# Life Choices: University-Educated Mothers

# in a Japanese Suburb

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## Chapter 5 Mother-Rearing

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# Abstract

This thesis addresses how Japanese university-educated mothers in a suburban context make the most of their lives. The chief focus is a group of women who have chosen not to pursue a career outside the home. The expansion of numbers of university-educated women in post-war Japan has not made a great impact on the pattern of women's labour force participation as a whole. The majority of university graduate women enter employment immediately after graduation, but once they leave the workplace, especially on child-birth, they tend not to return to work afterwards, while women from a lower educational background are more likely to do so after their children grow up.

I attempt to show how women's and mothers' multiple roles in both the public and the domestic spheres, are related to an exclusion of university-educated mothers from working outside the home. Firstly, university-educated women have received contradictory messages from society. Although university education is regarded as a key to access a privileged social position and professional success, educators have not necessarily encouraged female students to pursue a long-term career. Rather, for women, they have stressed developing their 'special talent', i.e. motherhood. Moreover, the field of employment has not been in favour of hiring university graduate women. In many Japanese firms, university graduate men are placed on a managerial track and women are automatically classified in a group of assistant workers. University graduate women who pursue a managerial career are therefore in an anomalous position. Secondly, mothers are treated in the same way in society irrespective of educational attainments. University-educated mothers have less interest in working outside again, because they well know the fact that almost all the paid work available to mothers is so-called 'housewife's part-time work', which does not require any special skills or abilities. In addition, socialisation of compliant mothers is one of the main aims of community activities organised by local government.

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that university-educated mothers in contemporary Japan are simply tied down to mothering duties at home. As the term 'professional housewife' shows, Japanese housewives were granted relatively high status as a manager of the household in the domestic sphere. However, university-educated mothers are not attracted to the status of 'perfect' housewife any more. Rather, they are expanding their field of activities into a public sphere named 'community society' through mothers' networks. They want to have something more meaningful to help them feel fulfilled than being simply engaged in mothering or unskilled labour. In the community, they take part in various activities, e.g. a mother-child group to change the world around them in a better way for children; or in a study group to broaden their horizons. Instead of full-time economic activities, they are seeking for alternative means for self-development in the public sphere.

# Note

1. Definition of 'university-educated women' in this study

In this thesis, I define 'university-educated mothers (or women)' as those who were students of four-year universities. I also use 'university graduate women' meaning women with a university degree. When it comes to 'higher education', generally in Japan, not only four-year universities but also two-year junior colleges are classified in the category of 'higher educational institutions' *(k6t6 kyoiku kikan).* Therefore, here I use the terms 'highly educated mothers (or women)'either when graduates from two-year junior colleges are included, or when I refer to women who attended tertiary education before the end of the Second World War, because women could not access university-level education until the post-war educational reform took place.

However, I am not particularly concerned here with women from graduate school. Several mothers among my interviewees had got a masters degree, but here I limit the discussion to female graduates of the undergraduate-level. As regards the relationship between women with a master's degree or higher and employment, various problems are pointed out, for instance, higher educational institutions being reluctant to hire female researchers on a full-time basis, or female researchers are at a disadvantage in terms of promotion and access to research fund (Hara 1996). However, to follow up this particular matter would take us beyond the scope of this study.

2. Japanese names are written with the surname first.

3. Macrons are used for Japanese words except for particular names of persons and places.

# Acknowledgements

# Introduction

My female friends who graduated from university are still struggling to find a job while their male classmates have already received letters of acceptance from firms. In Japanese society, only women, even the highly educated, are forced to choose 'either home or work' or accept a 'double burden'. I suppose the strong idea of sexual division of labour is related to sexual discrimination generated in this society. In my country, Malaysia, it is taken for granted that a highly educated woman continues her work after marriage and giving birth. - A reader's letter from an overseas student (28) (Asahi Newspaper, *5* May 2000)

M-san (32) graduated from Keio University and obtained a position at Sony. When she was 28 years old, she quit work and went to the United States as the wife of a promising banker whose firm had required him to gain an MBA degree at the University of Pennsylvania. She became a full-time housewife *(sengyo shufu),* because she wanted to make a 'warm-hearted' *(atatakai)* home, but it did not take much time for her to realise that people in Philadelphia have different views. When her husband introduced her, as his wife, to American people, they asked her, 'so, what do *you* do?'. Many looked at her amazed and asked, 'did you come here without your own purpose? Just following your husband?'. At her husband's graduation party, her eyes were filled with tears. 'My husband got an MBA and will be promoted while I am being nothing. We used to be university classmates though ...' (Asahi Newspaper, 18 November 1998)

## Question

This thesis focuses on university-educated Japanese mothers, especially those who are without full-time paid work. The main question is why many Japanese mothers with a university degree stop pursuing a career after giving birth despite their higher educational attainments.

Generally, education is considered to be one of the important factors which facilitate more women participating in employment with better working conditions than in unskilled labour. A feminist anthropologist Moore states that 'Education is thought to have a positive effect on women's participation in the labour force because it improves employment opportunities for women' (1988:103). From this viewpoint, it would seem reasonable to assume that university-educated women would be motivated enough to engage in a paid job which makes the most of the knowledge and skills obtained through their studies. In other words, university education

could be expected to grant women a key to enter the world outside the home and gain access to professional success.

Like many girls growing up in the 1960s and 70s, I suppose, I had internalised a vague idea that a woman's place was in the home. As a primary school student, I shared the idea that a woman was supposed to stop work after marriage to serve her family. I was born and raised in Kanagawa Prefecture, a suburb of Tokyo. In my view, a woman's world was restricted to the home, neighbourhood, and their children's school. In a TV drama, a wife asked her husband for permission to go outside the women's world for a whole day or at night, and the only acceptable reason for her going out was to attend an alumni union. The women's world was a synonym for the mothers' world. A girl was raised to be a mother while a boy was raised to get a job which he would be fit for. When my class teacher asked us, 'what are you going to be when you grow up?', almost all girls in the class wrote that they wanted to be a nursery nurse or a kindergarten teacher. I now know that few of the girls could imagine that a woman would have a job which was not associated with a motherly role with its domestic and reproductive responsibilities.

Today many more women go to university in Japan than women of my mother's generation did. In 1955, when my mother was an 18 year-old, only 2.4% of girls (13.1% of boys) of the age group entered university, but the rate grew to 15.2% (boys: 33.4%) in 1990 and to 29.4% (boys: 46.5%) in 1999 (see Figure 0.1). Why do more women go on to university? Beauchamp states, 'Japan is an intensely education-oriented society', and graduation from a university, especially from a top-ranking or prestigious one, is a 'prerequisite to success in that society' (1998:234). In that sense, one might expect that Japanese women enter university in the hope, more or less, to obtain a successful professional career.

An important question I would like to investigate, therefore, is why so many university-educated mothers in Japan still leave the workplace on giving birth, and do not even return to work later on. Despite the great expansion of university education for women, why is the situation largely unchanged? Several studies show that university-educated women tend to have a stronger consciousness as an individual, compared with women from a lower academic background; for

instance, they are more aware of sex discrimination in society (Brinton 1993:144-45) and are more concerned with leading a lifestyle to satisfy their own desires rather than the interests of their husbands or family as a whole (Mifune 1996:141-46). In that case, are they satisfied with ending up 'just being housewives'? Japanese people frequently use a phrase *mottainai* when referring to people who quit something worth doing, or who do not make full use of their abilities or useful experiences. Why do many university-educated mothers not pursue a career: why do they do such a *mottainai* thing?

It is clear that the double burden of professional (public) and family (domestic) responsibilities, is a major obstacle for many mothers to career progress. However, is this the only reason explaining why they give up professional lives? Moreover, do they give up their career because they want to do so? Or, do any social constraints make them to choose that option against their own will? In addition, I intend to compare the experiences and opinions of university-educated mothers in different age groups to see the extent to which social attitudes have or have not changed in the last few decades, and also the extent to which women themselves have played a part in creating a social world which suits their tastes.

The weak relationship between university graduate women and employment

Government reports, such as the White Paper on the National Lifestyle Fiscal Year 1997 (EPA 1998) and the Actual Situation of Working Women Fiscal Year 1999 (MOL 2000), state that the relationship between university graduate women and employment is not noticeably strong as a whole in Japan. More correctly, the rate of female university graduates entering employment just after graduation is high, but once they leave the workplace, the rate of re-entry into the labour market is weak in comparison with women from a lower educational background (EPA 1998:121, MOL 2000:48-50). In 1999, the rate of women in the labour force among all women graduated from university or higher was 93.4% for the group aged 20-24, but 62.9 % for 40-44 age group (see Figure 0.2). This shift makes up the 'shape of a giraffe' (MOL 2000:49) while the rate of female high school leavers' labour participation makes the M-curve shape which shows that they tend to leave the workplace for child-rearing and to return to work afterwards. In addition, the 1997 National Lifestyle White Paper points out that the labour force participation

rate of university graduate women aged from 25-64 in Japan was lower than that of any Western counterparts: 60% in Japan in 1990, while it was 82% in the United States and 81% in both Germany and France in 1996 (EPA 1998:122). The 1997 National Lifestyle White Paper regards the present situation that many university graduate women do not have an opportunity to develop their professional ability as a great loss to Japanese society as a whole (ibid. 123-34).

What makes the relationship between university-educated women and professional opportunities so relatively weak? Both Japanese and overseas researchers cited multiple cultural and institutional factors to see the causes of perpetual constraints on university graduate women in social and employment participation. Many researchers point to the external constraints on university graduate women's serious long-range career planning. First of all, they all agree that Japanese firms were reluctant to hire women who have graduated from university, finding them 'over-qualified'. In addition, in firms whose employment practice gave priority to male university graduates, there were few chances for promotion left for women with or without a university degree (Shinotsuka 1995b:219). According the Ministry of Labour's survey in 1981, cited in Lam (1992a:5) and Tanaka and Nishimura (1986:215), only 9% of the firms hired university graduate women, 83% of them had positions that were not open to women, and 43% gave no promotion opportunity to women. The approval of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985 was expected to facilitate more women, those who were newly graduated from university in particular, to enter employment and to work on an equal basis with male workers. Even after that, however, limited opportunities for university graduate women in employment and in the attitudes expected by companies were still pointed out as institutional factors weakening a woman's career aspirations (Brinton 1993, Fujimura-Fanselow 1989, 1995, Lam 1992a,b, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999). Such attitudes of firms were considered to lead to the tendency that parents had less interest in their daughters' educational attainments than in their sons' (Brinton 1993, Fujimura-Fanselow 1989, 1995, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999). Educational attainments were regarded as serious matters for sons in order to gain success in later life, but not for daughters. As a cultural factor, moreover, Okano and Tsuchiya (1999:77-78) indicated that the achievement of academic excellence is not seen as part of femininity, rather it represents

masculinity in the context of gender-specific roles defined by Japanese society and expected by parents.

On the other hand, how have the attitudes of university-educated women themselves been interpreted? Tanaka and Nishimura (1986) deplored the fact that highly educated (university and junior college graduate) women might have aspirations for professional work, but they tended to lack the ability to take action to actualise a long-term plan for career progress. Fujimura-Fanselow agreed in 1995 that highly educated women, female students of university or junior college, were in many cases still reluctant to pursue long-term careers. It could not be said that they were not interested in pursuing a career, she stated, but 'the idea of combining career, marriage, and family is viewed as a much more remote and unrealistic – though, for many, attractive - possibility' (ibid. 135). Mainly because, she insisted, they knew how poorly women in general were treated in the workplace and how heavy were the burdens that full-time working mothers had to manage (ibid. 135). In addition, many researchers have pointed out the fact that female university students tend to choose a 'feminine' area of study which had limited occupational value, such as humanities and home economics that revealed the lack of an idea of making a serious long-term career plan (e.g. Fujimura-Fanselow 1989, 1995, Liddle and Nakajima 2000, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999, Sugita 1996).[1]

It appeared that the researchers agreed that women's domestic role took precedence over the utilisation of their higher educational attainments. Until quite recently, as literature showed, it was not considered that pursuing a career was part of women's role in Japanese society. Rather, women were expected to share the same set of values in terms of their domestic duties and the idea of femininity, irrespective of educational background. Moreover, several insisted that especially university graduate women tended to stay at home after they had married, since they needed neither to earn their living nor to support their household finances: marriage to a university graduate man with a well paid secure job did not give them a strong necessity of

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[1] Faculties of education and phannacy are also female tracks, but qualifications as a teacher and a phannacist make it easier for university-educated women to find a job with relatively good pay.

engaging in paid-work (Mifune 1996, Tanaka and Nishimura 1986). It was pointed out that there is a strong tendency for a female university graduate to marry a male university graduate in post-war Japan (Ueno 1994:98). In a way, they suggested that university education could function as a facilitator of women staying in a 'privileged' position at home, which releases them from paid labour outside the home. On the other hand, however, some claimed that women were forced to stay at home. Sodei (1996) regarded the care of children and the elderly[2] as the main hurdles standing in the way of women's working outside. She pointed out that the higher the academic qualifications women obtained, the more they positively utilised public care services and hired professional caretakers. Sodei encouraged women to make full use of these social services to lighten their burden as a caretaker, i.e. as a mother, a daughter, or a daughter-in-law, and to continue outside work (ibid.). Finally, Sugita (1996) encouraged university-educated women to actively take part in productive work and various social activities in the public domain, in order to improve the unchanging male-dominated social structure of Japan.

University-educated women and motherhood

Another important factor we should look at is women's role and duty associated with motherhood. Plenty of books have dealt with this subject to examine how a maternal role is deeply connected to Japanese women's lives.

According to these studies, there has been a strong 'myth of motherhood' that seemed to be a major force to keep the lifestyle of women unchanged. They demonstrated that Japanese contemporary society has clung to a very strong idea that motherhood is the woman's most important attribute. In my previous MA research (Sasagawa 1996), I showed that the 'Japanese mother' has been praised according to her selflessness and self-sacrifice. In the research, I cited an Educational Sociologist, Yamamura Yoshiaki's (1971) analysis of the concept of 'mother' held by Japanese people, revealing that a mother's total commitment, physically and mentally, to her children characterises the way the 'traditional' mother was supposed to be. I discussed the

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[2] The care for the elderly, especially at home, is a very serious problem for Japanese women in their 50s and over in particular to be engaged in outside work, however, it is too involved a subject to be treated in this paper in detail.

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way that women were taught that they should devote themselves to their children and their husbands, and by and large society has shared the notion that any hardship generated from the demanding role of caretaker should be a source of maternal pleasure. Thus, the idea that a woman should become a mother and spend a child-centred life was strongly socially sustained. Moreover, I showed that it was considered that the full commitment of a woman to her family is the only or at least the major way for her to fulfil herself. I found there have been changes in mothers' attitudes at an individual level: they had begun to complain overtly about the maternal burden, resisting an ideal maternal figure, and to try to enjoy mothering not as a duty but as a delight. Nevertheless, motherhood still strongly signifies self-denial at a metaphorical level in Japanese society.

In *Sociology of Motherhood* (1992), Funabashi claimed that in Japan Bowlby's theory of 'maternal deprivation'[3] still seems to be strongly supported, continuing to propagate the 'myth of three-year-old children' *(sansai shinwa),* that a mother should be always with a child under three years of age. Bowlby's theory was translated and was published in Japan in the 1960s. Funabashi claims that the introduction of his 'maternal deprivation' theory greatly contributed to the pervasiveness of the Japanese myth of three-year-old children. As a proverb saying 'the soul of three-year-old child continues to affect on his life till one hundred' shows, Japanese society originally had the idea that the first three years of life are essential for creating personality and abilities (Hendry 1986:17). Therefore, it could be said that there was cultural background which welcomed his theory.

For reasons such as these, it cannot be said that Japanese society fully welcomes university-educated women as candidates to be mothers. It is a tendency to consider that university graduate women are those who have less interest in becoming wives or mothers, the 'traditional' goal of women's achievement. In Japan, women were allowed to enter university on an equal basis with

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[3] E.J. Bowlby declared that a mother's strong 'attachment' for her child is essential to establish child's personality in a proper way, and warned that 'maternal deprivation' could cause children's emotional, psychological and character disorders (Forna 1998).

men for the first time right after the end of the Pacific War. Rapid growth in the number of university-educated women is generally identified as one of the major indices of how Japanese society has changed since the end of the war. The phenomenon of growing numbers of women with a university degree is identified as not only one symbol of post-war social change in a positive sense, but also as the cause of another, namely the sharply declining birth-rate in a negative one. In the early 1990s, for example, Japanese leaders including the former Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro attacked higher education for women for encouraging women to enjoy their life 'too much' and desert their 'primary' role (Jolivet 1997:1, Uno 1993:321). In this sense, university education is seen as something negative, which may take women away from the domestic domain and release them from the roles imposed on them there. In other words, university education is thought to function to release women into the public sphere.

Domestic versus Public

General Feminist theory might suggest that these unchanged constraints on Japanese women are mainly caused by their domestic duties and maternal role. The model of the domestic sphere versus the public sphere, i.e. separated social domains associated with men and women respectively, has been expected by feminists to provide us an analytical framework in exploring male and female roles and positions in society, and the way in which 'the universality of female subordination' (Ortner 1974:67), or 'a universal asymmetry in cultural evaluations of the sexes' (Rosaldo 1974:17), was generated. Rosaldo claims that a woman's reproductive capacity is identified as the cause of the two segregated domains. 'Women become absorbed primarily in domestic activities because of their role as mothers' (ibid. 24), therefore they are precluded from activities engaged in outside the home, while 'men are free to form those broader associations that we call "society," universalistic systems of order, meaning, and commitment that link particular mother-child groups' (ibid. 24). Thus, the domestic/public dichotomy is used in an attempt to explain how women's maternal role causes women's social status to be lower than men's.

However, the validity of the domestic/public model has been doubted by many researchers (Moore 1988:22-24, Yamazaki 1987:23-24). The main point of criticism is that the

domestic/public dichotomy is based on a Western notion of family and motherhood. 'One of the reasons why the "domestic"/ "public" opposition is able to make strong claims for a genuine cross-cultural validity is that it presupposes a defined mother-child unit which seems "naturally" universal' (Moore 1988:23). Even if a mother stays at home, however, it remains a question whether she is actually responsible for child-rearing (ibid. 26-27). The meanings of motherhood and the function of the domestic domain are subject to historical and cultural transformations. It is also questionable whether the public domain is always given a higher value than the domestic domain is.

In addition, mothers are not always restricted in the domestic sphere and family-related duties at home. Bell and Ribbens state that 'many mothers of young children in industrial societies are actively and regularly involved in informal contacts with other women like themselves, especially in localised settings' (1994:229). They argue that 'invisible' maternal networks create a kind of social area somewhere between 'public' (as work, state, formal organisations) and 'domestic' (as domestic family life), and play a very active role to shape mothers' and their children' lives (ibid.).

Clearly the cause of the weak relationship between the effect of university education and the employment of mothers cannot be explained only by pointing out that mothers are tied down to domestic activities and obligations. I propose that the way in which mothers relate themselves to public activities is an area which needs to be examined to understand their choices in life. To explore this area in detail will fill a gap in previous pieces of research and this is one of the major purposes of this thesis.

**Structure of this thesis**

This thesis will address various social and institutional factors, as well as women's manifold roles in both the public and domestic spheres, to see how they affect university-educated mothers' choice of lifestyles. The effect of education on women is not universal because education is linked to 'women's socio-economic status and to their role and position in society' (Moore 1988:I03). I will especially examine the views and attitudes of university-educated

mothers at an individual level. To present women as victims or as sacred is not what I intend to do. Rather, taking the various social restrictions on them into consideration, I would like to demonstrate their strategies for gaining personal fulfilment and for making the most of their lives. An interesting question is whether women always want change in society. Any society puts some restrictions on women, but it is likely that men are also bound by social obligations and duties associated with male roles, and it is not immediately evident that women would willingly accept what is on men's shoulders.

Chapters Two to Four firstly describe a variety of research done from historical, anthropological, sociological, statistical and feminist perspectives, which has examined Japanese women in relation to various social phenomena in order to put my research in a broad context. In each chapter, historical and social backgrounds related to the subject of the chapter are laid out before providing my findings from fieldwork. This is to enable the reader to see how my new findings fit into and alter the whole picture.

Chapter One is a section about my fieldwork. The characteristics of the area in which I carried out research and its residents, especially those who are mothers with small children, are described, explaining why this area was chosen for this study. How I gathered data and findings through my fieldwork are also shown.

Chapter Two focuses on Japanese education and its effect on women in order to consider institutional factors which prevent many university-educated mothers from pursuing professional success. I will examine two educational reforms carried out in Japanese modem history in seeking how the aims of education for men and women have been differentiated and how the differences have been related to shaping social attitudes towards women's role and lives. The post-war educational reform stressed equal educational opportunity. Nevertheless, why has the situation not largely altered? What sort of women has Japanese education been attempting to create?

Chapter Three explores the way in which the labour market has dealt with university-educated women. The main question in this chapter is why many of them do not return to work. Looking at historical changes in the women's labour force in Japan, I will show how women's work styles have been connected with their social backgrounds and attributes. Before the Second World War, women's occupational statuses were greatly affected by their class and family backgrounds. In post-war Japan, class-consciousness became diluted, but female workers are categorised according to their academic background and/or age. How does being a university graduate and a mother affect a woman's occupational status in Japan today?

After considering university-educated mothers in the fields of education and employment, i.e. the public sphere, Chapter Four explores mothers' mixed feelings toward the housewifely role in the domestic sphere, focusing on the changing evaluation of the full-time housewife. The status of the housewife without paid work symbolises wealth in the household on the one hand, but it connotes a married woman's laziness on the other hand. What do university-educated mothers think about the conflicting evaluation of the housewife? Questioning the 'traditional' housewifely figure, I will illustrate the discrepancy between the reported image of the full-time housewife and the mothers' own self-images.

Finally, Chapters Five and Six depict mothers' activities in the public domain named 'community society' *(chiiki shakai).* From the findings of fieldwork conducted in Ichikawa City, I propose that there are two aspects of community activity associated with mothers. In Chapter Five, community activities that attempt to strengthen the motherly role in creating compliant mothers will be demonstrated. In Chapter Six, on the other hand, mothers' activities as opportunities for self-development will be discussed. How university-educated mothers, who tend to play a leading role in self-organised community groups, find activities within the community will be considered to illustrate the way they create a role for themselves in the public sphere.

# Chapter One

# Fieldwork

1.1   Ichikawa City

A considerable part of data collected for this thesis was gathered through fieldwork I carried out in Ichikawa City in Chiba Prefecture, Japan, from February 1998 to March 1999. I also did some follow-up work from September to December 1999.

Characteristics of Ichikawa City

A geographical feature may be one of the elements that shapes the lifestyle and attitudes of people. The pattern of family, level of education, types of occupation, roles of women and men, and many other things related to everyday life can be much affected by the location of a community. The fact that Ichikawa City lies in a suburb of Tokyo, for example, is an important factor when discussing its inhabitants.

Ichikawa City is one of the suburban residential towns that have been largely developed since the high economic growth period, and have been providing human resources to the Tokyo Metropolis. [1] It is located at the northwestern end of Chiba Prefecture. The Edo River running through its west side separates it from the east end of Tokyo, and the south part of the city faces Tokyo Bay. It covers 56.39 square kilometres and nearly 9% of the area is land reclaimed from the sea. The population was 449,113 in 193,497 households as of April 2000. Statistically, in 2000, an average household had 2.3 family members and owned 0.6 car. 13.4 babies were born and 6.3 residents died per day (Ichikawa City 2000). According to the Population Census *(Kokusei ChOsa)* conducted in 1995, the total number of working people was 240,370: 0.1% of

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[1] According to Miura (1999), great quantitative expansion took place in three prefectures adjacent to Tokyo, i.e. Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba, in the early 1970s. The trend of baby-boomer immigrants settling in the suburban areas continues to influence and shape the structure of Japanese society.

them were engaged in primary industry, 26.6% in secondary, and 71.5% in tertiary. The census also showed that the day time population was 335,570 and the night time population was 440,555, indicating that around 105,000 people were estimated to commute to outside Ichikawa City, which functions as a dormitory town, to work or study. A survey carried out by Ichikawa local government in 1994 showed that 64.0% of the male paid workers and 45.0% of the female paid workers commuted to Tokyo (Ichikawa City 1994:66). Unlike the male workers, almost all of whom were full-time regular workers, only 44.3% of the female workers in the poll were regular full-time workers (ibid. 64). As far as female workers were concerned, 68.9% of the full-timers were commuting to Tokyo, while 50.6% of the part-timers were working inside Ichikawa City (ibid. 66). In the case of male workers, only 18.0% of them were working inside the city (ibid. 66).

The fact that most of the breadwinners are working outside Ichikawa City may contribute to a failure in forming a solid local identity, which is a common problem attributed to suburban residential communities, as Ben-Ari (1991) argues. City dwellers in Chiba, living in areas adjacent to Tokyo, are often called *'Chiba Tomin'* (Tokyo citizens living in Chiba) which indicates their lack of identity as Chiba residents. It is a political tendency that, in Chiba, inhabitants of the urban areas are relatively in favour of opposition parties, whereas the rural areas are strong constituencies for the leading party, the conservative *Jiminto.*

There are some variations in the characteristics of the Ichikawa inhabitants according to the part of the city they live in. I moved to Ichikawa City in 1992, three years before starting to study Social Anthropology. The area I moved into is Gyotoku, formerly named Gyotoku Town, which was annexed by Old Ichikawa City in 1955. It is located in the southern part of the city, and the reclaimed ground occupies roughly one third of the area. The development of the Gyotoku area was accelerated by the opening of a new underground line in 1969, which has three stations in the city today. In Gyotoku, apartment buildings and condominiums of different sizes are arranged in irregular order. Between them, construction of new condominiums on the reclaimed land keeps carrying on and on, seemingly never to be stopped. Before the development as a suburban town began, Gyotoku was a small fishing village. A middle-aged woman who married

into her husband's family in Gyotoku from a urban city outside Chiba a few decades ago told me, 'At first, I wondered why everybody always got so angry, shouting at one another. Later I noticed that they are not angry, it is just that fishery people speak in loud voices and their language is dirty'. Today, many parts of the seashore are artificially covered with concrete, leaving little remaining evidence of the peak period of the fishing industry.

Gyotoku attracts a younger generation seeking a place to settle or to stay temporarily until the next job transfer *(tenkin),* due to its advantageous location. The main reason why we, a newly wedded couple at that time, chose this place to start a new life was, perhaps the same reason as many other newcomers have, the fact that Gyotoku is a very convenient place for commuting to Tokyo. It takes only 20 minutes by tube from Gyotoku station to Tokyo Station, the biggest and busiest, or at least one of the biggest and busiest, station(s) in Japan. For salaried men and women living in the Tokyo suburbs, it is not so unusual to spend two hours commuting to Tokyo, as I myself did before settling in Gyotoku. This advantage may be related to the tendency for more young newcomers to live in Gyotoku than in areas of Old Ichikawa City. According to research on families with children under the age of eight in Ichikawa City, conducted by the local government in 1998, the proportion of families with three generations living together in Gyotoku was only 7.3%, whereas it was 15.8% and 16.0% in the Ichikawa and Yawata areas in the centre of the city, respectively (1998:22).[2] One of my informants living in the Ichikawa area told me that every time she comes to Gyotoku, she finds more young people and young mothers with small children walking down the street than in her own neighbourhood.

The easy access to Tokyo seems also to be connected to a relatively strong concern for the education of children. The Ichikawa Statistics Yearbook (2000) showed that 97.6% (National average 96.9% in 1999 (MOL 2000:app.54)) of middle school leavers entered high schools, and 35.7% (NA 38.2%) and 14.5% (NA 10.9%) of high school leavers enrolled in universities or

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[2] This research shows that 81.7% of the households studied consists of parents and their child(ren), and 12.1% of them consists of parents, their child(ren), and at least one parent of the parents (Ichikawa City 1998:22).

junior colleges, respectively. In the research, the rate of students continuing schooling was almost the same as the national average proportion. However, the actual figure of students who live in Ichikawa City and enrol in higher educational institutions may be higher, because the number calculated was the number of graduates of the schools located in Ichikawa City, excluding students going to school in Tokyo or other cities. Several mothers told me that they are sceptical of the quality of education provided by a local public middle and high school, so relatively wealthy families send their children to private schools, including prestigious ones in Tokyo, seeking better educational opportunities. Because of the proximity, even a 12-year-old child is expected to go to school in Tokyo by train. It seems that there is little marked difference between boys and girls in terms of their parents' educational aspirations for their children. Rather, the difference between public schools and private ones is remarkable. According to the Ichikawa Statistics Yearbook (2000), 22.7% (268 out of 1,182) of male students and 18.2% (173 out of 953) of female students of public high schools went to universities, while 53.5% (431 out of 805) of male students and 46.8% (749 out of 1,599) of female students of private high schools chose the same option. On the other hand, the numbers of high school leavers entering employment was quite small. Only 17.6% of boys and 9.7% of girls from public high schools and 0.4% of boys and 1.5% of girls from private high schools obtained a job immediately after graduation (ibid.). These data indicate that mothers in this area may have a great interest in their children's education.

