What kind of thing?*
> Sumire: Something like, "If we get married, I'd want you to stay home." I was offended.
> *Author: Why were you offended?*
> Sumire: I think I felt I was told to stay still or something.

> Rumi (45 years old, never-married): I really hated to be told things like, "You've got to do this because you're a woman," "Because you're a woman, you have to do the housework." I think that was because of my mother. I have an older brother. And when she needed help preparing dinner and stuff, she said, "Rumi, you're a girl, so you do it." And my brother didn't need to. We both had homework, you know? Why do I have to do it because I am a girl? I resisted it, and I never stood with her in our kitchen. [laugh] If she didn't say, "because you're a girl," but said, "let's make dinner," I'd probably have done it. But I felt I'd never do it. I felt "Why do you treat differently from my brother?

They resisted the societal expectation that women take a domestic role. Yet both Sumire and Rumi were prejudiced against employed mothers (as presented above). Interestingly, Sumire later said she was willing to become a housewife:

> Sumire: Well, uh, maybe I'm contradicting myself, but. Well, it's contradicting. I said I got offended when he [the guy she met at the *miai*] told me to stay home … but if some guy tells me I don't need to work [after we marry], I may just quit.
> *Author: So why did you get offended before?*
> Sumire: I don't know. Maybe because he said it first thing at our meeting? [laugh]

Additionally, many women of this cohort felt wrong about men doing housework. This was expressed by Rumi, who felt unfair that her brother did not need to do housework:

> *Author: So what do you think men and women should do?*
> Rumi: I think men and women are the same. I think so, but when I visit my mother and eat with my sister and brother and their spouses, my brother just sits and eats. I help cleaning up. I work longer hours than he does. That's just wrong. I think that's wrong, but if my brother washes dishes with us, I may feel sorry (*kawaisoo*) for him. When I hear men doing things around the house a lot, they do laundry every day, I feel sorry for them.
> *Author: Sorry? Or nasakenai (a feeling that the person is pathetic, in this context because he is not masculine)?*
> Rumi: Not *nasakenai*. Sorry. What is that, really? I can't explain, but if I hear that my brother is doing laundry at home, I'd feel sorry.

In this manner, some women went back and forth between rejection and acceptance of the traditional gender ideology and contradicted themselves.

Expectations of traditional role from men

When it comes to men's role, on the other hand, unmarried women of this cohort's expectations were more solid and traditional. Their future husband was expected to have a career and take the breadwinning role. Stable employment in the white-collar occupations – the image of the hegemonic masculinity of Japan (Dasgupta 2003) – was important for most of the single interviewees. Some came to view "in recent years" that farmers are acceptable as potential partners as long as they were

independent and not poor. Blue-collar workers and men with casual work (*furiitaa*) were utterly rejected by single interviewees.

Men taking a fulltime domestic role (i.e., househusband) was "out of the question" for all unmarried women as well as for most married women. It was not simply because they planned to depend on husbands economically, but that employment was the central component of an image of masculinity. Men who wished to stay home were considered "*nasakenai* (pathetic)" and/or "*otokorashikunai* (not masculine)" by the interviewees, regardless of marital status. For instance, Rumi and Seiko had careers with high earnings – enough to support a family, even in the expensive city of Tokyo. Rumi, in particular, loved her job at a small company she co-owned, as a vice president, and did not want to give up her job for marriage. I suggested that the solution for her situation is to marry a man who is willing to stay at home. She looked surprised, agreed that it would solve her problem, but immediately rejected it because "I can't accept such a man." I asked why, and she first answered that she did "not have much respect for people who don't work." In response to this, I asked more questions:

> *Author: So do you mean you don't have much respect for housewives?*
> Rumi: Oh, no, that's fine for them. If they're happy with that, then I'm happy for them.
> *Author: How about men who would be happy with the househusband's role?*
> Rumi: When it comes to men, I'd feel, "What's wrong with you? You're a man! Where's your spine?"
> *Author: Even when a married couple is happy with that arrangement?*
> Rumi: Even when it's fine for them. I'd feel, "Are you sure that's okay with you? " Strange, I admit. But I'd think so, even when those people are happy with it.

In answering my question, she realized her own bias, a reverse sexual double standard. She looked very amused by her own prejudice, but admitted that she would not be able to change her view. Men are not real men if they do not want to work.

Two women were exceptions. They did not adhere strongly to a traditional conception of the male role. One was Tamami, the only having-it-all interviewee. She clearly stated that "there is no difference between men's and women's roles" and believed both husbands and wives should share the providing and domestic responsibilities (though she was frustrated with her husband's smaller contribution to domestic chores). Another was Eri, daughter of the lawyer mother. She was striving to achieve economic independence by becoming an accountant, and her husband wanted to stay home once she attained a breadwinning income. Her intention was unclear, though. I asked her what she thought of her husband's wants. Eri answered "I don't care what he does" with a grin and, with a laugh, refused to elaborate further. She later insinuated a possibility of divorce.

In sum, interviewee's conceptions of gender roles were largely traditional, endorsing the role of housewife. Although some were skeptical about the housewife role, mother's employment was disapproved of by most of the interviewees. Women of this cohort knew hardly any women who balanced work and family, and exposure to the lives of employed mothers only contributed to negative views towards this life course. Women were not uniformly happy with traditional role expectations, and some contradictory views were observed. Women were more solid about their acceptance of the traditional men's role. Employment, particularly in the white-collar sector,

signified masculinity, and breadwinning was expected from men regardless of women's present earning power.

VIEWS OF OTHER MARRIAGES

The question regarding views towards parents' (and other) marriages was intended to tease out women's conceptions of gender roles. For the boom cohort, however, this question ended up opening Pandora's Box. Many negative stories were told, passionately, and this contrasted with answers given by the recession cohort. Such negative views might have had a profound impact on marital behavior.

Negative views toward parents' marriage

Of all the women of this cohort, only Sonoko (45 years old, married with two children) gave a positive comment about her parents' marriage. She viewed her parents' marriage "ideal," because her father was helpful around the house and she had a great relationship with him. Three women said their parents' marriage was "hardly the ideal" though it was "not bad." Two other women lost their mother when they were young and had no clear memories of parents' marriage. The rest held strongly negative views.

For some women, this negative perception was derived from their disgust towards their father's dominance and their mother's submissiveness:

> They [my parents] were classmates from high school. … A typical pattern – a salaried man (*sararii man*) and a housewife. My father took it for granted that my mother did everything [around the house]. She had to cook for lunch and dinner, so when she went out, she was always mindful of returning home early enough to prepare dinner. It was like working around my father's schedule, and I didn't like that at all. I prefer that people are independent and take care

of themselves. I don't know, maybe they're alright. They're still together and go on a trip, while still complaining. They're really complaining about each other, all the time. … Even when my mother had a cold, he just sits and expects her to wait for him.
(Izumi, 46 years old, never-married)

[My father] is a man of the old days. … He doesn't answer the phone even when it's ringing right there [by him]. "Pass me the salt," like that. Watching my father acting like a feudal lord (*otonosama*), I feel disgusted, really repulsed. I really hate men making women work. And I question my mother, too, for allowing it happen. … My father is really short-tempered. Really short-tempered. A kind of father who'd throw a [dining] table [referring to the old-fashioned father from an old TV drama, who was famous for throwing a dining table, out of rage, during dinner].
(Tomomi, 39 years old, never-married)

My parents' marriage? Well, now that my father passed, my mother dares to say she had a happy marriage. [laugh] Back then, my dad often came home, really drunk. My mother really hated it. When he came home drunk, … he said [to her], "Drink!" He wanted her to drink with him. … He banged on doors and stuff, too, and she complained. … She was always complaining, "I hate it."

I told her many times, "If you hate it so much, get a divorce." She said she wouldn't be able to make a living [if she divorced]. I said we could make a living. Well, at that time, she wasn't working. She started complaining when I was around high school age. I said, "We can make a living. I don't want to hear your complaints all the time, so why don't you get a divorce." Then I felt disgusted. Disgusted towards women who aren't independent. Disgusted with her complaining all the time.

Yes, yes, I think this has to do with why I don't marry. Because she can't be independent, she can't make a living [on her own], she'd have to put up with it all and keep on living [with him]. Yuck. So I disrespect my mother a bit for being that way. I think kids would disrespect mothers for saying that kind of thing. If you can't do anything about it, keep your mouth shut. She couldn't find a solution, only complained. I told her [what to do], but she just came up with excuses for not doing it. What did she want to do then! I hated it.
(Rumi, 45 years old, never-married)

For those who had economically independent mothers, the issue was the hardship their mother experienced:

Well, when I was a kid, when I was living with my parents, I was wondering why they were staying married. They were always fighting. My father didn't help around the house at all, so my mother was working so hard, and he came

> home drunk. To a kid's eyes, he looked like he was only fooling around. So, I asked her why she married him. Uh, "He gives me money for living, however little it is." I asked why she didn't divorce him. She said she wouldn't get it [money] if she divorces, so she wouldn't divorce [laugh].
> (Eri, 46 years old, married with three children)

> [In tears] I feel my mother had such a hard life, compared to me. … She was always working. I think she was in a situation where she had to work. I never talked about it, but growing up, I always thought she was having a hard life.
> (Chie, 45 years old, married with two children)

Lack of emotional closeness and presence of frequent fights were also reasons for negative views toward parents' marriage. Some described their parents' relationships as "*nakaga warui* (not close or in a bad relationship)" and others mentioned a lot of fighting (*kenka*), which could mean either verbal or physical violence:

> My older sister was chronically ill and often hospitalized. So ever since I was little, because my sister was hospitalized … my mother was always with my sister. My father was busy [with work] so he wasn't around much. I was often playing by myself outside.
>
> Family, [Pause] about family, how shall I put it? I haven't felt family is nice in my life. When I was an adolescent, they [my parents] were fighting (*kenka shiteta*) over the shop [which her father began as a family business]. I saw my mother trying to leave us, too. It was also shocking. Once, she also asked me, "Which one [mother or father] would you choose if we divorce?" That was really a shock.
> (Kozue, 45 years old, never-married)

Despite the mention of "divorce" and unhappiness observed in these marriages, none of the interviewees' parents were divorced. For their parents' generation, divorce rates were indeed low. Women had no economic means to divorce and/or believed they should stay for the sake of children (White 2002). Mothers' self-sacrifice for children, ironically, may have had serious repercussions for their daughters, as a 43 year-old single woman, Natsumi, said, "They [i.e., my parents] were fighting (*kenka shiteta*) all the time. But divorce was out of the question in those days when we were kids, you

know? As I grew up, I felt, I don't need to marry. I don't want to get into this kind of situation."

Invisible peer marriages

Even when parents painted a gloomy picture about marriage, such a negative image could be altered or modified as women witnessed the happy marriages of peers. Peer marriages were less likely to be as patriarchal as parents.' But the problem was that most single women had little opportunity to observe the marriages of friends, as Natsumi, 43 years old and never-married, commented:

> For example, my [married] friends from high school. I don't know their husbands' faces, well, I don't know their husbands, you know? So I <u>can't</u> <u>see</u> their relationships. I'm not saying they're having bad relationships. I just <u>can't</u> <u>see</u> how my friends are doing in their marriages.

What Natsumi's comments reflect is the gendered social lives of the Japanese, briefly mentioned in Chapter 3. Because it is typical that a Japanese husband and wife separately spend time with their own friends (e.g., Kerbo and McKinstry 1998; Lebra 1984), single women see their married female friends in the absence of their husbands. Peer marriages were, therefore, largely invisible to single interviewees.

Another reason for the lack of opportunities to observe peer marriage was that friends grew apart after marriage. All interviewees said they hardly met with friends whose marital status is different from theirs (i.e., the married meet only with married friends, and the unmarried with unmarried friends). Women of both marital statuses cited incompatibility in time schedules and interests as reasons that friendships grew apart. Married women could not make themselves available at night, when single women were off work. Also, women of different statuses did not enjoy each other's

company because their interests differed. Married women were frustrated about not being able to talk about children and family with single friends, whereas single women complained about "dull" talks about "kids and stuff" with married friends.

Thus, friends of different marital status only occasionally met with each other. On such limited occasions, single women were exposed to negative stories regarding marriage:

> *Author: What do you think about your friends' marriages?*
> Tomomi (39 years old, never-married): Huh? By seeing their marriages? [pause] I've never thought much about them. Well, I'm happy for them. [pause] There're some friends I feel sorry for.
> *Author: Because?*
> Tomomi: Well, for instance, she [a married friend of mine] doesn't agree with her husband on the education of their children, and they have big fights. Also, when the mother [another friend of hers] is scolding [their child], her husband says something to undermine what she said. Another one has a mean in-law mother.
> *Author: Do your married friends complain a lot?*
> Tomomi: Well, ah, they're busy, and. When they're really stressed, we'd get together, and they'd tell me a lot. In humorous ways, though.
> *Author: Do you hear stories about them being happy?*
> Tomomi: Every one of them wanted to marry so badly. And yet they tell me I shouldn't get married. I tell them, I haven't done it [married] yet [so don't tell me such a thing]. But everybody says I don't need to [marry].

There may be various reasons for such negativity in the talk of married women. They may rarely have a chance to gather with their friends, and so see such meetings as opportunities to let off steam. But it is also important to take the Japanese cultural context into consideration. Humility is considered a virtue in Japanese culture, and so the Japanese are expected not to boast about themselves or their immediate family members (Condon 1984; Lebra 1976; Nakane 1970; Reischauer [1977] 1988). Instead of boasting, the Japanese might say degrading things about their own family members, such as "my stupid son does this…" It is not easy to decipher the true meaning behind

such talk, even for Japanese natives. Married individuals may understand each other's real intentions (due to having similar experiences), but never-married women may have difficulties decoding this. In any case, positive stories about marriage were absent, so unmarried women rarely (or never) had a chance to learn about happy peer marriages.

One of the married interviewees, Chie, 45 years old, agreed with my observation that married women tend not to talk about happy aspects of their marriage to friends. She herself was happy with her marriage in recent years, although she admitted there had been some bumps in the road in her twenty-one years of marriage. She liked to tell others how wonderful her husband was, but when she did, others teased (i.e., socially sanctioned) her as if she was a newlywed in the honeymoon phase.

Peer marriage probably shaped single women's views of marriage in yet another way. The very fact that single women lost close contact with married friends should have contributed to their ideas about marriage as "restrictive." As previous research (e.g., Tsuya, Mason and Bumpass 2004) shows, all women of this cohort – both unmarried and married – immediately answered that *the* advantage of singlehood is "freedom/autonomy (*jiyuu*)." Indeed, married women's time for use in social activities (such as meeting with friends) was limited. They felt guilty about going out on their own during the time their husband was not at work (such as evenings and weekends), even when their husband approved of it. A40 year old married woman, Nozomi, said:

> Even before I had my child, I was still conscious of time, knowing *papa* ["dad" referring to her husband] was waiting at home. … Even when he said I could go out, knowing he was waiting at home, I felt, oh, "I probably shouldn't go home late, it's probably bad," and worried about time. I didn't worry about time at all [when I was single], so that was really nice.

The same behavior was observed among mothers of women of this cohort (who found it appalling), as shown in Izumi's comments about her parents' marriage, presented above.

Tsuneko, 43 years old and never-married, gave her theory of increased singlehood among Japanese women, attributing cause to the lack of good models of peer marriage:

> Tsuneko: I think there weren't any model cases that married women can work and have happy lives. … If there were many cases like that around us, we'd have gradually thought, "ah, that's nice. I should get married," right? If there were very many cases like that.
>
> [Instead] Oh, I have to [go home and] do laundry, or, women have to choose one of two [marriage or work]. … Or they don't have enough money so they both have to work. Only sacrifices were visible. Even the mass media wasn't showing "it's fun to share a life with another person" or that kind of thing, you know? I think that was the problem. … [When we hear only about] someone who can't work because they have no parents to watch kids or the high cost of daycare, we're just "Ooooo." [laugh] When I heard those kinds of stories, I felt I couldn't do that.
>
> *Author: Do you not think women refused to marry because they wanted to work?*
>
> Tsuneko: [With a tone of surprise] Wanted to work?! [pause] Well, that's not impossible … but I don't think that's it. What's happening in society, and also laws and stuff. It seemed like there wasn't anything good waiting in marriage. Women would have a hard life. So I would choose this [staying single], something like that.

Lack of romance in peer marriages?

With regard to views towards peer marriage, one of the single women of this cohort, Teruko, 41 years old, pointed out another negative aspect. She spent a year in Paris in her early 30s and was envious of married couples in France because they retained romantic relationships, unlike most Japanese couples:

> Teruko: They [married couples in Paris] maintain such a [romantic] relationship for ever. Even when they have kids, they leave kids behind and spend time [as a couple]. I'd like [to marry] a man who thinks in that way. But the Japanese are always going out as a family or just watching kids.

Author: Do you mean Japanese couples become just "dad and mom (papa mama)?"
Teruko: That's right! I don't want that.
Author: How about your married friends? Do they seem happy?
Teruko: I guess. …
Author: Are there couples that remain romantic?
Teruko: No, there aren't any couples like that. For one of my friends [who is a designer], her husband is also a designer and they work together. So they're not just "dad and mom." … For the rest [of my friends], husbands work hard and have money, and wives are alone at home. I don't want to be like them. I feel sorry for them.