Characteristics of suburban/urban mothers

Many point out that there are two characteristics, which are related to each other, of housewives living in suburban/urban areas, i.e. being highly educated and having no paid job (EPA 1998, Miura 1995, Sechiyama 1996, Ueno 1994). Sechiyama and Ueno argued that different work patterns between urban and rural areas, and how much a husband earns, determine whether a wife has paid work or not. In contrast with the general myth that housewives in the past always stayed at home merely doing housework, historically women used to be engaged in productive work in Japanese society; 'women have not always been full-time housewives', as stressed Ochiai (1996:17). The work pattern of housewives engaging in productive work on a farm or in a factory is inherited in many rural areas, whereas housewives in urban areas tend to seek

employment in an office. According to the Population Census of 1990, in all prefectures in Japan, Tokyo was at the lowest point in terms of the rate of double income couples (MCA 1998). Ueno (1994) insists that housewives get a job when they need to do so for economic reasons. In other words, she argues that couples living in urban areas tend to be both highly educated, and the husbands are engaged in a white-collar job with high income, hence the wives do not need to work outside the home. If a wife does not have financial difficulties in running the household, she has to provide a 'good' reason for going to work.

I could not find any data on the educational background of mothers in Ichikawa City, hence I circulated a questionnaire to 87 women I came to know through community activities in December 1999, mainly to see if they had graduated from a university. 48 were returned. All the respondents were Ichikawa citizens and 47 were mothers while the oldest was single. Their ages ranged from 35 to 69. The numbers of women with experience of university education is 21 (43.8%), including two drop-outs and two students of a correspondence course of the University of the Air.[3] This rate is quite high in comparison with the rate of women entering universities among the age group in 1975, i.e. 12.5% (see Figure 0.2), when the average aged woman (approximately 44-year-old) in this group was 20 years old.

According to Miura (1999), Ichikawa City is one of the suburban cities and towns where the rate of full-time housewives is relatively high. As regards paid work, 23 respondents (47.9%) of my survey mentioned above did not have paid work at the time of the survey (but at least two full-time mothers got a part time job after that). Only one among the respondents was a full-time worker, chiefly because the questionnaires were circulated only to women taking part in the local activity groups I joined for this research. Full-time working mothers hardly ever join these activities. According to an official survey done by Ichikawa City (1994), the proportion of Ichikawa women with paid work is by no means high (see Figure 1.1). The 30-34 age group in particular displays quite a low rate of labour force participation in comparison with, for instance,

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[3] The University of the Air *(Hoso Daigaku)* offers distance education by broadcasting lectures on TV and radio. Some courses enable the student to graduate with a college diploma.

the same age group in Figure 0.2. As regards mothers with small children, the 1998 local government survey of families with child(ren) under the age of eight showed that 28.1% of their mothers had a paid job, including those who were engaged in regular full-time work (10.6%) (Ichikawa City 1998:41). The 1995 Population Census showed that the percentage of households with a wife with paid work and child(ren) under the age of six was 32.9% (MCA 1996:202). Therefore, the rate of mothers engaging in paid work in Ichikawa City was rather low in comparison with the national average.

Many mothers in Ichikawa City agree with the idea that both men and women should take part in the upbringing of children, but my initial reaction was that this might not reflect the actual situation. In the 1998 local government's survey, 95.9% of the mothers agreed to the notion of sharing child-rearing responsibility between a father and mother (Ichikawa City 1998:48), but there was little evidence that fathers positively participate in housework and looking after their children. 86.3% and 88.0% of the respondents replied that mothers mainly take charge of cooking, and of laundering and cleaning, respectively (ibid. 96-97). Moreover, the fact that 88.7% of the households studied responded that it is the mothers who almost monopolise the care of their children indicated that mothers' burden of family responsibility is actually much heavier than that of fathers (ibid. 107). Nevertheless, only 9.9% of the respondents complained about the absence of their spouse's commitment to child-rearing (ibid. 95). In addition, asked whether a mother should take care of her child under the age of three at home, 72.1% of the mothers replied 'I agree' (ibid. 49). It is likely that the myth of three-year-old (see Introduction) may be related to mothers' low expectation of fathers' involvement in family matters and to the fact that they are not very disappointed by the lack of fathers' participation.

**A suitable community for this research**

These characteristics of Ichikawa City and its inhabitants suggest us that this area is a most suitable one to seek answers to our questions. Firstly, it seems reasonable to suppose that mothers living in Ichikawa City represent suburban mothers who are relatively highly educated and who tend to avoid paid work especially while their children are small. As a commuter suburb, secondly, a substantial part of the working population of Ichikawa goes out of the city

during the daytime, leaving mothers in the community. Therefore, mothers are the ones who play leading roles in community activities. Thirdly, the majority of Ichikawa mothers with small children do not live with their parents or parents-in-law. This indicates that mothers cannot expect grandmothers or grandfathers to attend to the children while they are out, which is common practice in some other areas of Japan (Hendry 1986). In other words, a mother's sole responsibility for the care of her child gives her autonomy in the way in which the child should be raised. In the following chapters, we will investigate why many mothers choose to stay behind in the community in a suburban town.

## 1.2    Gathering data

The primary feature of anthropological research is to emphasise qualitative methodology, notably by participant observation, for data collection. Social anthropologists generally start their research by selecting a society they will study and setting about long-term fieldwork there. Qualitative research methods such as participant observation, informal interview, and case study cannot be conducted without ongoing interaction with the members of the society studied. The purpose of this type of methodology is to enable a researcher to see the world of the people studied from their own point of view, and to make sense of their attitudes and behaviour in relation to the social structure.

I used several kinds of methods for the field research in order to cross-check the data validity (Burgess 1984:143-63). Below is the list of research methods employed in this study.

(1) In-depth, semi-structured interviews with forty graduate mothers

I decided to carry out semi-structured interviews, since I considered that a rough structure is necessary in order to produce an academic result which might not be the case with aimless conversations. However, I also wanted to leave room for the interviewee's autonomy, allowing them to speak in ways which are not strictly structured by the researcher. Moreover, I was interested in the words and verbal expression that interviewees would choose in expressing their opinions or feelings. Their attitudes and their ways of expression contribute to a grasp of the

deeper meaning of their words, a meaning beyond the surface meaning. In addition, I tried as much as possible to conduct the interviews in an informal atmosphere. The interviews were conducted mainly either at the mother's place if her child was very small, or at a coffee shop.

Snowball sampling was used to find the interviewees. A weakness of snowball sampling may be the possibility that a researcher can only gain access to those who have a similar nature or attributes, coming from the same social background. Hence I attempted to prepare as many types of 'snowballs' as possible, looking for different types of women (e.g. activist feminist, 'professional' housewife, business woman, teacher, local councillor, etc.) and asked them to introduce me to their friends and acquaintances for interviews.

As a result of the sampling, not all the mothers were residents of Ichikawa City, but all of them lived in suburban (or urban) areas. 21 out of 40 mothers were Ichikawa citizens, and nine were from other cities in Chiba Prefecture. Moreover, four mothers were from the Tokyo Metropolis, and five mothers were from Kanagawa Prefecture. The remaining one was from Takarazuka City in Hyogo Prefecture.

There were 38 university graduates including five with an MA or MBA degree, and one drop-out from university, and one junior college graduate. M-san (39) left university before her graduation because her parents died, so she is not qualified as a university graduate. The junior college graduate is H-san (33), a full-time business consultant. Her colleague introduced her, as a university graduate, to me for my research, but in fact she did not enter university. However, I included her in my interviewees, since from her, I gained very useful and interesting findings concerning a full-time working mother. Despite including the two mothers who did not obtain a university degree, my focus in this paper is university-educated mothers or university graduate mothers, and I do not distinguish them in particular from those who gained a university degree.

The mothers' occupational statuses varied. I attempted to interview not only full-time mothers or mothers with a part time job, who were relatively easy to access, but also mothers with full-time

work. I found several mothers through community activities described later in this chapter, but to find those who were working outside on a full-time basis was somewhat difficult as they rarely take part in local activities. However, I managed to find the first 'snowball' of full-time working mothers by asking my acquaintances to introduce me to someone they knew. Finally, the number of full-time housewives was 14, including a mother who identified herself as a 'full-time housewife' in spite of being paid for participating in her husband's family business. Eleven mothers had full-time regular work and another two mothers were self-employed, working at home as a private *'juku'* tutor and as a technical translator. Moreover, one divorced mother was working as an independent writer and translator. The most problematic classification is the group of part-time workers, because, as we will see in Chapter Three, there is no clear definition of 'part-time work' in a Japanese context. Some part-timers can be recognised as 'genuine' part-time workers whose working hours are shorter than that of full-time workers. Ten mothers can be categorised into this 'genuine' group. The remaining two mothers, a high school teacher and feminist counsellor, were working on a nearly full-time basis, but their jobs were much less secure than those of full-time regular workers.

The age of the mothers I interviewed ranged from 29 to 62. I divided them into two age groups: one group of 33 women from 29 to 49 and the other group aged from 50 to 62 of which there are seven (Group A), in order to compare different generations' views and attitudes towards the effect of university education on society and on their personal lives. Also, I divided the former group into two: one is those who graduated from university before the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law came into effect (the 35-49 age group with 22 mothers: Group B), and the other, those who graduated after that (the age group of 29-33 with eleven mothers: Group C), in order to see if there is any sign of change in their attitudes after the law whose aim was 'to promote equal opportunity and treatment between men and women in employment' (from the Purpose of the 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law).

(2) Participant observation in community groups

In order to gain insight into the situation and to expand my local network for research, I joined community activities as a member of three women's groups. I definitely needed actively to take

part in these activities to access mothers' networks, because, as I will show in Chapter Four, a childless woman cannot easily blend into women's groups in the community. Several interviewees for this study also belonged to one or two of these groups. Moreover, I could collect materials regarding local schools, written information which is normally available only to parents of the children, through the networks I established there. They were:

a) A study group named *Gyotoku uman karejji* (Gyotoku women's college)

This was a lifelong learning course organised by Ichikawa local government. It ran eight-week courses in spring and autumn. The number of students was generally around 30 (women only) for each course. Their ages ranged roughly from 25 to 55. The aim of the programme was to encourage participants to learn about social, cultural and gender issues but without a strong academic purpose. Two-hour seminars were offered once a week at a public citizens' hall *(kominkan)* in Gyotoku.

b) A study group named Ichikawa *Josei daigakuin* (Ichikawa women's graduate school)

This lifelong learning course was also organised by Ichikawa local government. It was a one and a half year course, running from October 1998 to March 2000. The number of students was 30 including one retired man at the beginning, but six women left later. Their ages ranged from in the 30s to 60s. The aim of the programme was to cultivate Ichikawa citizens' qualities for managing leadership, necessary in realising a 'gender-equal society' *(danjo kyodo sankaku shakai)* which is being promoted according to a state policy named 'Action Plan for Gender Equality 2000' by the Prime Minister's Office. Three-hour lectures and seminars on gender issues were offered twice a month at the Ichikawa Women's Centre.

c) A mother-toddler group named Ichikawa Gyotoku *Oyako Gekijo,* (Ichikawa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre)

This was a branch of a nation-wide private organisation which provided a variety of leisure activities for its members in seeking an ideal way of raising children. The number of members was 466 (as of August 1999): 202 parents (almost all were mothers) and 264 children. The

mothers' ages ranged roughly from 25 to 55. The activities included theatre-going for children, a summer camp, sports activities, a Christmas party, and the like.

There is no rigid answer to the question of the extent to which a participant observer should be involved in a field situation. If the ultimate purpose of fieldwork is to collect data and to observe situations in settings as natural as possible, a researcher should minimise his/her influence and impact on the field, as his/her existence itself has the possibility of modifying it. Nevertheless, a researcher cannot gather rich data without being involved more or less in the community and interfering in informants' daily lives to some degree.

Through doing fieldwork, I realised that the ethnographer's active participation is indispensable in producing a fruitful outcome for the field research. Therefore, I attempted to put a priority on the role of participant rather than on that of an observer. I agree with Agar that 'ethnography isn't *just* about shared knowledge; rather, it's about the *practices of everyday life,* the way those practices are built out of shared knowledge, *plus* all the other things that are relevant to the moment' (1996:9) (emphasised by Agar). Retaining detachment is important for reducing bias, but keeping up a good rapport is also crucial for producing an insightful research result.

I realised that people would not accept me if I stayed as a stranger or an outsider. The mothers for my research were very sensitive and were suspicious of a stranger who appeared to be approaching them with a 'secret' intention. Burgess suggests that the researcher's age, sex and ethnicity will influence his/her field role and field relation (1984:88). In my case, as a childless woman, I often felt the necessity of explaining why I wanted to join a group whose members were almost all mothers, or even just why I was there. According to the situation, I often modified my explanation to some extent to satisfy each person's curiosity. Introducing myself as a part-time tutor of a private *juku* school was often more useful than explaining what anthropology actually is. For many of them, an anthropologist may have been a relative stranger, but a *juku* tutor is a member of their world because the education of their children is one of their main concerns. Familiarity helped to relax their guard. Therefore, I could often break the ice by talking with mothers about my part-time job.

Establishing close relationships with individuals who are to be researched also allows a researcher to have opportunities to become aware of their common knowledge expressed in a non-linguistic form. Even silence can have an important meaning on some occasions. As Bloch points out, in certain situations, 'anthropologists have noted that language seems to play a surprisingly small role in the transmission of knowledge' (1991:186). Through commitment to community activities, I learned some unspoken rules of a mothers' world. I found, for instance, that mothers, especially those who were young, were quite sensitive to criticism, and also they were weak in expressing disagreement in a group conversation. Disagreement often hurt their feelings. Therefore, some of them changed or modified their opinions according to who were the other members of a group, or some did not even turn up for a group activity again without saying anything.

(3) Questionnaire circulated to the participants of those groups

Questionnaires including both closed and open-ended questions were circulated to female members of the three groups that I selected for participant observation, regardless of their educational background and marital status. The questions were divided into five parts: 1. Evaluation of university education, 2. Attitude towards paid work, 3. Images of the 'professional' housewife, 4. Opinions about the activities they have joined, 5. Attitudes of their husbands (or partners if any) towards their community activities.

The main aim of the circulation of questionnaires was, however, to find university graduate mothers and the rough proportion of university-educated women in each community group. In general, to inquire directly of people about their educational background is regarded as impolite. Moreover, as one of my interviewees told me, each other's educational attainment is a 'taboo' topic among women in the community or neighbourhood.

In addition to the above list, I carried out un-structured interviews with a mother who organised a women's circle, a professional married woman who was working for a job placement agency, a single middle-aged woman who was working in a major Japanese firm, and the female president

of a private baby-sitter firm. Besides, I carried out observation at some mother-toddler groups, mothers' social and study groups, activities of a primary school **PTA** including the school Sports Day, a nursery service organised by local government, and a private day-care centre.

All this fieldwork is of course presented in the context of an abundance of existing literature on related subjects and is also supplemented by information gathered from governmental documents, media materials such as newspapers, magazines and TV programmes, and local community papers.

# Chapter Two

# Women and University Education

## 2.1   Introduction

It was not until Japan's defeat in the Second World War that women were granted educational opportunities on an equal basis with men. In December 1945, following the directions of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Allied Occupation Force, which included promotion of the emancipation of women and equal rights for both sexes, the Cabinet agreed to the Renovation of Women' Education *(Joshi Kyoiku Sasshin YokO).* This contained three basic principles: equal educational opportunity for both sexes; standardisation of the contents of education; and mutual respect between men and women. In practice, higher educational institutions for males opened their doors to women, the content of education for middle school girls was upgraded to that of middle school boys, and co-education started in universities. Thus, for women, the way to university was paved as a part of the post-war social reform initiated by GHQ, in the same way as the right of women to vote was actualised. Women attained various legal rights after the war, but they were more as a part of the democratisation policy of GHQ than the fruits of the women's movement which had started a few decades before the war. Still less was it a sign of changing negative attitudes of Japanese policy makers in terms of granting equal legal rights to both men and women. [1]

Education is one of the most crucial factors in offering the possibility to expand social and economic opportunities for women, but the degree and content of improvements are greatly

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[1] The Japanese government was less enthusiastic about these educational reforms. In a document published by the Ministry of Education, it says 'In the rush to restructure the militaristic educational system, GHQ promoted some measures that failed to take Japan's unique cultural circumstances into account' (MOE 1980). There is no explanation of the contents of 'Japan's unique cultural circumstances' here, but it may include promotion of higher education of women and coeducation. 'As a number of scholars, both Japanese and American, have pointed out, many of these reforms, such as coeducation, comprehensive schools, and local control, were deeply rooted in the American democratic model but were dysfunctional when transported to the Japanese context' (Beauchamp 1994:8). Moreover, Japanese government had misgivings about women's suffrage since it may weaken a man's authority over his wife (Hisakake et al. 1997:5). Nevertheless, the Japanese authorities had few options but to accept proposals from GHQ.

subject to social and cultural background. It is, as Moore suggests, 'assumed to increase the aspirations and expectations of women workers, and it is supposed to weaken the barriers of cultural tradition which prevent women from entering the labour market' (1988: 103). For instance, in her research exploring changes in gender relations in the United Kingdom, Walby suggests that there is a clear relationship between women's level of education and their participation rates in employment in the 1990s; the higher the academic qualitications they have, the more likely they are to be in employment, particularly among the younger generation (1997:41-50).[2] According to an investigation by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys cited in Walby's study, for example, in the 30-39 age group in 1994, 81% of women with higher educational qualification, and 54 % of those without any qualifications were in employment (ibid. 42). In Japan, however, many studies deny a strong relationship between university-level qualification or higher and women's employment on the whole, as shown in the Introduction of this paper. Differentiation of educational levels does not make a tremendous impact on the labour force participation rate of women as a whole. In the 25-64 age group, in 1990, 60% of women with a university degree, 55% of female junior college graduates, 57 % of female high school leavers, and 57% of female middle or primary school leavers were in the labour force (EPA 1998:121-22).

The effect of university education for Japanese women has been viewed with scepticism because of its weak relationship to employment. Even after it was officially granted to women, such notions as 'education for women is a waste of money' and 'boys should be given priority in education over girls' seemed to be still widely accepted. Some criticism was generated even from within the academic establishment. In 1962, for example, a professor of Waseda University, one of the prestigious private universities, published a paper complaining about the increasing number of female students who, he assumed, entered universities to gain nothing more than cultural enrichment in preparation for their marriage (Hisatake et al. 1997:65). He claimed that the situation in which the large population of female students presented an obstacle to male

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[2] Walby's research refers little to the conditions of employment in which highly educated women are engaged. She adds there is no guarantee that a clear relationship between educational qualifications and employment will be sufficient for women to reach the highest level of employment (1997:43).

applicants whose academic purpose was much more serious and whose future was much more promising than that of girls', was not acceptable. Following him, a professor of Keio University, another prestigious private university, voiced an opinion along the same lines. The mass media supported them, naming this argument the 'theory of female university students ruining the nation' *(Joshi Daisei Bokoku Ron),[3]* and contributed to establishing a social climate in which the view prevailed that university-level education was wasted on girls who would only end up getting married. Another example was the decision made by the administration of the Kyoto Pharmaceutical University in 1983, where they preferred male applicants to females in order to avoid 'feminisation' of their institution (Beauchamp 1994:13). Their excuse that 'Japanese companies overwhelmingly prefer to hire men and that the university sees no point in producing female graduates who will not be hired by the industry' (ibid. 13) is likely to be the one shared by those who do not value university education for women in general.

In spite of such criticism and scepticism, the number of female students has increased steadily. The proportion of women among all university students has kept on rising from 1955 to 2000 (see Figure 2.1). The total numbers of universities and their female students have dramatically increased since 1955 (see Figures 2.1, 2.2). On the other hand, university qualifications do not guarantee professional success for many female graduates, especially if they are mothers. Here, as regards the relationship between women and university education, we face two related questions: firstly, despite the weak connection with professional opportunities, why has university education for women been expanding greatly? Secondly, despite its expansion, why does the increasing number of university-educated women not make a strong impact on the asymmetrical gender relationship established in society? These questions also lead us to others: what makes women enter universities? What have educators expected female students to gain through university-level studies? What kind of messages have female students received from university education? How do university-educated women themselves evaluate their academic

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[3] The critics' claim went like this: the nation spends much money (tax) to educate university students, especially those of national universities, in the hope that they will contribute to national prosperity. Therefore, investment for female students who will end up as 'just' full-time housewives is completely wasted and will eventually lead to collapse of the nation.

qualifications and utilise them? How does society evaluate university-educated women? Finally, and most importantly, I wondered if raising the social status of women has actually been the aim of university education for women since its inception.

In order to answer these questions, I will focus on the following points: first, characteristics of educational systems before and after the Second World War will be investigated to see the purpose and function of Japanese education, and what students were expected to acquire through schooling. Secondly, the historical dimension of the relationship between women and education will be examined in seeking the meaning and purpose of education for women. Lastly, female graduates' views and attitudes towards university education, and higher academic qualifications in relation to their own lifestyles will be illustrated to consider the outcome of university education for women.

## 2.2    Characteristics of Japanese education: two educational reforms

In a Japanese view, education is regarded as a good thing (Refsing 1992:116) and is highly evaluated (Aso 1991:29). According to Aso, the belief that education has a good effect on shaping one's    character has    motivated Japanese people's eagerness to gain academic achievement, and underpins the academic pedigree society that Japan is today (1991:29).

### Pre-modern education

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, Japan has maintained an extremely high rate of school attendance (Hendry 1995:97), but the spread of a basic school education had already occurred in the pre-modem period. Informal schools called *'terakoya'* (literally means 'temple school'), which diffused from the 18'h century to the middle of the 19th century, were for children of the commoners to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic (Shinotsuka 1995b:70-77). Temple schools opened their doors not only to boys but also to girls, and some of the teachers were women (ibid. 71-72). Girls represented around a quarter of all the students (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:14), but in Tokyo the ratio of girls to boys rose to approximately 8 to 10 at the end of the Edo era (1603-1867) (Shinotsuka 1995b:76-77). For children from the upper or *samurai* class, formal schools

*(hanko)* were set up to teach them mainly the Chinese classics (Dore 1997:37). 'These schools, a rarity in 1750, were found in almost every fief a century later' (ibid. 37). Schools for *samurai*-class children rarely accepted girls (Shinotsuka 1995b:74). Dore estimates that by 1870 some 40-45 per cent of boys and some 15 per cent of the girls of each age group received a basic education (1997:37).

**The beginning of modern education**

The first educational reform, in a modern sense, began a few years after the Meiji Restoration (1868) when Japan brought her feudal period to an end and restarted as a modern nation by lifting the policy of 'closing the door', i.e. national isolation from the rest of the world, which had lasted more than 250 years. The modern educational system was initiated and operated largely by the state, as a substantial part of the new state's policy, aiming at modernisation of the country to catch up with the Western industrial countries. 'Education was to be one of the keys to meeting the challenges posed by the Western countries by providing skills required for military and economic development, promoting a common sense of nationhood, and opening the way to the full realisation of the intellectual resources of the country' (Hara 1995:95). Not only primary schooling for the masses, but also higher education for a limited number of people played a role in producing human resources needed for national prosperity. According to Dore, although the social function of the universities was unclear and questioned in British society, 'the Japanese university system was established by the state with the primary role, from the beginning, of serving the state's manpower needs' (1997:36). The Meiji government promoted the educational reform based on the ideology to 'enrich the nation, strengthen the army' *(fukoku kyohei)* (Hara 1995:96).

Modern primary schooling was to be open to every child regardless of his/her place of residence and class background (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:14). Comparing the Japanese educational system with the British one, Dore points out that the state was not a leading actor in the growth of primary education in Britain's case, indicating the dominant class's negative attitudes towards mass primary education. On the other hand, 'Japan's leaders had little doubt, from the very beginning, that education would contribute to both the loyalty and the productiveness of the

masses' (1997:35). However, it took a few decades for the idea of compulsory schooling to spread through every corner of the country. In 1873, only 39.9% of boys and 15.1% of girls attended primary schools (Shinotsuka 1995b:83). Rural families were reluctant to send their children to school, because children's labour was indispensable for farming, and especially girls were absolutely necessity for domestic labour including taking care of infants (ibid. 82). Moreover, they did not find the contents of education relevant to their own lives (Okano and Tsuchiya 1991:15, Shinotsuka 1995b:82). Rural families were even hostile to education for their children and the cost imposed on them, so 'In some villages, people damaged school buildings and demanded the abolition of school levies' (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:15). Nevertheless, the school attendance rate rose to 90.3% for boys and 71.7% for girls in 1900, and finally the rate for both boys and girls increased to approximately 99% by 1920 (Shinotsuka 1995b:83).

Post-primary schooling was mainly targeted at boys. For a few years from their birth, middle schools accepted a small number of girls, but girls were not allowed to enter middle school by a new law after 1879 (Shinotsuka 1995b:84). For boys' education, moreover, the government subsidised vocational schools and specialised schools to produce technicians to meet the urgent needs of industry (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:19). Boys of the elite entered universities via higher schools (ibid. 19-20). For girls, girls' high schools were created to offer them secondary schooling, but no public education higher than middle-school level had been arranged by 1874 (Shinotsuka 1995b:84-86).

**The purpose of modern higher education**

In Japan, academic credentials played an important role for job opportunities from the beginning. 'In Japan educational qualifications played a large part in determining career opportunities from a very early stage', whereas 'the role of education in allocating people to jobs – as a channel of social mobility – did not predominate over heredity and apprenticeship until the mid-twentieth century' in Britain' (Dore 1997:36). In order to distribute manpower to serve rapid industrialisation, workers were supposed to obtain enough knowledge or skill through schooling. At first people applied for posts by claiming that they had acquired the relevant knowledge, but

as the system of recruitment was formalised, higher educational qualifications began to be required for professional jobs (ibid. 43).

> Not only for anyone seeking to enter the technical professions, but also for administrative posts, a university qualification became essential. By the end of the first decade of this century many of the business corporations were restricting their recruitment to graduates; so were the major newspapers – a trend in which Japan was far ahead of Britain' (ibid. 43).

Thus, an educational qualification, especially a higher education one, became a useful tool for 'getting a high position in society, making his name' *(risshin shusse).*

University education had a very selective system to produce the small number of people making up the social elite. Tokyo Imperial University, which was set up in 1886, was the top university, and provided human resources for governmental and managerial posts in industry. Kyoto Imperial University, the other elite university, was established in 1897, and other public universities were established to meet an expanding demand for highly educated manpower. From the 1870s to 80s, private universities were founded, accepting 'those who Jacked the necessary ability to get into the state universities' (Dore 1997:47). Post-compulsory schooling, such as vocational schools, higher technical schools and universities, were graded hierarchically and functioned as 'the supply system for a status-ranked society' (Fukutake cited in Beauchamp 1994:4). As regards the attendance rate, 5.2% of boys of each age group attended middle schools or their equivalents and 1.0% of boys of each age group attended higher educational institutions including specialised schools, higher schools and universities in 1900 (Shinotsuka 1995b:92). The proportions increased to 42.9% and 5.3% respectively in 1930 (ibid. 92). Among those who received higher education, university students occupied only 0.1% in 1990 and 0.4% in 1930 (ibid. 113). Consequently, university graduates made up the very limited elite group who enjoyed privileged positions in society, granted only to winners of the selection process.

The modem Japanese educational system after compulsory schooling aimed to establish itself based on meritocratic ideology. To proceed from middle schools to universities in the state system and to pass an examination was a condition necessary for entry (Dore 1997:45-46).

Basically, higher education allocated a higher position in society and better employment opportunities to those graduates whose academic achievement had been good enough to pass the entrance examination, irrespective of their social class and family background.[4] Middle-class children clearly had very great advantages in the system, but according to Dore, even a boy from a poor family in a village might have a chance of finding some patron to send him to a university, if he had exceptional academic ability (ibid. 46). Dore argues that 'the school system functioned as a general intelligence testing device' in Japan (ibid. 45). Thus, the class structure was still firm, but one's social origin was not always the only element which enabled a boy to gain access to higher education.

**The post-war educational reform**

The basic form of the current educational system of Japan was established under the direction of the Allied Occupation. One of the major aims of GHQ was to achieve a fundamental reform of Japanese society through the education of its people. The Occupation's reform aimed to change the goal of education from that of building an integrated nation with strong military power to that of developing a democratic and peaceful nation. To this end, GHQ demanded the removal of militarist and nationalist ideology (and also teachers tainted with these ideas) from school curricula and textbooks, and instead, ideas of world peace and human rights, such as freedom of thought, speech, and belief, were newly introduced to the school curriculum (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:30). In 1947, the School Education Law put into effect a new 6-3-3-4 system: 6 years for primary school, 3 years for middle school and high school respectively, and 4 years for university. Compulsory schooling was expanded to middle schools for every child regardless of sex. The Fundamental Law of Education which came into force in the same year, indicated the new aim and spirit underlying education, and guaranteed no educational discrimination on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin (Article 3); nine-year's compulsory education for both boys and girls without a tuition fee (Article 4); and finally

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[4] 'In the only pre-war count available - for 1939 - 16 per cent of Tokyo (Imperial) University students were peasants' sons - doubtless the majority from the more well-to-do strata of villagers' (Shimizu cited in Dore 1997:46).

co-education was recognised for the promotion of mutual esteem and cooperation between the sexes.

Egalitarianism was also brought in when the post-war educational reforms took place. Occupation policy was aimed at the promotion of social and economic reforms to dismantle the class structure in creating an egalitarian society. The main aim of the post-war educational reform was not only to provide equal educational opportunity nationwide, but also to ensure that the same quality was offered by all schools (Amano 1997:75). As a result, the attendance rate of post-compulsory schooling, that is to high school, sharply increased after the war. In 1950, 48.0% of boys and 36.7% of girls went on to high school (MOL 2000: app.54). The rates rose to 91.0% for boys and 93.0% for girls by 1975, and to 96.1% for boys and 97.7% of girls by 1999 (ibid. app.54). Amano argues that the egalitarian educational system was 'a key factor in the "middle-class consciousness" that took root among the Japanese, with almost 80% eventually identifying themselves as middle class' (1997:76).

Academic pedigree society

After the end of the Occupation period in 1952, the main educational concern shifted from producing the citizens needed to build a democratic nation, to 'the development of human capital for the nation's economic growth' (Okano and Tsushiya 1999:39). Beauchamp points out that, 'Indeed, there is little doubt that since the mid-1950s the interests of industry have been extremely influential in shaping educational policy' (1994:16). The National Income Doubling Plan *(Kokumin Shotoku Baizo Keikaku)* introduced in 1960 by the central government, declared the aim of doubling the national gross product and the national income within ten years (Hisatake et al. 1997:57). Education was again recognised as a driving force for creating a strong nation, not militarily but economically this time. 'The plan was based on the then popular human capital theory, which assessed education in terms of its contribution to the economy, but which undervalued individual human development' (Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:39). The competitive aspect of education became stressed, and parents began to encourage their children to improve their scores in tests. Parents became resigned to the burden of educational costs on the grounds that they would receive a return from their investment in their children's education, as the human

capital theory suggests (ibid. 39). Thus, the rapid growth of the Japanese economy became the major promoter of educational competition.

The egalitarian ideal and the competitive aspect of education worked together to expand higher education. With the rapid increase in the number of students entering high school, young people began to desire a university education to surpass others in academic credentials. The number of students entering university rapidly increased after 1960 (see Figure 0.1). Moreover, the number of universities had been greatly expanding in post-war Japan (see Figure 2.2). (In pre-war Japan, the number of universities was only 47 by 1940 (Shinotsuka 1995b:ll2)). As the numbers of universities and university students increased, however, people's interest shifted from the entry to university to the selection of a university itself. Including top-ranked Tokyo University (formerly Tokyo Imperial University), all universities (and high schools) in Japan are hierarchically ranked. The more university education became popularised, the more competition to enter prestigious universities became excessive. Thus, 'The egalitarian education system did not eliminate competition but actually encouraged it' (Amanol997:76).

The strong image of contemporary Japan as an academic pedigree society is supported by a widespread belief that a higher academic qualification grants a professional advantage and success in life to the possessor. Many Japanese companies give priority to graduates of prestigious universities for recruitment. Moreover, they tend to set up starting salaries for newcomers and assign them to jobs based on their level of academic qualifications, and in general, university graduates are entitled to higher wages and a fast-track to a management job. In addition, posts of state government officials are occupied by graduates of top-ranking universities including Tokyo University. University education is regarded as the moving force for social and economic upward mobility.

Kariya (1995) showed that middle school students tended to consider that academic credentials would bring them not only professional success but also a happy family life. According to his survey carried out in the 1980s, middle school students thought that a good school record and a university qualification would give them an opportunity to become a medical doctor, a professor,

a lawyer, or an employee of a large-sized firm. When it comes to becoming an artisan, cook, or a carpenter, and to leading a happy family life, the students also considered a good school record and a university qualification would give them advantages over others. Karita argues that this reflects an aspect of Japanese society: that school education has a great influence over one's success in life.

Academic credentials are strong forms of social classification. Educational background is crucial in Japanese society since it identifies whether one is a university graduate (also whether top university or third-class one), or simply a high school leaver. Besides, it is generally considered that educational attainment is a measure of one's level of capabilities and in tum indicates the kind of social group to which one belongs. Although Japanese people do not have strong class-consciousness, they are greatly aware of academic pedigree instead. Many social groups, for instance married couples and groups of colleagues at work, tend to be established through previous school/university-related connections[5]. Moreover, educational background is one of the major variables of official and academic statistics. Another important point is that in fact the level of education of parents determines the children's educational credentials to a certain extent (Liddle and Nakajima 2000:210-11). Professional and managerial families can afford the extra educational expenses to enable children to prepare for the entrance examinations of highly competitive high schools and universities. Despite the egalitarian principles of the educational system, privileged social positions are effectively reproduced.

It is noteworthy that people are not interested in what subject one studies at university. Academic credentials became effective when passing the entrance examination of a prestigious university. Japanese universities are often regarded as 'leisure centres' (Hayes 1997:301), or 'a breathing space' (Refsing 1992:118) which don't require the students to actually study. The fact that a student simply passed the entrance examination of a top-ranking university already proved

5 According to a survey conducted by the association of female graduates of Tokyo University (Satsuki Kai 1989:154), for instance, 80% of the members studied married graduates from Tokyo University. Only 1% of them have husbands with lower educational qualifications than undergraduate level.

his/her high ability which would in turn lead him/her a privileged position in employment and society. In practice, a university is not expected to be an academic institution that cultivates the students' minds.

2.3　Women and educational equality

Weak effect of academic credentials on women

As we have seen, university educational credentials have granted professional success and high status in society to their possessors in Japan. Many studies, however, deplore the fact that women's expanding participation in university education after the educational reform has not promoted their social and work participation as much as expected (see Introduction). It is understandable to expect that women with a university degree should gain access to a higher social position just as university-educated men do, in accordance with the principle that equal opportunity should be given to those with the same academic skills. Nevertheless, egalitarian- and meritocratic-based polices of Japanese education have actually been passing women by (Brinton 1993:189-221, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:74-78).

The post-war educational policy that granted women access to university education has not necessarily equipped women for climbing the ladder of social success on an equal basis with men. It seems that even female graduates from Tokyo University have been at a disadvantage in comparison with the male graduates. A woman who graduated from Tokyo University in the 1980s deplores that the female students did not take advantage of being Tokyo University students as much as the male students did when job-hunting (Asahi Newspaper Weekly AERA, 25 June 2001). She attended a meeting held by a bank for university students who were going to enter the bank the following year. The students were divided into groups according to the rank of university, such as 'Tokyo University male students', 'Waseda University male students', and 'the others', and female students from Tokyo University were classified in 'the others' group. (The rank of each group reflects a position in the company after entering).

For one thing, female university students have been marginalised from the mainstream of university education. The ratio of women to men attending all universities has steadily increased. The proportion of female students in old imperial universities, including elite universities such as Tokyo University and Kyoto University, was 0.5% (447 women out of 8,420 students), and that of female students in universities newly established after the war was 11.3% (49, l 63 out of 435,952) in 1952 (MOE 1953). In 2000, the proportion of female students in all universities reached 36.2% (see Figure 2.1). Liddle and Nakajima point out, however, that 'women were clustered in the lower-quality institutions, taking subjects which were non-vocational or sex-typed as feminine', whereas 'men were over-represented in the higher quality institutions, and heavily over-represented in the higher level academic degrees'. (2000:208-9). Still in 2001, the ratio of women tends to be smaller than the average in prestigious universities. For example, the proportion of women attending Tokyo University is 17.1%[6], and that of women attending Waseda University is 26.5%[7] in 2001. Thus, an equal opportunity in post-war education does not necessarily lead to an equal opportunity in society.

Equality in a Japanese context

The post-war egalitarian educational system was modelled on the American educational system. According to Tsuneyoshi, however, concepts of educational equality in Japan are different from those in the United States.

> In contrast to Japan, American discussions of equality incorporate problems of race, class, gender, and ability. Indeed, the heterogeneous population of the U.S. has introduced another distinct dimension into the problem of equality in education - a concern with differences within and among groups (1991:169).

In the United States, she argues, the idea of equality in education is based on the belief of individual difference, and also, 'concepts of equal educational opportunity are commonly tied to the right of individuals to achieve academic success and have access to various levels of the occupational ladder' (ibid. 169). Where a certain ethnic minority group is generally identified as culturally 'disadvantaged', for instance lacking appropriate language usage inherited from their

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[6] The University of Tokyo, http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/jpn/gaiyou/after/gakusei.htrnl
[7] Waseda Data Book, http://www.waseda.ac.jp/koho/databook/dbO l.htrnl

family, school is considered as being responsible for correcting these disadvantages 'based on a concept of individual rights - that each individual regardless of his or her socioeconomic background should be given an equal opportunity for success' (ibid. 169). Tsuneyoshi makes the point that American schools have differentiated systems because the key question is fairness. 'For Americans the issue is not whether differentiation should occur in education, but whether methods to distinguish classes of students are fair' (ibid. 170).

Equality is embedded in the notion of democracy that stresses individual rights in the United States, but the concept of equality is not linked to the idea of individual rights in Japanese discourse as much as in the American one. Tsuneyoshi pays attention to the difference of meaning of 'individualism' in the United States and Japan. Individualism is essential for democracy in an American context, whereas 'the term is carefully avoided when Japanese talk about democracy and education' (ibid. 170). Individualism is considered to imply self-centredness which is negatively linked to egoism in a Japanese context (ibid. 170). In Japanese society where children are encouraged to think of the benefit of the group as a whole before thinking of their own will or interest, individualism that connotes self-assertion and selfishness should be avoided (Hendry 1992c). In contrast, a notion of 'individuality' *(kosei)* is highly praised in schools and society. It is considered that 'individuality' *(kosei)* connotes each person's special personality or gifted ability that should be developed in school education. (The concept of 'individuality' *(kosei)* usually does not refer to one's academic ability). Hendry argues one's 'individuality' *(kosei),* or individual qualities such as personal skills and strengths, may contribute to making the most of the interest of a group to which s/he belongs, but the self-assertive side of 'individualism' *(kojinshugi),* or individual rights, is not for the benefit of the group as a whole (ibid. 61). For Japanese, 'equality' is not something awarded based on the concept of individual rights. The inborn differences between individuals are not stressed, and 'equality' means that all students should be educated in the same way to give them an equal opportunity for developing their potential academic abilities.

The system that requires an individual's effort to achieve 'equality'

The fact that Japanese schools basically deny inherited differences among children has pushed students into the competitive educational race. In a Japanese context of 'equality', 'children should receive a standardised education, have standardised texts, and prepare for standardised examinations that differentiate strictly according to test scores' (Tsuneyoshi 1991:171). This underlying assumption of the current school system is based on the theory that all children are equally gifted in academic performance. Therefore, 'anybody can reach a certain level if only he or she tries hard enough' (Cummings quoted in Tsuneyoshi 1991:171), and failure in education is considered to be 'due to insufficient effort' (Refsing 1992:126) of individuals. This view is supported not only by government and school but also by parents (Refsing 1992:125, Tsuneyoshi 1991:172). In this theory, Tokyo University, for instance, needs to set the level of their entrance exam extremely high, in order to reject plenty of applicants on the grounds that their efforts in study were not enough to reach the standard of acceptance. Thus, the ideas of equality and competition within education have been closely linked in the establishment of the Japanese educational system as it is today.

The egalitarian principle set up after the war, which in theory presumes that educational equality means providing an equal opportunity to all children who should be equally talented, or more correctly, who are equally capable of achieving the same level of academic performance, has been sending the same message to all students: anyone who studies hard enough can reach the top of the social ladder. Nevertheless, in practice, gender differences are strongly stressed in the field of school education. In this regard, girls have been receiving contradictory messages. On the one hand, like boys, girls are encouraged to study hard in school to reach the highest academic level as possible on the assumption that all are potentially gifted to gain social success. On the other hand, however, the strong idea that men and women are talented in different fields permeates throughout society including schools.[8] Despite the notion that all children are gifted

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sCIE (the Civil Information and Education Section), a section of GHQ, ordered that Home Economics which had been a compulsory subject for girls only before the war should change to Homemaking which required both boys and girls to study in the middle schools (Hisatake et al. 1997:51). After GHQ left in 1952, however, 'the Japanese government undertook a careful reassessment of the recent reforms with an eye to correcting what were widely viewed as excesses' (Beauchamp 1994:10). In 1958, the Ministry of Education divided Homemaking into two compulsory subjects: technical skills for boys and housework

equally, girls, and also boys, are supposed to develop their gender-specific talent *(kosei)* to serve eventually for the benefit of society as a whole. In this regard, it is little wonder that education provides different goals for boys and girls respectively: it is socially considered that the kind of talent they should develop is different.

2.4    Gender specialisation in higher education: historical implications

Although the government did not deny education for women even at the very beginning of the Meiji educational reform, they never regarded the purpose of women's education as 'getting a higher position, making his name' *(risshin shusse),* which has been an ultimate goal for men's education. In its early years, the Meiji government sent a large number of young men to the West for a few years to have them acquire advanced knowledge in technology, law, trade, and other areas, expecting them to be engaged in a certain position in the government on their return. In 1872, the government sent five girls aged from eight to fifteen to the United States for education for the first time. What they were expected to study, by spending ten years there, was 'American home life'. Unlike the men's cases, the government had no plan to utilise the female returnees except using them in later years as a convenient example in order to impress Japan's 'progressive' attitude towards women to Western countries (Sievers 1983:12-13). It is well-known that the youngest of the girls, Tsuda Umeko, became deeply disappointed by the condition of Japanese women on her return, and established a specialised school for women. She became a founder of Women's English College (the present Tsuda-Juku University) as a result, but 'her achievements were certainly not the result of government support or encouragement' (ibid. 12-3). From the start of modern education, the government did not expect women to use their academic credentials to gain privileged positions in employment.

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skills for girls. Only girls were supposed to learn cooking, dressmaking, child-rearing, and household management until the policy changed again in 1989.

## The necessity of education for girls

> The man from Kumamoto said that it is best not to bother looking for an intelligent, well-educated girl to marry, for you will find it is all no use once the children start to come. It is best to get some mountain girl who is good to look at but not too beautiful, who works hard, can do your laundry, and take care of the children. ... A wife needs not to be educated; she is to be a mother. (Smith and Wiswell 1982:180)

Japanese policy makers were concerned about education for women from the early stages of the educational reform in the Meiji period (1868-1912), but the goal and meaning of education they set for women were quite different to those for men from the outset. One of the reasons why education for women was segregated before the war was a long established social consensus that women were not worth being educated.[9] Nevertheless, it does not mean that the central government or intellectuals in those days judged that it was meaningless. In fact, many intellectuals presented papers that expounded their views in favour of education for women (Koyama 1991). In a document issued in 1872, the Ministry of Education explained the necessity of primary education for women; a girl should be granted education 'equally' *(hitoshiku)* with a boy because she eventually becomes a mother, and whether a mother is clever or not greatly affects her children's ability (ibid. 35-36).[10] In other words, the government began to recognise the necessity of education for women because they should be clever enough to educate their own children themselves. In contrast with the man from Kumamoto illustrated in Ella Wiswell's journal written in 1935-6, the government considered that women need education to fulfil their maternal role in later life.

## Pre-war educational system for women

Prior to the post-war educational reform, the school system for girls was distinct from that for boys. Co-education in primary school was admitted, but in fact, girls and boys were divided after the third year of primary school (Hara 1995:98-99). Although girls were not allowed to enter

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[9] In the Edo period (1603-1867), before the Meiji Restoration, daughters from the upper *(samurai)* class and wealthy merchant families were supposed to acquire women's virtues to be an obedient wife and daughter-in-law by their marriage. (Koyama 1991:14-15).

[10] The Ministry of Education was established in 1871. The fact that this document was published in 1872 indicates government already had an interest in educating women at the beginning of the educational reform.

middle schools that finally lead to universities, which means they had no possibility of becoming members of the ruling elite such as bureaucrats, other options were arranged for girls who wanted to advance their schooling (Hara 1995:99, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:20). In the 1880s, the government launched secondary schools for girls, and the Girls' High School Law *(Kato Jogakko Rei)* was promulgated in 1899, which ordered local governments to establish at least one girls' high school in each prefecture (Hara 1995:99, Shinotsuka 1995b:87).

It was Christian missionaries who played the main role in establishing girls' high schools in the early years of post-primary education for women. Before the Girls' High School Law was implemented, several girls' high school *(kotojogakko )* were set up in various parts of Japan, such as the Ferris Seminary in Yokohama (1870), Aoyama Jogakuin in Tokyo (1874), Kobe Jogakuin in Kobe (1875), and Doshisha Jogakko in Kyoto (1877) (Hara 1995:98-9, Shinotsuka 1995b:88). Many of them had a Western principal and had depended on foreign economic aid in the beginning, but gradually became independent with a Japanese principal (Shinotsuka 1995b:88).

Tertiary education for women started with a state higher normal school for women *(joshi k6t6 shihan gakko)* for training teachers. The first higher normal school (the present Ochanomizu Women's University) was founded in 1874.[1] Nara Women's Higher Normal School (the present Nara Women's University) followed in 1908. These two teachers' training colleges were the only two state-run higher educational institutions for women, and today they are known as elite women's universities. In the private sector, the first women's specialised schools *(joshi senmon gakko )* were established in 1900, namely Women's English College (the present Tsuda-Juku University), Tokyo Women's Medical School, and School of Fine Art for Women. In the following year, Japan Women's University was founded. These private higher educational institutions for women were treated as women's specialised schools, being distinguished from state-run women's higher normal schools by the law. From the 1920s, higher or tertiary education for women began to expand, but the proportion of women attending higher educational

[1] The institution was firstly named 'Women's Normal School', and changed the name to 'Tokyo Women's Higher Normal School' in 1908 (Shinotsuka 1995:101-3).

institution in the 17-21 age group was only 0.2% (and 3.0% for boys) in 1920 (Amano 1986:43, Shinotsuka 1995b:92). In those days, only a handful of elite women attended higher educational institutions.

Western influence over education for women: 'good wife, wise mother'

The main philosophy of education for women before the Second World War was to produce a 'good wife, wise mother' *(ry6sai kenbo)* (Koyama 1991). The notion of 'good wife, wise mother' advocated that girls should be disciplined to be nothing but a good wife and wise mother. Moreover, it defined 'women's contribution to the good of the nation to be their labour as "good wives" and "wise mothers" in the private world of the home' (Uno 1993:297). Naruse Jinzo, the founder of Japan Women's University, who had been educated in a theological school in the United States, insisted that an 'excellent' good wife and wise mother greatly contributes to the state by producing an 'excellent' imperial subject (Koyama 1991:128-29). From the viewpoint that a mother has the role of educating her children at home, 'wise mother' was overwhelmingly stressed more than 'good wife' in the field of education for women (ibid. 46).

The pre-war educational ideology of 'good wife, wise mother' and its legacy have been criticised as the main cause of women's segregation in higher education. Fujimura-Fanselow argues as follows:

> Women's education has been seen as serving primarily to prepare them to be better wives and mothers. To the end, general cultural enrichment, rather than specialised or vocational training, is what most parents have sought for their daughters. This, of course, harks back to the pre-war concept *of ry6sai kenbo ky6iku,* or 'education for good wives and wise mothers' (1989:166).

Hara claims that 'the pre-war concept of gender-differentiated education and the ideology of education for "good wives and wise mothers" has resurged from time to time over the post-war period' (1995:104). She cited the words of the director of the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education in a newspaper article published in 1969; 'This undoubtedly aims at educating women as good wives and wise mothers. No one dares to oppose it' (Mainichi Newspaper, 1 October 1969, cited in Hara 1995:104).

Although the image of 'good wife, wise mother' ideology as an 'out of date' philosophy of women's education rooted in Confucianism, is still firm in contemporary Japanese society (Sechiyama 1996:127), recent research points out a Western influence on governmental views of the 'good wife, wise mother' education in the Meiji era. For example, Koyama (1991) reveals that the concept of 'good wife, wise mother' used in the context of women's education was established in the process of modernising the nation with Western influences.

It was not until the Meiji period that child-rearing was necessarily a woman's primary duty. In the pre-modem period, various texts were used to educate girls at temple schools or at home (Koyama 1991:14-24, Miyashita 1985:29-40). In these texts preaching womanly virtue and moral principles, there was little description of a woman's obligation as a mother. Instead of duties of a mother, duties as a daughter-in-law *(yome),* such as obedience or filial piety towards her parents-in-law and labour associated with household management and business, were emphasised in the texts. In the Edo era (1603-1867), Japan, 'childbearing assistance by siblings or in-laws in the lower classes and by servants in the upper classes would enable them to concentrate on other types of productive and reproductive work for the household' (Uno 1991:30). Therefore, the only thing a woman was expected to do, as a mother, was to give birth (Koyama 1991:19). Maternal love was rather regarded as a negative factor in socialising children, since women would spoil them. Women were not considered to be clever enough to educate their children, sons in particular, at home (ibid. 19-24). The education of boys was a father's important job in middle- and lower-class families, those whose trades did not require formal education (ibid. 30-34).

On the contrary, the role of a mother in educating her children was stressed in Western society in the 19th Century. After the tremendous change in industry occurred in England, followed by some other Western countries, social norms were transformed to a large extent, including the meaning of the ideal family and the maternal role (Forna 1999:36-37). The split between home and workplace, one of the main effects of industrialisation, made it difficult for women to deal with both household work and paid jobs in the same manner as they had before. As a result,

women's roles had shifted in emphasis more to family-related matters including the education of children, and away from productive work. Among middle-class people, to create a peaceful 'nest' for her children and husband became a woman's primary job. 'Gradually, men's involvement with children tailed off entirely until the responsibility for moral teaching was taken away from them and placed in the hands of women' (Foma 1999:37).

The womanly figure described above was one of the Western ideas imported to Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868). The Japanese government of the day zealously assimilated anything from the West, believing that if they acquired a Western way of thinking and values, they could establish a modem nation which was economically, technologically, and militarily as strong and powerful as Western nations were. Education for women was discussed in the context that women should acquire modern knowledge to be able to help their husbands and to teach their children, who would in turn serve the nation. The principle of 'good wife, wise mother' education for women reflected the drive of governmental policies wishing to catch up with Western countries as soon as possible. According to Sechiyama, the ideal figure of 'good wife, wise mother' is a woman who is well equipped in terms of 'traditional' womanly virtue, and also has a broad view of the nation itself and enough knowledge to raise the future generation in a proper way (1996:127).

Equality vs. Equal rights

The distinction in the usage of 'equality' from that of 'equal rights' is essential to see the basic principle which underpinned the development of higher education for women in history. Shievers illustrates that intellectuals in the early Meiji era, such as Mori Arinori and Fukuzawa Yukichi, who insisted that husband and wife should be equally treated in a family, showed little interest in offering legal rights to women (1983:18-25). [12] Several Meiji intellectuals, who were influenced by Christianity and a Western notion of 'the better half', insisted on an equal relationship

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[12] Among the male intellectuals in the Meiji period, there were arguments about women's rights. 'Both Mori and Fukuzawa must have been surprised to find themselves described as advocates of equal rights for men and women *(danjo doken)*. To Mori (and perhaps to Fukuzawa as well) it was something of a shock to be identified as the champion of a cause he did not believe in' (Shievers 1983:21).

between husband and wife because they believed that women's inferior status in Japan was 'a major contributor to its backwardness' (ibid. 18). They suggested that a 'civilised' country should treat men and women equally in marriage and should abolish the concubine system (ibid. 18-20). The intellectuals and the government reached agreement that women should be educated in modernising the nation, but their lack of the notion of 'equal rights' for men and women made their arguments incompatible. On the one hand, the government and intellectuals could not accept women's 'invasion' of the male realms e.g. political activities, as the result of educating women. On the other hand, however, leaving women uneducated and putting them in an inferior position at home were not what a 'civilised' country was supposed to do. Although a woman should be given an appropriate position as a home educator in the framework of education for 'good wife, wise mother', equal rights for men and women outside the home was beyond the scope of education for women.

Advocates for women's education expected women to develop their own 'special' talent that men were not given, i.e. motherhood including the qualities of affection and mercy, through education to be a 'good wife, wise mother', and fully to take advantage of it for public interests and national prosperity (Koyama 1991:155-61). According to Koyama (1991), there were three characteristics in the ideology of 'good wife, wise mother'. Firstly, it assumed that men and women have polarised existences; the distinctions between men and women are not limited to their reproductive abilities, rather they are greatly different physiologically and psychologically, and so are the roles they achieve. For example, Shimoda Jiro, a professor of the Tokyo Women's Higher Normal School, explained that men and women have completely different physiological characteristics, such as speed of pulse, quantity of red blood cells, and ability of memory. Because of these 'natural' differences, according to his theory, women are suited for doing housework and educating their children while men are suited for working outside to earn a family living. Secondly, it denied the idea of 'male superiority, female inferiority' *(danson johi )*, and insisted on 'equality' of men and women; i.e. different characters of the sexes were considered to be complementary, so men's role and women's role are equally valued. Therefore, more importantly, the notion of equal rights was denied because it leads to the collapse of the boundary between the male and female spheres. In effect, thirdly, a woman had to be socially

and financially dependent on her father or husband, so their position could clearly not be on the same level as a man. A woman's financial independence and positioning on the same level of a social post with a man was considered to be a violation of the male domain. [13] Koyama concluded that 'good wife wise mother' ideology had a function of placing women under the illusion that they had a role equally as important as that of men's in society, despite the fact that women's social status was much more restricted legally and morally than men's.[14]

Highly educated women and employment

Despite the fact that education to be a 'good wife, wise mother' emphasised women's roles at home, it did not aim to purge women from the field of employment. Basically, higher education for women started to produce teachers; normal schools (for men) and women's normal schools trained teachers for primary schools, and higher normal schools (for men) and women's higher normal schools trained teachers for secondary schools. A teaching job was the first professional occupation in modem history for women from the middle class (Shinotsuka 1995b:101), whereas lower class women had been working as factory workers or domestic servants. As with the rapid expansion of girls' high schools, which started around 1915, women's specialised schools to train teachers, especially those who taught English, Literature, and Home Economics, were founded one after another (Amano 1986:31-33). In addition, women's specialised schools teaching new subjects, such as medical, pharmacy, and sewing education began to be established from the 1920s (Sugita 1996:28).

Ironically, however, the increasing number of women's specialised schools ended up in producing jobless teachers in large quantities (Sugita 1996:28). As a result, general subjects in these schools, such as English, Japanese, and Home Economics, became fields of study that were

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[13] Koyama (1991:55) cited the speech of the Minister of Education at that time. In 1902, Minister Kikuchi stated at a women's educational conference as follows: 'I consider the tenns "equal rights for the sexes" to be abominable. Nevertheless, we should respect equality of men's duty and women's duty. Manly women are not so acceptable as womanly men. I don't hope our women occupy the same level of social position as men'.

[14] For instance, the old Criminal Law issued in 1880 admitted a husband's right to kill his wife if she committed adultery. On the other hand, it was socially acceptable that husbands had mistresses (Hisatake et al. 1997:13).

not necessarily connected to vocational training (ibid. 28). Moreover, a social climate of those days which did not necessarily welcome professional women, and limited possibility of gaining professional occupations except for the teaching profession at secondary schools were obstacles for graduates from women's specialised schools who were in pursuit of a career (Amano 1989:156). Yoshioka Yayoi, the founder of Tokyo Women's Medical School and a female doctor herself, deplored the fact that a female doctor was paid less than a male colleague and was used instead of a nurse (Yoshioka cited in Amano 1986:49). Even if a female graduate succeeded in obtaining a professional job, it was common for her to give up it on marriage (Amano 1986:50).

Finally, along with their expansion in numbers from 1920 to 35, women's specialised schools began to function in providing 'general cultural enrichment' *(kyoyo)* to young women from middle or upper classes for their marriage preparation (Amano 1986:50-55). According to Amano, as higher education for women was expanding, male graduates from elite universities began to marry women who graduated from specialised schools (ibid. 50-55). Higher education did not necessarily provide a woman with professional success, but functioned to prepare her to marry an elite man in order to gain future security for herself.

2.5    University education for women after the Second World War

After the end of the Second World War, women's specialised schools were officially promoted to the status of junior colleges or women's universities. The post-war educational reform removed the barrier to women's access to formerly male universities, but the ratio of female students in prestigious coeducational universities remains small even today.

'Feminine' fields of study

As regards the problems associated with higher education for women, two main factors were identified: firstly, a greater number of female students chose a two-year junior college rather than a four-year university. Secondly, the majority of female students of four-year universities, those from junior colleges too, majored in 'feminine' subjects such as Literature, Education, or Home Economics (Beauchamp 1994, Fujimura-Fanselow 1989, 1995, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999,

Toshitani et al. 1996). What made these two issues problematic was that, 'An important consequence of these tendencies is that opportunities, particularly occupational options, available to women upon graduation are very limited' (Fujimura-Fanselow 1989:164). In general, junior colleges are not expected to produce promising researchers in the academic domain or employees who will eventually be allocated a managerial job. Besides, companies hesitated to employ female university graduates, still more if they had no job-related skills or qualifications, as I will describe in the following chapter.

Concerning the former issue, however, the situation has been rapidly changing in recent years. Two-year junior colleges have been seen as higher educational institutions exclusively for girls since the 1960s. In contrast with four-year universities that tend to be located in metropolitan areas, many junior colleges are situated in local areas throughout the nation. This fact has attracted parents of the female students in two ways: firstly, they do not need to be over-burdened with the cost of a daughter's education, including living costs, and secondly, they can continue to keep their daughters under their own supervision while they are still living at home (Fujimura-Fanselow 1989:168). Moreover, a large number of companies recruited new female employees from junior colleges, not from universities, and offered them clerical work. Since 1990, however, the number of girls who choose universities sharply increased (see Figure 0.1). The total number of students enrolled in junior colleges dropped from 498,516 in 1995 to 377,852 in 1999 (MOE 2000:3). Being threatened by the shortage of applicants, the Association of Private Junior Colleges advocated the replacement of their title at a higher education committee of the Ministry of Education, from 'junior college' to 'university', to attract more applicants (Asahi Newspaper, 7 March 2000). In 2000, in 59% of private junior colleges, the number of applicants did not reach the number of admission places (Asahi Newspaper, 28 June 2000).[15]

The problem of female students tending to major in a limited range of subjects has also been

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[15] Universities have also suffered a decreasing number of applicants in the last few years. In 28% of private universities, in 2000, the number of applicants did not reach the number they could admit (Asahi Newspaper, 28 June 2000).

lessened, but still remains an issue today. In 1952, in feminine fields of study in university faculties, the percentage of female students among all the students was 24.6% in education, 24.5% in literature, 46.7% in pharmacy, 64.7% in music, and 98.5% in home economics *(kasei gakubu )* respectively (MOE 1953). In faculties of masculine subjects, on the other hand, it was O.l% in agriculture, 1.0% in economics, and 2.1% in law respectively (ibid.)[16] . In 1999, the percentage of female students among all university students was 58.6% in education, 67.4% in humanities (inc. literature and history), and 95.8% in home economics faculties. Also, it was 9.8% in engineering, 25.2% in sciences, 26.0% in social sciences (inc. economics and politics), and 39.9% in agriculture faculties (MOE 2000). In medical faculties, 61.1% of the students were women on pharmacy courses while 32.0% of them were females on medical courses (ibid.).