Among unmarried women of this cohort, Teruko was the only one who brought up this aspect of peer marriage. This is probably because this lack of romance in marriage (to become "just dad and mom") is taken for granted by most Japanese women of this cohort. Teruko became aware that married couples could relate to each other more romantically only after her experience of living in Paris. Romance was, indeed, absent from most marriages of this cohort, according to the accounts of married interviewees. For example, Mari, 38 years old, who used to be on the verge of divorce when she was stressed with the rearing of her then very small children, had "no complaints" about her present marriage, despite a lack of romantic feelings toward her husband:

Author: Do you have any complaints about your marriage?
Mari: My husband lets me do anything, so [pause]. Well, I have no complaints now [pause]. Well, it doesn't need to be my husband. I may have been just okay with any man as long as he doesn't complain. I may not love him [my husband] or anything like that. [laugh] I can do anything I like. I do sewing, I'm involved in kids' extracurricular activities (*saakuru*), I'm doing PTA, … as long as I take care of our home, he would say I can do anything, so.

We don't cling to each other. We're like, each of us does whatever we like to do. … For example, he has many days off during the "Golden Week" [referring to the weeks of vacation typically taken by corporate workers at the end of April and in May] but kids are in school. We're two of us, but we do things separately [laugh], and that doesn't bother me. So it's easy. Well, as a married couple, it may not be good, but. [laugh]

Sonoko (45 years old, married, with two teenage children) was dissatisfied with her husband, who began to spend leisure time on his own as their children grew:

> Sonoko: Recently, he's kinda changed about how he spends weekends. He goes out on his own. He's into his own hobby, and that's not fair. He's into amateur radio operating [which was a hobby this couple had in common]. Also, once, what was that, something to do with his work, he went to college and took some seminars. He gets together with people from those seminars. With all these things, he's not around much on weekends. Also, he started doing PTA at school. [laugh]
> *Author: Your daughter's [school]?*
> Sonoko: Yeah. And he'd go, "I have a meeting today, and after the meeting we're having a party [*konshinkai*].
> *Author: I've never heard of fathers doing PTA. Is it common now?*
> Sonoko: No, he's the only guy and others are all mothers. I got so mad the other day. He went there on our anniversary. Would anyone do that? I understand about going to the meeting, but not the party afterward! He asked, "it's this day [anniversary day], but is it okay that I go?" I was like, "What!?" [laugh]

For Fujiko (38 years old, married with two young children), romance was alive but the source of frustration was the lack of external supports that allowed her and her husband to spend time as a couple:

> *Author: Do you have any complaints about your marriage?*
> Fujiko: Well, of course, I want him [her husband] to come home early and take care of the kids. Please give me time for myself. I also want time for the two of us.
> *Author: Wouldn't your parents or in-laws watch your kids once in a while [for you two to go out]?*
> Fujiko: Never. Well, uh, our parents don't understand that kind of thing. Even when my friend's husband passed away and we were going to his funeral, I told them [my parents] I had no choice but to leave the kids with them, and they took them [kids] because it was a funeral, but still said "Why don't you take them [kids] with you?" So it just doesn't work. They say they adore the kids to death, but I have to be there, too.

Although this is a personal anecdote, I can relate my experience as a wife of international marriage to Fujiko's story. The generation above the boom cohort does not understand that married couples want to spend time as a couple away from children

once in a while. About a month after our baby daughter was born, my in-law (American) father came to visit us and offered to watch her so that my husband and I could go out for dinner. I still remember the culture shock I experienced at that moment, and felt how "cool" my in-law father was to offer such an amazing thing. In contrast, I once overheard my (Japanese) mother telling her in-law sister about her bewilderment with my brother and his wife, who dropped off their young child at her place. "Looks like these days' young people want to do that kind of thing," she said, puzzled.

For Harumi, 39 years old, lack of attention from her husband was a serious issue. Harumi was a petite, pretty, young-looking woman who was married for 8 years with a 6 year old daughter:

> *Author: Do you have any complaints about your marriage?*
> Harumi: Now? Yes, there are. I want him to pay attention to the family more. Spend more time, too. Also, we [pause] are no longer a couple. I hate it. We're not a couple, physically and emotionally. I'm lonely and bored. He comes home, eats dinner, and goes to sleep. That's all. I feel, that's not what I expected. I'm really lonely. He has no time [for me]. I have a lot of time. It's disappointing. [watering in eyes] … We have no conversation. Even when I talk to him, it doesn't become a conversation. He just says, "I see."
> *Author: How do you spend weekends?*
> Harumi: We try to go out as a family, but he says he has to work, so he works one day of the two [Saturday or Sunday]. He's facing a computer screen and working. One day is a family service day, and another day is a work day. He does it [family service] for our kid.
> *Author: Not as a husband?*
> Harumi: Not as a husband. … I want him to listen to me, but maybe I already gave up on it. It's been years. Sometimes I get really depressed, but he's busy, and he won't change even if I tell him, so recently I think I just have to give up. So, maybe I should change my focus to work or hobbies, something different. Then I could change my pace. I'd start focusing on something else, and could forget about all that unhappiness.

Her problem was not limited to a lack of romance, but also lack of respect as an equal partner:

> Harumi: He always talks down on me. I think he's like he's always right. But he says that's not true. He's giving me advice because I'm so ignorant about the world. I tell him I don't need advice. [laugh] I get mad and we start fighting, then he goes, "Okay, *mama* [referring to her] just doesn't listen," and the end of story. … To me, it's not a mutual talk. It's preaching.
> *Author: So do you feel you're not his equal?*
> Harumi: I feel that way a lot. He's right about everything. Even interiors of our house [which was remodeled recently]. When I said I wanted to do it this way, he said, "That's wrong. You won't understand. You totally lack a sense of this." And that was it. [laugh] So he really makes all the decisions and is stubborn about that. He says this, and it has to be this. …
>
> You see that plant over there [pointing to a large potted green plant]? That's what he picked. And that and that [framed photographs on the wall], too. He picked the wall color [which was white], too.
> *Author: How about sharing of housework? Does he do any? Like taking out the garbage?*
> Harumi: Never. If I'm sleeping [at night], well, I'm usually sleeping when he comes home late [from work]. He wouldn't like to heat up dinner [she made] in the microwave. He hates to do it, so when he guesses I may be asleep, he eats out. He does nothing around the house.
> …
> *Author: What do you think the disadvantage of marriage is?*
> Harumi: Monotony (*manneri*). Monotony is the disadvantage. [pause] But young married couples. They look like friends. I envy them.

Most married women did not seem to have sexual relationships with their husbands, though this was only implicitly expressed. None except Chie listed the relationship they had with their husband as a merit of marriage.

Sex was the piece missing from the puzzle of marriage, and this was reflected in the prevalence of extramarital affairs between unmarried interviewees and married men. Out of eleven single (boom cohort) interviewees, seven revealed that they had one or more affairs (*furin*) with married men. One of them was having an affair at the time of interview, but for others it was a "stupid" thing they did in the past. Although none of these women reported that they mistrusted men and marriage based on their experience of affairs, it is possible that this cast shadows on their views toward marriage.

Recent changes in views of marriage and marital roles

Several unmarried interviewees of this cohort shared their changing views, in recent years, toward marriage or gender roles. The reasons for this change were exposure to happy marriages or a positive role model of having-it-all. Izumi (46 years old), who was so appalled by her parents' marriage, envied her younger brother's marriage in which she perceived him and his wife as very happy.

> His wife is a housewife. … She quit [her job] with her first pregnancy. She's good at cooking. She bakes cakes nicely. I visit them once in a while, and she's a good hostess and enjoys parenting. They look so happy. … Looks hard, too. Three kids, and all kinds of mess, but. … My brother never liked kids, yet he's being a real good father, and that's so interesting. He takes days off to attend kids' school events and stuff.

Izumi began to think the life of a housewife "may not be all bad" although she "may be saying this because I'm so tired of working now." Sumire, 45 years old, and Teruko, 41 years old, witnessed the possibility of balancing family and work:

> I saw my co-workers had a baby and continued to work. That made me feel maybe I could do it, too, if I try. In the past, I thought it was absolutely impossible to do such a thing! In my hospital, she's still young, 25, she had a baby last year and returned to work recently. Leaving a year old child in, our hospital built a daycare center last year. If she can do it, [I should be able to do]. [laugh]
> (Sumire)

> In Japan, one works and the other raises kids. But when I went to Paris, women were working and raising kids. I was really shocked first, but then I thought that's so great.
> (Teruko)

Natsumi, 43 years old, said she used not to be serious about marriage because of her parents' marriage, which was filled with fights. Yet it was the endurance of her parents' marriage that changed her view in recent years:

> It's a little embarrassing, but it was only recently that I started thinking I really want to marry [laugh]. I began to think it [my parents' marriage] is nice since

> I got more mature and my parents got more mature and we came to be more thoughtful towards each other. I go visit my parents. We just eat meals together.
>
> My father and mother were not really in a good relationship. But now, it [their marriage]'s still continuing, and ah, that's what family is about. Very close families talk about anything, don't they? We aren't like that. We aren't like that, but we eat meals together happily, and ah, this is what the family is about. I finally began to understand that recently. I feel relieved when I go to my parents' home. It's really nice. We don't do anything special, but it's really relaxing, and I feel, ah, family is good.
>
> Rather than a lover, I want to have a man as a marital partner. I started thinking in this way just recently. I finally understood the meaning of marriage, I think.

Earlier, I wrote that her mother's self-sacrifice to stay married for the sake of the children may have had repercussion on Natsumi's intent to marry. Years later, however, this sacrifice may be the reason for Natsumi's more intense desire to marry in her 40s. Natsumi also got to know a couple who "married in old age (*bankon*)." This couple socialized with other couples as well as single people so that she finally gained an opportunity to observe a good, happy marriage:

> The relationship of this couple is really nice. They become friends with other married couples. … Then I started thinking, ah, that's how marriage is. Ah, it's fun to live as a single woman, but living with someone else may be fun in different ways. So I started thinking in more positive ways.

SUMMARY

In summary, women of the boom cohort held similar visions of their future life course, as well as a common conception of gender roles. Most women expected to become housewives after marriage, although not every woman found this role fulfilling. Despite their negative sentiments towards the housewife role and expanded opportunities (discussed in Chapter 6), a great majority of women did not accept the "having-it-all" lifestyle as a viable option. Such a lifestyle was regarded as impossible,

too hard, and/or undesirable for children. This view was shaped through internalized traditional gender ideology, an upbringing with stay-at-home mothers, and/or observations of stressed having-it-all mothers. One interviewee who took this life course faced social disapproval and limited institutional support. Whereas women resisted some aspects of the traditional woman's role, most of them had solidly traditional expectations from men.

Regardless of marital status, most women of this cohort were critical towards their parents' marriages, which were patriarchal, emotionally distant, and/or hostile. Peer marriage was largely invisible to single women, due to certain Japanese cultural contexts: gendered social lives, virtue of humility, and gender role expectations. Romance was largely absent in many marriages and extramarital affairs were common between married men and unmarried women. These may have contributed to skepticism towards happiness in marriage.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RESULTS

PART IV

CONCEPTIONS OF GENDER ROLES AND IMAGES OF MARRIAGE: THE RECESSION COHORT

This chapter will present the findings on the recession cohort regarding women's views of gender roles and images of parents and other marriages. As discussed below, though certain aspects of traditional gender ideology linger among many women of this cohort, there is more diversity and flexibility in their views compared to women of the boom cohort. I will present women's ideas and views regarding these three aspects: 1) ideal life course, 2) role allocation in marriage, and 3) images of parents' and other marriages.

IDEAL LIFE COURSE

"Return to work after childrearing": the most chosen life course

Many women of the recession cohort chose "return to work (*saishuushoku*)" as an ideal/preferred life course. Like most boom cohort women, these women believed that it is better for mothers to stay home while they raise young children because:

> It's better for kids to be with their mothers when they are little. … I don't want to leave them [my kids] to other people when I'm at work.
> (Ran, 29 years old, never-married)

> I'd like to be with them [my kids] when they're little. ….When I saw newborn babies left in daycare [referring to the daycare where she once worked as a nutritionist], I felt sad and painful (*setsunai*). [small laugh] Personally, I wish mothers stayed with them [kids] a bit longer.

(Ryoko, 26 years old, cohabiting)

I think it's better that one [her or her lesbian partner] stays home [for kids], because I grew up that way.
(Maya, 26 years old, cohabiting)

I definitely want to raise my kids at home when they're little. I want to stay home until they finish preschool. … There's a coworker in my department who has a preschooler. She works full-time but she takes days-off for her kid. That causes trouble to our company. … Another co-worker has a son going to middle school. She tried to work before, but up until the boy was a 1st or 2nd grader, he ran a fever due just to a small change in environment. So she couldn't work full-time, she said. She started working after her kid was a 3rd or 4th grader.
(Yoko, 36 years old, never-married)

I don't think I can do both [family and work] because I'd worry about my kids during work and I'd think about work when I took care of my kids.
(Mutsumi, 32 years old, never-married)

Although they emphasized the importance of mothers' stay-at-home role, these women had *no* intention to live as housewives for life. They "would not marry a man who would demand I become a housewife." "It's probably impossible for me [to become a housewife]. I'm not the type to stay at home forever. I would be stressed" (Yoko, 36 years old, never-married). Employment was important to these women for various reasons. For Yoko, Mutsumi (32 years old, never-married), and Yuri (32 years old, engaged), jobs were a means to be connected with the outside world (*shakai*) and/or earn some income. They had no preference in terms of types of jobs they would take after childrearing. Yoko, a section manager of a mid-sized hotel managing company, "would be happy to work as a grocery store cashier part-time" and Yuri preferred to take part-time work (of any type) to full-time employment. Mutsumi, on the other hand, wanted a full-time job, and Ran (29 years old, never-married), who had

a medical degree and started a research position just a few months before the interview, hoped to return to the field of medicine after her childrearing years.

For Ryoko, cohabiting 26 year old, the choice of part-time work after childrearing was a compromise:

> *Author: Do you want to return to work part-time or full-time?*
> Ryoko: Hmmm. Which is better? Part-time is better, maybe? But, well, I guess it's fine as long as I have an interesting part-time job.
> *Author: So, it depends on the kind of job?*
> Ryoko: I think so.
> *Author: Do you prefer part-time because you can have time with children?*
> Ryoko: It's easy to make time [for them]. Yes. Well, also because I'm not sure if I can do both [fulltime work and childrearing]. [laugh] When I was working at the daycare, I was amazed by those mothers [who were doing both].

All of these women were in relationships, and they were either hoping to marry or had discussed it with their current partner.

Kyoko, an energetic, 29 year-old married woman, had been married for less than a year and was working full-time at the time of interview. Like other women discussed here, her ideal was to return to work after childrearing because she wanted "to raise my kids on my own." But because her husband's income was small and she was good at her job, she thought of employment after childbearing flexibly:

> Kyoko: The ideal is this [pointing a card for "return to work" (*saishuushoku*)]. I wish I could leave my job once. But our financial condition and also my position at work. I'm in a position to organize and lead others so I feel I shouldn't let them [company] down, so I want to do it all [work, marriage, and childrearing] if possible. I want to raise my kids on my own, but financially, our incomes are equivalent to one person's income, so it'd be hard to live unless we both work.
> *Author: Does your workplace allow you to return to work after a while?*
> Kyoko: Yes, they do. But I wonder who could fill the hole I'd leave. I think my company would be in trouble if I leave. I know it.
> *Author: Do you wish to stay in your job because you feel responsible, or for the sake of your own career? Or both?*
> Kyoko: Hmmmm, maybe both.
> *Author: But you can leave your company once and return, correct?*

Kyoko: I think it's possible.
Author: Do you think you can return to that leadership position?
Kyoko: It's possible.
Author: So, you'd be worried about the company during the time you're gone?
Kyoko: Yes, that's right.
Author: What if there was no problem with your husband's income?
Kyoko: Then, return to work.
Author: What do you think of a life as a housewife?
Kyoko: I don't want it.
Author: Didn't you say your mother [who was a housewife] is your role model?
Kyoko: She's my role model, but the job is a hobby for me. So I want to keep my job. … I feel I'd waste my time by staying at home. Right now, it's not hard to do both housework and work, so I don't need to change this balance.

Two women – Rika (29 years old, married with one child) and Megumi (31 years old, never-married) – used to think that the housewife role was ideal when they were younger, but changed their views later in life. Rika married as a result of premarital pregnancy and worked part-time (three days a week) after her daughter turned two:

Rika: I wanted to put her [in a daycare] one year earlier, but I drew a losing number [referring to drawing for daycare]. … So I put up with it [staying home with her child] for about a year.
Author: What was your ideal life course before you married?
Rika: Before I married, I thought housewife would be nice. …
Author: How come you don't think it's nice any more?
Rika: Of course, uh, financially, it's better that I work. Also, housewives spend a lot of time at home, so it's stressful. I was a housewife until she turned two, you know? I felt depressed a lot, and didn't go out much, so it's better to work, then you'd have no time to feel that way and you'd have a world with others, not just home … So I thought it's better to work, and I started working.
Author: Are you happier now that you're working?
Rika: Yes, I am.
Author: What if you didn't need to earn for the family? Would you like to be a housewife?
Rika: … I'd like to cut hours [of work], like to twice a week or so.
Author: Do you want more time for home and your child?
Rika: Ah, home, too, but I want to have time just for myself. … Just a little more. I work only three days a week, but working from 9:30 to 5. It's just a part-time job, but it's demanding. I get exhausted from it, so when I get home,

I'm really exhausted. But I have to give a bath to my child. I get tired. I want more time.
Author: What do you think of women who are housewives?
Rika: I wonder if they're bored. Well, if they're really rich and have a lot of money, maybe they can do a lot of things. Otherwise, hmmmm.