Educators' views on higher education for women

A legacy of education to be a 'good wife, wise mother' can still be found in educators' views on the aims and ideology of education for women. Interviews with academics of women's universities and junior colleges carried out in 1993, by a research group at Ochanomizu Women's University, clearly demonstrates their ideology of higher education for women (DKSSK 1994). In the research, seven university academics in higher positions were interviewed in terms of their views on higher education for women, e.g. its ideology, meaning, and the role it should play for female students.[17] Some replied that the meaning of higher education should be the same for both the sexes, but many of them stressed the significance of gender-specific education. The head of Japan Women's University insisted that both men and women should be treated equally as human beings, but gender differences *(seisa )* should be positively taken into account to promote 'utilisation of the sense of women' *(josei no kansei wo ikasu).* In her opinion,

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[16] Students of the old Imperial Universities were not included in these figures. In 1952, the old imperial universities, those established before WWII, admitted only 447 female students (out of 8,420). Among 447, 10 students were in literature, one was in science, and 386 were in medical departments (MOE 1953). It is supposed that many female students in medical departments studied pharmacy, but it was not clear because medical departments of old imperial universities included several related subjects to study. Old imperial universities that were formerly exclusively for men, are still the most prestigious universities today.

[17] All the interviewers and interviewees are academic staff at women's universities or junior colleges (some accepting male graduate students). As regards university education for women, various pieces of research have been carried out, e.g. follow-up survey of the graduates, but almost all were surveys done by women's universities. Women's universities may be aware of their 'mission' in contributing to better treatment of women in society, in which co-educational universities are less interested.

women originally have a spirit of love, therefore they can contribute to realising a peaceful society by utilising their 'gift'. A professor at Toyo Eiwa Women's University considered that one of the aims of educating women in a meaningful way, in Japan, was to produce good homemakers. He claimed that highly educated women could contribute to society through educating their own children at home, which is quite beneficial to society. The head of the home economics faculty of Doshisha Women's University insisted that higher education should contribute to the development of women's 'special gift' *(tokusei)*. The 'special gift' *(tokusei)* he referred to here is motherhood. Four out of the seven interviewees used words such as motherhood and women's 'special gift' *(tokusei)* or 'sense' *(kansei)* when it comes to the significance of higher education for women.

This survey reveals that the presidents and professors lack a broader vision of the role of a university as an educational institution supporting the female students' preparation for professional success in the future. The head of Meiji Junior College was the only one who referred to students' job opportunities, but she just commented that she did not need to worry about it because 'companies have assessed the professional ability of our students as high, and they prefer our students since they are obedient in contrast with university female graduates who are toffee-nosed or self-assertive *(namaiki)'*. One of the interviewers, a professor of Ochanomizu Women's University, commented afterwards that he found academics in the management position of universities, including the heads, had little interest in their students' professional perspectives and opportunities (Yuzawa 1969:97). He warned of their lack of awareness in terms of female graduates' severe difficulties in job hunting (ibid. 97). Kawakami makes the criticism that traditional views on women's education, that is, education for producing a good homemaker, are still deeply rooted in the attitudes of presidents of several women's universities (1986:151).

2.6    Graduate mothers' views on higher education: findings from fieldwork

How do female university graduates themselves consider and evaluate the university education they were granted? University education for women has stressed an aspect of education aimed to develop women's 'special' talent. Even so, more women enter university every year. Does it

mean that they want to be educated to be good mothers through university education? On the other hand, however, the numbers of women who choose masculine subjects have also increased. Does it mean that they enter a university to seek better professional opportunities? In addition, are they satisfied with the content and quality of education provided?

The following are findings from interviews with mothers who attended university, in order to seek answers for the questions above. (They are, in a way, women who achieved the 'traditional' goal of higher education for women). There was no Tokyo University graduate among the mothers, but approximately one third of them graduated from somewhat prestigious institutions, such as Waseda University and Keio University in the private sector and state universities including an old imperial university. They are divided into three age groups, and their ages are given in order to show differences and similarities between older and younger generations.

Reasons for entering university

University entry was not something special for the majority of mothers I interviewed. Rather, it was a matter of course for girls whose academic achievement in high school had reached a certain level. H-san (35) said that she feels that university is already part of compulsory education these days. She went to a high school attached to a private women's university, so she went on to the university 'just like stepping on to an escalator'. For one thing, many of the mothers attended highly-ranked high schools where the majority of the students go on to university as a natural consequence of their hard work. In a high school which M-san (36) attended, all the students went on to university. M-san (39) attended one of the top high schools in Osaka. O-san (30) told me that she entered university as a matter of course without thinking of the reason for doing it. 'All of my friends went on to university'. Their choices were partly formed by their environment where 'everybody around me entered university for no specific reason at all' (S-san (4?)).

Several mothers had more concrete reasons to study at university. H-san (29) had two reasons: 'I went to university because I wanted to study, and I wanted to leave home and go to Tokyo. Longings for academia and Tokyo made me do that'. The case of F-san (42) was a

bit unique, since she did not enter a university immediately after leaving high school. Instead, she learnt English in a specialist-training school, hoping to be a stewardess, but she came to a turning-point in her life there.

> I respected a female teacher who got a PhD in the United States. When I told her I wanted to be a stewardess, she said, 'Stewardess? That's a kind of job where you will say "tea? coffee? or me? ", isn't it? It's not a job for life' I was so shocked that my life turned around since then. Stewardess was a job that many girls admired in Japan at that time, but she knew American people didn't think of it as a job for life. It was a 'culture shock'. I really thank her.

Afterwards, F-san entered a university where almost all the lectures are taught in English to study comparative cultures as 'a more meaningful subject than just learning English'. Four years in university did not satisfy her, so she started her study of art history in a graduate school after completing undergraduate study. E-san's (40) case was also exceptional. Despite the fact that almost all the girls in her class went on to junior college or specialist-training school, she entered university since she wanted to study law 'without a specific reason'.

Even for the older generation, mothers of Group A (aged 51-62), their decision to attend university was not 'shocking news' for people around them. K-san's (51) father was a medical doctor and almost all her relatives were university graduates. For her, going to university was just a matter of course. M-san (62) told me that everyone in her high school took university entrance examinations. Her father was less interested in her higher education since her family was a merchant one, but she was allowed to enter a women's university, not a co-educational one. N-san (60) said that her parents let her have her own way. 'They neither strongly supported nor opposed that. My older brothers and sister went to university, and so did almost all my friends from my high school. Everyone went to university, so did I'. When women of Group A went to university, the number of female university students was quite limited. When N-san was in the second year of university in 1960, for example, the rate of female students entering universities among the same age group was 2.5% (see Figure 0.1). They were absolutely an academic elite in the wider society of those days, but they did not feel their choice was something very special.

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S-san's (55) case showed that it was commonplace for an excellent girl student to enter university, even in the 1960s. She told me that her case was unusual because she went to university 10 years after her graduation from high school.

> I took only the entrance exams of national universities when I was 18 years old, and failed all of them. At that time, in the upcountry like my place, few girls were allowed to be *ronin*.[18] After thinking over various options, I just gave it up. You would like to know why I tried again ten years after that. It was an inferiority complex. To be honest, I feel ashamed to say it, but I went to a highly ranked high school in Saga prefecture. Moreover, my class was for students who would enter national universities. I thought I was clever enough to go to a (national) university. Actually, however, I became a private home tutor after leaving high school. People who knew me asked me to teach their children at home. I could not put up with the fact that people from lower ranked high schools went to junior college (while I remained just a high school leaver).

When she was 20 years old or so, in 1965, only 4.7% of girls of the age group entered universities (see Figure 0.1). For girls in general, not going to university was quite common at that time, but for her, it was the cause of her strong feeling of inferiority because everyone around her went on to university.

**Subjects of study**

Asked what made them opt for the subject they studied at university, many of them told me that they simply wanted to study it. There was little difference between the three groups divided by age in terms of the way they selected a subject. For example, M-san (29) said that she majored in mathematics since she liked to study it when she was a high school student, and H-san (49) had loved to look at living things through a microscope since her high school days, so she studied natural science at university. Another example is N-san (60), who opted to study physical education because she preferred physical exercise to armchair study.

What impressed me is that many mothers, roughly one third of them, studied so-called 'masculine' subjects. Several mothers of Group **B** (aged 35-49) and Group C (aged 29-33) studied maths at university. M-san (38) studied applied biotechnology which had just been

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[18] *Ronin* means a student who fails the entrance examination and tries it again next April or even the one after next.

introduced in Japan.

Biotechnology had already been developed in the United States 10 or 20 years before that. It sounded interesting to me. It seemed that biology-related faculties in the old imperial universities were more theory-oriented, not so practical, so I went to the Science University of Tokyo. When I entered, female students were only 14 out of 150 contemporaries.

Even two women from Group A chose a non-feminine field of study. Five out of seven mothers of the group studied at a faculty of education, literature, or English, but S-san (55) who entered university 10 years after graduation studied law. Moreover, O-san (62) opted for a journalism course in the Faculty of Politics at Waseda University, which was one of the prestigious departments among private universities. 'I took the entrance examination for the university, just because I enjoy studying. Also I wanted to broaden my horizons'. When she studied in the 1950s, there were only 10 female students among around 700 male students in the

faculty. When it came to the selection of a subject, it seemed that their main concern was whether the subject would interest them, rather than whether it was 'feminine' or 'masculine'.

However, some mothers chose a subject considering the domestic role they would be expected to play in future. K-san (35) was the only mother who told me that she wanted to develop women's 'special' gift through university education.

The reason I chose psychology in the faculty of education was to be a clever mother. I didn't want to be like my mother who was working full time. My parents are scholars and they went to the United States as Fulbright students when I was in the 2"d grade in primary school. I didn't want to be an academic like my mother, so my dream was to be a full-time housewife.

As she had desired, she became a full-time housewife when she was 26 years old. However, soon she got deeply depressed by the monotony of a housewife's life.

I didn't know what the life of a full-time housewife was like, since my mother had been working. The main problem was that I could not get pregnant immediately after I quit my job. My husband was a workaholic, and his relatives never stopped asking me when I would be expecting a baby. My friends were very busy with either their work or child-rearing. Moreover, if you don't have a child, you cannot enter a neighbours' circle. I often did not speak to anyone during the day. A few months later, I began to suffer from a serious mental disorder. When I asked my mother for some advice, she soon picked up the phone and talked to a professor of Ochanomizu Women's University. My mother

had been waiting for me to give up as a full-time housewife. At last, everything had turned out just as she wished.

Her life as a full-time housewife made her go back to school as a result. She obtained an MA degree in family sociology from Ochanomizu Women's University, and is now teaching gender studies at a junior college, struggling to raise the consciousness of her students who want to be happy full-time homemakers.

Unlike K-san, A-san (48) considers that she made the right choice. She majored in management law, which was also 'masculine', in a coeducational university, taking her future role as wife and daughter-in-law *(yome)* into consideration.

> I wanted to get married into a family who runs their own business. So, I thought it was better for me to study something useful to help them. My parents fully supported me going to university. Two of my older sisters went to universities, too. But, my parents encouraged me to choose more feminine subject such as English, Japanese, or home economics. Finally, they gave in because I said I would not go to university unless I could study law or economics. After entering the university, I found all the classmates were boys but me.

As she wished, she became the wife of a dentist and his family owns property for rent. A-san identifies herself as a full-time housewife, but she often spends some time doing accounting work for her in-laws' family business. 'It is nothing more than an extension of household chores. I am paid for the work, of course, but my task is just to check if the rent is paid without delay'. She seemed to be quite satisfied with her situation.

Choosing a masculine subject does not necessarily mean that the student has stronger career aspirations than those who choose a feminine subject. M-san (30) studied maths in a faculty of science and engineering because she liked the subject, but she never had a plan of continuing work after marriage. She was asked to help with her husband's family business, a business paper for stationers. 'I don't want to work at all, but I have to accept that. I am working only for a week per month, so it is acceptable to me so far. I wanted to get some wages, but my parents-in-law do not have such an intention'. M-san was afraid that her parents-in-law would ask her to get more involved in their business after her children grow up.

Selection of university

My interviewees gave me relatively specific reasons for their selection of the subject on the one hand, the reasons why they opted to go to the university itself were likely to be less positive on the other. Several mothers said they chose the university simply because they did not pass the entrance exams of other universities. F-san (33) and M-san (30) said they obtained admission to university on the recommendation of the high school they graduated from. The recommendation of a high school gives preferential treatment to the applicants.

As we have seen, all universities (and their faculties, too) in Japan are hierarchically ranked. The higher ranked a university where a student is accepted, the higher s/he is socially praised. Therefore, students tend to opt for as highly ranked a university as possible rather than taking the actual quality of education into account. In other words, many students choose a university which they are able to enter, rather than a university they actually want to go to.

A difference between generations is that younger mothers tended to enter co-educational universities. Four out of seven mothers of Group A went to women's university, but only five out of 22 mothers of Group B, and two out of ten mothers (excluding one who went to a women's junior college) of Group C studied at women's universities.

Parents' attitudes

Their parents' attitudes were also influential on the selection of university for many of those who are in Groups A and B. For instance, some said that their parents were reluctant to have their daughters away from home, because they were girls. A-san (42) went to university within 15 minutes' walk. She said people in her hometown in Nara were a bit conservative. Abe- san (48) also took the distance from home to university into consideration.

It is generally considered that parents tend to place some restrictions on daughters when entering university, but not on sons. Much research reveals parents' preference for investment in a son's education rather than in a daughter's (Brinton 1993:210, Fujimura-Fanselow 1989:166,

1995:130-32, Okano and Tsuchiya 1999:76-77). Fujimura-Fanselow introduced examples of students at the women's university where she teaches in order to underline her argument.

> The majority of students at this university come from well-to-do families who more or less took it granted that their daughters, as well as sons, would attend university. Yet there are cases in which one or the other parent or some other relative thought it was a waste of time and money for young women to attend college for four years and felt, instead, that a junior college education was sufficient. (1995:130)

H-san (39) was told by her mother that a woman does not need to go university, but her father recommended her to do so. She opted for an English course, but she was forced to leave the university after her parents died in quick succession.

> Almost all the neighbours were our relatives. They took it for granted that I would leave the university and do housework. If my older brother had been a university student at that time, I am sure they would have encouraged him to continue his study. He had already got his job. Our relatives gave the greater part of my parents' inheritance to him at their discretion. Now he is out of work.

In addition, many parents would not allow their daughters to be *ronin,* which is however quite a common option for their sons (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995:130-31). Fujimura-Fanselow suggests this tendency reflects social agreement that a woman will end up being a homemaker and mother (ibid. 131). In other words, it is considered that a woman does not need to study hard for years to enter a top-ranking university, and also that marriage is advantageous to younger women. Some of my interviewees also told me that they were not allowed to make a second attempt. K-san (51) was late for the entrance exam of a university she wanted to go to. So she entered another university, since her parents had not allowed her to 'waste' another year. A-san (42) also failed to enter a university of her choice. K-san (38) entered Keio University since she did not pass other exams, but could not try them again a year later. Their parents opposed their daughters spending another year in preparation for university entry, but they took the daughters' choice itself, i.e. going to university, as a matter of course.

Parents of Group C mothers, however, were not against their daughters being *ronin.* E-san (30) spent one year as a *ronin,* and it was not so unusual even for female students of her network

then. O-san (30) said, 'everyone (her female contemporaries) went to university, after spending some time as *ronin'* . For this generation, it seems that women's entry for university was accepted as 'normal' not only by students' network, but also by the wider society itself.

On the whole, almost all the women I interviewed told me that their parents had supported them in going to university, even though some gave their daughters only one chance, or at least did not strongly oppose it. M-san (36) said that her parents eagerly supported her and her younger brother to enter university, because they were not allowed to go to university by their parents. S-san (40) did not consider an alternative to going to university. 'I simply didn't think of any other possibility. I think it was an influence of my parents on me. My elder brother and sister went on to university, too'. N-san's (40) father was university lecturer teaching biology. 'My father had relatively progressive ideas, but he was not pleased with me studying philosophy because it is not feminine. But, he supported me going to university'. Mothers of Group A were also encouraged to study at university by their parents. O-san (61) presumes that her parents considered that it was better for their daughter to gain cultural enrichment through university education. 'My family was from the middle class, and my father was a banker. In such a family, parents did not think their daughter should get a professional skill, but agreed that it was better to gain cultural enrichment'.

Parents' encouragement to their daughters to have higher education is partly caused by a general belief that women cannot get a good job unless they have special skills or qualifications, especially after getting married. S-san (40) obtained a qualification as a pharmacist at her university. She told me that her parents strongly recommended her to get it. 'My mother always said I need a qualification to find a good job. She thought I couldn't get married because I am fat. But when I got married, she strongly suggested I should quit work'. Y-san (52) entered a university because her parents had insistently asked her to do so since her childhood. 'My parents told me that a woman needs education because she has to find a job if she cannot get married or gets divorced'. Their parents did not necessarily expect their daughters to advance their career, but considered that it is better to have a university educational qualification for their own future security.

Career aspirations

I also asked them if they had any future career plans before entering university. When mothers in Group A were university students, it seems that few of them were expected to have career aspirations.

> N-san (60): Few companies offered jobs to female students at that time. Female graduates had very limited options: either to be a teacher or to have a clerical job at a firm. Many girls were in the faculty of either education or literature. Few were in the faculty of natural science. It was a time like that. Female university students themselves had internalised the idea that marriage is the source of women's happiness. If you got married after 25 years old, everyone thought it was too late. But, university graduates were a bit different from other girls. If you just wanted to marry, going to junior college was enough. Some parents said they gave up on a daughter with a university degree in a way (because they are interested in something other than marriage).

Among my interviewees, K-san (58) was the only one who had never had a paid job in her life.

> Many of my female classmates at high school didn't come to Tokyo to have advanced schooling as I did. But all of my four brothers came to Tokyo, so it was the pattern I would follow. Although I didn't expect my parents to allow me receive university education because I am a woman, they let me go to university instead of a junior college. ... I did not get a job after graduation. My contemporaries did so though..... They became teachers at middle or high schools. Some are still working as teachers. One of my seniors got a job in a company, but I wonder how she got it... I failed in getting a job, but my marriage had already been set up before my graduation. My parents arranged it without letting me know anything. I felt resistance, but he was not so bad when we met for the first time. So I have had no chance of having a job so far. It is quite unusual, isn't it?

O-san (62) did not have a strong desire to obtain a job after graduation, but she entered employment because her father died when she was in the first year. She got a job at Sony through her father's connections. When she entered Sony, the firm did not officially recruit female university graduates.

K-san (51) admitted her case was exceptional. She had had a clear career plan since she was a high school student. She studied hard at university to be a specialist in English language.

> I failed in entering the university I really wanted to go to, so I wanted to try for it again the year after. But at the university I entered, I came across a professor whom I respected. He was a great translator. I even almost fell in love. Only a few of the students could follow his supervision. I made a big effort to develop my ability. What I studied in the university is the base of my current job (as a technical translator). I think I am very exceptional. I feel that female students of those days thought more seriously about their profession than present students do. But many of them had difficulty in finding a job except for the teaching profession, owing to a shortage of jobs.

She criticised the younger generation. 'Nowadays girls go to university just because everybody goes there. When I was a university student, only women with a serious educational purpose attended university'.

For mothers of Groups B and C, it was taken for granted to enter employment after graduation, but the majority of mothers told me that they had no specific career plans before entering universities. Rather, some thought four years at university was enough time to think about it. H-san (31) is a speech therapist working in a hospital, but before she entered university, she did not know anything about the occupation. Her senior at the university let her know about it when she said she was interested in the mechanism of the brain and speech. When she was a high school student, M-san (29) could not come to any conclusion about her future professional plans. Therefore, she was going to spend four years trying to reach a conclusion. T-san (37) also did not have a clear career plan when she was a university student, just hoping 'something would be found during the four years'. S-san (38) said that she simply thought 'I would be able to manage job-hunting, because I studied economics'.

Until a few decades ago, it was generally considered that female university graduates were at a disadvantage in finding a job compared to junior college graduates. T-san (33) did not intend to go on to study after leaving high school, but she entered a junior college because her parents recommended her to receive higher education for her future.

> I wanted to work soon, rather than going to university. I did not expect anything in higher education, so I spent the two years doing a part time job. I was working at a cafe and experienced various kinds of job there, such as accounting or attending to customers. I learned many things which I found very useful later in my professional life.

Moreover, some mothers whom I came to know through a community activity told me that they went to junior college because companies did not hire women who had graduated from a university. One of them was a 39-year-old, and she said that the year she graduated from a junior college, her elder sister also graduated from a university. She was successful in finding a job in an airline company, but her sister found hardly any job opportunities available to female university graduates.

After entering university, they found university education insufficient to obtain a better professional opportunity. T-san (38) studied German language at the university, but did not get a job to use her knowledge of German.

> I wanted to use my language ability in work, but learning German in four years at university is far from enough to use it as a professional. I think many of my classmates thought that way. Even male classmates ended up just being a 'salary man'.

H-san (29) studied Japanese literature, but now she found it meaningless. 'What I learned at the university has been of little practical use to me. So I didn't obtain any useful skills in finding a job. It was a waste of money'. Y-san (36) became interested in journalism in university days, and studied sociology. However, she could not find a job related to her study. Many of my interviewees did not find study at university useful when job-hunting.

In general, students were not strongly encouraged to study in university. Hayes argues that 'The years of higher education for students are more like a vacation than a time of serious study' (1997:301). He illustrates what is happening in Japanese universities, which reminds me of my university days, as follows:

> Universities and colleges vary in their academic standards as do departments and programs within them. But generally speaking, expectations are less than for the higher education systems in Europe or North America. Students attend class irregularly, some hardly at all. Lecture notes are copied and sold, a process facilitated by the fact that some professors make few changes in their courses from year to year. Course exams are not demanding, if they are given at all, and students who do not pass can retake them. In some courses, there are few if any requirements apart from class attendance. Of those who enter the various institutions of higher education, 95 percent ultimately receive degrees.

(ibid. 301)

When K-san (44) entered her university, she felt happy because she did not need to study any more. Until high school, she had studied very hard to enter a good university, so entering university meant the end of her hard work. From her experience of studying sociology at graduate school in England, S-san (38), who wanted to be a journalist, declared that 'Japanese universities are no use in terms of study'. However, M-san's (38) university was quite demanding, so only half of the students in her faculty could graduate. Therefore, some students even transferred to another university to get a degree (in an easier way). She said that her university might be the only one in Japan which demands that their students study so hard.

Some mothers felt the need to continue their study after graduation. H-san (31) studied cognitive psychology at her university, and is working as a speech therapist. However, she needed further education to pursue her career.

> When I went to a hospital to see the work of a speech therapist, I realised I couldn't do that unless I had sufficient knowledge beforehand. So I went to a specialist-training school after university graduation. University education I received was not closely connected to my job, but I don't think it was useless. For example, I know how to look up things I want to know in books even if they are written in English.

M-san (38) realised the need to obtain a masters degree to get a job in which she could use her knowledge of biotechnology, but she did not have enough strength physically to go on with her study.

> We always had to do experiments until midnight. For instance, we had to put bacteria on living things or microbes every two hours. What undergraduate students were required to do was nothing more than assistant work, such as washing test tubes or putting bacteria on microbes, which disappointed me. If we wanted to be a professional researcher, we had to go on to a masters course.

Finally, she found a teaching job in a high school, partly because she could not acquire the necessary advanced knowledge to be a researcher at the undergraduate level.

Evaluation of university life

Despite the fact that a university degree was not effective in finding a job after graduation, almost all the interviewees told me that they are satisfied with their choice of entering university. They did not expect university to give them knowledge which would be useful for a business career, rather they considered university life as a good opportunity to enrich their personality, expand their personal network, get experience of various types of part time job.

Many of them told me that they did not study much at university, but even so they thought they gained something. E-san (30) said, 'We did not study at all and fully enjoyed student life during four years, but we learned something important such as mature attitude, thoughtfulness, capability. Companies taking on graduates expect such qualities, I think'. S-san (38) feels that she was making the base of her way of thinking through association with the network she established in university days. For M-san (38) and S-san (31), university life was the first step to independence from their parents. They considered that they learned many practical things and developed mentally by living alone.

A part-time job and activities outside university were attractions of university life for many. A-san (42) spent the four years working at a campground as an instructor. 'I enjoyed doing various activities with campers or children, for example, teaching children archery or swimming with them. Especially during the summer holiday, I worked there almost everyday. Apart from that, I had a part time job at a dentist, and often did a rock concert with my band. I led a full life at university'. F-san (33) happily told me, 'I enjoyed university life very much. I had a well-paid part time job, which I enjoyed, so I could make trips to China and other Asian countries several times. I experienced many useful things. I came to know many people. I was so happy everyday that I would not regret it even if I died (laugh)'. The younger generation might be not interested in gaining 'general cultural enrichment', but they were relatively satisfied with university life according to their own ways and purposes.

Mothers of Group A were also looking back on their happy university life. N-san (60) enjoyed the activities of a drama society, and her network expanded through the activity. She

stressed, 'my university life was really enjoyable'. M-san (62) belonged to a chorus group, and also was involved in an activity called a *'setsurumento katsudo'* ('settlement' activity) which gave her lots of opportunities of meeting new people, including her husband.

> We hardly hear of *'setsurumento'* recently, but many university students took part in the activity at that time. It was voluntary work to help children in a kind of slum area with their lessons. We were looking after those children while their mothers were working outside. I was asked by my friend who inclined to Marxism to go there, and my husband was also there with his friends.

K-san (58) organised a reading circle with her classmates at the women's university.

> It was good for me to go to university, because I gained life-long friendships. I had a meeting every week with my friends to have a talk about books we had read. People said women's friendship would be over on marriage, but we often take a short trip together even now. All of us married and had children, we had arranged marriages which were quite common in those days, but we are still very good friends.

As a whole, they were satisfied with the fact that they could gain not only academic knowledge, but also something important for their life, such as experiences of social activities and friendships established through them.

Especially for full-time mothers who have few opportunities to meet people outside the community, a university reunion is a good opportunity to gain some stimulation. K-san (38) said that it was very good for her to have friends with different occupations.

> There are only two full-time housewives, including me, among my reunion members. Some of my male contemporaries work in well-known companies. One works as a lawyer and one owns a hotel. A woman who is one year younger than me is an assistant professor. I think I need an association with professional people outside the mothers' network. This relationship stimulates me a lot.

A-san (48) also enjoyed meeting her contemporaries at a class reunion.

> It is exciting to listen to a story of business or of a company life from my male contemporaries. (A-san was the only female student in her class). Because what they are talking about is something I never experience in my housewifely life. I cannot enjoy my girls' high school reunion, because everyone talks about their husbands or children.

They found the personal network as expanded at university very useful after graduation. During my fieldwork, I met many mothers who said they have few opportunities to have a conversation with men except their husbands. Through a university network, mothers gain an opportunity of looking at a world outside their local community.

Some found university education useful in child-rearing. O-san (30) was trained to be a maths teacher. She thinks her knowledge of a training programme for teachers would be useful when her children enter a primary school, since she knows the way a teacher is educated at university. N-san (40) studied philosophy which she found impractical in finding a job after graduation. However, she realised that philosophy is of use in taking care of children. 'Children begin to talk at the age of one or two. Language is related to thought, isn't it? As a day nursery nurse, I found it interesting to see the way children are shaping their thought in the process of their growth'.

## 2.7   Conclusion

From the early years of the modern educational system in Japan, a higher academic qualification was a tool to gain a privileged position in employment and society. Rapid industrialisation after the opening of the country to the outside world devalued knowledge passed down from feudal times. The aim of education (for men) was to produce workers who could contribute to making the nation strong militarily and economically. Although higher education was for a very limited group of people, modem education gave a chance to access higher social status to those who had excellent academic abilities irrespective of social background.

Higher education for women started under Western influence, and it was formed from the viewpoint of how to utilise women in modernising the nation, mainly from the home. An imported Western image of a middle-class woman, i.e. a good homemaker and a home teacher for her children, partly shaped the notion of 'good wife, wise mother' education for women. Advocates of women's education did not expect women to play a leading role in the male domain, such as industry or politics, but considered that women need to be educated to make use

of their feminine ability in the female domain. The development of the 'special' ability or talent of women, especially those from the middle class, was regarded as a necessity to catch up with advanced Western nations.

Post-war educational reform granted women access to university for the first time after the end of the Second World War. However, the legacy of pre-war education was partly passed on to post-war education. As a result, post-war education has been sending double messages to women.

On the one hand, Japanese education assumed that all children are inherently equally talented in academic performance, so failure in education is considered a result of the lack of effort. Therefore, in Japan both boys and girls are encouraged to study hard to enter a higher-ranked high school and university to show the fruit of their efforts. The number of women entering university has increased remarkably, partly because entering university became a matter of course not only for boys but also for girls with good academic achievements.

On the other hand, female students were clustered in feminine fields of study, such as literature or home economics, and many university graduate mothers left the workplace to concentrate on their domestic role. Japanese education encourages students to develop their 'individuality' *(kosei)* or individual qualities to maximise the good of the wider group to which they belong. This leads to the idea that women should contribute to society as a whole by developing the 'special' talent or ability associated with motherhood. Gender specialisation in higher education has been pointed to as the main cause of the weak relationship between university graduate women and employment. However, this is not always regarded as unequal or gender discrimination because of the notion that men and women are equally talented but in different domains. In other words, it has been considered that women's social position is to be promoted by the perfect accomplishment of their role rather than by competition with men in the field of employment. In this regard, the purpose and framework of women's education has not greatly changed since the Meiji era.

Nevertheless, various changes in the situation have been taking place. For instance, more parents

have agreed to their daughters' university education as the number of female students has increased, and almost all the female university graduates enter the employment field immediately after graduation as a matter of course. Their career aspirations when entering a university still did not seem very strong in the 1980's, but they had spent four years in university thinking about their future career plans. Moreover, more female students have started to choose a so-called 'masculine' subject in a co-educational university. From the students' viewpoint, female university students have been assimilated into the mainstream of university education, while educators of women's universities still place stress on education as a means to develop women's 'special' talent.

After entering university, many women realised that university education does not always provide them with enough knowledge and skills to find a good job. However, they were relatively satisfied with the fact that they went to university, because they considered that they gained something important for their lives, such as a personal network, mental development, and the experience of part-time jobs, through university life. To obtain 'general cultural enrichment' is no longer the motivation for female students to enter universities, but rather they regard university education as a necessity to enrich their personal lives.

# Chapter Three

# University Graduate Women and Employment

## 3.1    Introduction

Although the main purpose of women's higher education was historically not to grant them a privileged position in employment, the percentage of female university students entering full-time employment immediately after graduation had steadily increased from 64.1% in 1960 to 81.8% in 1991 (MOL 2000:app.49). After the bubble economy burst at the beginning of the 1990s, the percentage decreased to 59.8% in 1999 (ibid. app.49), but eventually 93.4% of university graduate women of the 20-24 age group were in the labour force in the same year (see figure 0.2). Especially, after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) which came into effect in 1986, it was expected that not only would more female university graduates enter employment, but also that they would pursue careers with a long-term perspective on an equal basis with male university graduates.

Nevertheless, many university graduate women still leave the workplace in their 30s. The rate of female university graduates in the labour force was 92.7% in the 20-24 age group in 1989, but it dropped to 62.4% in the 30-34 age group in 1999 (see Figure 3.1). Several data sources suggest that the age of 35 is a turning-point. Figure 0.2 shows that above the age of 35, the rate of the university graduates levels out relative to that of the high school leavers which increases. Moreover, several surveys cited by Mifune show that more university-educated women were in employment than lower educated women among the younger generation (24-34 age group) in the first half of the 1990s, but the proportion of university-educated women in the labour force dropped in the age group of 35 and over ( 1996:147-49). Thus, there is a tendency among university-educated women who leave the workplace before the age of 35 not to return to employment afterwards.

A relatively high ratio of non-working women among university graduates characterises a Japanese pattern of the relationship between women and the effect of education on an economic activity. In Britain's case, for instance, an investigation by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys cited in Walby's study shows a higher proportion of inactive women without academic qualifications (54% in the 30-39 age group), compared to women with higher educational qualifications (16% in the same age group) (1997:42).

In contrast, in Japan, the higher educational qualification the women obtained, the less likely they were to be in employment as a whole. A survey conducted by the Economic Planning Agency in 1994 indicated that more university graduate women were outside any economic activities than women with lower academic attainments (see Figure 3.2). Another important point is that, in Japan, female university graduates prefer to be full-time workers or regular workers *(seishain )* rather than part-time workers or non-regular workers. Figure 3.2 shows that the proportion of full-time workers among university-educated women was higher than among women without a university degree. On the whole, women with university qualifications tend to choose either to be full-time workers or to be away from paid work, while women with lower academic qualifications vary in patterns of work, including part-time work, self-employed, and piece work.

From a historical perspective, productive work has been a substantial part of Japanese women's lives. For instance, from the beginning of industrialisation in the Meiji era (1868-1912) to the present day, women have continued to make a huge contribution to the maximum productivity of the Japanese economy. In the post-war rapid economic growth which started in the middle of the 1950s, a large number of unskilled young women in rural areas were absorbed into the secondary and tertiary sectors. Gradually they were replaced by a labour force of part-time housewives. Osawa argues that one of the reasons for the international success of Japanese automobile and electronic industries was the utilising of a cheap labour force, i.e. female workers in subcontracting factories and housewives doing piecework (quoted in Ida 1995:143). In 1999, the rate of women in the total labour force population was 40.6%, and the rate of women's labour

force participation among all women over 15 years old was 49.6% (MOL 2000:1).[1] 62.2% of unmarried women and 50.0% of married women took part in the labour force in the same year (ibid. 3).

Although the social norm that mothers with small children are not supposed to be involved in work outside home existed in post-war Japanese society, the climate of opinion has been slightly changing. According to a survey carried out by the Prime Minister's Office in 1984, that asked 'what do you think about women having an occupation?', 10.6% of women (13.4% of men) chose 'until having a child, women had better have an occupation', and 45.3% of them (36.1% of men) chose 'women had better quit on giving birth and return to work after their children are grown up' (Hisatake et al. 1997:271). Only 20.1% of women and 15.7% of men chose 'women had better continue their work without interruption even after having a child' (ibid. 271). In the same survey conducted in 1999, 39.8% of women and 35.0% of men still insisted that mothers had better put their career on hold for child-rearing and return to work afterwards; however, 34.4% of women and 31.5% of men agreed to mothers' continuing in work (PMO 2000). Mothers' not giving up work has gradually begun to be accepted, and they are at the very least expected to return to work after their children are grown up.

Nevertheless, university graduate mothers tend not to return to employment. In the previous chapter, we have seen that university education has encouraged female students to have a much less strong career aspiration than their male counterparts who enter universities chiefly to gain professional success. However, the majority of female graduates also enter employment after graduation in contemporary Japan. Why do they leave the labour market relatively soon and hesitate to return there? Gender segregation in the workplace may still be obvious in many firms, but the female labour force is generally indispensable for firms and the national economy. While male university graduates and mothers from a lower academic background are actually engaged in productive work, why do so many university graduate mothers keep away from it? Do they

[1] In the case of the age group between 20 and 59, the average rate of women's labour force participation was approximately 66.0% in 1999 (MOL 2000:3).

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actually prefer staying at home in spite of their high academic qualifications, or does the qualification itself make them stay at home?

In this chapter, I would like to explore the relationship between university-educated women and employment. Firstly, the relationship between women with different social backgrounds and productive work will be examined from a historical perspective, with a focus on the situation of better-educated women before the Second World War. Secondly, the way in which female workers have been treated and categorised by the labour market in the framework of the so-called Japanese employment system, established through the rapid economic growth period after the war, will be described to examine the situation of the women's labour force on the whole. Thirdly, from my interview findings, university graduate mothers' attitudes and views on their own lives with or without employment will be illustrated. Mothers with full-time work will be included to examine what factors encourage them to pursue a long-term career.

## 3.2    Women and employment: historical background

### Pre-modern period

In pre-modem Japan, women were engaged in various types of productive work according to their family background and social class. Uno states that women's agricultural and handicraft labour was indispensable for the majority of rural households (1991:25). She also argues that mothers in the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) were mainly involved in productive work, household business, or the management of domestic tasks including that of the servants if they had any, leaving reproductive work to servants in wealthy upper-class *samurai* families and merchant families, or to nursemaids *(komori)* or other household members in peasant families (1991:26-30). Amino Yoshihiko (1999), a historian, questions the traditional historical view that women's productive work was only a supplement to men's work, suggesting that in fact women played the main role in several fields of occupation, such as finance (e.g. lending money) and textile production from ancient times to pre-modem times. Overall, productive work has historically taken up a substantial part of Japanese women's lives, except for only a few wives of nobles or very rich families.

Working women in Japan before the Second World War: women from rural areas

From the Meiji era (1868-1912) to the Second World War, women's occupations were clearly regionally oriented and relatively class-specific. Women engaged in productive work were divided roughly into three types of workers, 'farm woman' *(noson fujin ),* blue-collar workers called 'labour woman' *(rodo fujin ),* and white-collar workers called 'professional woman' *(shokugyofujin ),* and the majority of working women belonged to the former two groups.

More than a half of the total female labour force in Japan used to work in agriculture or forestry (e.g. 65.5% in 1906, 57.4% in 1936 (Odaka 1993:18)), and there were also many women in the manufacturing sector. From 1870 to 1930, the average rate of women's participation in the industrial labour force reached 60%, which was unparalleled in any other country at that time (Sievers 1983:84). Not only unmarried young women but also married women or women with children were engaged in productive work. 70-80 percent of the women employed in agriculture and 40-50 percent of those who were in industry were married, widowed, or divorced (Molony 1991:220).

At the beginning of the Meiji era (1868-1912), roughly 80% of women in Japan were engaged in agricultural labour, but as industrialisation increased, many farm daughters left their village to become paid-workers in spinning mills (Fujii 1995:2-7). Cotton textile production was one of the most important export industries in Japan, especially before the Second World War, and almost all the workers were unmarried young women (Molony 1991:219-20) whose age was between 12 and 20 (Hunter 1993:70). When the first state-run spinning mill was established in Gunma prefecture in 1872, girls from former *samurai* families were gathered to work at the factory (Amino 1999:61, Shinotsuka 1995b:197). Gradually, especially after the turn of the century, the workers became overwhelmingly daughters of poor farm families (Nakamura quoted in Molony 1991:225).

Although the working environment of textile workers was very poor (e.g. very long working hours, insanitary living conditions in an overcrowded dormitory, and high rates of illness such as

tuberculosis) and the wage was quite low, many of them were glad to work at the mills because it was preferable to agricultural labour at home (Hunter 1993, Saito 2000:76-82, 122-24). Farm women, especially daughters-in-law *(yome)* of agricultural households, had to manage extremely heavy loads of farm and domestic labour all day long. The majority of mill workers did not return to their native village to marry, rather they stayed working in industry even after marriage or retired on marriage to become wives of urban working-class men (Molony 1991:224).

To be a domestic servant also represented an employment opportunity for lower-class women. In 1906, the number of female textile factory workers was approximately 630 thousand, and that of domestic servants was approximately 760 thousand (Shinotsuka 1995b:198). Like textile workers, the majority of maids were young and of rural origin (Odaka 1993:17-18). Most maids were live-in maids, being employed by urban middle-class families (Saito 2000:83-90). There was little difference in terms of the quality of working conditions between live-in maids and female factory workers. There was an idea that working as a maid was a good opportunity for girls to learn homemaking and manners that a married woman should possess, but in reality many employers drove their maids too hard and the way they treated them impaired their dignity (ibid. 83-90). The poor working conditions partly caused a shortage of maids in the Taisho era (1912-26). According to a magazine article in 1922 quoted in Saito, an employment agency advertised around four to five hundred jobs for maids per month, but they could find only approximately 50 applicants for the jobs (ibid. 87). Nevertheless, many urban middle-class households wanted to take on a maid in the early decades of the 20[1]h century. The number of maids was 584,000 in 1920 (one maid per 19 households), and the figure was up to 710,000 in 1930 (one maid per 17 households) (Odaka 1993:17).

Working women in Japan before the Second World War: urban women

Urban lower-class wives were engaged in productive work inside and/or outside the house. Many wives undertook a variety of types of piecework *(naishoku)*. Wives of lower-income white-collar salaried men were engaged in mainly needlework which required some sort of basic skill, such as machine sewing, embroidery, or knitting (Saito 2000: 117-22). For wives of blue-collar workers, types of piecework which did not require vocational skills were available, such as paper-bag

pasting, mending holes in Japanese-style socks called *tabi* or finishing knitted gloves (ibid. 119). Piecework at home seems to have been a work-style which suited married women with family responsibilities, but many of them found it tough to manage both domestic tasks and piecework because wages were very low and 'subcontractors typically brought them large quantities of work to be done on short notice' (Uno 1993:42). Moreover, wives of poor families had outside work besides piecework. Apart from large-sized textile plants which employed a great number of young unmarried workers, there were many small factories, e.g. a food factory, tobacco factory, and book bindery, which provided employment opportunities to poor married women in urban areas (Saito 2000:119-20). Moreover, some poor women actually worked in the town itself, for instance, as scavengers of paper or scrap metal, street vendors of food, or laundresses (Uno 1993:43).

Lower-class mothers had little time to take physical care of their children (Uno 1993:56-58). According to Saito, there were three types of day nurseries for poor families in the Taisho era (1912-26): a nursery placed in the factory, a voluntary child-care activity called a 'settlement movement' *(setsurumento undo),* and a public nursery (2000:120). However, the number of such facilities was far from sufficient, so it was not uncommon for poor mothers to actually bring their infants with them to the workplace (ibid. 121). School-aged children of poor families were also engaged in productive work to supplement their household finances (ibid. 121).

'Professional woman'

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the first professional job for highly educated women was the teaching profession in the Meiji era (1868-1912), as higher educational institutions for women started with the aim of training teachers. From the tum of the century, however, types of occupations for urban middle-class women expanded. The kinds of jobs they obtained were mainly white-collar work which required some vocational skills. Urban women who worked in these jobs came to be called 'professional woman' *(shokugyo fujin ).*

The term 'professional woman' that emerged in the 191Os or 1920s did not have a standard definition (Nagy 1991:201). Nagy suggests that 'professional woman' had 'a "high-collar"

nuance and thus was mainly used for women in the tertiary sector who held white-collar or professional jobs' (ibid. 201). Moreover, Saito cited the definition of 'professional woman' in a broad sense, as defined by the Japan Labour Yearbook *(Nihon Rodo Nenkan)* published in 1921: it was a woman who possessed a 'special position' *(dokutoku no chii)* as an employed or self-employed worker with some clerical or technical ability (2000:41). In an investigation on Tokyo women's occupations, conducted by Tokyo City government in 1925, (cited in Fujii 1995:13-14), occupations of the 'professional woman' were divided into two groups, the 'intellectual occupation' *(chiteki shokugyo)* and the 'technical occupation' *(gijutsuteki shokugyo)*. Such occupations as teachers, doctors, pharmacists, journalists, writers, novelists, and office clerks were classified in the former group, and those such as midwives, nurses, typists, stenographers, telephone operators, and hairdressers were in the latter group. Apart from these two groups, actresses, artists, and musicians were also recognised as occupations for the 'professional woman' (ibid. 13).

An expansion of the 'middle-class' bracket called *chusan kaikyu* (or *churyu katei* or *chU kan so*) is considered to be a cause of the emergence of 'professional women'. The start of the First World War (1914) brought great economic prosperity to Japan, and it led to the establishment of a capitalist economy (Fujii 1995:7). The middle class were initially enjoyed the benefits of the economic boom (Nagy 1991:204). In the Taisho era (1912-26), the middle class or petit bourgeoisie bracket greatly expanded, because of the increased number of white-collar salaried men (e.g. office clerks, teachers, salesmen, and research workers) in addition to the original middle class bracket (e.g. owners of small or medium-sized firms, wealthy farmers, merchants, and governmental workers) (Koyama 1991:101-2, Saito 2000:73). Saito suggests that it was mainly the wives or daughters of the increased middle-class families in urban areas that produced new types of women in those days, i.e. students of girls' high schools *(koto jogakko )*, 'professional women', and housewives without paid work (ibid. 73).

Despite the expansion, however, the middle class at the beginning of the 20[1]h century was a minority, unlike contemporary Japan where around 80 % of people identify themselves as middle class (see Chapter Two). Nagy's definition of 'middle class' in those days is 'urban salaried

workers whose educational background and earned income, as a rule, put them above the working class, or labourers', and according to this definition, 'the middle class was only an estimated 8.5 percent of the total population in 1920' ( 1991:201). In the case of Tokyo, she cited an estimation that the middle class grew sharply from 5.6% of the total work force in 1908 to 21.5% in 1920 (Minami 1965 quoted in Nagy 1991:201). In those days, the middle class bracket constituted the group of urban white-collar salaried men and their families.

Even recession encouraged the entry of women from white-collar families into employment. The economic boom brought about a rise in prices, and post-war recession and the impact of the 1929 great world-wide financial panic followed. During the recession, even male university graduates found difficulties in finding employment, and white-collar household heads could not earn enough money to meet their expenses (Nagy 1991:205). Daughters from these families obtained a job between completing their education and getting married in order to supplement their household finances (ibid. 205-6). Shinotsuka states that middle-class *(chUryu katei)* women those days did not generally enter employment except for the teaching profession, unless their families had particular financial difficulties ( 1995b:200). From the viewpoint of the demand side, a female Jabour force was preferable during the recession because of its low cost (Nagy 1991:209). The expansion of the commercial sector after the outbreak of the First World War required cheap white-collar labour to grow further.

The expansion in numbers of white-collar women in employment did not necessarily encourage them to be financially independent. Overall, 'professional women' enjoyed a large income compared to blue-collar women workers, but there was wide variation in income between different types of occupation. For example, a typical monthly income of occupations which did not require higher education (e.g. typists, office clerks, and shop assistants) was less than 60 yen, which was the minimum living cost per month to support oneself in Tokyo around 1925 (Fujii 1995:13-14).[2] According to the 'research on professional women' done by Tokyo City government, the majority of 'professional women', except for teachers, were unmarried young

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[2] The average daily wage of a female textile worker was 1.3 yen and that of a maid was 0.836 yen in 1925 (Odaka 1993:32).

women living with their parents, and the main motivation for employment was to supplement their household finances (Saito 2000:43). Moreover, more than half of them replied that they received financial support from their family (ibid. 43).

Women's personal desire for work should be taken into account in examining the expansion of white-collar working women. According to Saito, young women were attracted by new occupations with a Western flavour, such as bus conductor called 'bus girl' *( basu giiru),* shop assistant called 'shop girl' *(shoppu giiru),* elevator operator called 'elevator girl' *(erebeta giiru )* and typist *(taipisuto)* (2000:44-48). When an airline company advertised for a stewardess, which they named 'air girl' *( ea giiru),* for the first time in Japan in 1931, 140 women applied for the job (and only three of them were accepted) (ibid. 37-38). Moreover, 'the women's irrepressible aspiration for independence and self-reliance *(dokuritsu jiritsu )'* (Nagy 1991:207) also encouraged urban women from white-collar families into the field of employment. An article in the Yomiuri Newspaper in 1920 introduced the words of a spokesman for the Tokyo Central Employment Exchange, saying that young women, who were mostly girls' high school graduates, came to his office daily to seek jobs with a desire to escape the boring everyday life of wealthy families (Nagy 1991:207).

Academic credentials and women's employment

The number of girls' high school graduates entering employment increased from the Taisho era (1912-26) to early Showa (1926-89) years, as white-collar job availability for women was expanding in urban areas. According to Koyama's calculation (1991:99), the proportion of girls' high school graduates entering employment increased from 4.2% in 1914 to 10% by 1919 (see Table 3.1). After that, the rate had decreased by 1930 to 4.8%, but the actual number of those who were entering employment continued to grow. The number of female students who went on to tertiary education had also dramatically increased during this period, implying that more women took a job after graduation from tertiary schools such as a women's specialised school. However, the majority (average approximately 70%) of girls' high school graduates entered neither tertiary schools nor employment: they stayed at home after graduation until their marriage was arranged (Saito 2000:35). Although highly educated women entering employment

remained a minority before the Second World War, the number of them had been steadily increasing.

Not all the professional women in employment were highly educated. For example, shop assistants and bus conductors were usually not required to complete post-compulsory schooling (Saito 2000:48). As regards office workers, the Bank of Japan, the Central Telephone Exchange, and Morinaga Confectionery, for example, accepted female primary-school leavers (Konno 2000:66-68). On the other hand, a certain proportion of domestic servants, who were supposed to be from poor rural families, were actually better educated. According to a private survey on maids in Tokyo in 1930 cited in Odaka (1993:22), not only had 93% of the respondents completed primary schooling, but also 12% of them went on to secondary education or above. This may indicate that the class-consciousness in those days was connected to one's regional background; girls from urban areas could get a white-collar job even without post-primary schooling, but those from rural areas were regarded as blue-collar workers even if they could afford better education.

However, employers were already taking newcomers' academic credentials into account when hiring by the 1930s. As regards male workers, companies began to request job applications directly from schools after the First World War, and as a result an employment practice based on academic credentials was systematised (Konno 2000:64-65). In the case of female office workers, connections through their fathers, relatives, or acquaintances were the main ways of finding a job in the early 1920s, but employment by the introduction of school qualifications had gradually increased (ibid. 65-69). In other words, companies started to require some educational attainments not only of male employees but also of female workers. In an advertisement placed in a women's magazine in 1925, for example, Yasuda Bank and the Ministry of Rail Transportation wanted women who had graduated from girls' high schools (ibid. 66-69). The Bank of Japan and Mitsui Trading firm hired girls' high school graduates as office clerks and female primary school leavers as assistant clerks or office girls (ibid. 67-68). In their advertisement, the firms set the starting salary of better educated women higher than that of primary school leavers (ibid. 66-69).

Social attitudes towards the 'professional woman'

Society did not fully welcome 'professional women' who were thought to be by no means desperate for a paid job. A negative public attitude towards expanded employment opportunities for middle-class women mainly originated from an expressed anxiety over the harmful effects of employment on women's 'special' talent and domestic roles, especially their maternal role. Government officials and intellectuals in those days worried about 'the future of family life and national unity, especially since the middle class was viewed as the bastion of social stability in an era of social and political turmoil' (Nagy 1991:200). Many researchers questioned 'whether a working woman would have lessened opportunity (or desire) to marry', and they wondered 'whether her feminine virtue would still be intact when and if she did marry' (ibid. 200). In the 1920s, the climate of opinion was that women's working experiences would lead to the 'masculinisation of women' *(josei no dansei ka)* (Konno 2000:83-86).

In addition, middle-class working women themselves showed some anxiety about the effect of outside work on their femininity. They struggled to find a way to meet their professional responsibilities without sacrificing their women's virtue. According to a survey on professional women carried out in Kyoto in 1926, 'respondents insisted that their desire was "not to lose their special virtue as females, but to develop it more and more"; to "cultivate accomplishments as a future housewife in a family and to fulfil their vocation as women"; and to "increase both in knowledge and virtue"' (Nagy 1991:212-13). In another survey conducted in Tokyo and Osaka in 1925, 138 out of a total of 1,118 respondents were worried that they might lose their women's gentleness (Konno 2000:84).

The company management worried that hiring women might be injurious to public morals. Unlike textile factories where the majority of the workers were young women, workplaces for white-collar women, such as banks, department stores, trading firms, and insurance companies, were basically dominated by male workers. In 1920, the proportion of women among white-collar workers was approximately 10% (Konno 2000:49). In many firms, male and female employees were in fact working in different rooms (ibid. 38-41). For example, female employees

were not permitted to speak to male colleagues including the simple exchange of greetings in the Bank of Japan (ibid. 39). In an insurance company, another example, there was a notice warning 'no men are allowed to enter' on the door into the women's office (ibid. 39). Employers were afraid that the presence of women might disturb order in the workplace. Actually, at that time, the 'corruption of public morals' (*juki no midare*) was regarded as a labour problem in the blue-collar workplace where a small number of male and lots of female workers were working together (ibid. 39). Konno points out that the separation of male and female office workers was positively supported by both the management and workers, and they each needed the policy to identify their workplace as being for the middle class *(chuto shakai),* not for the underclass (ibid. 39-40).

Some professional women continued their work even after marriage, but society discouraged married women from working outside the home. Companies encouraged female workers to leave the workplace on marriage by setting the retirement age for women at a younger age, such as 25, 28 or 30 years old (Konno 2000:94-104). This was because some women continued their work for years, not quitting it at an 'appropriate' age (ibid. 102). Married professional women, especially mothers, managed the double burden of professional and family responsibilities by leaving domestic work and child-rearing to their family members or maids (Fujii 1995:15, Nagy 1991:213). However, society attempted to make married women's employment unnecessary. The public job exchanges asked factories and companies to expand job opportunities for middle-class men, and attempted to create new governmental projects (Nagy 1991:214). Moreover, the Campaign to Improve Livelihood *(Seikatsu Kaizen Undo)* advocated the rationalisation of home management by training homemakers to run their households with economic sense (ibid. 214). 'Techniques of effective budgeting and wise selection of consumer goods presumably would enable these wives of salaried workers to respond creatively to their husbands' shrinking incomes' (ibid. 214). Thus, working married women from white-collar families made up only a minority group, and it could not be said that they were entirely accepted by society.

3.3    Change in the female labour force in the immediate post-war period

A big change in the blue-collar women's labour force

High economic growth starting in the middle of the 1950s with the influence of the outbreak of the Korean War (1950) (and ending with the 1973 Oil Shock) dramatically changed the class-specific working categories of pre-war women. One characteristic of the change in the post-war labour market was a large reduction in primary industry. The Population Census *(Kokusei ChOsa)* revealed that the rate of primary labour force in the total working population had dropped from 47.0% in 1950 to 19.4% in 1970 (Lam 1992b:l 1). The rate of female labour force in primary industry had also decreased from 61.2% in 1950 to 26.2% in 1970 (ibid. 11). Young men and women who finished compulsory schooling in rural areas were absorbed into the manufacturing industry in towns or cities. They were welcomed as the main source of unskilled labour in the early years of post-war economic growth, being called 'golden eggs' *(kin no tamago).* In 1954, special trains called the 'train for a group of new workers' *(shU dan shushoku ressha)* began to transport 'golden eggs' in a large quantity from rural areas to Tokyo and other urban cities.[3]

young women came to be in great demand not only as textile factory workers, but also as machine factory labour. The manufacturing industry, including the production of electrical appliances, precision instruments, and metal goods, rapidly developed in the post-war economic boom, being regarded as an industrial favourite at that time (Fujii 1995:70). According to Saito, textile factories and manufacturing factories scrambled for female middle-school leavers, naming them 'princess thread' *(ito hime)* or 'transistor girls' *(toranjisuta musume)* (2000: 198). What these factories expected young women to do was unskilled labour which required them to have great dexterity, good eyesight, the ability to concentrate, and great patience (Fujii 1995:70). The length of service of female factory workers was very short. In the case of electrical appliance factories, for instance, the average length of service of female workers was 3.6 years in 1954, and only 3.3 years in 1964 (ibid. 71).

Many young women who had left farm villages were reluctant to return home to marry. Research on daughters of farm households in 1963 showed that only 8.4% of them replied that they wanted

to marry farmers (Shinotsuka 1995b:182). Asked why they did not want to marry farm men, they referred to 'expected discord with a mother-in-law' (24.8%), 'hard agricultural labour' (15.2%), and 'feudalistic customs of farming families' (11.1%) as the causes of hesitation (ibid. 182). Saito introduces magazine articles published in 1954, featuring a round-table talk entitled 'We don't want to be daughters-in-law of farming families' by women born and raised in farming families, and points out that 'a shortage of daughters-in-law of farming families' *(noka no yome busoku),* one of the serious social problems for post-war Japan, had already emerged in the 1950s (2000: 198). Young women in farm villages wanted to escape from farming and get married to white-collar salaried men in urban areas.

The number of domestic servants had rapidly decreased after the Second World War. According to the Population Census, the number of live-in maids dropped from 670 thousand in 1930 to 31O thousand in 1955, 240 thousand in 1960, and to 120 thousand in 1965 (Sechiyama 1996:204). This did not necessarily mean that the demand for maids disappeared. In 1960 a magazine article described an attempt by a job placement office in Tokyo to attract girls from rural areas to be maids: the working conditions included a scholarship to a high school, semi-annual bonuses, the same meals as the employer's family's, and at least two days off per month (Saito 2000:199). Nevertheless, maids were disappearing because of post-war social changes such as the expansion of employment availability for rural girls, the spread of electrical appliances, and the increase of middle-class 'professional' housewives that I will describe in the next chapter.

Women's office work as marriage preparation

The young female labour force shifted from primary and secondary industry to tertiary industry which was the fastest developing sector after the war. The proportion of distribution of the total labour force in the tertiary sector rose from 29.8% in 1950 to 46.6% in 1970, and to 54.6% in 1980 (Management and Coordination Agency quoted in Lam 1992b: 11). The female labour force in the tertiary sector expanded especially after 1970. The proportion of female labour force in the tertiary sector rose from 25.6% in 1950, to 47.8% in 1970, and to 58.4% in 1980. On the other hand, the rate of female secondary labour force grew from 13.2% in 1950 to 26.0% in 1970, but

there was only a slight increase after that (e.g. 28.2% in 1980) (ibid. 11). The increased number of high school leavers also promoted the shift of young women's employment from factory work to office work. In 1961, 60.0% of new female middle school leavers and 8.7% of new female high school leavers got factory work, while 3.3% of the former and 59.0% of the latter entered firms as office workers (Saito 2000:200).

Young women engaged in white-collar office work were called 'business girls' until the NHK broadcasting firm concluded the terms were taboo in 1963. (NHK announced that 'business girl' actually meant a prostitute in the U.S.). The terms 'office ladies (OL)' replaced it, and became widespread. This is still in use today.