A never-married woman, Megumi, realized the problem of women's economic dependence after she broke up with the boyfriend she wanted to marry:

Megumi: I don't hate working. I'm probably the kind of woman who hates to be inactive, staying at home. But I don't prefer to work after I get pregnant. Once I have kids, I'd like to stay home for 7 years or so until they enter elementary school. … It's my ideal that I return to work after kids start schooling.
Author: Was it always your ideal?
Megumi: I used to think housewife was an ideal. Until I graduated from college and around the time I started my first job, I wanted to become a housewife.
Author: Why did you change your mind?
Megumi: Hmmm. I think, up until then, I observed my [stay-at-home] mother and thought housewife was good, well, rather than good, it was just normal. … So I had no intention to work for life, and didn't do the job search seriously [when I was finishing college]. …

Why did I not stay with my boyfriend [about whom she talked earlier]? That's because I was thinking in that way, well, I was expecting him to support me, and I think that's why we broke up. [Earlier, she said that her ex-boyfriend quit college and she broke up with him because she thought he could not afford to support her.] If I was [economically] independent … we may have stayed together. When I thought of it, I realized that dependence is bad. In the future, how, well, there may be a path to be a housewife, but, I think, you know, I couldn't hold my head high if I live depending on someone. …

Up until then, until when I was graduating from college, watching my parents, I thought it [to be housewives for women] was normal. But now looking around, there are many working women. And men, those men who work for top companies may be earning good income, but there aren't any [men] of my age who are really wealthy, are there? Then, it's better for women to think of a real career. What if I get a divorce when I have nothing because I married and became a housewife? I'd have nothing, wouldn't I? I want to work and keep working now, so, because of that, I came to think becoming a housewife isn't good.

But besides that, women shouldn't live dependent, should be able to live on their own. Well, we could have a time like this [referring to the current recession], you know? Lay-off, lay-off. If they [wives] are dependent, the burden goes to husbands. I think I'd complain to him [my future husband], "You aren't working!" even though I wouldn't be working, either. [laugh]

> Rather than that, I came to think it's better for women to be independent and work. I should acquire some skills so I can return to work after quitting once [for kids]. …
>
> I once asked my mother. How did you become a housewife? Didn't you feel any remorse about depending completely on your husband? [She said] That was the way it was. When wives worked, people thought husbands were incompetent, and that was the way it was.

The want and need for employment among women of this cohort reflect the precarious, poorer economic conditions among men (and women) of the recession cohort. Like Kyoko, Megumi felt that having-it-all is "definitely possible" even "though that's not what I wish."

Housewife as an ideal, but returning as an expected life course

Three never-married women – Shizuka (34 years old), Momoe (30 years old), and Shoko (29 years old) – had a strong wish to become housewives and preferred not to work (outside home) at all. They wanted "to spend time on cooking … and scrapbooking, and making kids' clothes," "to do everything for him [her husband]," even taking off his socks, and/or "to watch every moment" of children's growth. Yet for them, "the ideal is a housewife, but the realistic course is to return to work after childrearing." They are flexible in their expectations. As Momoe put it, "You never know, right? He [her future husband] could get laid off after we marry. ….I may have to work. If we live close to my parents, I'd leave them [kids] to them. Or if there're places we can feel safe about leaving them, well, there's no choice but work. I'm not like, 'Things have to be this way!' or 'I'd divorce otherwise!'"

The position of housewife was taken for granted as normative by the boom cohort women. For the recession cohort, however, not only is it no longer the most

desired life course but, even for those who wish for it, it is becoming a privileged position that may be out of reach.

Shifting ideals through different life stages

As presented above, women's choice of life course came to be more contingent upon other conditions, particularly their husband's economic situation. Women's ideas also change as they go through different life stages. For instance, Akane (34 years old, married) used to want to return to work but now was content with her current housewife role and wished to stay home for life. These shifting ideas regarding ideal life course were most pronounced in the accounts of two young women – Junko (27 years old, never-married) and Kimi (25 years old, newlywed):

> *Author: What is your ideal life course?*
> Junko: Recently, I've been going to a lot of weddings of my friends and seeing them being so happy, and I don't like my job, so I felt I want to marry and stay home, but everybody says I'd be bored in 3 months. [laugh] So, if possible, this [pointing to the card for "returning to work"]. It's my ideal that I work part-time once I have kids. I work until I have kids, and then when I have kids, I take a break, and when they get old enough, I work part-time.
> *Author: What do you mean by "when they get old enough?"*
> Junko: Probably, I'd change my mind once I'm there, but probably when they're in elementary school.
> *Author: So, do you mean you plan to work when they're in school?*
> Junko: Right.
> *Author: So that means that you want to stay home longer than 3 months [referring to her friends' comment that she would be bored in 3 months], right?*
> Junko: That's right. [laugh] Ideal, isn't that my ideal? It's my wish. If I can marry, that's what I want to do.
> *Author: Did you want to become a housewife in the past?*
> Junko: No, in the past, I wanted this [pointing to the card for "singlehood"]. I wanted to live a life with a career. But recently, I saw my friends getting married, and I felt tired of working for a living. I'm changing as I get older.

The above account shows that Junko used to think the "singlehood with career" life course was her ideal, but recently changed her mind to favor the "return to work" life course. However, the subsequent conversation reveals her contradictory views:

> *Author: Do you not want to have it all?*
> Junko: I don't think I could do it. Probably, well, I'm a kind of person who gets stressed with too much work. I'd like to do both, but I'd get stressed because I'd like to do both perfectly.
> *Author: Do you mean that you want to do housework and childrearing all by yourself?*
> Junko: Ah, you're right. I should ask him [my husband] to help. I assumed I can't do so, so there goes my answer. [laugh]
> *Author: What if you marry a man who's willing to share?*
> Junko: Well, but, overtime work. If I work fulltime, that'd require overtime work, so probably not. I could work after I marry, but not after I give birth.
> *Author: So are you saying that you wouldn't work because your work conditions wouldn't allow you time to raise kids?*
> Junko: Right.
> *Author: What if you can go home without overtime?*
> Junko: Ah, then, I'd keep working. But that wouldn't happen in reality.

So, it seems that her true wish is to have the "having-it-all" life course, if conditions allow. In the earlier part of the interview, she said she was planning to go back to school and become a teacher. Yet her view towards a life-time career became unclear or contradictory as we continued our conversation:

> *Author: There aren't many part-time career jobs. You may have to take a job like cashier at a grocery store. What do you think of it?*
> Junko: That's not a problem at all. I worked at McDonalds for about 7 years. There were many married women and it was fun, so I could work there. [laugh] … I'd like to work. When I lived alone, I realized it's bad to be alone at home. I need to get out, or I'd go crazy.
> *Author: So, is work an opportunity to get out?*
> Junko: Yes.
> *Author: Not a career?*
> Junko: No.
> *Author: But you said you want to become a teacher and go back to school for it.*
> Junko: Yes, I do want to do that.
> *Author: So what if you become a teacher and want to marry?*

> Junko: Oh, yeah. [laugh] If I become a teacher, I'd probably take this path [pointing to the card for "singlehood"]. I'd do teaching for about 3 years, and marry. While I'm a teacher, I wouldn't think about marriage.
> *Author: So, it's not like you'd stay single for life.*
> Junko: No.
> *Author: You just want to stay unmarried when you're a teacher.*
> Junko: Yeah.

Similarly, Kimi's ideal changed from "having-it-all" to "return to work" yet remained ambiguous.

> *Author: How long do you want to continue your current job?*
> Kimi: Well, because I'm married now, so once I get pregnant, I'm sort of thinking I would quit once. Also, if others, if I can get help from others, uh, I don't know. If I have an environment where I can keep working after having kids, I'd like to keep working.
> *Author: What is your ideal life course?*
> Kimi: Hmmmm. Honestly, I wish I could have this [pointing to the card for "having it all"], but if I think realistically, it's probably this [pointing to the card for "returning to work"].
> *Author: What do you mean by thinking realistically?*
> Kimi: After having a child, well, I'd like to raise my kids on my own until they're okay to let them go. Then, it's impossible to keep working with the current condition. So, realistically, this.
> *Author: Why is it impossible? Is time an issue?*
> Kimi: Time, yes, time is an issue.
> *Author: Didn't you say your bank has programs for women to balance family and work?*
> Kimi: Yes, it does. But do I want to use them? Well, at the headquarters, women use these programs, but in small branches [like mine], I'd have to worry about other people, and other people also would worry about me. Could I say, "good bye," [when others are working overtime]? I think others would forgive me, they'd understand since that's the policy, but I can't imagine myself leaving work behind and saying good-bye. Rather than that, I'd just quit, and then return to work after my kids get older.

Like Junko, Kimi changed her view because she began to think about what is possible "realistically," not just ideally. She later restated that her "real ideal is, I think doing it all. But, realistically, return to work." Yet, as the following exchange shows, it seems that she began to change her sentiments toward her "real ideal" life course after she married:

Author: Do you think you could have it all if your husband didn't have to be transferred?
Kimi: Yes, but. There's a [married] female worker in my office, age 34 or 5. She doesn't have kids. She told me she always buys prepared meals, and I feel, well, that raises a question for me. She doesn't cook for her husband and dinners are always prepared meals she buys. When I imagine that kind of life, ask myself if I really want to continue working doing such a thing, I'd feel, why, then, did I marry? I feel responsibility for that part [referring to cooking and other housework].

Now that I'm married, I'd like to do what I should do for him [my husband]. So, recently, I'm thinking I should choose family [over career]. … When I walk by a daycare, I hear babies crying. Sounds like they were only a few days old. I feel, what is the point of working, leaving such little babies in daycare? It's okay to let kids go from my arms once they're old enough. But I thought I may not be able to go [to work leaving my babies].

Both Junko and Kimi came across as intelligent women who had career ambitions at some point in their lives. But what is the life course they envision currently? Their ideal not only shifted in their lives, but remained unclear.

Additionally, one never-married woman, Hitomi (36 years old), never thought of an ideal life course when she was young:

Author: Which life course do you envision yourself taking 5 or 10 years from now?
Hitomi: [long pause] Hmmm, the closest among these is [pause] probably DINKS. Hmmmm. I don't mean I want to be doing this. Just vaguely, I don't know if I'll marry, well, if possible I'd like to meet my lifetime partner and marry. In terms of children, … I don't feel I've got to have kids, honestly.

Honestly, I don't want to work for life, either. I'm lazy. Once I marry, why don't I stay home? I feel that way, too. [laugh] I don't think I could have career and children, so I'd like to choose either or. Even if I do DINKS, rather than having a career job, rather than working hard, it'd be easier to work just enough to get connected to the outside world.
Author: Do you mean that housewife could be your ideal life course, too?
Hitomi: Yes, that's right. That's definitely an option. I'm telling my boss that my ultimate dream is to become a housewife, quitting my job, receiving a flower bouquet [from him]. My friends tell me I'd get bored soon, but I feel becoming a housewife is just fine. If you do everything seriously, it [housework] couldn't be underestimated. I think I can make use of my time even if I don't work [outside home]. For example, I can take lessons and do volunteer work, too. I think it's wrong to take a job just because someone is bored of housework.

Author: What was your ideal life course in the past?
Hitomi: Ideal? Huh, ideal? [pause] Hmmmmm. [pause] Honestly, I've probably never thought of it.
Author: Were you always uninterested in having kids?
Hitomi: No, not necessarily. I'm just thinking, what'd happen if I give birth. Once I give a birth, I'd like to focus on childrearing. Well, not that I want to focus, but I'd have to focus, I guess. … I'm not sure if I could.

These women's accounts show that women do not necessarily hold clear visions of their future life courses or retain such visions if they had them. This raises the question of the validity of survey questions in the National Fertility Surveys, which ask respondents to choose one life course over four others as their ideal.

Daughters of employed mothers: acceptance of maternal employment

For recession cohort women, the impact of their mothers' employment differed from the boom cohort. Many of them advocated maternal employment and did not think mothers needed to stay home for children. However, whereas all employed mothers of the boom cohort women were married, the mothers of recession cohort women showed more diversity in marital status. Mothers of Hitomi and Yayoi were divorced, Midori's was widowed, Honoka's was never-married, and Kei and Akane's were married. Among these two with married, employed mothers, Kei's mother owned her own pharmacy next to her husband's fish store, and the family lived in quarters above their shops. Akane's mother worked for the government, which rarely required overtime work. Kei's father hardly helped with house chores, whereas Akane's father, who was also a government employee, shared a substantial amount of the housework. Except for Akane, all these daughters of employed mothers were never-married at the time of interview.

Whereas Hitomi (36 years old) and Akane (34 years old) believed in the mother's stay-at-home role, Midori (36 years old), Kei (35 years old), Honoka (32 years old), and Yayoi (31 years old) felt there was no problem working full-time while raising children. Honoka thought:

> Whichever [a father or a mother] who has time should raise kids. Or, I hope we'll have enough earnings to put the kids in daycare or preschool. I stayed half a day at daycare and spent the rest with my grandmother. I think it's good for kids to get used to the outside air early, from my own experience. I don't like clinging relationships [between a mother and children].

I asked Yayoi whether she wanted to stay home temporarily to raise her children, and she responded, "I'm not sure. My mother didn't take a break for that. But I grew up just fine. So I don't need to. It's up to how things are going at that time." Midori and Honoka "always wanted to do it all" and Kei "can't imagine being a housewife, growing up watching my mother work." Yayoi used to want to become a housewife. However, as she gained confidence with her job, she was even willing to be a breadwinner if her future income permits.

ROLE ALLOCATION IN MARRIAGE

Answers to the question regarding ideal and expected life courses revealed that most women of the recession cohort either wanted or expected to return to work after childrearing. Some women also preferred or anticipated working full-time, continuously after childbearing. Many were aware of poorer economic prospects for male peers. How did these women plan to allocate roles in marriage? What role did they expect men to take? And what about themselves? Women of this cohort were

diverse in their views, and I categorize these women into three types – *traditional*, *transitional*, and (almost) *egalitarian*, using the three types of gender ideology coined by Arlie Hochschild (1989). Traditional refers to women who identify themselves with domestic activities and expect their husbands to base their activities at work and hold more power, even when women (plan to) work. Egalitarian women expect equal sharing of work outside and inside home as well as equal power in marriage. Transitional women identify themselves with both paid work and home, but expect their husbands to focus on work outside home.

Traditional expectations: man as breadwinning head of the household

Nine women of this cohort were traditional, expecting their husbands to "support the family economically" (i.e., to take the breadwinning role) and perceiving women's domestic role as "natural" or "normal." Earning for the family was the man's role and men were expected to "work for life." Men must "have a stable job and income in order to marry," and male ability to work and/or confidence and pride in work were viewed as important aspects of manhood. Hitomi (36 years old, never-married) had a career job as a marketing consultant, yet:

> I think I'm expecting men to be stronger, superior to me. In terms of ability and. [pause] What is it? How shall I put? Not quite that I want men to protect me, but, for men. [pause] I think, compared to men, women have more weaknesses. Men can complement women's weaknesses so that probably means that men have more abilities than me. …
>
> I don't like men who aren't competent at their jobs. I prefer a man who chooses work over women. … I wouldn't be able to see a man as the opposite sex [if he is not good at work]. No matter how handsome he is, no matter how our values match. … If I have to choose between a handsome man who doesn't work and an ugly man who is good at work, I'd choose the latter. I don't mean that I like workaholics who'd neglect the family, but I like men who have confidence and pride in their jobs.

This expectation seems to contradict expressed desires or expectations to return to work after childrearing. It turned out that these women considered their earnings to be only supplementary to the household income, or for spending on their own leisure. Even Megumi, who discussed at length the importance of a wife's economic independence (presented above), said that her husband's competence at work was a necessity if she was going to respect him and to feel inspired about pursuing a career.

Though some of these women expected their husbands to take part in childrearing, all of them wanted "to do all the housework" or "wouldn't mind at all" if their husband did not help around the house. To them, homemaking was their central role. All these women were raised by stay-at-home mothers, except for Hitomi, whose mother was divorced. Observing a gendered division of labor in which their mothers devoted themselves to the care of family and household, these women perceived traditional gender roles as *natural* and *normal*:

> *Author: So, do you think breadwinning is a man's job and women should take care of households?*
> Megumi (31 years old, never-married): Hmmmm, Hmmmm. There is this kind of couple [pointing to the card for a breadwinning with a househusband]. But I think women's and men's roles are, well, our society now has a lot of working women but fundamentally, instinctively, I think women make home and men work. Women can take care of home better than men. I think they [men and women] are just born that way. So, working [for women] is just assisting, well, I don't mean to work half-heartedly, but relatively, men's jobs are more important.
>
> *Author: You said the wife's job is homemaking. Is this what you want to do, or what you feel you'd have to do?*
> Kimi (25 years old, married): Well, I don't think that's what I'd have to do, but that's what I'd like to do for him [my husband]. Well, how shall I put it? It's not like that's my mission, but, well, I grew up watching my mother doing everything for my father. He doesn't do anything [around the house], so my mother did everything for him. So I feel it's normal for me to do things for him [my husband]. ...

> I think women are better at that kind of thing, so I'd like to do that personally. I don't want to sacrifice, well, I feel it's a sacrifice, if I don't do it [housework] because of my job [at her bank]. So, I want to keep my job, but I don't want to work if I have to sacrifice all that.

They held an image of ideal wife that was similar to women of the boom cohort. Mutsumi described this as a wife who "can do things around the house perfectly, comfort her husband, and support him discretely." This is almost identical to the image described by one of the boom cohort women, Fujiko, in the last chapter.

Other qualities of men were thought to be important for good husbands and fathers. Decisiveness was expected of men, and some women thought important decisions should be made by their husbands. Men were also expected to be dignified, strong, and protective, and possess abilities superior to their wives. "I want my husband to be *daikoku bashira* (the central pillar of a house)." In their eyes, mothers are often ineffective disciplining children because they "nag and scold about small everyday things." Fathers should be a presence that is more dignified so that "children will respect and listen" or someone who "comforts children after mothers scold them too much."

Transitional expectations: breadwinning to be shared but housework as wife's job

Five women of this cohort were transitional, willing to share the breadwinning role, yet wanting to do the housework perfectly. Earning a living "should be split into half," "is the role for whoever can do it," or "may be shared half and half if a husband cannot earn enough." With the exception of Ran (29 years old, never-married), all these women were aware of the unreliability of men's earnings based on personal observations. They were either raised by an employed mother (who supported the

family primarily), or in relationships (including marriage) with a man whose earning was small. In Ran's case, her boyfriend, to whom she was informally engaged, was a physician and his income was high. Ran was a medical researcher and expected both of them to stay in medical careers (though she planned to stay home to raise children). This means that they would share the breadwinning role, though providing income was not the reason she would remain employed.

These women (except Ran) were sympathetic to men's economic hardship under the long-lasting economic recession. The low income of men was not perceived as a sign of a lack of masculinity. They did not expect men to shoulder the providing role alone. Yet these women felt work around the house was their job, thinking of it as *natural* or *normal*:

> *Author: Do you have any ideas about what you should do as a wife?*
> Ran (29 years old, never-married): As a wife? Well, I'd like to take care of home well.
> *Author: Home means housework?*
> Ran: Yes.
> *Author: Is it like you'd take care of all the housework so your husband can focus on his job?*
> Ran: Yes, sort of. My boyfriend has no ability to do housework, so I don't think I'd ask him to do it. If he has something he can do, that'd be great. But it'd be easier if I do it.
> *Author: You said you want to stay home for childrearing. Do you feel it has to be the mother who quits her job to raise kids?*
> Ran: Well, either one could do it, it's about which does what, but, personally, I think it [childrearing] is a women's job. Fathers, how shall I put it? Children need their mothers when they are little, I think. It's the same for animals, right? There aren't many cases where fathers raise kids.
>
> Watching my own mother, I'd like to do all the work around the house. Cleaning, laundry, all of it. She does it all because my father never did. And it's not a problem to me. I just think that's the way it is. I get pissed off if someone says "that's a women's job," though. [laugh]
> Kyoko (29 years old, married)

For Kei, 34 years old and never-married, and Yayoi, 31 years old and never-married, having employed mothers caused them to feel they should take the homemaking role while being employed full-time. When she was growing up, Kei's father did no housework, and she thought wives "should do all the housework. Even when they work, they have to take care of the home properly. I don't think wives should do things just for their own wants. Wives should take care of their husbands. That's how women should be." Yayoi's mother was a single mother who, she perceived, did "not do a very good job taking care of the household." For this reason, Yayoi wanted "to do housework perfectly," and did not expect her husband to do half the housework even if she took on half the task of providing.

Though they were amenable to flexibility in men's roles, they were almost stubborn about retaining housework as their job. This reflects how persistently the role of housewife is attached to womanhood (Ochiai 1997) and how normative activities for one's sex construct *gender* (West and Zimmerman 1987). These women took pride in their (potential) ability to perfect housework. Giving up housework for the needs of employment was like giving up on being a woman. However, most of them were not married, and those who were married had no children. This appears to be the dawn of the era of the second shift (Hochschild 1989).

(Almost) Egalitarian: non-traditional allocation of breadwinning-homemaking roles

Five women were egalitarian, or almost egalitarian in their expectations. They were all never married. Midori (36 years old), Junko (27 years old) and Yuki (26 years old) did not think earning was a man's role exclusively, and wanted their partners to

share work around the house equally. Honoka (32 years old) and Ryoko (26 years old) felt that, rather than allocation by gender, "who is good should take the tasks" they are good at.

Thirty-six year old woman, Midori, lost her father when she was little and was raised by an employed mother and grandparents in a rural farm village. She found out that her egalitarian expectation was rather unusual among women of her age group in the city:

> Probably because I grew up with one parent and my mother was doing all the men's work, and … I also grew up taking care of myself, so. … I went to college [in Tokyo] and my friends talked about their fathers who were the bosses of the house (*teishu kanpaku*). [Because of this upbringing] They [my friends] would feel sorry for men if they are pouring tea on their own. And so, they'd offer to help. I was shocked.

Midori, Ryoko, and Yuki were cohabiting at the time of the interview. Yuki's 40 year old boyfriend did grocery shopping and cooking, and took the garbage out. She did cleaning and dishes and felt they shared housework about 50/50. Ryoko was doing most of the chores because she was "between jobs at this moment, and my boyfriend works long hours." She wondered whether he would share half once she got a job. Midori was frustrated with her partner's unequal sharing of housework:

> Midori: Compared to my friends' husbands or boyfriends, I think my partner does a lot more. Still, when I come home in the morning after working the whole night and see the garbage not taken out, I get irritated and feel why in the world do I have to take out the garbage after all night at work. …
>
> Compared to other men, I think he does quite a bit. But still inequality is inequality. I know he does more than the average Japanese man. But no matter how busy I am, he wouldn't do cleaning and laundry. … I do laundry once a week, but he won't do it until he runs out of underpants. He'd never say I should do laundry, but he seems to be able to put up with dirty clothes longer than me. So, I don't feel he's making me do it, but I end up doing it.
> *Author: Why don't you tell him to do the laundry?*
> Midori: Well, that's because, what if I'm in his shoes? If he tells me to do it when I'm busy, I'd get pissed. Why do I have to do it when I can wait longer?

> That's how I see. ... So I get irritated, but I don't feel right about arguing about this with him.

Midori's story also is similar to that of "transitional" couples in *The Second Shift* by Arlie Hochschild (1989).

Although these egalitarian women expected equal sharing in terms of providing and domestic responsibilities, they expected their husbands to be superior to them in other dimensions. For example:

> I think it's fine for men to be authoritarian. … Women should be submissive. [laugh] … Women are too strong these days. Women used to be submissive. I admire women in those good old days, though I don't think I could be one. [laugh] …
>
> Like my grandmother, she was respectful to her husband. Well, she wasn't really respecting him, she said later, but she acted that way. I admire it. [Now] there're no rules. There's too much we have to figure out. That's confusing. Things are getting more and more confusing. …
>
> Equality is tiring (*tsukareru*). [laugh] … Let men make the decisions. (Honoka, 32 years old)

> *Author: Do you have ideas about how your husband should be?*
> Ryoko: Ah. Well, my father was the boss (*teishu kanpaku*), so I want my husband to make important decisions. I want him to be decisive.
> *Author: How should a wife be?*
> Ryoko: [short pause] Well, she should respect her husband and support him. Sounds a bit old-fashioned, but I think so.
> *Author: Like your mother?*
> Ryoko: Yes. Ah, yes, really. I guess that's what it is.

> *Author: Is it correct to say that you don't like a man who'd say men should be this way and women should be that way?*
> Midori: Well, it's correct, but there's another self [laugh] and that self tells me I should pay due respect (*tateru*) to a man [my husband] and be submissive (*hikaeme*). So I'm contradicting myself. When I see men who want that kind [of women], I go, "whatever!" But when I meet that kind of woman, I admire them – women who pay due respect to men, are submissive, but actually have good control over men in a discrete way.
> *Author: What about the sharing of housework? Is 50-50 your ideal?*
> Midori: Yes, 50/50. … Equality is my ideal, but my admiration for that kind of woman is another story.

In each of these above cases, the traditional image of a good wife who stands in the shadow of her husband (Lebra 1984) persists. By rejecting the notion of equal power in marriage, these women were not quite egalitarian, but almost egalitarian.

Others

There were two women who did not quite fit into any of the three types above. One was Yuri (32 years old), who was informally engaged to her co-worker. Though her plan was to have a "return to work" life course, and she expected her husband to be the breadwinner, when it came to housework and childrearing, "I may sound selfish, but I want him to do everything together with me. He'd work fulltime, but after he comes home, I want him to take care of our kids. … a cooperative husband is my ideal."

Another woman was Maya (26 years old), who was cohabiting with her lesbian partner. She only recently began to think about the possibility of marriage because her European partner influenced her views on equal rights for same-sex couples. She had no clear vision regarding role allocation. After she gave thought to my question for several seconds, she answered, "Whatever is fine."

Views toward house-husbands

As mentioned in the last chapter, boom cohort women viewed househusbands as pathetic or non-masculine, and some could not accept such a role even when it pertains to some else's marriage. On the other hand, women of the recession cohort were much more receptive to this new role for men. For a great majority of women, it was a "totally acceptable" lifestyle and they would "not think of these men as non-masculine

or pathetic." Rather, as in Yayoi (31 years old, never-married)'s words, some men "are suited for that kind of role. … Some men love to raise kids. They may want to spend time with little kids and return to work later. Some men are better at cooking and things like that." Whereas most of them did not think of the breadwinning wife/homemaking husband life course as suitable for themselves, some (Yoko, Kyoko, Honoka, and Yayoi) said they would happily take this life course if they can earn enough.

VIEWS OF OTHER MARRIAGES

Positive images of parents' marriage

In contrast to the patriarchal, emotionally distant, and/or hostile marriages depicted by the boom cohort, many women of the recession cohort used words such as "ideal," "a role model," "*nakaga ii* (close, in a good relationship)" to describe their parents' marriages:

> They're very close (*nakaga ii*). They go on trips often and do everything together [laugh]. They're like two bunnies. If one gets weak, the other would also get weak. … I heard they met at work. I envy their marriage.
> (Shizuka, 34 years old, never-married)

> Yeah, yeah, I envy their marriage. Real good relationship. I've never seen them fighting. Really close (*nakaga ii*). They're my ideal. … They're always together. They hold hands together. … Really ideal. Really close (*nakayoshi*).
> (Shoko, 29 years old, never-married)

> They had a *miai* marriage. My father is 7 years older, so he adores her [my mother]. My mother doesn't like housework but he tolerates everything. … My father's crazy about her. [laugh] … Yeah, I'd like to have a marriage like them.
> (Junko, 27 years old, never-married)

> Yoko (36 years old, never-married): Really good relationship. They are my ideal. They had a *miai* marriage, but they take a bath together. They sleep in the same bed (*futon*). They go out together on weekends. … My father's like, I'm the head of the household, but my mother steps back very tactfully. My father's stubborn but she keeps the relationship smooth. … My mother had parents who were fighting all the time and she hated it as a child. So she decided she'd never fight in front of her kids. So I've never seen them fighting. I told her it's amazing that they never fight. She said she's mad inside. She started telling me, after I grew up, about the pathetic things about my father, and things like that. … only after I grew up.

And then Yoko explains what makes them ideal as I asked:

> *Author: What makes them ideal? Because they're close (nakaga ii)?*
> Yoko: Yes, because they're close. Also, she makes my father feel good, makes all of us respect him, and always allows him to make the final decisions about everything. My father feels good, but in reality, my mother's controlling him, so things are going well.
> *Author: That is your ideal?*
> Yoko: That's my ideal. My mother gets a lot of free time. She goes out on her own.
> *Author: Is your father not too authoritarian?*
> Yoko: No, not really. He's not very verbal, but he's kind, my father. He's really stubborn and hard to deal with, but my mother. Once, I heard her saying, "I'm really glad I married your father," …
> *Author: Did she tell you why she was glad?*
> Yoko: No, she didn't. … But don't you think it's great that she can say it? After all those years of marriage? She thought she was glad that she married this man. Ah, I envy her.

Nine women rated their parents' marriages in a definite positive light. Six other women described their parents' marriages as good, using the same term, *nakaga ii* (close), though they did not find their parents' marriages ideal to emulate. Some of them observed their parents fighting in the past, but these fights were understood as "a normal part of relationships," or understandable considering "how stubborn my father was" or "because my father didn't give enough respect to the work of housewife my mother was doing."

Parents' marriages were not characterized as egalitarian. As demonstrated by above accounts, some marriages appeared to be quite patriarchal. What impressed daughters was, instead, emotional closeness, lack of fighting or hostility, and/or mothers' good management over stubborn, patriarchal fathers.

Fathers' involvement in housework was also attributed as the reason for good marital relationships by some women:

> My father did a lot [around the house]. He got groceries and cooked when my mother was late from work. … They didn't leave any room for me to do housework. … My mother was very active outside home, and my father spent a lot of time at home. They seem to get along well because of that. (Akane, 34 years old, married)

> Megumi (31 years old, never married): My father lost his mother young, so he did cooking and stuff since he was little. So he likes to cook. He doesn't do laundry and stuff, but he was cooking often. He still does.
> *Author: After coming home?*
> Megumi: On days off.
> *Author: Does your mother do all the other housework?*
> Megumi: Well, when he lived alone in Kobe for three years after being transferred (*tanshin funin*), I think he was doing everything. He can do anything on his own, I think. I went to see him, and he kept the place clean. [laugh] Maybe it was cleaner than our house. [laugh]
> *Author: What do you think about your parents' marriage?*
> Megumi: Nice. Yes. They're close (*nakaga ii*).

Among the interviewees who had a father (i.e., all except Midori and Honoka), only four women had negative views toward their parents' marriage. Hitomi (36 years old, never-married) and Yayoi (31 years old, never-married) witnessed parents' separation and subsequent divorce during their childhood, and reported that their fathers were hardly involved in their lives. Parents of Kei (35 years old, never-married) and Mutsumi (32 years old, never-married) were married but their marriages were similar to those of parents of the boom cohort:

> They insulted each other. … My father was close to his siblings, but my mother had a hard life. Her father died when she was little. She was poor but had to take care of her younger sisters. That's why she got the license to become a pharmacist. So she doesn't want to get involved with her siblings. But my father insults her, 'that's not how siblings should be.' I don't know why they do this, but I don't like them insulting each other. … I've seen a lot of conflict between them. … We didn't have much happy family time (*danran*) together. …
>
> I saw my mother's hardship. My father was doing [business] with his brother and they were sloppy with money. I heard that. It wasn't like we fell into poverty, but my mother took another job at some point. He worked, but was a bit too relaxed. I saw the suffering of woman from this. So I'd never, ever marry a man who doesn't take care of money right.
> (Kei)

> *Author: Then, is it not a role model for you?*
> Mutsumi: No, probably not. It's not like really bad. They go out to eat together, too. Not like they're hostile, but, it's like they're not interested in each other much.
> *Author: Do they not talk with each other much?*
> Mutsumi: Like that. If TV is on, they may say something about it, but they don't talk much. Only when they want to ask something to the other.
> *Author: Is your father authoritarian (teishu kanpaku)?*
> Mutsumi: Not so much these days.
> *Author: Was he in the past?*
> Mutsumi: Oh, yeah. They fought, well, mother got scolded unilaterally. Very often.

Thus, some women's observations of their parents' marriages were negative, but overall, women of this cohort were exposed to better models of marriage than was the case for the boom cohort.

More visible, happy peer marriages

Most never-married women of the recession cohort knew peers in happy marriages. For some, their "envy" of friends' marriages was the reason they wanted to marry. Twenty-seven year old Junko used to plan to remain single" but because she saw "two people being so happy, I envy them so much" she wanted to marry one day.

For Yayoi (31 year old), her friends' marriages were life-transforming, because she used to be negative about marriage due to her mother's divorce:

> Yayoi: I used to think it [marriage] isn't a very nice thing, watching my mother. But by watching my friends, I go to visit friends who've been married for some years, and [I realized that] there are many different forms of marriage, different from the impression I had. What they showed me was all positive. Marriage is not a loss, but a gain. I got very good impressions so now I really want to marry.
> *Author: Would you describe what you find positive?*
> Yayoi: Ah, well, the couples are very close. That's one. Also, each of them individually, [for instance] a husband has his own hobby and a wife is going to college. They complement each other's minuses and plusses, getting close yet keeping some space for each other, and create a comfortable, warm space together. This woke me up.
> *Author: Do you see positives among married friends with kids, too?*
> Yayoi: Oh, yes, I do. My friend became very mature. I see her new side as a mother. She had many miscarriages and had a hard time in the past, and she had a baby after going through all that, so everybody is so happy. Her husband used to do whatever he liked to do, but after having their baby, he's being a good father. Well, I was shown very good sides [of marriage] from couples with and without kids, since around last year. There're bad marriages, too, but marriage is not as bad as I used to think.
> *Author: Are there any married ones in your drama club?*
> Yayoi: Yes, one, just recently married. I know her husband well. Yeah. This couple is doing music together, forming a unit, and really nice.