'Business girls' or 'office ladies' were expected to develop their femininity though working in an office. According to Sugita (1996), in offices, women employees were offered assistant's jobs without any particular responsibility or promotion opportunities, which was called a job for 'studying society' *(shakai benkyo)*. He argues that it showed a social norm, by around the 1970s, that it was not good for young women to get married into their husbands' household without obtaining any knowledge about society beforehand (ibid. 33-34). Neither was it good for them to keep working in an office for too many years (as full-time regular workers). They were expected to obtain some knowledge about manners in society, and then to marry and become a good housewife. What they were supposed to learn was how to deal with an assistant job including serving tea and doing dishes in an efficient way *(tekipaki to)* (ibid. 33). Moreover, it had been considered that a company was a good place to learn social manners and regulations, such as manners and social rules associated with vertical relationships inside and outside a company, and some social rituals, e.g. gift exchange rituals such as *oseibo* and *ochUgen,* and the proper way of treating important guests (ibid. 33-34). On the whole, young women had been expected to gain some qualities for being good wives (of hard-working salaried men called 'enterprise warriors' *(kigyo senshi))* by joining a company as 'temporary' or 'visiting' workers. Therefore, they were allowed to stay at the workplace until a 'proper age for marriage' *(tekireiki)* and if they stayed longer, they had to withstand pressure to leave. Through managing a wide range of assistant

work, young women were expected to learn the kind of knowledge and skills that housewives should ideally be equipped with.

Many 'office ladies' accepted the notion that the main aim of young women's work was not to pursue a career. The survey entitled 'what are OLs thinking?' (1979) asked female office workers about their purpose in entering employment: one third of the respondents answered that they got a job 'for "studying society" *(shakai benky6)',* 22.0% of them chose 'to earn money for hobbies, leisure, and marriage', 21.7% of them chose 'to develop professional abilities to feel fulfilled', and the rest chose 'to make a living' (Fujii 1995:170).

According to Fujii's analysis of large corporations' newsletters distributed to employees and their families in the 1960s, companies encouraged young female workers to retire on marriage (1995:141-46). These newsletters often ran to several pages sending the message that an ideal woman figure as defined by male workers was a good care-taker and home-maker. Moreover, the image of a happily married couple consisting of a hardworking husband and full-time housewife was stressed by presenting stories of former female workers who had left the firm on marriage (ibid. 145-46). They also warned that a wife's outside work would ruin her life with her husband and children (ibid. 146). These newsletters were distributed not only to white-collar workers but also to factory workers. In other words, young women both in offices and factories received the same message from the firms. Thus, the notion that young women should retire from full-time regular work on marriage in order to concentrate on making a happy family had influence on both white-collar and blue-collar women's aspirations for their future.

The birth of 'housewife part-timers'

Nevertheless, married women became a new source of cheap labour in secondary industry. After young women in the manufacturing sector had shifted towards white-collar labour, what replaced the young in the blue-collar labour force were middle-aged 'housewife part-timers' *(shufu piito ).* From the second half of the high economic growth period, a mass of housewives was drawn out of the home to make up for the loss of 'golden eggs', or middle-school leavers in the labour force (Hisatake et al. 1997:191). For instance, the numbers of female employees in their 30s or over

had increased from 0.64 million in 1955 to 1.36 million in 1965, reflecting positive attitudes towards the utilisation of middle-aged housewives mainly among major electronic enterprises (Fujii 1995:73). Services of the 'train for a group of new workers' *(shudan shU shoku ressha)* were disappearing in the 1970s (Hisatake et al. 1997:67), and local housewives started to be employed in factories instead as non-regular workers.

According to Fujii (1995:92), this shift of unskilled labour force in the manufacturing industry, from young women to housewives, was related to a change on the demand side. The electronics industry which had developed remarkably since 1955, began to exclude skilled workers after 1960 as technology on the production process side advanced. At first, the industry rationalised economically by using young women as the major source of cheap labour. However, as the increasing number of young workers strengthened the power of unions, the company management started to become dependent on temporary workers for their recruitment. From 1963-4, the companies needed to promote further rationalisation as a result of severe competition between companies and stagnation of the market, and they found middle-aged housewives useful as a new supply of cheap labour. The management preferred housewives to temporary (male) workers *(rinjiko),* because they were not organised, and had less desire to become regular workers and were not so aware of workers' rights. Moreover, housewives' income was supposed to be only a supplement to a household's finance, hence their wages were set low.

3.4   The gendered distribution of the contemporary workforce

The Japanese employment system and male university graduates

After the 1973 Oil shock, the end of post-war high economic growth, companies' personnel management practices were gradually systemised, becoming characterised as the so-called Japanese employment system *(Nihonteki koyo kank6* or *Nihonteki koy6 seido).* Key features such as a seniority-based wage system, lifetime employment, hiring directly from school, and on-the-job training for new employees were observed during the period of high economic growth, but they were applied only to regular workers in large corporations or with the governmental sector (Brinton 1993:14, Matsunaga 2000:4, Osawa 1993:34).

The main beneficiaries of the Japanese employment system that stressed secure lifetime employment have been male university graduates (MOL 1995a). As we have seen in the previous chapter, male university graduates have historically used their academic qualifications as a tool for achieving professional and social success. In other words, boys have been encouraged to study hard to eventually win a secure job. As the number of universities greatly increased in post-war Japan, however, the actual rank of a university became important to win the competition for prestigious posts. Many firms gave priority to graduates of elite universities or a selected group of universities, so students began to be required to enter top-ranking institutions to make the most of the advantages they offered. Nevertheless, a university degree in general still works to achieve job security (Rebick 1998:25). In a way, university education is effectively the minimum requirement for gaining a stable job with good working conditions for men.

Another important point related to the Japanese employment system is that not only university students themselves but also employers do not expect universities to provide education of high quality. Professor Makino of Ochanomizu Women's University told me, 'Companies want to recruit "freshmen without any colours", or a "blank canvas". They don't want graduates who have acquired excessive knowledge though university education'. According to Refsing, employers do not expect the educational system itself to provide their future employees with special skills or knowledge (1992: 117). 'Rather he (a Japanese employer) looks for human qualities and social skills, such as discipline, obedience, endurance, diligence, and a capacity for hard work, for learning new things, for loyalty and for team-spirit' (ibid. 118). Companies prefer educating the newcomers with their own training system, hence they try to find students who are clever enough to be trained. As mentioned in Chapter Two, students are not required to study hard after entering a university.

Treatment of female workers

In the framework of this Japanese employment system, most writers agree that women have been virtually excluded from the benefits of the system. Shinotsuka argues that the seniority-based wage system and lifetime employment practice, which were originally created to attract skilled

male workers, were not applicable to unskilled female workers (1995a:30). In general, moreover, female workers' shorter years of service compared to male workers put women in a disadvantageous position in the seniority-based wage system, and as a result this Jed to their earning a lower wage than men's. Furthermore, companies were reluctant to invest in job training specifically for women (Lam 1992b:18). Participation in firm's own training system is important to its employees for career development and promotion opportunities. Consequently, female workers were greatly handicapped in these respects.

Women were also subject to protection in employment. The Labour Standards Law, which was enacted in 1947, incorporated clauses aimed at the protection of women workers, such as the provision for menstruation leave and maternity leave (6 weeks both before and after giving birth), and overtime restrictions on women. Shinotsuka states that the protective provisions of the law gave some benefit to women, but played a role to alienate them from equal treatment in the labour market (1995b:207-10). In addition, the Working Women's Welfare Law was enacted in 1972, with the aim of improving the status of working women. However, the law did not stress equal treatment of men and women in the labour market, rather it aimed to help female workers to balance the demands of work and family (Lam 1992b:94). Those laws in tum encouraged firms to deal with male and female workers in different working conditions. It was thought that female workers should be protected because of their reproductive capability and domestic role.

The emphasis on women's reproductive capacity divided the women's labour force into two groups: one comprising unmarried young regular workers in relatively large companies, and the other middle-aged married part-time workers in relatively small or family-run firms (some family members working in the family-run firms are actually unpaid) (Brinton 1993:12). The divided groups of women in employment show large firms' hesitation towards the utilisation of women with domestic responsibilities on a full-time basis. The companies' employment system was deeply related to social assumptions that 'men's domain is the workplace, and women's domain is the home' (Lam 1992a:8).

'Part-time worker' as a status of married women

Age is crucial in employment opportunities for women.[4] In general, companies tend to be reluctant to employ middle-aged women as regular workers. For instance, Shinotsuka's analysis of a series of job-advertisement magazines named 'Torabayu' published in 1990 revealed that it is very difficult for middle-aged women to find secure full-time work (1995a: 179-209). The 'Torabayu' targets urban women who are looking for mainly regular work. She found that 92.0% of the advertisements in the magazines set up age limitations, and only approximately 7.0% of all the advertisements accepted applicants of older than 35 years old.[5] Therefore, she concluded that a middle-aged woman who is planning to find a job after child-rearing, especially as a regular worker, firstly needs to recognise the fact that the age limitation for returning to work is 35 years old (ibid. 189).

Although work on a part-time basis is regarded as fit for women with domestic duties, a 'part-time worker' does not simply mean an employee who works short hours. Actually, many part-timers work the same hours as regular/full-time workers do (Brinton 1993:136, Lam 1992b:56, Matsunaga 2000:20, NIEVR 1988:27). In the General Survey on Part-time Workers by the Ministry of Labour (1995), for example, the terms 'part-time workers and such' are used to define workers who cannot be classified as regular workers. Non-regular workers are further divided into two categories: 'part' *(pd.to)* and 'the other' *(sonota)*. 'Part' is defined as 'non-regular workers whose work hours per week are scheduled shorter than those of regular workers', and 'the other' is defined as 'non-regular workers who are scheduled to work the same hours or more as regular workers are'. However, there is no standard definition of 'part-time worker' in labour force or employment surveys published by the Ministry of Labour or the

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4 Age is crucial in finding a job not only to women but also to men. It is very common knowledge that age is a very important element when hiring new workers in both a small firm and a large-sized enterprise (Osawa 1993:91).

s The age of 35 has somehow special meanings for Japanese people. For instance, it is generally regarded as the age limit to find a new job even for men and 'middle-age' in a Japanese context starts at the age of 35 (and ends at 60). Moreover, the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology defines the first childbearing at 35 years old and over as 'late childbearing' *(korei shussan)*. In a magazine article entitled •35 year-old: midway through dream' *(35 sai: Yume no tochu),* the age of 35 is regarded as 'not being young any more, but not too late to catch the last plane, i.e. a new job or baby' (Asahi Newspaper Weekly AERA, 23 November 1998).

Management and Coordination Agency (Osawa 1993:79-82). In practice, a 'part-time worker' usually means a non-regular worker who is 'excluded from the wage structure, long-term employment security and benefits applied to the full-time regular workers' (Lam 1992b:56).

Another important point is that 'part-time work' is commonly regarded as a housewife's job, as the term 'housewife part-timers' *(shufu ptito )* indicate. According to the General Survey on Part-time Workers, 73.8% (77.3% in 'part-time workers' and 55.8% in 'the other') of the total non-regulars were women in 1994 (MOL 1995). In the survey, female part-timers were clustered in the 35-54 age group, whereas male part-timers were clustered in 15-24 age group and another group of 60 years old and over (ibid.). Generally, non-regular workers younger than 30 years old are not called 'part-timers'. Instead, they are called *arubaito* (from the German word *'arbeit' )* if they are students, or *furit<i* (an abbreviation of *'furi* (free) *arubait<i '*) if they have already left school. In the case of males, non-regular work is considered to be a working style which fits unmarried young men or elderly men who have already retired. On the contrary, for females, housewives are the ones to be engaged in non-regular work. Thus, a 'part-timer' indicates a worker's 'position or status' *(mibun)* in the workplace rather than referring to one's length of working hours, and it is regarded especially as working 'status' which suits middle-aged housewives (Osawa 1993:82).

The status of 'housewife part-timers' is by no means high and stable. From her fieldwork conducted in a chain store, Matsunaga states that the relationship between female regular workers and female part-timers was 'probably the most apt to be problematic of all the different employee relationships within the company' (2000:86). Although both types of female workers were not expected to give a long-term commitment to the company, regular workers, who were much younger than part-timers, were entitled to a much higher salary and greater job security. On the contrary, no matter how hard or how many years part-timers had served with the company, their treatment would never be on a level with that of a regular worker. Although some of them were in the unofficial position of section chief due to considerable experience in their job, they received 'neither extra pay nor higher status in recognition of the responsibilities they assumed' (ibid. 84), leaving them feeling their situation was unfair. In addition, Matsunaga

points out that the widely accepted notion that housewife part-timers work for pocket money is misleading; in fact many part-time workers' income is indispensable to maintaining their households' finances (ibid. 21). Nevertheless, many middle-aged housewives do not have any other options of employment but to work as part-timers. As the remark of a part-timer in Matsunaga's work shows, 'It can't be helped' (ibid. 87).

## 3.5    Graduate mothers' views on employment: findings from fieldwork

In the situation described above, how have individual university-educated mothers coped with their occupational life? For university qualified women, having a job after graduation itself has not been something peculiar or uncommon. Thirty-nine out of forty mothers I interviewed had had a paid job at least once in their lives. Compared to university graduate men who are at an advantage when it comes to job security, university graduate women's work patterns are many and various.

### Entry to employment

As we have seen in the Introduction, many Japanese firms have been reluctant to employ female university graduates. University graduate mothers I interviewed also described companies' hesitation to recruit female university graduates. When N-san (60) graduated from Ochanomizu Women's University, she found that female university gradates had very limited choices for their career (see Chapter Two). K-san (44) told me that she had few career aspirations while she was a university student, and that she did not take job-hunting seriously. However, she faced a bitter situation after graduation.

> I just wanted to be an ordinary OL (Office Lady). When I tried to find a job, however, I soon got discouraged because many companies just said they don't need a woman with a university degree. So I simply jumped at a job offer from a medium-sized company which accepted me. In the company, I was the first woman to have graduated from a university. Perhaps because of that, other female employees of the firm ignored me for the first month. I don't know exactly why, but they did not talk to me for a while.

S-san (38) wanted to be a journalist, but she found that only small numbers of newspaper firms accepted female applicants. Finally, she entered a small publishing firm that she left three months later. A-san (48) who studied law at university said that most companies that wanted to hire graduates from her university were not interested in hiring women. 'Few firms said "male only", because it was a matter of course. They just didn't expect there to be any women studying at the faculty of law. I entered a law firm, since they wanted a secretary, which was a women's job'. Some of women in Group B said that their employment opportunities were very limited because it was before the EEOL came into effect.

Among the mothers, those who had connections could obtain jobs with less difficulty. After graduation, O-san (61) entered employment because her father died when she was in the first year of university. She got a job at Sony through her father's connections. E-san (40) also entered Fujitsu through her father's connection. Y-san (36) passed the employment examination for Marubeni trading, but only those who had connections could take the examination in the case of female university graduates. Among my interviewees, these three mothers worked for the most well-known large firms, and perhaps most competitive firms to enter.[6] What their firms had in common was that they did not officially recruit female university graduates, at least by the time the mothers entered. All of the three mothers were engaged in assistant level work at the firms. Y-san told me that university graduate women and junior college graduates were assigned to the same kinds of tasks. In Fujitsu, said E-san, female university graduates were treated as equivalent to male graduates from special-training schools *(senmon gakko),* and female junior college graduates were treated as equivalent to male high school leavers, in the academically oriented hierarchical employment structure.

It seems that mothers who became teachers did not have much difficulty in finding a job either. The teaching profession was the earliest professional job for highly educated women, and perhaps partly because of that, it has facilitated women's continuous full-time work. For

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[6] When O-san entered Sony in the late 1950s, the firm was not as big a world-famous business as it is today. However, it was already a large firm with 3,536 employees in 1960 (Fujii 1995:94).

example, it is relatively easy for teachers to get maternity leave, since schools have in place a system to arrange a substitute for a teacher taking long leave.

**The effect of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL)**

Mothers of Group C, who entered employment after the EEOL was enacted, tended to enjoy much more choice in finding a job when they were university students. O-san (30) told me that when she was a senior in her university, everyone in her class received two or three job offers regardless of sex, owing to the bubble economy prevailing in the late 1980s. N- san (31) recollected that 'it was a "sellers' market". It was quite easy to get a job'. F-san (33) also agreed that there were many job opportunities open to female graduates even then. She said that she very much regretted having entered a chain of supermarkets, despite the fact that she could choose from many offers from a variety of companies.

> I should've chosen a workplace with many university graduates. In the supermarket, I didn't have anything in common to talk about with other employees, since many part-time women were middle-school leavers. Their educational level was so low.

It is noteworthy that mothers of Group C considered that their employment opportunities were relatively plentiful because of the bubble economy, and nobody actually referred to the effect of EEOL. However, in fact, many of them got a specialised job or a job in the 'managerial track' (which I will describe later in this section).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Law enacted in 1986,[7] aimed at the diminution of the segregation of women in employment and the utilisation of women's potential professional abilities. The law encouraged employers to give women an equal opportunity with men in terms of recruitment and hiring (Article 7); assignment and promotion (Article 8); and not to discriminate against a woman as compared with a man by reason of her being a woman in terms

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[7] The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was partly revised in 1999, which newly added a measure to promote employers' considerations concerning problems caused by offensive sexual speech and behaviour in the workplace.

of vocational training (Article 9); of fringe benefits (Article 10); and of retirement age, resignation and dismissal (Article **11).**

One of the most significant aspects of the EEOL was the introduction of a double-track system. After the EEOL, many large firms set up two career tracks for newcomers to choose at the point of entry: one is 'managerial track' *(sogo shoku)* which was originally the male track with job responsibility and promotion opportunities, and the other is 'clerical track' *(ippan shoku)* which was arranged chiefly for young women who were engaged in manual practice and were expected to leave within a few years. In effect, even after the new system came into practice, male (mainly university graduates) newcomers are assigned to the managerial track 'automatically', and most female newcomers entered the clerical track as before except for some specially selected university graduate women (Lam 1992a:24). The ratio of university graduate women who entered the managerial track was only l% of all female school graduates in 1990 (Ida 1995:123).

Positive aspects of the law were recognised to some degree. Some point out that the law did actually have the effect of promoting female university graduates' participation in major firms (Ida 1995:123), and that it made a contribution to weakening the kind of social climate where women's continuous work is not preferable (Tanaka 1992).

on the whole, however, the EEOL did not bring about a drastic change in companies' employment practice, since society did not fully support the principle of the law. Many point out that the authors of the EEOL had given in under strong pressure from companies and finally ended up writing legislation with many loopholes (e.g. Hisatake et al. 1997:161, Shinotsuka 1995a.b, Lam 992a,b). Company management was afraid that the new employment practice based on sex equality would ruin their personnel management systems and eventually weaken the vitality of the Japanese economy (Lam 1992a: 10, l992b: 100). Moreover, some intellectuals criticised the EEOL on the premise that 'equal opportunity for women would destroy the Japanese family and the country's cultural heritage' (Lam 1992b: 100). In addition, Lam argues that 'There has been little evidence that Japanese women have become more career conscious and begun to make more demands on their employers' (1992a:38). As to the causes of their

attitudes, she made two points: one is that Japanese women are simply not prepared to accept the demanding work style of male workers which requires continuous work, overtime hours, and job transfers; and the other is slow development of their equality consciousness for achievement of equal rights (ibid. 39-40).

In a sense, the EEOL attempted to modify the categories of regular workers in a firm. In other words, it aims to classify female university graduates not merely into the group of women, but rather into the group of university graduates who are in the most advantageous position to climb up the ladder of professional success. It seems, however, that the law in fact produced a small new women's group which does not neatly fit into the established categories of a firm. Women selected for the managerial track are neither 'men' nor 'women' in company society; as if they were almost entitled to be 'honorary males'. Unfortunately, the 'honorary male' may in fact be the 'assistant male' at most. Ouchi (1999) points out that women on the managerial track are not always treated in the same way as their male colleagues are. Firstly, in some firms, male and female employees are offered different conditions regarding distribution of personnel and on-the-job training (ibid.). The definition of the managerial track is altered according to a company's view. In some firms, male and female managerial staff are entitled to the same working conditions, but some firms set up a specific women's managerial track, apart from the general 'male' managerial career track.

Female university graduates selected for the managerial track at the point of entry tend to be isolated from women's society within the company. Based on her own experience of working as a female manager candidate in a bank for a few years, Akiba (1993) illustrates how the existence of some elite women *ruffles* everyday life in the firm. Nobody knows how to deal with women with 'male' status in their highly gendered firm society. Subtle conflicts between firm members take place, e.g. whether women on the managerial track should put on a bank uniform, or whether they should serve tea (ibid.). As Valentine points out, 'The most obvious case of marginality at work is the professional woman, or at least a woman in a "man's occupation"' (1990:43). The managerial track women in effect represent marginality in company society. They

are neither 'female' workers nor 'male' workers, rather they are in an anomalous position, somewhere between them.

Reasons for leaving the workplace

Until quite recently, as we have seen, the majority of women in the labour market were workers who were not expected to stay long in the firm. Among my interviewees, the number of women who never left the workplace was only six, and one self-employed woman also had not put her paid work at home on hold. There were clear differences between the generations.

Group A

When women of Group A (aged 51-62) graduated from their universities in the 1960s, it seemed that society and female graduates, in general, shared the notion that women should leave the workplace when married. After her graduation, Y-san (52) got a job 'that anybody can do, such as making photocopies'. Four years later, she left the workplace on marriage. For her, it was taken for granted that a woman leaves the firm when a marriage is set up. Other women in this generation group, O-san (61) and N-san (60) also quit their work on marriage as a matter of course. What these three women had in common was that their husbands were frequently transferred between workplaces. In some industries, e.g. banks and insurance firms, and large firms which have many branches, regular workers who can expect promotion are subject to job transfers every few years for career development, on the premise that wives accompany them to take care of them. N-san told me that 'We moved a lot. We moved twice a year so it was impossible for me to get a job or to start community activities. I gave up getting a job'. K-san (58) was never able to get a job because her marriage had already been arranged while she was in university. S-san (55) continued to work outside until her first child was born. After that, her husband was transferred to the London branch, and their second child was born during their London stay. Three years later, the family came back to Japan and the couple got divorced. She opened a small cram school at her parents' home.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that some mothers in Group A did not regard being a full-time housewife as the 'traditional' lifestyle typical of middle-class married women. M-san (62)

said 'I didn't know how a full-time housewife should behave because I was raised in a merchant family, so my mother didn't do housework very often. We had a maid living with us'. Having graduated from a university, she continued to study to be a counsellor and worked for a hospital on a part-time basis, but became a full-time housewife when her husband was transferred. N-san's mother was a teacher who recognised that a woman should be financially independent, so she also got a degree to qualify as a teacher. However, she could not continue her teaching job because of her husband's persistent job transfers. After her children had grown up, she started part-time work as a counsellor.

> My husband cannot do any housework, but he doesn't oppose my going out. He was raised in a society which believes 'work for men, housework for women', but he didn't know what it meant very well since his mother didn't do any housework at all. She was from a very rich family that took on many housemaids. She used to be a spoiled girl from a rich family in Tokyo, going to girl's school by rickshaw. Recently I began to take care of her because she was often hospitalised in the last few years, so we have close contact now, but she is extremely tough to handle ... living outside the real world (laugh). She is very self-centred, so has never done anything for the sake of other people in her life. She didn't even do child-rearing, leaving her children to the housemaids until the (Pacific) war destroyed everything. My mother-in-law was a dentist, a so-called 'professional woman' *(shokugyofujin )* in those days. 'Professional woman' was a kind of mocking term, meaning a woman who got a skilled job e.g. typist and translator. But I think that 'professional woman' was a liberated woman who went her own way. My mother-in-law was a so-called *'moga* • (modern girl), born in the first year of the Taisho era (1912).

I found it very interesting that they had mothers who were engaged in skilled jobs and left housework and child-rearing to the maid at home, because in general people these days take it for granted that Japanese mothers 'traditionally' used to devote themselves to child-rearing and domestic matters.

## Group B

More than half of the mothers of Group B (aged 35-49) left the workplace on marriage or giving birth. H-san (49) also left the workplace after giving birth to her first child.

> I left the workplace when I was pregnant with my first child at the age of 33. I didn't have enough mental and physical strength to continue work. The firm accepted my retirement as a matter of course. I didn't have enough power to resist their attitudes. Also, I realised that I had no future in the firm. There were only one or two women who had a job title there. Everyone in the office considered

a pregnant woman should leave. So did my husband and I.

After graduating from a law faculty, A-san (48) was working for a small law firm as an assistant, but had resigned before she got married. She said that she did not leave the workplace in order to get married, but shared the notion of a woman's retirement prior to marriage.

> I was not very well satisfied with my job. I was a secretary but my tasks were just typing legal documents, submitting them to a court, going to a police station to deliver things to people in custody. The boss (lawyer) had two secretaries. He mixed up his private and professional lives, so we were asked to do various kinds of miscellaneous tasks. The other secretary always got angry because he asked her to drive to his holiday villa, and moreover his wife frequently dropped into the office and ordered her, 'please send my blouse to the dry cleaning. Treat it carefully, because it cost 50,000 yen (app. £300)'. The secretaries were all university graduates .... One of the former secretaries quit saying she would get married, but actually she moved to another law firm. I thought another firm would be the same, more or Jess, in terms of the treatment of women. No woman got promoted.
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> The reason I quit was that I was going to study in the Philippines. A Philippine diplomat I knew invited me, and I wanted to go abroad because my parents were so annoying at that time. They were eager to arrange my marriage. But my boyfriend proposed to me one or two weeks before my leaving. I left the firm to study abroad, but told them that I would leave on marriage. In those days, it was taken for granted that a woman quit work for marriage. There was no workplace for married women. Since then, I haven't had any outside job, not even part-time work.

A lack of job satisfaction encouraged some of the mothers who left the workplace on marriage or giving birth. T-san (38), who studied Gennan in her university, entered a retailing firm after her graduation, but she quit it one year after her marriage. 'I worked for the firm only because they gave me an offer. I did not have much choice. What I did was not the job for me, so I wanted to leave there as soon as possible'.

N-san (40) wanted to enter a publishing firm, but she could not withstand the severe competition to get into it. Then she looked around a company where she was not required to do overtime work.

> I could not get the kind of job I wanted to have, so I decided to go a specialist-training school after work in order to acquire some professional skill. The job I got was a secretarial job. I really hated that. Even making photocopies and typing were better than my job. Just after I joined the firm, I was told by a senior, 'our job is *"kibatarakt'* work'. I was so shocked. I thought it was impossible for me

to do such work. (What does *'kibataraki'* mean?). *'Kibataraki'* work meant that we had to keep paying attention to the old male bosses in order to sense what their wanted, and arrange everything for them before they asked us. We sharpened pencils, served tea, displayed newspapers, and when our bosses entered in the lift, we kept bowing outside until it closed. I had never done anything like that before.

I went to a French language school after five. My husband used to be a teacher there. One and a half years later, I left the office for marriage. The firm did not allow married women to stay there. Anyway, I had had enough of it. That was not the job for me. After marriage, I got a diploma in French language, so I was going to get a job as a translator. But, I felt that as long as I did something related to French, I would remain under my husband's influence. I wanted to have something completely different from his interest. So I stopped studying French.

My husband has more *kibataraki* ability than I do. When I get tired and lie down at home, he starts to do housework spontaneously. He cleans up the rooms on Saturday, but I wish he did it on Wednesday too. And I want him to cook more meals.

I had never heard of the word *'kibarataki'* before. Literally *'ki'* means attention, mind or sense, and *'bataraki'* means working or functioning. The *'kibataraki'* type of work requires a female worker to be sensitive to the needs of her male boss. It seems that this type of work does not exist only at N-san's former workplace. The Asahi Newspaper Weekly AERA (7 December 1998), featured an article entitled 'A corporate executive demands "female servants"' *(Kigyo no toppu wa "nyokan" wo motomeru).* Although the article does not use the word *'kibataraki'*, tasks of secretaries serving old men in the top positions of large firms and governmental offices introduced in the article are quite similar to what N-san described. For instance, a secretary bones a fish for lunch for the boss, prepares a moist hand towel *(oshibori)* for him to wash his face, and regulates the room temperature; the junior secretaries learn how to serve the boss from their senior secretaries.

K-san (35) also quit her first job because she was disappointed by the way the firm treated women.

I found my job very stressful. In my firm, women had to get to the office earlier to wipe the desks. According to the public principle *(tatemae)* of the firm, male and female university graduates were supposed to be engaged in the same kind of work, but in fact, women also had to do 'women's work', such as sewing on a button and going out to buy a packet of cigarettes. I hated these duties. What drove me mad the most, however, was a male worker, who was one-year younger than me, got promoted before me. I was the one who had instructed him.

Although some of the mothers were satisfied with their work, they left the workplace partly because of the male-centred employment system of their firms. S-san (40) was enjoying her full-time work but left it when she was pregnant.

I was very satisfied with my first job. I produced statistical data about the sales of medicines by using a computer. We sold the outcomes to pharmaceutical companies. I became very busy and my work responsibility became a burden, but despite that, I wasn't promoted. I was told that I would be promoted to team leader *(shunin),* but I wasn't. The company was foreign-affiliated, so they said that men and women were treated equally, but it was not like that. A man could be a team leader even if he was not a university graduate. I was doing a team leader's job without the title. In the German branch, however, women got promoted, and a section chief *(kachO)* from Sweden, with whom I was working in the German branch for a while, was a woman. But because we were in Japan ...

I prefer working outside to staying at home, so my husband and I discussed which one of us should quit work to take care of our child. I like a professional life more than he does, but in Japanese society, women cannot be promoted. At that time, our salaries were almost the same, but he had the possibility of promotion in the future. So I quit.

My husband doesn't say that a mother should stay at home for her children, but insists either mother or father should do so. I am working on Saturday now, so he does all the housework and takes care of our son on Saturday.

In the large trading firm Y-san (36) worked for, women were offered assistant work only. However, she studied trading business and expanded the scope of her work. Her boss and male colleagues gradually left a part of their work in her charge.

I enjoyed my work, but I had to quit it since my husband's firm transferred him to other branch. My boss evaluated me highly as an able worker, so he tried to transfer me to where my husband was transferred. But the personnel section refused his request, as they did not want set a precedent for a woman's job transfer.