Because the average age of first marriage has been about 28 for women in recent years, young women in their mid-20s had few or no friends who were married, so that their observations were limited. Still, Maya (26 years old, cohabiting) and Yuki (26 years old, cohabiting) viewed their older siblings' marriages as "very nice" and "very happy." Ryoko (26 years old, cohabiting) changed her image of marriage because of her friend's marriage:

> *Author: What do you think about your friends' marriage?*
> Ryoko: I think my friend who married first is quite free. Before then, I had an image that once you marry, you'd stay home. She became a housewife, … but she calls me, 'Let's get together.' I didn't know we could do that.
> *Author: Are all of your friends in happy marriages? Are there any marriage you don't like?*

Ryoko: They are good, seem happy.
Author: Like, they're close?
Ryoko: Yes, very close. That friend has been with him [her husband] for long. They started dating in high school. They've always been close. They're still close.

Not all peer marriages were perceived positively. But the important difference from the boom cohort was that friends' husbands and marital relationships were more visible to many single women of the recession cohort:

Author: What do you think about your married friends?
Shoko (29 years old, never-married): My married friends? Uh, I envy about half and don't like the other half.
Author: Would you describe the marriages you envy?
Shoko: Oh, they're my ideal. When I go visit them at their home, well, they're like, "Come over!" And their husbands come home, and go, "Why don't you stay over night?" and their husbands become like my friends. And, they [my friends] stay home, so make everything homemade. They raise their kids well. They [married couples] are close and I've never seen them fight.

And, the bad marriages are, they're always fighting. In front of me, in front of their kids. Fighting over money problems. Why [do they do that]? That's not good for kids [fighting openly]. And towards their husbands, I feel, "Don't you have any pride? Why do you fight in front of your wife's friends?"

On the other hand, some of the descriptions of peer marriages reflected the same problems observed in the boom cohort: lack of romance, absence of husbands, influence of the culture of humility, and lack of freedom:

Megumi (31 years old, never-married): There're some marriages I don't envy. [They make me feel] Ah, that's the reality. [laugh]
Author: Can you describe those marriages?
Megumi: Well, what do I not like about them? Well, hmmmm, well, marriage is not just about two of them, but the family, relatives, uh, … like hearing about in-law mothers. …

Also, husbands don't come home. Probably busy with work, but they [my friends] say they're lonely. Different from what I imagine as marriage life. … No longer loving, uh, kind of distant. When I see it, I feel, ah, this is the reality.

But those with kids, well, my friends married late, 28 or 29, so there aren't very many with kids, but those with kids are different. Not distant. No longer just a couple, but having a family. I envy it. Well, I'm envying having kids, not marriage, aren't I? [laugh] …

When I saw them at weddings, I felt envious. But there aren't very many married couples I envy.

Mutsumi (32 years old, never-married): You know, in Japan, there are more people who'd say they shouldn't have married, aren't there? There aren't many people who'd say they're glad they married, are there? It's embarrassing to say such a thing.
Author: Yeah, others might say, "what are you, newly-weds?"
Mutsumi: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! So I rarely hear [good things about marriage], so I hear only negative things, right? Even when I'm not thinking marriage is bad, maybe, unconsciously, I can't make one step towards marriage because of it.

Honoka (32 years old, never-married): Just the other day, I worked with a French top fashion model. She was with her husband and stayed here about a week. They were married for 13 years or so, but they were so loving to each other. I envy them. After 13 years, they can be so loving to each other, like lovers who just started dating.
Author: Do you normally not see that kind of couple around?
Honoka: No, I don't. Well, the Japanese can't do that, maybe? I don't see any.

Like Teruko, a boom cohort woman who had lived in Paris, Honoka compared Japanese married couples she knew to other couples that involved Westerners.

Author: What do you think about your married friends?
Honoka: Well, uh, they don't say good things about each other, you know? My friends who married a foreigner [i.e., a Westerner], or foreign couples, praise each other. Like, "She's a real good cook," "He caught this fish." We don't do that in Japan, do we? We don't respect each other. Saying something like "my stupid wife (*gusai*) is…" I don't like that. Mostly that kind of marriage [is around me]. They have to say negative things. I feel, then, why did you marry? I really don't like that.
Author: Do you have female friends who married male foreigners?
Honoka: The other way round, too. But they always surprise me by praising each other a lot. Even about tiny little things. [laugh]
Author: Do your Japanese friends who married foreigners praise, too?
Honoka: They praise their partner. … They say to each other, "Wow, how did you do this? Amazing!" I really envy that kind of relationship.

Yuri held the image that marriage was restrictive, based on her observations of friends' marriages:

Author: What is the disadvantage of marriage?

Yuri (32 years old, engaged): Well, I'd have less time for myself. I feel that's what'd happen. Also [short pause]. I'd have less freedom (*jiyuu*) in many things. Time is one. I wouldn't be able to do anything without getting my husband's permission. I don't know, but I have that kind of image.
Author: Do you feel you'd have to ask your current fiancé for permission?
Yuri: I don't really think so, but by looking at my [married] friends, many can't go out or buy things without getting their husbands' permission.
Author: Are many of your friends married?
Yuri: Most of them are married.
Author: Do they have kids?
Yuri: Yes.
Author: Do you observe them not having much freedom?
Yuri: I haven't gotten together with my friends for a while.

As our conversation continued, she began to point out other negative aspects of her friends' marriages, as the following demonstrates:

Author: Do you have some image about marriage from seeing or hearing about your friends' marriages?
Yuri: Well, I hate to say this now that I'm going to marry, but, unfortunately, I have no friends who say, "I'm glad I got married!" It makes me think, what is marriage? Why do we have to marry? Why do they [marriages] turn cold? But, well [short pause]. I don't know what'd happen to me, but I still want to marry. Probably, I think there're probably many things I'd never know unless I do. I don't understand what goes wrong in reality.
Author: Are you saying you have no idea why your friends are unhappy in marriage?
Yuri: Yes. They all married men they loved. Yet one of my friends says she doesn't want him [her husband] around (*uzai*). Another says she doesn't want him to come home. I don't know why. They say love and marriage are two different things, you know?
After all, it's living with a total stranger. It's different from dating. They have to be together all the time. Then you'd start seeing parts that were different from what you saw before, and question what you know about him. Is that what it is?
Author: Hmmm. Do you think their marriages may be restrictive?
Yuri: Yes. Some men have to control, have to know everything about what their partner is doing. I couldn't tell that when I saw them at the weddings.

Hitomi, 36 years old and never married, mostly observed the marriages of boom cohort women because most of her friends belonged to this cohort:

Author: What do you think about your friends' marriages?

> Hitomi: From my married friends, I hear a lot of stories that their marriages are not going very well. There're many stories that make me wonder what the point of marriage is, staying together that way. My father has four siblings and all their marriages failed. I saw only that kind of case so rather than longing for marriage, I probably thought marriage is trouble ever since I was a kid. …
>
> No friends have told me I should marry, or that marriage is nice. … Most of my married friends don't have kids. So they can get together with me like single women. …
>
> *Author: Aren't their marriages nice?*
>
> Hitomi: Not at all. There's one who had a baby recently that seems happy. She and her husband used to say they didn't like kids, but they totally changed after having a baby. They look really happy. They're building a warm family. When I went to visit them, they looked so happy.
>
> But the rest are, like they have no sexual relationships, they're not interested in each other, and they're having affairs. I feel, since they have no kids, why wouldn't they divorce? But they're doing it [i.e., having affairs] without it [divorce]. … They say, marriage is not just about two of them. They involve parents, too, so it's hard [to divorce]. I think that's just an excuse, but it's not my business.

Among the recession cohort of women, Hitomi was the only one who had an affair with a married man. She saw him for many years and expected him to get a divorce and marry her, which did not happen. She was angry at her married, childless friends who were having affairs with no intention of divorce.

In addition, this cohort of women were exposed more to divorce and single motherhood (after divorce), compared to the boom cohort. Some unmarried women were advised not to marry by those who divorced:

> There are many kinds of women in my company now. There're married women with children, and also *shinguru mazaa* ("single mother" literally but referring only to "divorced mothers"). By hearing their stories, I'm not sure if marriage is hard or nice. When I hear conversations among married women, I feel envious. But when I hear single women [single divorced mothers] telling about their hard lives, I feel I don't want such a life. … Some of my friends are divorced, too. They say things like, "My husband was stolen and now I'm alone. What am I going to do from now on?" They say it's best not to have a divorce, so I shouldn't get married. It's better to stay away [from marriage] to avoid all the complications. … There're more friends who divorced because of husbands' affairs [*onna mondai*] than because of money problems. They

> said they had no idea that they [their ex-husbands] were cheating on them. Why would they do that after going through all the trouble to get married? (Kei, 35 years old, never-married)

Women of the recession cohort were surrounded by a mix of good and bad marriages, but a majority of women were exposed to positive images of marriage through parents' and/or peer marriages. The only exceptions were Hitomi (36 years old) and Kei (35 years old). Their negative images of marriage shaped by parent(s) were hardly altered due to a lack of good role models among their peers. Two of them were ambiguous about marriage, as Hitomi said, "I want to marry one day, but at the same time, I feel marriage is like the end of the world."

Their own marriages

Only four women were married in this cohort, three of whom were married less than one year (with no children). Rika (29 years old) was married for over four years, with one child. Not surprisingly, three newlywed women were happy in their marriages. Rika wished she had not become pregnant and married, and was afraid that she and her husband might divorce in the future. Despite the limited number of cases in this cohort, comments made by married interviewees revealed common issues in Japanese marriages. For instance, Kyoko (29 years old)'s husband worked incredibly long hours as well as on weekends, and she and her husband "hardly spend time together." They communicated best through e-mail and phone calls.

Akane (34 years old) and Kimi (25 years old) admitted the nature of marriage was restrictive. They were hesitant about going out with their friends in the evenings, even though their husbands never said they had to be home at night. They felt they

should not go out because they took the wife's domestic role seriously and did "not want to neglect my duty." For Akane, the source of her discontent was her husband's reduced amount of conversation. Rika's husband hardly spent time with her, except on weekends when they went out with their 4 year old daughter. She envied her single friends who were active in dating relationships, and focused on parenting as a source of happiness.

SUMMARY

In contrast to the boom cohort, most recession cohort women rejected the housewife life course, and chose "return to work" as their ideal. Employment was viewed as important as a means to supplement household income, get connected to the outside world, and/or to attain self-fulfillment or economic independence. Although most women believed that mothers should stay home to raise young children, they anticipated and accepted the possibility of their own employment due to the poor economic prospects of men of their cohort. Several women felt that mothers need not stay home for children, and these women were all raised by employed mothers.

Despite their intention to participate in the provision role, to varying degrees, a majority of women wanted to take on full domestic responsibilities, viewing this role as natural and/or normal for women. Among them, about half expected their husbands to fulfill the traditional man's role (i.e., breadwinning), which was equated with masculinity. The other half accepted that their husbands may not be able to fulfill the sole provider role, and they did not associate this with a lack of masculinity. Several other women wanted either equal sharing, or role allocation based on ability (rather

than gender). Regardless of their ideas about role allocation, most women advocated gender hierarchy in non-economic dimensions such as decision-making and gestures of respect.

Unlike the boom cohort, a great majority of the recession cohort women were exposed to good marriages and held or came to hold positive images of marriage. Most of their parents' marriages were characterized by closeness and absence of open conflict, and peer marriages were more visible to this cohort than to the boom cohort. Descriptions of their own and peer marriages, however, reflected the persistence of certain problems such as husbands' long working hours, restriction on wives' time and money use, and distant marital relationships.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the phenomenon of increased singlehood in Japan, and contributes to the construction of a more applicable theory of non-marriage. Guided by a theoretical framework that synthesizes the life course perspective (i.e., cohort effects), William Ogburn's hypothesis of cultural lag, and Emile Durkheim's concepts of anomie and egoism, I hypothesize that the existing gender culture of Japan did not match new economic conditions for young women – expanded employment opportunities triggered by the economic boom – and that this lagged culture led to an increase in singlehood among women who spent most of their young adulthood during the economic boom. I expect that gender culture may have adapted or declined (i.e., anomie) for the subsequent cohort of women. This cohort may marry at a higher rate as culture adapts, or singlehood may remain common due to anomie. Japan's economic recession since the mid-1990s is also expected to have effects on marriage and singlehood for this cohort. Although several scenarios were expected for the recession cohort, cause of non-marriage is expected to be different for each cohort of women. Using mixed research methods, this study tests four hypotheses that predict cohort differences in 1) ideal age to marry, 2) experiences of pressure to marry around marriageable ages, 3) conceptions of gender roles, and 4) the gender gap in views of the wife's role. Original, in-depth interviews also explore other related factors that might be associated with the phenomenon of increased singlehood in Japan.

The research findings support three of the four hypotheses. Clear cohort differences were observed with regard to ideas about ideal marriage age, conceptions of

gender roles, and the gender gap in views of traditional wife's role. Women of the boom cohort, explicitly or vaguely, expected to marry by age 25 whereas those of the recession cohort perceived marriage by age 25 as being "too early." Compared to the preboom and recession cohorts, men and women of the boom cohort agreed least in their views of the wife's role.

Conceptions of gender roles are multifaceted. A majority of women in both cohorts strongly believed that mothers should stay home to raise young children and perceived women's domestic role as natural and normal. Yet there was a subtle but important difference by cohort in this belief. Whereas boom cohort women firmly rejected maternal employment, recession cohort women accepted or anticipated the possibility of balancing work and childrearing. Boom cohort women strongly adhered to the idea, or took it for granted, that men should take on the breadwinner role, while recession cohort women exhibited diverse views toward men's proper role. Men's ability to be sole provider, which was equated with masculinity in the eyes of the boom cohort, was not necessarily connected to manhood for women of the recession cohort. In terms of the second hypothesis (i.e., cohort differences in pressure to marry), the two cohorts were similar, providing little to no support for this hypothesis. Pressure from parents and work was weak, absent, or easy to disregard for both cohorts.

The qualitative portion of this research uncovered other important factors that may have implications on increased singlehood in Japan. First, the presence of other single women had different influences on the two cohorts. Boom cohort women felt alright about remaining single because there were many other single women in the same age group. On the other hand, the prevalence of older single women was taken

negatively, or at best sympathetically, by the recession cohort – and this cohort of women did not wish to follow the same path taken by their predecessors.

Second, meanings of jobs and leisure differed by cohort. For boom cohort women, jobs and leisure were incompatible with romantic relationships. This incompatibility reflected the gendered nature of social life, unavailability of men (probably due to long work hours required of them), and gender inequality in dating and marital relationships. In contrast, most recession cohort women did not regard jobs and leisure to be irreconcilable with romantic relationships. Instead, several of them felt men were reluctant to marry, and this kept them from marrying. Some of these women were also frustrated with the "indecisiveness" of men.

Third, there was a sharp contrast between the two cohorts in their views of other marriages. For the boom cohort, parents' marriages are characterized by patriarchy, emotional distance, and/or hostility – and peer marriages are largely invisible. Through their limited glimpses at peer marriages, never-married women of this cohort tended to shape negative images about marriage. The invisibility and negativity of peer marriages appear to be attributable to Japanese cultural contexts. Gendered social life, the virtue of humility, and devotion to family life by married women kept single women from observing their friends' marriages in a positive light. Absence of love and sex in marriages was also mentioned or implied in married women's accounts, and extramarital affairs between single interviewees and married men appeared common-place. Sexual double standards, and repressed sexuality of married women, may have further contributed to negative views toward marriage among single women of the boom cohort. Women of the recession cohort, on the other hand, typically viewed their

parents' marriages positively. This did not necessarily mean that their parents' marriages were egalitarian or non-patriarchal, but many daughters rated parents' marriages high due to parents' emotional closeness, mothers' ability to manage patriarchal fathers, and the absence of marital conflict. Additionally, women of the recession cohort were exposed to positive models of marriage through peers, who were more visible to them.

There were a few other important findings I could not include in the previous chapters. First, cohabitation was more prevalent and viewed as an acceptable living arrangement (though not as a permanent arrangement) among women of the recession cohort, whereas most women of the boom cohort were appalled by it. Second, opportunities to date or meet potential dates were limited for both cohorts of women, but particularly for the boom cohort. Most single women of the boom cohort had not been in relationships for several years or in some cases over a decade, despite the fact that they were attractive (sometimes stunningly beautiful), charming, and heterosexual. All these women mentioned that opportunities to meet single men are scarce. There is, however, a large single population in the Greater Tokyo area. Why are they deprived of such opportunities?

My interview data revealed a few common issues that kept women (and men) from meeting potential dates. One was incredibly long hours spent at work by men, as well as by some women in the interviews. Women were unable to meet or maintain relationships with men due to men's long work hours, or they themselves had little time for dating or other social activities. The second issue was that workplaces were often gendered. Many single women of both cohorts worked in companies and offices where

their co-workers and superiors were predominantly females and/or married, middle-aged males. The third issue was the lack of dating culture. There seemed to be no cultural scripts for men and women to approach each other as potential dates in public settings. This issue was uncovered by questions about the American dating scene, voluntarily asked by some of my interviewees after I finished asking questions from the interview guide. Observing American movies and sit-coms, these women were fascinated by and curious about the casualness with which Americans ask dates of people they meet in public places, such as fast food restaurants or subways. Their questions made me realize how absent such casualness is in Japan. After the *miai* or arranged marriage practice declined in popularity, the most common ways for the Japanese to meet future spouses are through work, schooling, and introduction by friends (Tokuhiro 2010). My interviews with married women showed that these three ways are indeed common. This means that if women miss the chance to meet future spouses at school or work, it would be difficult for them to find mates unless they or others such as their friends and relatives actively seek ways for them to meet potential partners.

Towards construction of a theory of non-marriage

How do the above findings explain the causes of increased singlehood in Japan and contribute to the construction of a theory of non-marriage? As one of the first steps towards theory construction, Hage (1972) recommends that we formulate theoretical concepts and categorize observed patterns along with these concepts. As the theoretical framework for this research, I borrowed Ogburn's concepts of cultural lag

and adaptation ([1922, 1950] 1966) and Durkheim's concepts of anomie and egoism ([1951] 1979). I found these concepts useful in categorizing my research findings. Before sorting out the findings, however, I need to specify the definitions of these terms.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Ogburn's idea of cultural lag refers to a time period in which culture lingers in society as a whole, or part of it, so that it contradicts changed material conditions. Cultural adaptation is the next stage, described by Ogburn, in which new culture emerges or old culture is modified to match the new material conditions. Durkheim's concept of *anomie* is a state of society in which norms are weakened and no longer constrain individuals' behaviors, etc. Anomie can lead to *egoism*, a state in which individuals are not well integrated into society.

The concepts of cultural lag and anomie are similar in that both describe a situation wherein individuals are not guided appropriately by cultural prescriptions. There are, nonetheless, important differences between the two. Whereas, in a state of cultural lag, traditional culture has a significant influence on individuals' lives, in anomie it is weakened or absent and, therefore, loses the power to shape individuals' actions, etc. The similarity between these concepts lies only in the consequence they have for individuals. Actors are not guided appropriately by norms due to contradictory culture in the former and lack of norms in the latter. The distinction between cultural lag and anomie is illustrated by my research findings. Boom cohort women's thoughts and acts were heavily influenced by internalized traditional gender ideology despite the way this ideology contradicts opened-up employment opportunities. This is not anomie, but cultural lag.

Thus, I define four concepts to denote four distinctive states of society (or groups of individuals) as follows. *Cultural lag* refers to a state in which individuals in a given society or a group/groups hold onto traditional culture despite its contradiction to changed material conditions. As in Ogburn's theory discussed in Chapter 3, cultural lag may be observed in one group but not in another (e.g., among men, but not among women), or degrees of lag my vary in different social institutions, for example the law is adapted to new conditions, yet people's beliefs lag behind. *Anomie* is a state in which traditional norms are weakened or have disappeared, and therefore, no longer constrain or guide individuals' behavior. *Cultural adaptation* is a state in which either new culture emerges, or old culture is modified, so that individuals are guided by culture appropriate to changed material conditions. *Egoism* is a state in which individuals shape their behaviors and thoughts based on individual desires as opposed to conformity to social expectations. Egoism and anomie may be observed simultaneously because, in the absence of cultural prescriptions, individuals might have to mold their actions and thinking based on their own needs and wants. My theoretical definitions of these concepts are presented in Table 9-1. These concepts are "variables," meaning that a particular social state can be categorized by assessing whether or not it exhibits the characteristics of each concept (Hage 1972).

Table 9-1. Definitions of Theoretical Concepts

Name of Concept	Theoretical Definition
Cultural lag	a state in which individuals in a given society or social group(s) hold on to traditional culture despite its contradiction to changed material conditions
Anomie	a state in which traditional culture is weakened or absent and no longer prescribes appropriate behaviors for individuals in a given society or social group(s)
Egoism	a state in which individuals in a given society or social group(s) shape their actions and thoughts based on their own desires
Cultural adaptation	a state in which new or modified culture matches new material conditions and guides actions and thoughts of individuals in a given society or social group(s) appropriately, given these changed conditions.

The next step is to categorize the findings of my research using these four theoretical concepts. First, in terms of the ideal age of marriage, the boom cohort's expectation to marry during *tekireiki* (i.e., early 20s), within a context where women can remain employed past this age, indicates cultural lag. For the recession cohort, the marriage age norm either shifted to older ages or no longer exists (i.e., it is up to each individual). This implies cultural adaptation, anomie, and/or egoism. Weak pressure to marry observed in both cohorts indicates enforcement of marriage age norms was weak, and thus anomie.

The larger gender gap in the boom cohort's view of wife's role seems to point to cultural lag. At first glance, this seems to contradict findings from the qualitative research. Interview research found that boom cohort women are more traditional in gender role expectations than recession cohort women. Why are the former found to be less traditional than the latter in the quantitative portion of this research? This seeming contradiction can be explained by several important factors.

First, as discussed in Chapter 5, the observed traditionalism of the recession cohort may be confounded by age effects. Because the data set used for this analysis was collected in 2005, the age range for the recession cohort (born between 1973 and 1985) was 20 to 32, whereas it was 25 to 36 in my interview research conducted in 2009. Young women may be idealistic about their ability to accept this future traditional role given that marriage, for most of them, is something that is still quite a few years away, and this may have had something to do with the difference in the two different research methods' findings. Second, statistically significant, though marginal, effects of marital status and presence of preschoolers indicate that ever-married

individuals without preschool children are more in favor of wife's employment. Women may change their views of gender roles in response to changes in life circumstances (Kroska and Elman 2009). For instance, married Japanese women may approve of wife's employment due to discontented feelings toward the housewife role after taking it on for many years.

Third, qualitative research findings uncovered the fluidity and ambiguity in women's conceptions of gender roles. Single women not only shifted their ideals as they passed through different life stages, but presented the ideals of society in general as if they were their own, even though these were not necessarily compatible with their own wants or capabilities. For instance, some single women in the boom cohort listed the housewife role as an ideal but were skeptical of the happiness they would derive from taking this role. The Japanese are very cognizant of what is expected in society as a whole (Condon 1984; Lebra 1976; Peak 2001; Reischauer 1988[1977]), and thus survey questions used for this analysis may not be accurately measuring individuals' *own* views toward women's marital roles.

Even considering these limitations and issues, the findings from the quantitative analysis indicate discrepancies in role expectations between men and women for the boom cohort. This may be a reflection of cultural lag for this cohort, whereas in the case of the recession cohort it is difficult to tell whether traditionalism (and a smaller gap by gender) indicates cultural adaptation.

The boom cohort's conceptions of gender roles clearly show cultural lag. Their expectation of/ adherence to the housewife role, strong disapproval of maternal employment, equation of housework with womanhood, and expectation that men take

on a sole breadwinning role all contradict the (perceived) opened-up employment opportunities for women. For this cohort, culture also lagged at the institutional level. Married employed mothers like Tamami faced difficulties balancing work and family due to a lack of institutional support (e.g., quality daycare that accommodates work schedules).

On the other hand, recession cohort conceptions of gender roles reflect a mix of cultural lag, adaptation, and anomie. Approval of maternal employment and a willingness to engage in it indicates cultural adaptation. Diverse expectations regarding men's role may indicate that culture is on its way to adaptation, or declining and giving way to individual preferences (i.e., anomie and/or egoism is at work here). Beliefs in homemaking as true womanhood may point to cultural lag experienced by the recession cohort, just like the boom cohort experienced it. However, it can also be argued that women of the recession cohort are "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987) by accepting the domestic role – activities which make them "women" – and that the importance of doing feminine work may have become heightened in this era of increased two-income families. Women of the recession cohort may adhere to the homemaking role so that they can retain their "femininity" even if they take the traditional men's role (i.e., employment) in marriage. In this case, their belief in the traditional women's role may have a different nuance than that of the boom cohort, with the former possibly reflecting cultural adaptation. Additionally, interviewees' accounts implied improvement in institutional support for employed mothers. If that is the case, culture is adapting.

Table 9-2 explains my research findings in terms of the four key theoretical concepts discussed earlier. As shown in this table, boom cohort women's lives are shaped largely by cultural lag, whereas recession cohort women are affected by cultural lag, adaptation, anomie, and egoism.

Table 9-2. Explanation of Findings in Terms of Four Theoretical Concepts

	Boom Cohort	Recession Cohort
Ideal age to marry	early 20s (***cultural lag***)	late-20s or by 30, or none (***adaptation/anomie/ egoism***)
Pressure to marry	weak, absent, escapable (***anomie***)	weak, absent (***anomie***)
Conceptions of gender role		
Wife's employment	large gender gap (***cultural lag***)	smaller gender gap (***adaptation/***age effects?)
Ideal/expected life course	full-time housewife (***cultural lag***)	part-time housewife /having-it-all (***adaptation***)
Wife's homemaking role	equation with womanhood (***cultural lag***)	equation with womanhood (***cultural lag***)
Husband's breadwinning role	Expected (***cultural lag***)	diverse (***adapting/anomie/egoism***)
Institutional support	Limited (***cultural lag***)	improved (***adaptation***)

Next, I link the above states (described by four concepts) with other relevant factors, and explain why singlehood increased among women for each cohort. For the boom cohort, lagged culture required women to marry in their early 20s but employment remained possible past this traditional marriageable age. Negative views toward marriage, lack of institutional support for employed mothers, enjoyment of leisure and jobs, and weak pressure to marry all provided women little incentive to marry at the expected age. In passing the marriageable age, single women felt fine about staying single because of the presence of other single women. Without norms to properly clarify women's role in marriage under changed economic contexts, and with negative sentiments held towards marriage, many young women of the boom cohort may have put marriage on the back burner and drifted into singlehood. They also had little chance to meet potential partners. Unless single women were already in serious relationships (formed through school, work, etc.) or actively sought ways to marry by a certain age, they were likely to drift into singlehood despite their intention to marry one day. Women's value in the marriage market tends to decline with age, and chances of meeting potential mates continue to be slim in Japanese contexts.

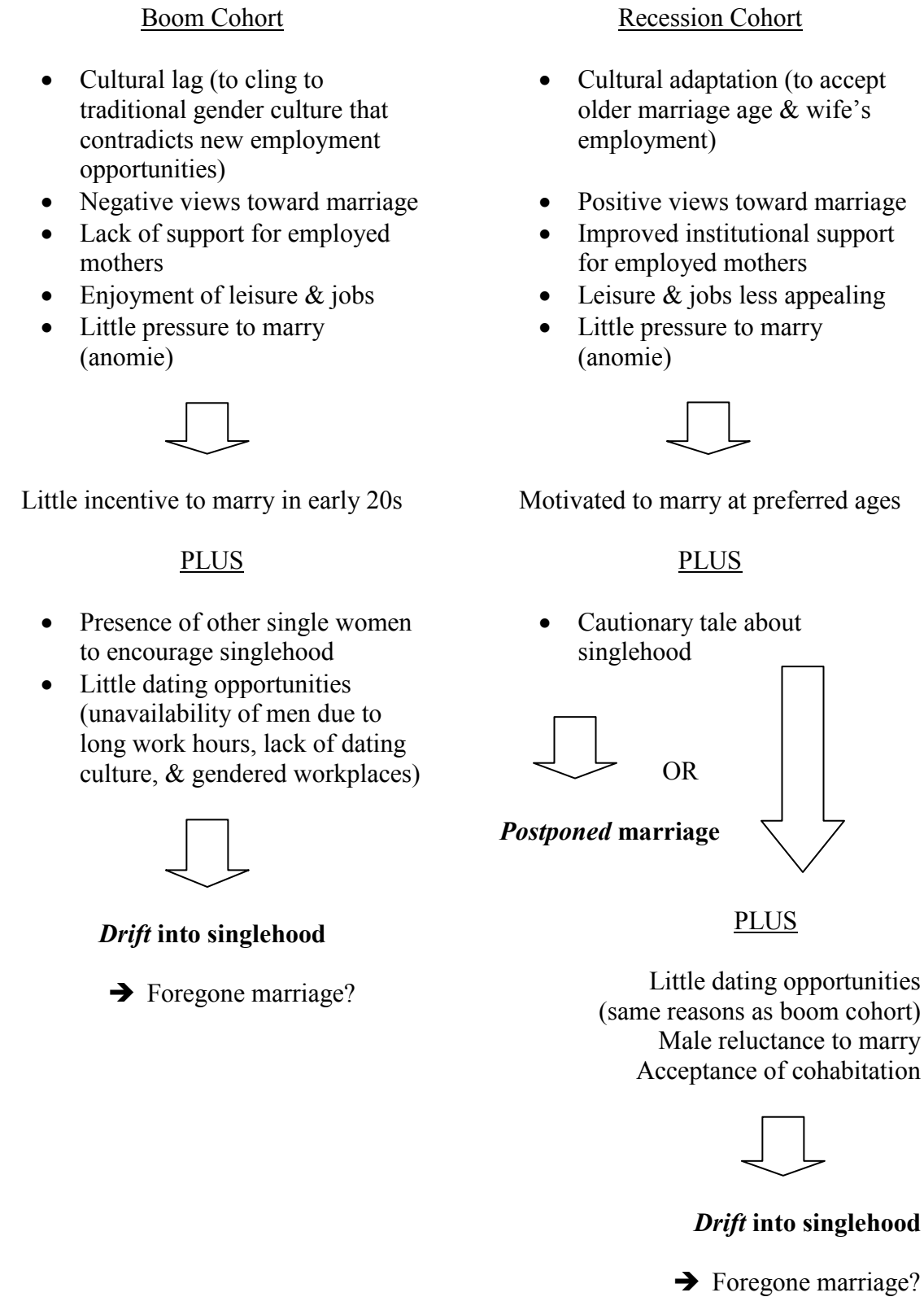
In short, for the boom cohort, increased singlehood was caused by a combination of multiple factors: cultural contradiction, feedback loop (i.e., presence of other single women that validates singlehood), and cultural contexts that placed impediments on marriage (i.e., negative perceptions of marriage, absence of dating culture, etc.). It is possible that cultural lag itself may not have caused such a significant increase in the number of single women. For instance, if these women held more positive views of marriage or had opportunities to meet potential partners,

significant portions of them may have married despite the contradictory culture they had internalized (as did married women of this cohort). Lagged culture is one variable that reduces the incentive to marry for women.

For the recession cohort, a few different scenarios are possible. First, the phenomenon of increased singlehood among women of this cohort may indicate only postponed marriage. The age norm has adapted to women's new conditions, and with positive views toward marriage, low appeal of jobs and expensive leisure, improved institutional support for employed mothers, and little pressure to marry at certain ages, women may be motivated to marry, but at ages they personally prefer. They are more motivated than the boom cohort to marry, despite weak external pressure, because the presence of older single women poses a cautionary tale. The recession cohort therefore may marry at a higher rate than the boom cohort, but at a later average age.

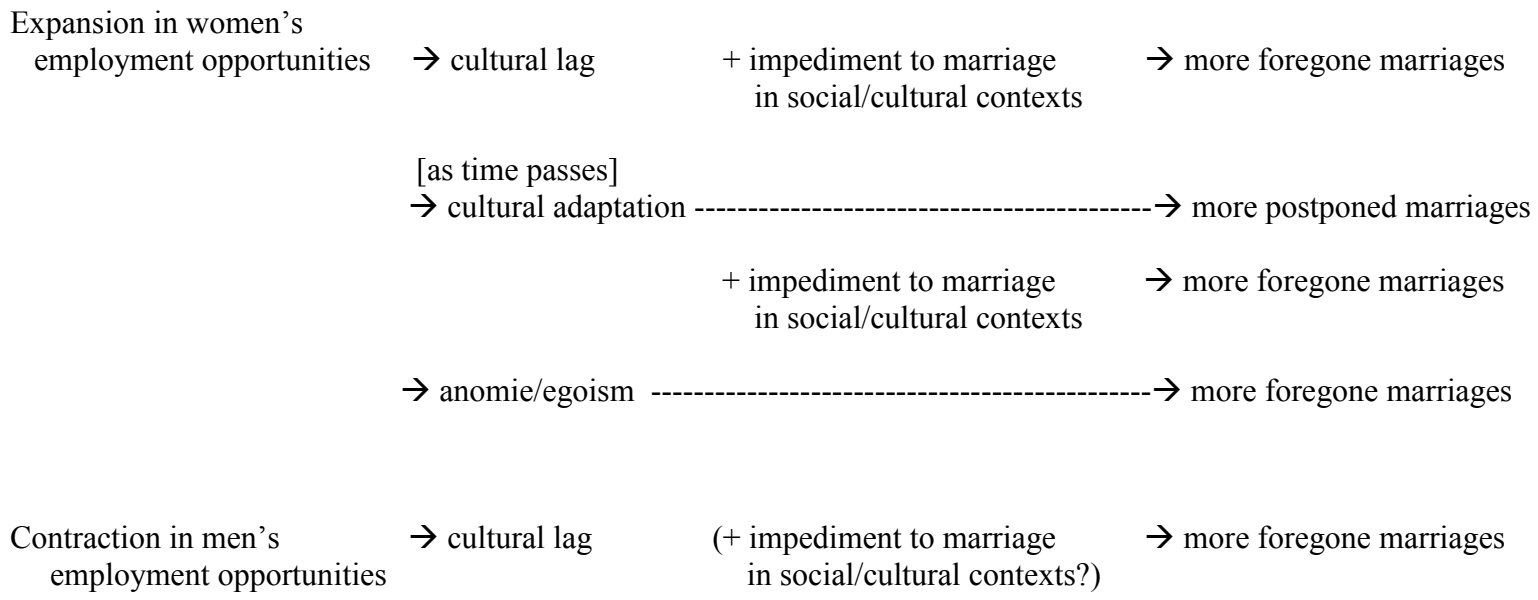
Another possible scenario is that different circumstances of the recession cohort may pose impediments to marriage (despite women's greater eagerness to marry). Declined economic prospects of young men and more acceptance of cohabitation may provide little incentive for men to marry. This cohort of women (and men) may also suffer from an absence of dating culture like the boom cohort. Many recession cohort women may drift into singlehood. See Figure 9-1 for a summary of the linkages among these variables.