## Group C

Some women of the Group C (aged 29-33), who graduated from university after the EEOL was put into effect, also left the workplace on marriage or childbirth, but it was no longer as a matter of course, rather it was a question of her own choice. M-san (29) left a computer firm after she got married, and is a full-time housewife now.

I quit work because I had no confidence in managing the double burden of child-rearing and professional work, and I didn't like working with that boss.... I was a systems engineer. It was a tough job, but I enjoyed it. I don't hate having an outside job, because I can expand my personal network through work.

I know some women continue their work, leaving their children to their father or mother, but my parents and parents-in-law's places are far from here. A mother living downstairs leaves her one year-old child to a day nursery. But I don't like that option, because the day nursery frequently rings her up and tells her that her child has a slight fever. Finally, her family moved to be near the day nursery. I am planning to have a job after my children enter primary school.

My husband cleans up the bath-tub. He also cleans the rooms and does the laundry, because I repeatedly ask him to do so. A man cannot 'distribute the attention' *(ki ga mawaranai );* my husband doesn't notice my needs. He just reads my face, and does some housework 'stealthily' (trying not to provoke his wife's temper).

O-san (30) was also working as a systems engineer, and left the workplace after she was pregnant.

I liked my job. I was so busy that I got to the office at 9:00 a.m. and left there around midnight. Moreover, I frequently went to work on Sunday. My husband was working in the same section with me, but one of us had to transfer to another section after making an announcement that we would be married. That is a custom that many Japanese companies have. Fortunately, my boss persuaded the personnel section to put off my transfer, so I could stay at the same section until our project was completed.

They always transfer the wife. I was transferred to the section which dealt with a completely different type of task from my previous job. I could not understand why a woman has to move on her marriage. My friend who is working at the Isetan Department Store also got married to a man who was in her section. They were working in the office, but soon after their marriage, she was transferred to a shop in the department store. She cannot take days off on Saturday and Sunday (since department stores are so busy at the weekend), whereas her husband works only on weekdays.

After the transfer, I lost interest in my job. I had already made up my mind that I would leave when I was pregnant. I want to raise my children by myself, and want to stay at home when my children come home.

In the firm O-san worked for, few employees go home before 6:00 p.m.. It is true that systems engineers are extremely busy in the information technology industry. However, on the other hand, even if they do not actually need to do overtime work, they tend to remain at the workplace. In such an atmosphere, it is only mothers who have to leave on time in order to collect their children from a day nursery. This means that mothers are becoming isolated from the other workers, or at least they begin to feel isolated. Both M-san and O-san were

able to continue work if they wanted to, but in fact, they were aware of the fact that working mothers have to cope with many obstacles. For them, it is unfair that the entire burden falls only on a mother. They do not want to struggle against the double burden of work and childcare every day. Rather, they want to feel comfortable, enjoying time spent with their children.

Attitudes towards part-time work

After their children grew up, mothers of Group A 'graduated' from being full-time housewives, except for K-san (58) who never had work experience. Y-san (52) works for a primary school three days a week as a counsellor for students. M-san (62) started to work as a social worker around 20 years ago. Her job is to support refugees from Asian and African countries. N-san (60) is engaged in several jobs as instructor: for example, to train people with speech defects and to teach parents how to raise their children. S-san (55) began to study to be a feminist therapist when she was 44 years old, and then she organised a job-training course for housewives who want to get a job again and gave them advice.

Before they left the home, they attempted to involve their husbands in doing housework.

> Y-san (52): My husband was raised in a feudalistic family, so he'd never done any housework before. When we were young, he never had a key when he was out since he thought that I was at home all the time. I had always gone home before he came back, so I could not even make a trip with my friends. When I got a part-time job, I began persistently to ask him to share the housework, and finally he came to enjoy cooking. Now I can take a trip with my friends.

> M-san (62): Until quite recently, my husband did not have any time to do housework. Nowadays, he stays at home weekends, so he began to do the washing. We have an automatic washing machine these days, so I only taught him not to wash white clothes and coloured ones together. He often shouts, 'Only white clothes for today's washing!' (laugh), walking from room to room asking, 'Are there any white ones to be washed?'.

N-san (60) said that her husband still cannot do housework, but 'That's all right, since we can buy ready-cooked meals anywhere today. In that sense, we live in a better society than before'. S-san (55) told me that her present husband does not ask her to take care of him. 'If he were a man who complained about my feminist activities, I would not have remarried'.

Mothers in the Group A showed satisfaction with their part-time work, as they felt that they achieved financial independence to some extent. N-san (60) said, 'Financial independence is indispensable to obtain my liberty'. M-san (62) told me that outside work is necessary for self-fulfilment.

> I often think that I should've continued my work after marriage, but I did not want to ruin my family life. I might have led a different life, but I chose marriage over my career. I am satisfied with my present situation since my children grew up and I am engaged in work where I can make use of my experience and what I studied. One of my contemporaries at university, who continued to pursue her career, became a university professor. It is meaningless to compete with her (as to who has spent a better life), and to envy her success. We chose different ways of life. That's all.

Another source of their satisfaction was that they had taken part in social activities to some extent and got a job related to these activities. Although 'I failed to be financially independent with a professional full-time job' (N-san), job-satisfaction and some earnings provided them with a happy medium.

In the mothers of Group B, 17 out of 22 mothers left the workplace chiefly to give priority to child-rearing, and six of them found a job on a part-time basis few years later, and four of them gained full-time work. The rest of them, seven mothers, remained at home.

As I described in this chapter, it is quite difficult for many middle-aged mothers to find a full-time job. Part-time jobs available to them are, in many cases, 'part-time work for housewives' *(shufu pato )* which do not require any special skills or abilities and are low in prestige. This fact underlies the hesitation of mothers in this group about starting a part-time job.

H-san (35) and Y-san (36) were not interested in 'part-time work for housewives' at all.

> H-san: I don't want piecework or part-time work in a factory or supermarket. My husband gives me money for my personal expenses, so I don't need paid work. Ifl go out to work, I will choose the part-time work I can enjoy, such as an English teacher or staff of Disney Land. I am not interested in full-time work, too. I don't want to spend all my time working.

Y-san: If I have to work, I want to have a job with responsibility. For example, I want to teach something. I don't hate the hospitality business, but I can't be satisfied with working at a supermarket.

The notion of taking up a part-time work with low prestige was just unrealistic for them. They did not feel the need for paid work mainly because of their husbands' high income.

Outside work was considered a means of escaping from isolated child-rearing. Some mothers told me that they had a desire to have an outside job when their children were small. However, they did not take any steps to actually go out of the home.

A-san (48): When my children were still very small, I wanted to get an outside job to escape from the child-rearing burden. But, I think that I just wanted to go outside the home, not for work. When I was young, there was no notion of housework sharing between husband and wife.

Although she identifies herself as a full-time mother, she has a paid job at home. She often spends some time helping with her in-laws' family business, but she regarded it as an extension of housework.

H-san (49): I looked for a day nursery for my child, but I was refused because all the day nurseries I visited were full and my husband was well paid. I realised that a day nursery is for mothers who have to earn their livelihood. In fact, I did not need to work outside, and my desire to work was not so strong. To be honest, I did not try to find a day nursery seriously. Now my children are grown up, but if a woman quit work and stayed at home for years, it is very hard for her to find a good job. Of course there are many part-time jobs available to housewives, but I don't want to get such a job.

On the one hand, they wanted to be away from the 'duty' of 24-hour child-rearing, but on the other hand, they were reluctant to share the burden with their husbands or a third party. Moreover, they were not interested in engaging in the usual part-time jobs available for housewives, such as factory work or shop assistance.

Moreover, the idea that it is better for mothers to stay at home while their children are small put a stop to their going out. The fact that they cannot expect their husband's cooperation in child-rearing also encouraged them to choose to stay at home.

M-san (38): I quit my teaching job as I was not physically strong enough to do full-time work. I cannot manage both housework and work perfectly. I'm not interested in doing housework perfectly, but I don't want to skimp outside work. In a way, I chose to concentrate on taking care of one child at home rather than looking after 40 children at school. I feel that I don't need to rush into returning to work.

My husband sometime assists me to take care of our child, but he is not helpful. I often ask him to keep watching our son while I am away, but he doesn't do anything more than 'seeing' him. He doesn't change the diaper even it is soaking wet.

H-san (39): I had a desire to go out to work, but I am going to stay at home for a while as I am satisfied with my present situation. I am busy with the activities of a mothers' network and I want to spend some time to study gender issues. If I have outside work, no time will be left for other activities. I will keep my child at home for one more year.

I think that my husband does more housework than other husbands do. He is in charge of taking out the garbage, wiping the windows, and repairs. But, he rarely takes part in taking care of our daughter. He doesn't think it is his job.

H-san also expressed her dissatisfaction at social attitudes towards middle-aged women taking up outside work.

Age is crucial. There is no decent work for women older than 30 even if they were graduated from universities. The majority of part-time workers are women of the age of 50 or so, and they did not go to university. If a university graduate gets a part-time job, everyone will make a fool of her saying 'why is a university graduate doing such a job?'. Companies do not accept mature women. Nor do men. They see adult women as old, not as mature.

Jn fact, mothers who were actually engaged in 'part-time work for housewives' showed their feeling of discomfort with their status. For instance, they never reveal their academic background at the workplace. For instance, T-san (38) said that 'I never say that I am a university graduate to other part-timers at the factory. If a newcomer is a university graduate, she will become the talk of everybody'. Y-san (36) told me that her contemporary at Kobe University, one of the prestigious state universities, cannot take up a part-time job because firms reject her as being over-qualified. An acquaintance of M-san (39) is working as a cashier at a supermarket, concealing the fact that she has a master's degree from Waseda University.

On the other hand, several mothers criticised the negative attitudes of university graduate women towards housewives' part-time work. K-san (44), who is engaged in full-time work, considers such women ignorant of the real world.

> After marriage, I worked as a part-timer in a factory for one year. The majority of the part-time workers were middle-aged women, but I enjoyed working with them in a friendly atmosphere. Now I am working for a bank where many colleagues are university graduates, but the atmosphere is not so good.

E-san (40), who is also a full-time worker, insists that mothers, who complain of a shortage of decent jobs available to them, may not really have any serious intention of working outside. N-san (40), a part-time day nursery nurse, thought that it is important for mothers to spend time outside the home anyway.

> Even a cashier at a supermarket and a cleaning lady will obtain something important apart from money. If you work outside, you will meet many people and can realise that you cannot get your own way about everything. A full-time housewife doesn't have any chance of experiencing unpleasant things (so they cannot develop themselves mentally).

They pointed out that full-time mothers' horizons tend to be narrow. From their points of view, any work experiences whatever would be instructive to form one's personality.

## Reasons for pursuing a career

Strong career aspirations motivate women to continue their full-time work even after giving birth. K-san (51) was the only mother who has never thought of quitting work in Group A. She is a self-employed technical translator, and her workplace is at home.

> I got married soon after graduation from university. Immediately after my marriage, I started a correspondence course in translating. I was going to get married and finish child-rearing as soon as possible (in order to devote herself to paid work}, so tried to give birth consecutively. But I miscarried my second child. Things did not go as I planned.
>
> I have never thought of quitting my job. I hate to be a man's subordinate. I don't want to be financially supported. The most important thing for me is that I have other people, my clients, who evaluate me highly. Of course I know they can find another translator instead of me, but I am really happy when clients say that they definitely need me for the work. I know I am indispensable at

home, but I cannot be satisfied with family responsibility only.

M-san (36) is a full-time worker on the managerial track at a middle-sized electronics company. She has worked for the same firm for 13 years since her graduation from university.

> I liked English, so I wanted to get a job where I can use my English ability. In theory, my firm treats university graduate males and females equally. However, there is a difference in terms of training. Before they are assigned to the sales department, university graduate males are given opportunities to study, e.g. accounting and shipping, in other departments. But, the firm assigned female graduates to the sales department immediately after their entering. The management wants women who already had skills, so only female graduates who majored in a foreign language at university were accepted. At first, I was assigned to the European division of the sales department. I started as an assistant, but was given a specialised job, such as writing business letters and translating documents. Finally, I had an assistant for my work until giving birth.
>
> Two years ago, I took one-year maternity leave, and after that, I went on a part-time (6 hours) shift for half a year. Now I am back to the full-time shift, but I reduced the amount of my work since I cannot do overtime work for the time being.
>
> I like working hard and getting money as the reward of my efforts and labour. I feel very comfortable with that kind of lifestyle. Financial reward makes me feel a sense of liberation. I am not an academically oriented person, so study without financial reward doesn't satisfy me. I feel that staying at home is a waste of energy. In this regard, I think that my parents' attitudes affected me. They encouraged me to make maximum efforts; if you have an ability to achieve something 100%, you can make it 120% by your additional efforts.

These women have developed their careers by continuing with their first job and accumulating professional knowledge and skill. Paid work is a source of satisfaction for them, rather than a financial necessity, and giving birth did not obstruct their professional lives.

Some mothers changed their jobs several times to climb the ladder of professional success. M-san (39) first chose to enter the Matsushita Institute of Government and Management *(Matsushita Sei-Kei Juku),* which offers the students a three-year graduate-level programme of training. The main aim of the course is to provide leadership training to excellent students with aspirations for a career in politics or business. All the students receive a monthly training allowance, and no tuition is charged.

> I wanted to do research on political measures. While I was an associate of the institute, I studied the overseas business of Japanese firms and worked for a foreign aid organisation. I experienced a lot of

useful things, e.g. working on a factory assembly line (to understand the situation of management and labour), but the institute did not know how to utilise the women students. I wondered if I should quit the institution and enter a government agency, but I also wanted a child. I thought that I needed to empower myself to pursue my career, so after giving birth, I went to a top-level business school in the U.S. to get an MBA degree. My husband agreed to my idea of going to a business school. He also began to study in the U.S.. We were looking for a business school with a day nursery.

I never think of giving up my career. I cannot live without my income. I need the power of money (laugh). After coming back from the U.S., I stayed at home with my son for two months until my new job started. We failed to join a mother-child circle in the neighbourhood, so we were really feeling depressed during those two months.

Now she belongs to a think-tank, doing research on people's lives about issues such as education and health, as a full-time researcher. T-san (33) also cannot imagine her life without outside work, either. She started her full-time work at a small trading firm, but left there after six months. After that, she was involved in setting up new businesses, and finally worked freelance. When she noticed her pregnancy, however, she closed down her business.

I had no intention of putting my outside work on hold. But my husband strongly opposed me working outside until our child became three years old. When I gave up my freelance work, I dumped all my name cards feeling as if I had lost my arms and legs. I put up with staying at home for one year, but soon became impatient. I got a job as part-time trainer of on-the-job training at firms before my son reached the age of three. When my son was three years old, I started to work on a full-time basis.

Her present full-time job is as a consultant on companies' personnel management. E-san (40), T-san's colleague, said that work experiences are very important to her because they have shaped her character and personality as she is today. These mothers are determined to pursue their career. Working outside is an important part of their lives, hence they by no means think of giving up their career because of child-rearing or other reasons.

Another important reason why they do not quit their full-time work is that they are very well aware of the fact that it is very hard for mothers to find a new full-time job. Some mothers gained a full-time job after giving birth, but they made a great effort to acquire professional skills beforehand. Moreover, they got the jobs before they reached the age of 35. H-san (31) wondered if she should quit work for child-rearing and return to full-time work afterwards, but

her husband stopped her, saying that nobody would hire a woman in her late 30s. T-san (37), a primary school teacher, is encouraged by other female teachers and her friends to continue her work. 'Many women told me that the child-rearing burden doesn't last long, so if you quit work now, you will regret it later'. M-san (36) also said that all her friends who quit work after giving birth advise her not to stop working. 'They said that no company accepts a mother, no matter how strongly they insist that they can ask another person to look after their children. I have no friend who succeeded in regaining a full-time work'. E-san (49), who got a job as business consultant when she was 29, insisted that 'if a mother wants to continue a professional job, she has to stick to it'.

## Mothers in the workplace

Gradually, companies' arrangements for employees with small children seem to be improving. M-san (36) said that the reason why she was able to stay at the same company for 13 years is that she is very lucky, e.g. her husband does not need to move his workplace *(tenkin),* they found a day-care centre within a five minute walk, neither of their parents are critical of her job, her boss is quite an understanding man and her firm has established many schemes to help employees with small children. With the permission of her boss, she is keeping overtime work and overseas business trips to the minimum. In the case of T-san (33), her firm accepted her condition that her work hours be shorter than other employees in order to pick up her son from a day nursery. N-san (31) is working on a part-time (6 hours) shift. The union of her firm, one of the NTT (Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation) groups, has strongly demanded the improvement of working conditions in favour of women, since historically the firm has employed a lot of women as operators. If she wishes, she can continue the part-time shift until her child reaches the age of six.

Even if a support system for mothers is well established, many female workers leave the workplace on giving birth. It is quite common for the full-time working mothers to have no female colleagues with children. When M-san (36) entered her firm, five other female graduates were accepted. However, now she is the only one who remains at the workplace. One of the women gave up working outside when she had her second child. She got a qualification as

a public accountant to enable her to do work at home. N-san (31) told me that she always feels some sense of guilt when she goes home leaving her colleagues behind. She is a systems engineer working in a group. Her boss understands her situation very well, but other colleagues, especially those who do not do any housework at home, cannot understand how busy a mother is. Moreover, she is dissatisfied with the fact that there has been a delay in her promotion owing to her part-time shift. On the whole, full-time working mothers I interviewed appear to be lucky in having an understanding boss. One exception was H-san (31) who is a speech therapist working in a hospital. Her boss, a doctor, did not allow her to take maternity leave, insisting that a mother should not take leave, and instead, that she should take on someone personally to look after her baby. (Finally, her husband succeeded in getting child-care leave, which is a very exceptional case for men). Even if a company arranges a good support system for employees with small children, the mothers agreed, it largely depends on the specific boss in the department just how far a mother can use the system to her advantage.

Another major problem of full-time working mothers is that full-time work generally includes overtime work. In a computer firm where E-san (30) works, the majority of the workers stay at the workplace until late at night even they do not have anything to do. She is the only mother in the department, feeling guilty a bit when she goes home at a fixed time. N-san (31) got frustrated at her present situation in the workplace. She said that her colleagues exchange important information when they are doing overtime work or they have a drink at a pub. Before she gave birth, she joined a circle of workers working overtime or overnight and gained new professional knowledge by communicating with other colleagues, but now she cannot work overtime and no one asks her out for a drink (because she has already gone home).

How mothers with full-time work manage the double-bu rden

Unlike other women in her generation, K-san (51) seemed to be very determined to achieve professional success. As regards domestic matters, however, she had the notion that a wife should do all the housework, while other A group mothers tried to involve their husbands in housework as they expanded their activities outside the home.

Ideally, I think that housework should be shared by all the adult family members, but people who go to work outside can't afford the time to do that. If I let my husband do half of the housework, he will die. He was so busy with his work that he comes home at 11-ish. He often tries to do the dishes, but I always stop him. I am not comfortable with my contradictory ideas. On the one hand, I want to be walking with him side by side, but on the other hand, I think I should put him in the centre of the family. At an unconscious level, my husband believes that a husband is superior to his wife. A long time ago, when we went to vote for the general election, he said to me '(you should vote for) Ichikawa Fusae' (1893-1981; the so-called mother of women's suffrage). I was so surprised and got angry. I was going to vote for her, too, but it should be me to decide whom I vote for, not him. Much worse, however, I also internalise the idea of the husband's superiority over his wife, to some extent.

K-san admits that ideally a husband and a wife should equally share family responsibility, but it is not a realistic idea for her. She has no idea of drawing her busy husband into the domestic sphere. If she does so, she is afraid, he would be exhausted and actually would die from over-exertion.

Younger mothers do not hesitate to ask their husband to share the housework burden. Some husbands are in favour of the idea of sharing, but in reality few husbands have enough time and/or ability to do so, and the wives accepted the larger share.

M-san (36): My husband doesn't hesitate to do housework, but he is also a full-time worker who is extremely busy. I am so busy that I gave up eating hot meals before they got cold (Because she has to feed her child at the same time). I was always thinking whether I should quit for my baby, but now I am happy since I have gained both of them, job and baby. Actually, I am quite satisfied with having double work: housework and paid-work, because I can enjoy a double life, in a way.

When she has to go away for a business trip, she asks her mother who lives in Hiroshima to come to look after her child. It takes around six hours from Hiroshima to her place by the *Shinkansen.* Moreover, she has a child-minder in her neighbourhood, and leaves the child in her care when she has to do overtime work. The husband of N-san (31) cannot cook, but they share other domestic work. They take a day off by turn when their one-year daughter cannot go to day nursery because of high fever, but the problem is that her husband often does a business trip overseas for months at a time. M-san (39)'s husband's tasks at home are to help their son's study, check materials from their son's primary school, and take him to school by car in the morning. However, he cannot do any housework, 'because he was brought up by a "perfect" full-

time mother'. M-san does all the housework except for cleaning rooms. A cleaning lady comes to her place once a week. N-san and M-san are not satisfied with the arrangement of their division of labour at home, but they do not expect too much of their husbands.

There are also husbands who do not identify housework and taking care of children as their duty. For instance, T-san's (29) husband did not support her in continuing her work.

> I put up with working outside for a year, and started work again when my child became two years old. My husband is working at home, but I cannot ask him to look after our child. He loves his child and is not bothered about playing with him, but he doesn't like to look after him for the sake of my work. Moreover, he cannot cook. When our son was small, I always asked my mother to come here while I was away for my business trips. My parents live in Nagoya. Now, my son has grown up enough to go Nagoya by himself by plane.

The husband of T-san (37) cleans up rooms on holiday 'only because he cannot put up with dust. He rarely does other housework or looking after our child. I am dissatisfied with the present arrangement. He doesn't even make a coffee for me'. According to Sodei (1996: 176), despite the fact that university graduate wives with full-time work have to struggle with balancing professional and domestic work, their husbands rarely support them. What makes it interesting, she states, is that wives do not even expect any support or co-operation from their husbands at all (ibid. 176). It is still not uncommon for working mothers to be unable to gain housework and child-rearing support from their husbands.

### 3.6    Conclusion

The female labour force has been divided into categories according to social background. Before the Second World War, it was clear that women's work style was chiefly regionally oriented and depended on family background. The majority of Japanese working women were engaged in agricultural labour, but in industry, lower-class women from rural areas were engaged in blue-collar work while urban women from relatively well-off families obtained white-collar jobs. After the end of the war, as post-war economic growth was expanding, young workers from rural

areas were absorbed into companies in urban areas. The numbers of agricultural labourers have greatly decreased. Class-consciousness and local variations became weaker partly owing to equal opportunity of education. As the educational level was improved, the young labour force shifted from factory work to office work. Companies found housewives useful as a substitute for young unskilled labour in factories. In post-war Japan, female workers were mainly categorised by their age and marital status, rather than by their class or family background. Unmarried young women were clustered in white-collar office work as regular workers, and middle-aged housewives were employed for unskilled labour as non-regular workers.

Historically, the way in which women should be treated in the field of employment has been considered in relation to their attributes as being women. Before the Pacific War, women from relatively wealthy urban families, with better education, were discouraged actively from making a commitment to work outside home, since it was often seen as the corruption of their feminine virtue. Even in the present day, what female workers are required to do is to balance the work burden and a motherly role, rather than to achieve a professional goal on an equal basis with men.

A university qualification has been a useful tool to gain job security for men but not for women. In the framework of the Japanese employment system, female university graduates became marginalised. Japanese firms, especially large corporations, gave priority to hiring male university graduates and granted them secure jobs with good working conditions, on the assumption that they would be loyal to the firm and work hard for decades. On the other hand, many firms were reluctant to employ female university graduates until recently. Women did not need to be university graduates, since they were not regarded as permanent workers. The male-graduate-centred employment practice encouraged women to leave the workplace on marriage or on giving birth.

Female university graduates have been anomalous in the labour market. Companies used to put graduated women in the category of 'female workers', not in the 'university graduates' category. In a way, it seems that firms did not know how to utilise women with domestic duties. Since the

Equal Employment Opportunity Law was enacted, however, companies have attempted to classify female university graduates in the group of 'university graduates', rather than as 'female workers'. However, once they leave full-time work, they are not classified as 'university graduates' in the labour market any more. Instead, they are to be categorised in a group of the 'middle-aged' housewives, especially if they are 35 years old or above. In the present situation, it is quite hard for middle-aged mothers to find full-time work regardless of their educational attainments. Moreover, university graduate mothers are often socially regarded as being over-qualified to just be a part-time worker. Because of that, they tend to stay at home as full-time mothers, rather than taking up part-time work with low prestige, unless they actually have financial difficulties.

Some mothers are motivated by strong career aspirations to continue with their full-time work. These mothers are, in many cases, engaged in some kind of professional job, and working outside is a source of personal satisfaction. It cannot be said that they are fully supported by people in the firm or family members, but as pioneers, these mothers are struggling to pave the way for professional female workers. However, it seems that such mothers are still in a minority. It is likely that only women with excellent abilities and good health succeed in managing both professional success with job satisfaction and family responsibility.

# Chapter Four

# The Status of the Housewife

## 4.1    Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that university graduate mothers tend to choose either to be full-time workers or full-time mothers, once they leave the workplace, rather than to re-enter the job market as part-time workers. If they choose to be full-time mothers, they will be engaged in domestic duties or act in housewifely roles on a full-time basis. In this chapter, I will examine how the role of the housewife in a Japanese context affects and shapes mothers' attitudes.

In contemporary Japanese society, the social norm that starting a family should be based on the foundation of a legal marriage is relatively strong. The majority of Japanese mothers are married, and are socially entitled 'housewives'. The rate of illegitimate children among all newborn babies has remained at only 1% from 1970 to 1995 (MPW 1998:100) in Japan. The fact that 82.7% of foetuses developed in unmarried mother's bodies were terminated in 1996 showed a strong social resistance against cohabitation with dependent children and against single mothers (ibid. 1O1).[1] In addition, marriage in Japan was extremely stable in the last few decades. Although the average age for marriage is rising, e.g. it was 26.3 years old for women and 28.5 years old for men in 1995, whereas it was 23.0 years old for women and 25.9 years old for men in 1950 (EPA 1998:86-87), the majority of the population got married sooner or later. The divorce rate is also gradually rising, but is not yet high: in 1998, the rate was 1.94 per 1,000 persons, whereas the marriage rate was 6.3 per 1,000 persons.[2] The notion that marriage is one of life's duties has been largely weakening, but 94.9% of women and 91.9% of men were married at the age of fifty in 1995 (MPW 1998:24). Thus, on the whole, as married women, housewifely duties associated with the management of their household affairs have great influence on

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[1] The percentage of abortion of legitimate babies was 33.0% in 1996 (MOW 1998:IOI).
[2] Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2001) http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hw/populate/pop4.html

Japanese mothers' lifestyle.

In Japanese society, housewives have been granted a relatively high status. 'Housewife' would seem to be a universal phenomenon, but its status and social significance vary from society to society. Kunihiro defines the Japanese housewifely role as a woman's responsibility for managing her home in a good condition by engaging in various activities which are necessary to run family matters smoothly (1993:77). In Japan, the housewife's role is highly evaluated as a 'professional occupation' (Hendry 1993:224), and it requires housewives to handle various tasks related to the 'management' of their family-related matters, in addition to the mundane housework skills such as cooking and cleaning. Here are some examples: first of all, housewives are generally considered to be in charge of the management of their household budget3; in theory, a husband turns his salary over to his wife, and she 'gives' him back a part of it as an 'allowance' ( *okozukai*).[4] Secondly, housewives are in charge of the 'public relations business' of their households. For instance, the maintenance of 'good relations with their neighbours and relatives, and with other people whose goodwill may be of benefit to their husbands and their careers' (Hendry 1993:226) is a part of the role in which housewives are expect to engage. Thirdly, it is mainly mothers, not fathers, who are deeply involved in their children's education in many Japanese families. It seems that, as we will see in the next chapter, schools, especially pre-school *(yochien)* and primary school activities do not function well without the mothers' active participation. Thus, housewives are required to have various skills in order to run their household affairs smoothly without any problems, and to make the most of the interests of members of their family.

The strong idea that men and women are equally talented but in different domains grants

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[3] In effect, this practice does not necessarily mean that a wife can have her husband's income at her disposal to control. As regards the management of household finances, the most important task of a housewife is usually to cut down on expenses as much as possible to manage to make ends meet.
[4] During fieldwork, I attended a meeting discussing domestic violence, organised by a women's study group in Ichikawa city. According to the organisers, there is a category named 'economic violence' apart from physical, psychological, and sexual violence. They explained economic violence as violence by a husband who does not hand over his salary to his wife, and instead of that, financially controls his family by managing the income at his disposal, or who is scornful of his wife's financial dependency.

'professional' status to housewives, which is regarded to be as important as their husbands' status as the 'professional' breadwinner. In general, a husband is regarded as the head of the household, but in practice, his wife is expected to be in charge of all the household affairs except earning money. A housewife's great contribution to her family is considered to be essential, and her strong sense of responsibility generated from the high opinion of the role makes her hesitate to put other members of her family in her place.

Nevertheless, this stereotypical Japanese housewifely figure wielding domestic authority is not 'traditionally' fixed. It is generally said that the term 'housewife' *(shufu)* was born in the Meiji era (1868-1912), but its meaning was not the same as it is today. Moreover, the role of housewives has changed and become shaped in relation to other social changes. In fact, the way in which the status of a housewife should be evaluated has long been a controversial issue in Japan. From 1955 to the early 70s, both intellectuals and housewives argued over the housewife's role and duties, and the value of domestic labour done by a housewife. Although the high estimation of a 'professional' housewife has been well established in Japanese society, it cannot be said that the role is always positively accepted by women on an individual level. The large number of publications questioning or discussing the housewife's 'professional' role shows women's mixed feelings towards it. For example, Hannah Gavron's *The Captive wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (1966) translated and published in 1970 in Japan sold 46,930 copies in one year, whereas it only sold less than 5,000 copies in five years in the U.K. (Oakley 1983:xiv). It cannot be said that the status of the housewife always guarantees satisfaction to women, and various opinions and attitudes towards it lead many of them to have ambivalent feelings about it.