Figure 9-1. Cultural and Social Contexts and Potential Linkage to Increased Singlehood



As discussed above (and summarized in Figure 9-1), the important explanatory variables are economic changes that significantly and rapidly alter young people's employment opportunities; existing gender culture that idealizes gendered division of labor (i.e., male breadwinning role and female homemaker role); the lag, adaptation, and erosion of this culture; and presence of social/cultural contexts that impede marriage (e.g., patriarchal marriages, absence of dating culture, etc.). In Figure 9-2, I present the linkage among these variables in more general terms, which should help to construct theoretical statements.

Figure 9-2. Theoretical Linkage among Variables that Lead to Foregone or Postponed Marriage



In societies or social groups in which women's employment opportunities are limited and the traditional gender role division is expected, sudden expansion in the former leads to cultural lag. When the cultural lag is combined with social/cultural contexts that create impediments to marriage, many women drift into singlehood and thus, forego marriage. As time passes, gender culture either adapts to expanded opportunities for women or erodes and causes anomie and/or egoism. In the case of adaptation, chances for women to marry depend on the existence of impediments to marriage. If there are no impediments, women marry at older ages, at higher rates (than the cohort of cultural lag). Increased singlehood among women in their 20s will be compensated for by increased marriage among those in their 30s. If there are impediments to marriage, however, many women drift into singlehood, hence the continuously large number of foregone marriages. This outcome is also predicted if culture erodes (i.e., anomie and egoism) instead of adapting.

Although Figure 9-2 presents only the state of cultural lag as a response to changes in men's material conditions (i.e., employment opportunities), the pattern following this change is expected to be the same as is the case for women. In other words, men drift into singlehood as they suffer from cultural lag and impediments to marriage, but gender culture eventually adapts or erodes, and this leads to either increased or decreased marriage in future years.

Applicability of this theory to other societies

Walker and Cohen (1995) argue that no theory applies universally and recommend that sociologists limit and specify the scope of theories they formulate.

The scope of my theory is limited to societies that meet the following two conditions: 1) the society is undergoing, or has undergone, sudden changes in employment opportunities for unmarried women and/or men, and 2) the society has or had culture that defines traditional gender roles (i.e., male breadwinner and female homemaker) as ideal. "Society" need not refer to a nation-state, but can be social groups delineated by class, race and ethnicity, geographic boundaries, etc. For instance, in a particular nation-state, changes in women's employment opportunities and the traditional gender role ideology may be relevant only to urban, middle-class, white women. In such a case, this theory explains the changes in marital behavior among this particular group of women.

This theory could be tested using data from all Western, industrialized nations (Northern, Western, and Southern Europe, North America, and Oceania), because they have gone through changes in employment opportunities while holding traditional gender role ideology. What Tilly (1984) calls *individualizing* comparison can be made by comparing the phenomenon of increased singlehood of Japan to that of another society, thus allowing us to elucidate the peculiarities of these societies. We can also make *universalizing* and *variation-finding* comparisons (Tilly 1984), by which we compare every possible case of the same phenomenon (i.e., increased singlehood) to seek either a common rule (i.e., universalizing) or to establish patterns of variations (i.e., variation-finding). Social and cultural contexts that posed impediments to marriage in Japan may be peculiar to certain historical periods of Japanese society. It is important to compare the Japanese patterns to other societies with different historical circumstances, and test the breadth of my theory's applicability. For cases where the

theory does not apply, we should assess what other variables are relevant to societies that are compared. In doing so, I hope that we will build a better theory that predicts (and prevents) undesirable life circumstances caused by structural changes and lagged culture.

In particular, Germany, Italy, and Spain should present excellent cases for individualizing comparison because they underwent demographic changes similar to Japan (i.e., rapid declines in marriage and fertility rates) at about the same time (Blossfeld 1995; Cherlin 2004; Kiernan 2000, 2004; Kohler, Billari, and Ortage 2002; Rossi 1997; Tsuya and Mason 1995). These societies define declining fertility as a major social problem, and application of this theory may be helpful in elucidating cause. For other Western societies, the theory might explain patterns observed for a specific group of women in the past. For instance, in her study of American white female corporate executives, Mary Blair-Loy (2003) found a much larger proportion of never-married or childless married women among her interviewees of the older cohort (born in the World War II era) than those of the two younger cohorts (born between 1947 and 1958). The older cohort of women in her study were similar to the boom cohort of Japanese women in that both grew up in an era of traditional gender ideology and believed in the incompatibility of paid work and women's marital role. Cultural lag may explain why American female executives of the older cohort forewent marriage or parenthood in order to climb the corporate ladder. The theory may not apply to other groups in American society of the same historical period (e.g., African American women, working-class women, etc.). But by limiting the scope to specific groups from specific time periods – groups that held the traditional gender ideology but experienced

rapid changes in employment opportunities – the theory can be applied to a wide range of groups and societies.

This theory should also be tested using cases from newly-developing regions such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and China. South Korea is similar to Japan in its economic and cultural contexts (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004) and, therefore, presents an important case to study. It is possible that empirical testing would be premature for other countries, however. In a book edited by Ochiai and Molony, Ochiai (2008) concludes, based on case studies conducted by several researchers in this book, that idealization of the housewife role only recently emerged in China, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. What we call the traditional gender ideology was absent in the traditional culture of Thailand, and married women's labor force participation has been high in Singapore, Thailand, and communist China (Ochiai et al. 2008). These societies may be currently in, or moving toward, a stage similar to Japan in the 1960s or the United States in the 1950s, or may be taking different paths. Because demographic transition is faster in these newly developing countries (Weinstein 2005), it would be interesting to examine whether these societies follow the same trajectory as Japan and Western industrialized nations (assuming my theory applies to all). Individuals in newly-developing countries are also more exposed to cultures beyond national boundaries in our increasingly globalizing world (Ochiai 2008). Diffusion of culture – such as egalitarianism – is likely to affect marital behavior in these societies and, therefore, they may take a different path from those that industrialized earlier.

Contributions of this study

This study contributes in various ways. First, it provides a better understanding of the phenomenon of increased singlehood in Japan, and this contributes to construction of a better theory of non-marriage. Close examination of the Japanese case (i.e., a non-Western case) brings to light and addresses weaknesses in existing sociological theories that assume ubiquitous patterns in all industrial societies and yet are based only on observations of several Western societies. Guided by the life course perspective, this study shows that increased singlehood is *not* a single phenomenon with the same causal factor(s) wherever it is found. Social context changes as culture lags, adapts, and erodes, and cultural contexts specific to a given society can create impediments to marriage for certain cohorts and not others. This theory should be more applicable to a wide range of societies, though it limits its scope to societies with changing employment opportunities and traditional gender role ideology.

Most existing sociological theories – economic or cultural – tend to assume that declined marriage (and fertility) rates reflect something "progressive," such as economic advancement of women and a cultural shift towards individualization and egalitarianism. This study, however, shows that increased singlehood among Japanese women reflects the persistent gender inequality of their society. My research underscores the importance of gender inequality, not equality, for demographic changes in industrial societies. Industrialization should not be equated with modernity (or post-modernity), and studies of non-Western societies are important to a sociological understanding of modernity and the effects of industrialization.

This research uncovered many issues for women in Japan across marital statuses. The Feminine Mystique-like lives of housewives are alive and well in Japan. In spite of the personal suffering associated with this role or a hesitance to take it on, most of my interviewees did not question traditional gender ideology. Instead, they tended to view themselves as "unfeminine" if they could not fulfill this role: the inadequacy was perceived to be in themselves, not in society's beliefs. I felt that social awareness of gender inequality was weak among women in Japan. Similar observations were made in studies by other qualitative researchers. Nemoto (2008) found that single women in professional occupations thought they were "unfeminine." In her study of "internationalist" Japanese women (i.e., single women who had contact with the West through study abroad, etc.), Kelsky (2001) observed that these women never challenged the traditional gender ideology, but only resisted it by personally refusing to take the expected role (e.g., by going abroad without marrying). Despite its affluence, Japanese society remains far behind other industrial societies in achievement of gender equality.

This study revealed that women were sexually repressed and exploited. Married women were left in sexually and romantically repressed marriages and never-married women were exploited sexually by married men. Japan's long historical tradition of a sexual double standard (Lebra 1984) continues to affect the lives of many women. Long work hours required from men are likely to be exacerbating this sexist culture. It legitimates husbands' absence from home and provides opportunities for them to cheat after work.

In her discussion of the power of cultural schemas in shaping people's actions, Mary Blair-Loy points out that "people are able to seriously imagine an alternative … only if they come into contact with alternative cultural models" (2003:116). My study illustrates the inability to imagine alternatives among the boom cohort women, who knew almost no other women who happily balanced marriage and work, and/or observed women having happy marriages. Women of the recession cohort, on the other hand, were in better positions. They possessed cultural resources because happy marriages and work-family balance were more visible to them. They were able to imagine alternative or flexible forms of marriage that meshed better with their desire for employment after marriage. Most women of the recession cohort were, however, transitional at most in their views toward role allocation in marriage. By persistently equating the homemaking role with womanhood and/or by doing (or planning to do) gender through domestic tasks, these women were willing to take both provider and homemaking roles without expecting men to share equally in household tasks. This predicts the coming of recession cohort women's suffering from the "second shift" (Hochschild 1989).

This research also unveiled the Japanese image of masculinity. Middle-class men in white-collar occupations were undoubtedly considered ideal marital partners by women of the boom cohort. Dasgupta (2003) discussed that hegemonic masculinity in Japan takes the form of "corporate warriors" who work for large corporations and dedicate their lives to their company. Boom cohort women's preference supports this notion. For the recession cohort, however, masculinity was not necessarily associated with occupation or ability to provide. Some women explicitly told me that they did not

think of men with low or no income as "non-masculine." Yet men seem expected to be superior to women in other areas. They should make important decisions and present a dignified existence to children. Men who cannot make decisions or lead women were disparaged by women as "feminine." Some women preferred gender inequality because under such conditions they need not make decisions. Gender equality is, indeed, anomic. There are few cultural scripts for egalitarian relationships, and couples must negotiate and make decisions constantly. This is similar to what Giddens (1991) discusses in terms of "pure relationships." Perhaps Japanese intimate relationships are moving in this direction.

My research findings point to the problematic practices of Japanese capitalists and their relation to increased singlehood. Many Japanese workers work long hours (in violation of labor laws) and the detrimental effects of this on workers' physical and mental health, and family life, are well-documented by other sociologists (e.g., Boling 2008; Sugimoto 2003). The current study shows that men's long work hours not only leave wives in lonely marriages, but deprive single men and women of dating opportunities while providing married men chances to engage in extramarital affairs. In other words, Japanese corporate practices are indirectly creating a virtual polygyny (for married men) similar to the situation for the warrior class of feudal Japan, in which samurai were allowed to have official concubines in addition to a legal wife.

Despite their preference for "corporate warriors" as marital partners, some boom cohort interviewees rejected such men when they met them through *miai*. A common reason for this rejection was that the men were judged to be "boring" because they were "able to talk only about their jobs." They were not cultured enough, compared to

women, who had multiple dimensions to their lives through cultural activities, gourmet eating, traveling abroad, etc. These "boring," single-dimensional men were viewed as "non-masculine" due to their location, compared to women, in the lower ranks of cultural fluency. But how are these corporate men supposed to meet women's expectations when they have to devote most of their waking time to work? By depriving people of free, personal time, Japan's corporate system shapes men into single-dimensional "warriors," and not culturally-attuned, sophisticated gentlemen. Further, such single-minded devotion to companies required from corporate male workers is becoming less popular among young men (Sugimoto 2003). It is possible that many young men are underemployed due to their aversion to corporate work styles, not just because of the economic recession. All of these findings show how the capitalist pursuit of profit tramples intimate human relationships.

This study has many policy implications. Declined fertility rates are a concern of the Japanese government, and this study elucidates the causes of increased singlehood – which accounts for most of the fertility decline. Improvement in employment conditions of young men and women is likely to result in higher marriage rates and thus, higher fertility rates. As discussed above, problematic corporate practices need to be viewed in a critical light. The state needs to strictly limit work hours and enforce violation of this policy. The government and other social organizations can also help men and women meet each other. For instance, the government of Singapore organizes large balls for single men and women; this practice is found to be successful in match-making (Kukimoto 2005). When I asked a few

interviewees whether they would be interested in such opportunities, they thought these arrangements were a good idea.

I would like to stress that policy makers should not focus only on fertility issues in relation to the phenomenon of increased singlehood. Most boom cohort single women were concerned and distressed about their futures. Their concerns were in regards to economic insecurity (e.g., their small income and/or insecurity after the death of parents), the burden of caring for old parents, and unavailability of family members who would help them (in the future) when they get old, sick, and die. Many expressed loneliness and depression because they were single. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Japanese government not only neglected the issues of these women, but was sometimes even punitive towards them. As boom cohort women pass reproductive age, I am afraid that the government might become even more neglectful. For the sake of human well-being, single women's issues must be taken more seriously, and the women themselves must be seen realistically (as opposed to simplistically labeling single women "selfish").

A few comments should be made on the research methods I employed. First, qualitative research uncovered multiple causal factors, the combination of which affected women's life courses. As discussed by Ragin (1987), qualitative research excels in elucidating complex causal associations. This research confirms the benefits of rich data that can be collected only through qualitative methods. Some sociologists continue to reject qualitative research methods as a valid methodology and determine their findings not generalizable. I believe my study exhibits the power of qualitative research, and hope this contributes to the eradication of such unproductive prejudice.

From a feminist standpoint, I attempted to empower women by allowing them to voice their own views, opinions, concerns, etc. It is difficult to assess whether or not I accomplished this goal. All the interviewees seem to have enjoyed the interviews. Many expressed that the interview was like counseling, helping them sort out their thoughts and feelings. I am confident that most, if not all, interviewees benefited from the interviews in one way or another, but I do not know whether my research helped them to realize and/or overcome the injustice of gender inequality. Through dissemination of my findings, I hope to contribute to the improvement of women's (as well as men's) conditions by increasing social recognition of the issues brought about in this research.

Some limitations of this study need to be addressed. Although some of the interviewees in the qualitative portion of research came originally from rural regions, all the interviewees resided in the Greater Tokyo Area, at least during young adulthood. Employment opportunities for women are likely to be greater in urban areas, and pressure to marry is weaker, compared to rural regions. Experiences of single women in rural regions may differ from those reported in this study. Studies on rural Japanese women are desired to help refine my theory.

Certain attributes of women are underrepresented in the interview samples: married, employed mothers with young children, women with high school education, and married women from the recession cohort. Only one woman, Tamami, fits the first group. It is unfortunate that I received no referral to employed mothers other than her. The fact that I received no referral, however, shows how busy these having-it-all women might be – as well as how distant they might become from friends who are

single or housewives. The small representation of women with high school education may not affect my research findings because I did not observe any discerning patterns based on education or other measurements of socioeconomic class (e.g., parents' occupations). This is probably because Japan is highly homogeneous in gender culture (such as expected female life course) across social class (Brinton 1993). In applying my theory to other societies, however, it is important to take heterogeneity of class (as well as race and ethnicity) into consideration.

I had only four married interviewees in the recession cohort and three of them were newly married with no children. Considering the average age of first marriage (27.8 for women in 2005), it is likely that married women with children from this cohort were raising young children, distancing them socially from single women – whom I tended to rely on for referrals. Thus, underrepresentation of recession cohort women who had been married several years may have affected findings, and readers should be aware of this limitation.

As discussed earlier, survey questions used in the quantitative research may not be good measurements of individuals' views of gender roles. Because the Japanese are conscious of socially appropriate behaviors (Condon 1984; Lebra 1976), it is possible that they give "ideals of society" as answers to these questions. Better measurements, including better wording of survey questions, are needed for future research.

The contributions made by this research, however, outweigh the limitations mentioned above. This study exemplifies the importance of a sociological perspective, or the "sociological imagination" (Mills 1959), in understanding human behaviors and social phenomena. Japanese women are not staying single to pursue selfish,

materialistic goals due to personal flaws, as is often reflected in portrayals of single women by the popular media, comments by policy makers, and even studies by some sociologists (e.g., Yamada 1999). These women are not parasites or losers. They are victims of gender inequality and lagged culture.

Overarching contributions of this study

This research reveals that changing economic and cultural contexts have had profound impacts on young women's lives in Japan. Gender culture lagged behind the changes in women's employment opportunities. Combined with other social and cultural aspects that posed impediments to marriage, many women who spent their young adulthood during Japan's economic boom forewent marriage. Gender culture appears to be partly adapting and eroding for the subsequent cohort of women, which may result in a higher rate of marriage among them, or continuing low rates of marriage. Poor economic prospects among young men under the current and long-lasing economic recession also appear to have negative effects on women's chances to marry. This study underscores the importance of sociological and historical thinking in understanding the reasons for increased singlehood. As social and historical contexts change, causes of non-marriage also change.

This study not only contributes to a better theorizing of the phenomenon of declined marriage in the industrial world, but provides support for past research findings regarding gender inequality in Japanese society and identifies several new issues related to corporate practices and inequality. These findings have the potential to inform policy that could be applied to Japan's population problem and improve the

lives of individuals and families. Finally, by allowing these women's voices to be heard, and by providing sociological explanations of the phenomenon of increased singlehood (in opposition to explanations that blame the victims), this study seeks to empower women in Japan. It is my hope that this theory can be applied to other societies, contributing to the empowerment of women in other parts of the world who may be living in social contexts similar to their Japanese counterparts.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE & STUDY PARTICIPANTS

INTERVIEW GUIDE
(in English Translation)

- Which part of Japan are you originally from?
- How old are you?
- What is the highest level of education you have attained? What year did you graduate?
- Do you have siblings? Are they married?
- What is your occupation? How many years have you been in your present job? Have you taken any (other) jobs in the past?
- What is your income?
- [To married women] What year did you marry? (Or how many years have you been married?) Do you have children? How old are they?
- Do you live with your parents, siblings, partner, spouse, in-law parents, children, or by yourself?
- Tell me about the job(s) you have ever taken. How did you like your job(s)? Why? Please describe your job(s). Have you ever faced difficulties finding a job? How long are you planning to stay in your current job? [if unemployed] Are you planning to work? When?
- Tell me about other workers at your workplace(s). Were there many single women in your first workplace? How about single men? Were there any single female workers who were much older than you? What did you think of these women? How did other people at work view/treat these women?
- Tell me about your parents and siblings. Are they married? Was your mother employed when you were growing up? What was her occupation? What did you think about your mother's employment status? What is/was your father's occupation? Did he help around the house when you were growing up? What do/did you think of your parents' and siblings' marriages?
- Tell me about your residence (current or before marriage).
  [if living alone] How long have you been living on your own? Do you own or rent your place? What are the benefits and costs of living alone?
  [if living with parents/siblings] How would you describe your relationships with your parents/siblings? Do you do chores? What/how often? Do you pay some money to your parents? Do your parents tell you that you need to move out? Do you plan to move out? When/why/how?
  [if living with a partner] How long have you been living with him/her? Do you plan to/did you marry your cohabiting partner? Why/why not?
- Tell me about your current and past relationships. How many romantic relationships have you had in your life? How long did each relationship last? How old are/were they? Where and how did you meet them? Did/do you think of marriage with any one of them? What kinds of persons are they? Were they unmarried or married? How long did you date/live with each of them? [to married women] When did you start thinking about marriage to your husband?

What did you like about him? Is he the eldest son? How is the relationship between him and his parents?

- Have you ever had *miai*? What did you think of your *miai* partners? Why did you (not) consider them as possible future husband? Why have you never used this system?
- [After explaining different life courses for women: housewife; returning to work full-time or part-time after staying home for a while; having it all; DINKS; singlehood living alone; singlehood living with someone; breadwinning with a house-husband, unwed motherhood, and others] What type of life course do you think, or did you think in the past, is/was ideal? Why? What life course do you expect to have in your real life? Can you think of any women you look up to as role models? If so, what are/were they like? Why do you think other life courses are not ideal? If you could go back in time to when you were 20 years old, would you choose a life course different from the current one? How and why?
- Tell me what you think about marriage age. Have you ever thought that you want to, or should, marry by a certain age? How old? When did you think so? Why? Do you think there is such a thing as *tekireiki* (appropriate ages to marry)? Why/why not? Was there some time in your life when you began to think about marriage seriously? Has anyone ever said to you that you need to marry soon? Who were they and what did they say? How did you feel about it? Have you ever felt pressure to marry? How old were you?
- Would you like to have (more) children? Do you think you have to be married before having children?
- What are the merits of marriage? Merits of singlehood?
- Do/did you want to marry? Why/why not?
- [if she want(ed) to marry] Are there any characteristics of men you think are important in a marital partner? [To probe] How about men's level of education, income, occupation, attractiveness, height, weight, personality traits, hobbies, views regarding gender roles in marriage, attitudes towards women, region of origin, nationality, family composition (e.g., eldest son), relationship with their mother? Any other things that are, or used to be, important to you?
- What do you expect from your (future) husband? How should a husband be? How about a wife?
- In your (future) marriage, who do you expect should take on the following tasks: cooking, laundry, cleaning, grocery shopping, discipline of children, physical care of young children, playing with children, care of elderly parents, household budgeting, decision-making on important family matters such as buying a house, education of children.
- How do you spend your free time, like weekends and after work hours?
- Tell me about your friends. How many friends do you regularly meet or talk with? Are they married or single? Do they have children? Are they male or female? What do you do with them?
- What do you think of your friends' marriages or your own marriage?
- [to married women] Do you have any complaints about your marriage?

- People often call unmarried women “Parasite Singles” or “Loser Dogs.” How do you feel about such labels?
- Tell me about your future. What kind of life do you think you might be having 10, 20 years from now? Do you have any concerns regarding your current circumstances or your future? Feel free to talk about any concerns you wish to discuss. [to unmarried women] Do you ever feel you may remain single for life? Do you ever feel glad that you did not marry? Why? [to married women] When do you feel glad that you’re married? Do you ever regret that you married?
- [to the recession cohort] Do you know any older women who never married? What do you think about them?
- [to unmarried women] Do you think that you have certain traits undesirable to a potential (male) marital partner? These do not need to be shortcomings. For instance, very smart or very tall women may not be taken well by some men. Please tell me if you feel you have any traits like that.
- [to married women] Do you know any single men around? Do you have any ideas as to why they remain single?
- [to the boom cohort] Do you have any advice to younger, never-married women?
- Do you have anything you wish to discuss with me?

At the end of interview:

- This is all I would like to ask you in this interview. Do you have anything you wish to discuss, or want to ask me? Please feel free to tell me anything you would like.
- This research is to identify why more Japanese women are remaining single. Can you refer me to a few women who are never-married and might be interested in participating in this research?
- May I contact you if I would like to ask you more questions later? What is the best way to contact you?

INTERVIEW GUIDE
(in Original Language)

- 出身はどちらですか？
- 失礼ですがお年は？
- 最終学歴を教えてください。何年に卒業しましたか？
- ご兄弟はいらっしゃいますか？結婚されてますか？
- 職業は？今の仕事には何年勤めていますか？他に勤めたこともありますか？
- 収入はどれくらいですか？
- [既婚者のみ] 結婚したのは何年ですか？もしくは結婚して何年になるか教えてください。お子さんはいますか？何歳ですか？
- 一人暮らし・親と同居など、現在のお住まいについて教えてください。
- 今までのお仕事について話してください。どんな仕事ですか？仕事は好きですか？どうしてですか？今の仕事にはこの先どれぐらい勤め続ける予定ですか？[無職の場合] この先仕事する予定ですか？いつごろ？
- はじめての仕事の職場の様子をお話してください。他に独身女性はたくさんいましたか？独身男性は？自分より年上の独身女性はいましたか？その人のことをどう思いましたか？ほかの人からはどう見られたり扱われたりしていましたか？
- ご両親やご兄弟のことをお話してください。ご両親は結婚されていますか？お母様は子供のころお仕事していましたか？どんなお仕事ですか？お母様が仕事をしている・していないことをどう思いましたか？お父様のお仕事はなんですか？お父様は子供のころ家事をしましたか？そのことをどう思いましたか？ご両親の結婚をどう思いますか？
- （現在もしくは結婚前の）お住まいの様子をお話してください。
  [一人暮らしの場合] 一人暮らし歴はどれぐらいですか？賃貸ですか、持ち家ですか？一人暮らしのメリットとデメリットはなんですか？
  [親・兄弟と同居の場合] ご両親・ご兄弟との仲はどうですか？家事の手伝いはしますか？どれぐらい？何を？お金を家にいれています？親から早く家を出てほしいと言われることはありますか？出る予定はありますか？いつごろ？なぜ？どのように？
  [同棲の場合]同棲歴はどれぐらいですか？その人と結婚する予定ですか？なぜ？
- 交際相手のことをお話してください。これまで何人ぐらいの人とつきあいましたか？どれぐらいの期間付き合いつづけましたか？何歳の人です・でしたか？どこでどのように知り合ったのですか？つきあった人中で結婚を真剣に考えた人はいますか？どんな人です・でしたか？その人は独身男性ですか？その人とはどれぐらいつきあいましたか？[既婚者のみ] 今のご主人と結婚を考えはじめたのはいつごろでしたか？どうし

てその人と結婚したいと思ったのですか？ご主人は長男ですか？ご主人とお母様の仲はどうですか？

- お見合いしたことはありますか？お見合い相手のことをどう思いましたか？なぜその人と結婚に至らなかったのですか？なぜお見合いしたことがないのですか？
- [理想のライフコースの説明：専業主婦・パートタイム再就職・フルタイム再就職・両立・ＤＩＮＫＳ・独身一人暮らし・独身誰かと同居・専業主夫・未婚の母・その他]　どのライフコースが理想ですか？なぜ？昔からこれが理想でしたか？現実にどのライフコースをたどる気がしますか？なぜ？理想の生き方をしたモデルになる女性がいますか？どんな人ですか？もし 20 歳に戻れるとしたら今と同じライフコースをたどりますか？それともどこか替えたいですか？　どう替えたいですか？なぜ？
- 結婚する年についてお話してください。何歳までに結婚したいとかするべきとか思ったことはありますか？それは何歳ですか？何歳のころそう思ったのですか？どうして？適齢期というのはあると思いますか？どうして？結婚を真剣に考え始めた時期というのはありましたか？何歳のころですか？回りの人から早く結婚したほうがいいといわれたことはありますか？いつごろ誰からどんなことを言われたのですか？そのときどんな気持ちがしましたか？結婚を焦ったことはありますか？何歳のころですか？
- 将来子供は（もっと）欲しいですか？子供を産むには結婚していないといけないと思いますか？
- 結婚のメリットはなんですか？独身のメリットはなんですか？
- 結婚したい・したかったですか？なぜですか？
- [結婚願望がある・あった場合のみ] 結婚相手となる男性にこだわる条件はありますか？男性の学歴・収入・職業（ブルーカラーの人は？農業は？自営は？フリーターは？）・外見・身長・体重・性格・趣味・結婚してからの男女の役割観・女性への接し方・出身地（都会・田舎）・国籍・家族構成（長男や親と同居になる人など）・母親との仲にこだわりは？他にこだわる条件は？以前こだわった条件が今はこだわらないことは？その逆は？
- 夫に何を期待しますか？夫と妻はどうあるべきだと思いますか？
- 妻と夫、どちらが以下の役割を分担するべきだと思いますか？料理・洗濯・掃除・買い物・子供のしつけ・子供の世話・子供と遊ぶ・親の世話・家族に関する大きな決断（家の購入・子供の教育など）。
- 休日やアフター５はどのように過ごしますか？
- 友人づきあいについてお話してください。日頃つきあいがある友達は何人ぐらいいますか？その友達は結婚してますか？独身ですか？お子さんはいますか？男性ですか女性ですか？友達と会ってどんなことをしますか？

- 友達の結婚をどう思いますか？
- [既婚者のみ] なにか結婚生活に不満はありますか？
- 独身女性をパラサイトシングル・負け犬と呼んだりしますが、それについてどう感じますか？
- 将来についてお聞きします。10年・20年後どんな生活をしていると思いますか？将来について不安はありますか？どんなことでもお話しください。[未婚者のみ] 一生独身かもしれないと思うことはありますか？結婚しなくてよかったと思うことはありますか？どんなときですか？どうしてですか？ [既婚者のみ] どんなとき結婚してよかったと感じますか？結婚しなければよかったと思うことはありますか？
- [不況コーホートのみ] 身近にずっと年上の未婚女性はいますか？その人のことをどう思いますか？
- [未婚女性のみ] 自分がこうだから男性から結婚を望まれないのだ、と思うことはありますか？必ずしも欠点というわけではありません。たとえば頭がよすぎるとか背が高すぎるとかで女性が敬遠されることがありますね？そういうことを含めて何かあったらお話してください。
- [既婚者のみ] 独身女性・男性を身近に知っていますか？なぜその人たちは独身なんだと思いますか？
- [好況コーホートのみ] 若い未婚女性に何かアドバイスがあったら教えてください。
- なにか他に話したいこと、付け加えたいことなどありますか？遠慮なく何でも言ってください。

At the end of interview:

- わたしがうかがいたいことは以上です。なにかお話したいこと、質問などありますか？遠慮なくなんでも言ってください。
- この研究はなぜ日本で未婚女性が増えたのかを調べるためのものでした。インタビューに協力してくれる人をまだ探しているのですが、誰か紹介してもらえませんか？
- 後で追って質問が出た場合連絡してもいいですか？どんな方法で連絡するのがいいですか？

Table A-1. Interview participants

Name*	Age	Marital status**	Education	Occupation	Income	Residence***	Relationships***
Izumi	46	Never-married	College	Marketing researcher	>$70,000	alone (owning)	no
Eri	46	Married (25)	College	Secretary (part-time)	<$20,000		
Kazuko	45	Never-married	M.A.	Artist/Instructor	"very small"	w/parents	no
Sumire	45	Never-married	M.S.	Pharmacist	$50,000	w/parents, sister	no
Kozue	45	Never-married	2 year college	Clerical worker	$60-70,000	alone (renting)	yes (two men)
Rumi	45	Never-married	2 year college	Advertising	>$70,000	alone (owning)	No
Saori	45	Never-married	Vocational	Clerical worker	"very small"	w/father	No
Tamami	45	Married (25)	College	Social worker (part-time)	$20-25,000		
Sonoko	45	Married (23)	2 year college	Store clerk (part-time)	<$20,000		
Chie	45	Married (24)	High school	Clerical worker (part-time)	<$20,000		
Seiko	43	Never-married	M.A.	Accountant	>$70,000	alone (renting)	yes (long distance)
Tsuneko	43	Never-married	College	Marketing consultant	$50-60,000	alone (renting)	No
Natsumi	43	Never-married	College	Illustrator (freelance)	$40-50,000	alone (renting)	No
Teruko	41	Never-married	College	Graphic designer (freelance)	Declined	alone (renting)	yes (married man)
Nozomi	40	Married (29)	Vocational	Housewife	N.A.		
Tomomi	39	Never-married	Vocational	Social worker	$30-35,000	w/parents,brother,niece	No
Harumi	39	Married (31)	High school	Housewife	N.A.		
Fujiko	38	Married (27)	College	Housewife	N.A.		
Mari	38	Married (29)	2 year college	Housewife	N.A.		
Midori	36	Never-married	College	Advertising	$35-40,000	w/male partner	yes (cohabiting)
Hitomi	36	Never-married	College	Marketing consultant	$50,000	alone (renting)	No
Yoko	36	Never-married	Vocational	Section manager	$55,000	alone (renting)	Yes
Kei	35	Never-married	Vocational	Clerical worker	$25-30,000	w/parents	No
Shizuka	34	Never-married	Vocational	Clerical worker	$25-30,000	w/parents	No
Akane	34	Married (33)	College	Housewife	N.A.		

Honoka	32	Never-married	Vocational	Marketing consultant	$55,000	alone (renting)	No
Mutsumi	32	Never-married	Vocational	Clerical worker (temp)	$30-35,000	w/parents	Yes
Yuri	32	Never-married	High school	Clerical worker	$35-40,000	w/parents	yes (engaged)
Megumi	31	Never-married	College	Clerical worker	$40-45,000	alone (renting)	No
Yayoi	31	Never-married	College	Clerical worker (temp)	$20-25,000	w/mother	No
Momoe	30	Never-married	College	Clerical worker	$40,000	w/parents	No
Ran	29	Never-married	M.D.	Medical researcher	$40,000	alone (renting)	yes (engaged)
Shoko	29	Never-married	2 year college	Homecare worker	$20-25,000	w/parents	Yes
Rika	29	Married (24)	2 year college	Dental assistant (part-time)	<$10,000		
Kyoko	29	Married (28)	Vocational	Cook	$20-30,000		
Junko	27	Never-married	M.A.	Secretary	$30,000	w/roommate	Yes
Ryoko	26	Never-married	College	Unemployed	N.A.	w/male partner	yes (cohabiting)
Maya	26	Never-married	College	Unemployed	N.A.	w/female partner	yes (cohabiting)
Yuki	26	Never-married	College	Receptionist (part-time)	<$10,000	w/male partner	yes (cohabiting)
Kimi	25	Married (25)	College	Bank teller	$35-40,000		

*All the names are pseudonyms.

**The number in parentheses indicates age at marriage.

***The information is provided only for never-married women. All the never-married women who were sharing their residence with their partners were renting apartments. For those who were living with their parent(s), their residence was owned by the parent(s), except for Saori who co-owned her condominium with her father.