Whether individual women find the housewifely role worthwhile or not, the role of the housewife is institutionalised and housewives are more or less involved in activities related to housewifely duties. In other words, married women are socialised to be 'housewives' and to play a socially required role. As Imamura stated, 'society is not ambivalent about the roles of women, although individual women themselves may feel ambivalent' (1987:18)

In this chapter, I will argue how the status of 'housewife' has influenced mothers' choices in life.

First of all, I will examine the historical transformation of the 'housewife' in the Japanese context. Exactly who is a 'housewife'? Has a 'housewife' always simply meant a married woman throughout history? Secondly, I will present manifold views on the 'housewife'. Despite its prestige, women have had ambivalent feelings toward being a 'housewife'. On the one hand, a housewife who concentrates only on domestic labour symbolises her family's wealth and her power over her household, but on the other hand, some housewives have been haunted by a sense of guilt because they do not actually need to 'work'. The role of the housewife has kept being redefined and modified in order to tie housewives down to their role. As housework has been rationalised, housewives have expanded their activities to fill their spare time. Thirdly, the way in which university-educated mothers with varying occupational status and from different generations see the status and role of the housewife will be presented to consider a changing image of the housewife.

## 4.2    Historical transformation of the definition and image of the housewife

Today the stereotypical image of a housewife is a full-time housewife who concentrates on household affairs and mothering, but from a historical perspective, this was not a so-called 'traditional' way of a Japanese woman's life. One of the reasons why a full-time housewife is/was highly admired in society is that she does not 'need' to work outside because her husband's income is substantial. However, the emergence of women who do not 'need' to be engaged in productive work is, except for women from the upper class, a relatively recent phenomenon in Japan. As we saw in the previous chapter, Japanese women historically have been an indispensable part of labour forces in productive work. In *The Women of Suye Mura,* Wiswell described the virtues of women in a farm village in the 1930's as 'the ability to endure (the} hardship of the very heavy labour' (Smith and Wiswell 1982:1). 'As a proverb shows, "if you are out of work, you should not eat" *(hatarakazaru mono kU bekarazu),* Japanese society basically does not accept people who do not work' (Sasagawa 1986:36). From a historical point of view, for Japanese women, the 'privilege' of being away from (productive) work may be something they do not know how to deal with.

**The meaning of 'housewife' in pre-modern Japan**

In the Japanese language, a term that is equivalent to housewife is usually *shufu.* Literally, *shufu* consists of two Chinese characters meaning 'main, head' *(shu)* and 'woman, especially married women' *(ju).* The term *shufu* was invented in the early Meiji period (Imai 1994:55), and before that, the wife of the household head was called a variety of terms such as 'oldest woman of the household' *(ie-toji),* or 'head of the household' *(ie-nushi)* (Ueno 1987:77). According to Takeda, *ie-toji* is still used in agricultural households in the Tohoku (north-east) district in Japan, meaning the (old) female head of the household, who has authority over domestic affairs and the family business of a big farm household (1981:84).

It is pointed out that the concept of a female household head existed before the Meiji Restoration (1868). In agricultural communities in pre-modern Japan, the wife of a head of the household was respected as the representative of the domestic sphere, while her husband represented his household to the outside sphere (Yanagita Kunio quoted by Ueno 1987:77). Apart from a female head, i.e. the wife of a male head, there were several women in a household, such as unmarried sisters and daughters of the male head, a (first-born) son's wife, and some servants if it was affordable. A female head meant the head of all those women, and therefore she had the authority to play a leading role in running the household. The succession ritual called 'transmission of the ladle' *(shamoji watashi)* (ibid. 77) was performed in some areas, when the rights of a female household head were transmitted from a retiring head, or mother-in-law, to a new head, or daughter-in-law. 'The ladle, used to serve rice, symbolised the female household head's rights: she had exclusive control over the distribution of rice, the most important staple and a form of currency in a nonmonetary economy' (ibid. 77).

Takeda points out, on the other hand, that household management was not left completely to the discretion of a female head. She suggests that a female head was not granted the rights to manage the household in her own way against her husband's will (1981:80). Before being promoted to female head, a daughter-in-law was severely drilled in the way her husband's household had been managed previously. In this regard, a female head was a woman who embodied the custom of her husband's family through daily work, and handed it down to the next generation. A female

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household head was granted domestic authority as a reward for the great contribution she made to the continuity and prosperity of her husband's family. In addition, the sexual division of labour was not as clear-cut as it is today. In the Edo era ( 1603-1867), many household tasks were managed by the husband, as head of the household. For instance, cooking was not dominated by women in all classes, and greeting guests and the management of household finances were also in the charge of a male head (Imai 1994:50-51). Child-rearing was also not solely a maternal job. Fathers took part in taking care of their children as we have seen in Chapter Two. A wife was mainly engaged in productive work in the household, and another important task for her was taking care of the parents-in-Jaw.

Western influence on Japanese 'housewife'

Like the notion of 'good wife, wise mother' (see Chapter Two), the way in which the image of the housewife which is widespread today was established has been shaped partly by a Western idea of a housewife. In the process of the modernisation of the nation, the role of the female household head has altered, along with changes within the family itself in Japan, under the influence of an avalanche of imported 19[1]ʜcentury Western ideas.

The usage of *shufu* started with the introduction of the role of Western wives as the mistress of the house. According to Imai, the term *shufu* first appeared in *Home Economics (Kaji ken 'yaku kun)* published in 1874, which was translated to use as a textbook in primary schools (1994:55). The book was part of the Japanese version of *Chambers' Information for the People,* introducing Western upper- and middle-class wives' duties in terms of .housekeeping (ibid. 55-56). Textbooks, introducing the instructions of household management in a Western manner, were published one after another in those days. And in those books, several words meaning housewife, including *shufu,* were used, varying with the context (ibid. 56). Almost all the translators agreed, however, to use *shufu* when they referred to 'one of the important duties of a wife was to handle the servants effectively' (ibid. 56). Imai suggests that *shufu* began to be used more widely in the process of establishing home economics education for girls, and that it depicted a woman (wife) whose domestic position was the highest of all women in the household (ibid. 55-56).

The original meaning of *shufu* suggested that there were several women in Japanese households, especially those who were well-off, in those days. Until the Meiji era (1868-1912), it was not uncommon for a man to have more than one wife. In 1870, the Meiji government gave concubines the same legal rights as wives had had (Sievers 1983:13). To describe the status of a wife at that time, Imai (1994) introduced two books written by foreign observers. Mary Crawford Fraser's *A Diplomat's Wife in Japan* published in 1899, reported 'it was extremely rare for upper-class women other than Christians to denounce the concubine system' (Ibid. 45). Moreover, Basil Hall Chamberlain wrote about the low status of a wife as follows:

> ... because registration of divorces was not enforced among commoners and only husbands had the right to initiate divorce, men of the lower classes easily switched wives, 'as if coming home with a new stewpot'. Wealthy upper-class men, although required to register their divorces, rarely obtained them. 'Why, indeed, should a man take the trouble to get separated from an uncongenial wife, when *any* wife occupies too inferior a position to be able to make herself a serious nuisance, and when society has no objection to his keeping any number of mistresses?'. (ibid. 45-46)

However, male intellectuals such as Mori Arinori, the first Minister of Education, and Fukuzawa Yukichi, famous educator and thinker, heavily criticised the concubine system as inhumane and immoral (Sievers 1983:18-20). Influenced by Christianity, they claimed that the concubine system should be abolished in order to catch up with Western nations where monogamy was institutionalised. The Old Civil Code, which took effect in 1898, prohibited the registration of a concubine in the household register *(koseki)* therefore, from then a concubine and her children were legally excluded from the family {Imai 1992:51). Thus, there were numbers of 'housewives' living together in one household at that time. Imai found the definition of *shufu* as the wife who unifies a family; the real wife; the number one woman; the principal *(shu)* of the women's living quarters, in Morohashi Tetsuji's *Comprehensive Chinese-Japanese Dictionary (Dai Kanwa Jiten),* and concluded that 'The wife was the indeed head among the women, and therefore the *shufu'* (1994:47).

After that, the original meaning of *shufu* changed by incorporating a Western concept of family. As shown in Chapter Two, the Meiji government believed that assimilating Western values and ways of thinking was the key to establishing a strong modernised nation, and the education of

women was also formed along these lines. One of the writers for the Meiji Six Journal *(Meiroku Zasshi),* Nakamura Masanao, who believed Christianity was the main factor behind Western success, advocated a new role for Japanese women as the 'better half to their husbands in a Western sense (Sievers 1983:22). In the process of modernising the nation, domestic work including child-rearing and managing family budgets came under a housewife's control. Education of women began but it was to educate them to be good housewives in a Western sense. Here the model of 'housewife', based on middle-class values, as a woman in charge of all domestic work emerged.

In the Taisho period (1912-26), the usage of *shufu* became quite common nationwide, meaning mainly a married woman.[5] A monthly women's magazine 'Housewife's Friend' *(Shufu no Torno)* was first published in 1917, aiming at the 'improvement of the quality of domestic life' *(katei seikatsu no kojo)* (Asahi Newspaper, 5 March 1995).[6] According to Takeda, the image of a *shufu* in those days was that of woman who applied herself to doing housework without being aware of business going on outside the home, such as political or social movements (1981:54). Strictly speaking, however, all married women were not identified as *shufu* yet. Under the Old Civil Code, which was effective until the end of the Second World War, the status of a wife was much lower than that of a husband. In the family system known as the *ie-system,* for a woman, marriage meant assimilation into her husband's family whose head was her father-in-law. The *ie-*system was a household system legalised by the Meiji government, and it gave absolute authority over family members to the (male) head of the household in all classes. For instance, the permission of a household head was required for the marriage of his family members. The top priority of the *ie* was continuity of the family, and the relation of *ie* members was patriarchal and seniority-based. In such a situation, the position of a new wife, the wife of the son, was the lowest in the family. A *yome* (daughter-in-law) was not yet *shufu,* while her mother-in-law

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[5] Saito suggest that *'shufu'* did not necessarily mean a 'married woman' in the very beginning. Jn a women's magazine published in 1887, there was a description that 'A *"shufu"* means a woman in a position of a head of the family, with or without the husband, and who manages all the household matters' (Saito 2000:54).

[6] At the tum of the 20•h century, a lot of women's magazines started to be published (Saito 2000: 131-51). Many of them, including 'Housewife's Friend', targeted chiefly middle-class women in urban areas. Urban lower-class women also bought such magazines, but women in agricultural areas could not access them.

occupied that position. Moreover, Takeda points out that in readers' letters in the newspaper, married women at that time did not address themselves as *shufu,* whereas their counterparts after the war did use the title; instead of *shufu,* married women chose terms such as *'tsuma '* (wife) or *'hitozuma '* (one's wife) (1981:54-55). Takeda suggests that under the old Civil Code that did not allow wives to have any legal rights, young married women hesitated to use *shufu* which connotes a woman with domestic authority (ibid. 54-55).

Nevertheless, the concept of the family itself began to change under the influence of the image of a 'warm' middle-class Western family. Arichi points out that at the beginning of the Taisho period (1912-26), many journals introduced a Western family as an ideal model family, while introducing a variety of aspects of Western lifestyles such as Western clothes, food, and housing arrangements (1986:69-70).[7] They praised the child-centred Western family that was supposed to be based on the love between a husband and wife, and took a critical attitude towards the *ie-*system as it was said to be still feudalistic (ibid. 69-70). Under the *ie-system,* 'Relations within the house were characterised less by love and affection than by duty and filial piety, and too close a relationship between a husband and wife, for example, could even be seen as detrimental to the house as a whole' (Hendry 1995:25-26). Arichi presented an essay entitled 'Western Family', published in 1914 (1986:70). In the essay, the Western family was likened to 'spring' while the Japanese family was likened to 'autumn' (ibid. 70). On the one hand, the Western family which was considered to set up based on human rights, with a warm and friendly atmosphere, was the target of admiration. On the other hand, the Japanese family was criticised because it imposed obligation on its members, forced obedience to the head, and the peace and order inside the house were only maintained by the authority of the head (ibid. 70). In addition, in the Taisho era (1912-26), the term 'motherhood' first emerged as a translated word from *'moderskap'* in the Swedish language, used in a book written by Ellen Key (Koyama 1991:165). Since then, the image of a maternal figure whose purpose in life is mothering with lots of affection has been reinforced.

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[7] In the Meiji era, western clothes were only found among upper-class male city dwellers, and Western food such as bread and meat was, too.

In the post-war period, Japanese families changed in many ways. First of all, the *ie-system* as legislation was abolished after the war, and the new Constitution declared that marriage requires only the mutual agreement of a husband and wife (Article 24). Under the new Civil Code, only one couple (and their children) can be officially registered as one household; for a young wife, her parents-in-law became members of another household. In theory, all married women became *shufu,* the 'principal' woman in the household in all classes. Moreover, the post-war economic boom brought huge numbers of immigrants from rural agricultural areas to urban industrial areas (see Chapter Three), and this affected a change in the family system and the concept of family itself. Large-scale construction of apartment complexes in urban and suburban areas was started in the middle of the 1950s, by the Japan Public Housing Corporation. Young people were encouraged to leave conventional agricultural communities and to start married life in a small '2DK-type'[8] apartment housing. (However, a first-born son stayed behind to inherit to his parents' house. The abolition of the legalised *ie-system* did not mean that people in general gave up the idea of continuity of family). The ideal model of a family became a nuclear family whose father was an employed white-collar worker (salaried man) and whose mother was a full-time housewife. Young women dreamed of becoming an urban full-time housewife, released from interference by their mothers-in-law and the obligation of engaging in family business, such as agricultural labour.

The ideal family figure after the war was partly modelled on a 'happy' American family as depicted in popular television programmes. In the 1950s, the image of a Western family was introduced to Japan mainly from the United States, through imported light entertainment television programmes. The television broadcasting which started in 1953, showed large numbers of American dramas in its early years. Especially, situation comedies like 'Father Knows Best' (aired in Japan in 1958) and 'The Donna Reed Show' (in 1959) had a strong influence on Japanese producers, and Japanese television firms produced many copycat dramas. Japanese children started to address their mothers and fathers as 'mama' and 'papa' in English (Miura 1999:17). American housewives depicted on TV became the ideal figure for a housewife

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a '2DK' stands for 'two rooms and a dining room with kitchen facilities'. This was the most common arrangement of rooms in a government-built flat at that time. They were quite small, but even so, young

to model herself on; they wore fashionable clothes, being surrounded by electric home appliances and sophisticated furniture in a beautiful house in the suburbs, and their main concern was to keep the house sparkling and to take care of their husbands and children. A full-time 'devoted' housewife represented a new family figure, and symbolised the achievement of an American-type affluence in life (Miura 1999:131).

## 4.3    Diversified views on the housewife

### Full-time housewife as an object of admiration

In the period of high-growth economy, from the middle of the 1950s to the early 1970s, a full-time housewife living in an urban area was the object of admiration for many Japanese women. The Japanese employment system, mentioned in the previous chapter, promised lifetime employment and a regular pay rise to husbands working in large companies. In the 1955 Population Census, 74.9% of the wives of salaried men were regarded as full-time housewives (EPA 1998:298). Separation from their parents-in-law in rural areas provided freedom to young wives, so that they enjoyed a married life without interference from 'nagging' parents-in-law and relatives, and 'meddlesome' neighbours characteristic of country life. Moreover, electrical household appliances such as a washing machine, refrigerator, and automatic rice cooker were invented by the 1950s, and spread rapidly. In 1970, 89.1% of households in Japan owned an electric refrigerator, 91.4% a washing machine, and 68.3% a vacuum cleaner (EPA 1998:299). The innovation of a variety of electronic appliances changed housework from mere drudgery to something quite enjoyable for housewives. Maids were disappearing from middle-class households, and the management of a maid as one of the housewifely duties also disappeared. In *Haruko 's World,* Bernstein describes the sense of longing of farm women for the life of an urban full-time housewife in the 1970s. 'For the Japanese farm woman, the idea of women's liberation, if it means anything at all, means freedom from the economic uncertainties and physical drudgery of farming, more time to spend cooking, cleaning, and sewing, and the opportunity to help the children with their homework' (1983:168). A full-time housewife was the symbol of a family that was sufficiently wealthy to allow the wife to have no paid job.

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couples longed to live in them.

In the early 1970s, the term 'new family' *(nyu famiri)* emerged and became popular in the mass media and society. A 'new family' put an emphasis on the affectionate relationship of a married couple and the enjoyment of a personal life, making a distinction with the set of values of an 'old family', which had stressed the patriarchal, continuous ie-system (Hisatake et al. 1997:125). A married couple who followed the fashion was named 'friend couple' *( tomodachi fufu ),* appealing to an equal relationship between husband and wife. Nevertheless, as many point out, in fact the 'new family' couple represented the gendered division of labour of a married couple (e.g. Asahi Newspaper 1999:91, Hisatake et al. 1997:125, Ochiai 1996:107-11). The ideal figure was a couple which consisted of a 'sweet' wife and a 'dependable' husband (Ochiai 1996:110).

The main duty of housewives became that of 'an all-around caretaker' (Lebra 1984:302), and they engaged in the task with a sense of superiority. English researchers studying Japanese housewives in the 1970s to the 80s (Hendry 1993, Imamura 1987, Lebra 1984, Vogel 1978), describe how they tied themselves down to a housewifely role as a manager of their homes and caretakers of their families, with a strong sense of obligation. Imamura points out that the role of Japanese housewives is regarded as 'a "profession" – a full-time, lifelong career to which she is expected to commit herself just as her husband is expected to commit himself to his work' (1987: 18). Housewives strongly supported the division of labour where the husband was responsible for making his family's living, and the wife was responsible for running her home without trouble. They even felt a sense of superiority to their husbands who had nothing to do but paid work. A housewife's monopoly in handling household affairs made her husband dependent in the domestic domain: wives made fun of the husband who did not even know in which drawer his socks were kept. Full-time housewives wondered if men's work in offices and factories was more satisfying than women's work at home. 'Why should the male's work to produce "things" be looked upon more highly, they (housewives) question, than the female's work to create, develop, and maintain human life, health, and safety?' (Lebra 1984:311). Compared to their husbands who spent lots of time in the workplace, housewives had time to create their own life and made it more enjoyable in their own particular way. As long as they accomplished the role of the household manager, they could have the rest of their time free for

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their hobbies or other activities which stimulated their own personal interests. In her study of 'professional' housewives, Hendry suggests that most of her informants would be 'most reluctant to change places with their husbands' (1993:239). Many housewives had an affirmative attitude towards the housewifely role based on the gendered division of labour, and pursued self-fulfilment through opportunities presented by the role.

'Housewife Debate'

Nevertheless, questioning regarding the 'happy' status of the housewife have also arisen since the 1950s. In those days, 'housewife' meant mainly 'full-time housewife' or 'professional housewife'. In 1955, the 'Housewife Debate' *(Shufu Ronso)* was touched off by a paper entitled *The Second Profession Named Housewife* written by Ishigaki Ayako. Ishigaki deplored the situation in which the majority of young women wished to leave the workplace and to obtain a stable status as a housewife before reaching 30 years of age, and warned them that the life of a full-time housewife would be less enjoyable than they expected (Ishigaki 1982 original paper was published in 1955). As technology advances, she expected, housewives would be released from many parts of the housework burden, so they would not need to struggle with domestic chores all day long (ibid.). She accused housewives of wasting time in chatting with other housewives, and losing opportunities for intellectual stimulation (ibid.). The paper questioned the high status of the housewife, claiming that a housewife should have a paid job as the 'first profession' and the housewifely role as the 'second profession', in order to be proud of being a 'proper' member of society and to serve society as a whole.

Ishigaki's paper aroused widespread controversy. The controversy continued in the magazine 'Women's Public Opinions' *(Fujin Koron)* from 1955 to 59 (Ueno 1982a), and later it was named the 'First Housewife Debate'. Kanda divided the papers that participated in the debate into three groups (1982). The first group consisted of papers, including Ishigaki's one, insisting that a housewife should have another occupation. Shimazu advocated that a housewife should be economically independent in order to establish a society without sex discrimination (1982; original paper in 1955). Tanaka criticised middle-class American women in the 1950s, whose purpose in life was only marriage and becoming a full-time housewife (1982; original paper in

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1955). Japanese women did not need to follow such 'backwardness' of American women, she stated (ibid.). On the other hand, the second group highly evaluated the housewife's role, based on the idea that women are specially gifted in doing housework and child-care (Kanda 1982:217). Sakanishi argued that both men and women should recognise that a housewife's role as a housekeeper is socially important, even more important than a paid job (1982; original paper in 1955). She regarded Ishigaki's opinion recommending housewives to have a paid job as 'out-of-date', arguing Japanese housewives should model themselves on their American counterparts who realised that 'a woman's place is in the home' (ibid.). Many housewives in general supported Sakanishi's view that women should think highly of their 'special skills' *(tokusei),* and that women's status would in turn be elevated by making the most of that skill (Kanda 1982:217-18). The third group stressed the housewife's role as a driving force for creating a better society. Shimizu argued that housewives' organisations have the power to change society; after the war, groups of ordinary housewives began to raise their voices against social problems, e.g. a rise in electric power rates; the existence of an 'entertainment district' in their locality; the abolition of school meals (1982; original paper in 1955). Maruoka advocated that the point is not whether a housewife should have paid work or not, but rather that housewives without paid work and working housewives should work together to make a happy home and community (1982: original paper in 1957). None of the groups ever questioned the framework of a gendered division of labour in the household and society, but it was noteworthy that critical attitudes towards the status of the housewife had already emerged in the immediate post-war period.

Negative attitudes towards the full-time housewife

It was likely that middle-class housewives were fairly satisfied with their status after the Second World War; however, the housewifely figure as the object of admiration gradually started to lose its brightness from the 1970s. First of all, the number of full-time housewives decreased after the 1970s. The proportion of women's labour force participation bottomed out in 1975, and after that it began to increase (EPA 1998:24, Ochiai 1996:15). The term 'full-time housewife' *(sengyo shufu)* emerged in the 1970s with their decrease in number, in order to distinguish them from housewives with paid work *(kengyo shufu)* (Hisatake et al. 1997:153). According to the Asahi Newspaper issue (5 March 1995), the magazine Housewife's Friend used the term *'sengyo shufu'*

for the first time in an article 'Is a *sengyo shufu* a lazy person?' featured in the 1971 October. In the article, the writer encouraged housewives to be more mature in mind, not to be lazy women (ibid.). The Asahi Newspaper described that the term began to be used with negative connotations in a context which assumed that the life of full-time housewives is too 'easygoing', every day spent with 'three meals and an afternoon nap' *(sanshoku hirune tsuki)* (ibid.). As the technology of home appliances advanced and ready-made clothes and food were available, full-time housewives were labelled as women enjoying a lot of free time, and it was often considered that they represented laziness.

From the end of the 1970's to the middle of the 80's, many pieces of non-fiction were published, focussing on depressed housewives (Matsumura 1990:242). One of the well-known books was *Housewife Syndrome (Shufu Shokogun)* written by Madoka Yoriko, a woman journalist who organised a 'clinic' for suffering housewives. In the book, Madoka introduced stories of housewives who suffered with family problems (1988, original hard-covered book was published in 1982). The housewives complained bitterly of discontent with their married lives; they were disappointed with their husbands' self-centred attitudes and lack of affection towards them, and they were irritated by the fact that they could not get a divorce for financial reasons (ibid.). Their problems ranged from domestic violence at the hands of their husbands, discord with their parents-in-law, to the juvenile delinquency of their children. As a result, they were suffering from feelings such as being weary in body and mind, a sense of loss, insomnia, difficulty in breathing, and from becoming alcoholics (ibid.). Madoka suggested several causes for their frustration; financial dependence on their husbands and mental dependence on their children; their narrow circle of friends in the community; the illusion that marriage would give them a happy life; and persistence in playing the role of the ideal 'perfect' wife and mother (ibid.). She named their bad condition in body and mind 'housewife syndrome', warning that all housewives were vulnerable to succumbing to this 'disease'. She argued that 'housewife syndrome' was a 'disease' caused by being a housewife who lacked a personal self (ibid.). According to Madoka, the socially defined housewife's role which expects housewives to be caretakers of their families and to be economically dependent on their husbands, is a source of psychological conflict and suffering (ibid.).

From inside to outside the home

As housework was mechanised and rationalised, housewives began to seek a location for their activities outside the home. They needed to find something to consume their spare time, in order to clear the 'disgraceful' reputation of 'lazy' full-time housewives. Some housewives tried to expand their time for housework by doing it elaborately; for instance, they baked bread and cakes, made dresses, and found other things which required a lot of time to accomplish (Takeda 1981:174). In a way, they tried to do housework 'perfectly'. Other housewives, however, went out of the house to take part in a variety of activities, including part time jobs. The rate of full-time housewives among the wives of salaried men, decreased from 74.9% in 1955 to 56.6% in 1980 (EPA 1998:298). Apart from paid work, housewives started to learn or study at facilities called 'culture centres' or city halls. Culture centres provided a wide range of classes, mainly for housewives, to stimulate their interests such as, cooking, knitting, reading classical novels, calligraphy, and flower arrangement. Most of the culture centres were organised by private companies, but local governments also offered a variety of leisure and study classes free of charge or with small fees. The majority of activities were for enjoying hobbies, or acquiring 'cultural enrichment', but there were also classes for studying more 'serious' issues such as women's history or women's political movements. Moreover, housewives could join tennis circles or a volleyball team called *mama-san* volleyball. Some housewives, furthermore, took part in other community activities such as volunteer work or political activities. In the 1980s, people came to associate housewives with 'part-time workers' or 'culture centre activists' (Matsumura 1990:244). Consequently, the sphere of housewives' activities was considered to be expanding from the domestic realm to the public realm. Society started to regard full-time housewives who concentrate only on family-related matters as a minority.

A new perspective towards the housewifely role emerged in the 1970s. The Third Housewife Debate started in 1972 with a paper entitled *A Housewife is a Liberated Human* written by Takeda Kyoko, following the Second Debate whose main issue had been whether domestic work should be paid or not. Takeda had a high opinion of full-time housewives, regarding them as being free from 'inhuman' productive work (1982; original paper in 1972). She insisted that

giving top priority to productive work makes a human's life worthless; full-time housewives live much more humanely than men and women who are worn out by working hard as a 'cog in a machine' (ibid.). Her definition of 'humane life' was to rationalise housework and productive work as much as possible, and to spend the rest of the time doing sports, enjoying hobbies, studying, taking part in grass-roots movements, or consumer activities. She questioned the social value that working hard is better than 'laziness', expecting full-time housewives to reject it (ibid.). Moreover, she advocated that this logic of a housewife's life (the idea of giving priority to living humanely over being engaging in 'inhumanly' productive work) should be shared by all men and women. In order to release workers from workaholic lives, she added, housewives could help them by taking part in productive work for short hours; if all full-time housewives participated in productive work, the workload per worker would decrease (ibid.). Thus, Takeda praised full-time housewives as the initiators of a more humane style of life. What she advocated was the emancipation of those who worked hard, irrespective of sex, from a material-oriented industrial society. Therefore she did not accept the importance of a housewifely role based simply on the notion of a gendered division of labour.

## Maternal role as the new main role of housewifely duties

As their spare time increased, housewives began to spend much more time on child-rearing. Mothering became the central role of the housewife. Takeda (1981) suggested that housewives of her mother's generation spent much more time doing housework than taking care of their children. She reminisced about her childhood in the late 1940s, and found her mother had been very busy with housework, rather than spending much time on actual child-rearing.

> I was the oldest daughter of the seven siblings, the last child was 16 years younger than I was. I was raised in a house where some infants were always around. Although my family was part of a nuclear family, my mother spent little time taking care of her infants, after the elder children came back from school. My younger brothers carried infants on their backs, holding hands with other infants, and went out to play around. As the oldest daughter, my duty was to assist my mother with the household chores. (ibid. 155)

The innovation and spread of electrical home appliances made a great contribution to the reduction in the housewives' housework burden. Especially, the appearance of an automatic rice

cooker in 1955 released housewives from the heavy burden of cooking rice three times a day. Housewives used to get up very early in the morning to cook rice, but an automatic rice cooker with a built-in timer enabled them to get the rice ready before they got up. Electrical home appliances provided mothers with more time to focus on and take care of their children.

Since around 1950, the number of children per family has decreased. The birth-rate fell from 4.32 in 1949, in the baby boom, to 1.43 in 1996 (MPW 1998:9). Small numbers of children in one family also meant that a mother became the only agent for child-rearing because older children's help was not available. Moreover, maids were disappearing from middle-class households (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, as a result of urbanisation of housing and the nuclearisation of family structure, 'traditional' shared mothering did not continue to be passed on by inheritance to those isolated mothers who were living in apartment buildings (Sasagawa 1996:31).

Another point was that the main duty of the children themselves changed from assistance with housework or family business activities to academic studying. For mothers, child-rearing no longer meant only serving children a meal and training them to acquire basic social rules and customs. To support children's school education became an essential part of motherhood. Lebra studied housewives in the late 1970s, and argued that they were 'primarily or exclusively school-bound, and this is much more so today than when the present-day mothers were schoolgirls' (1984:192). She continued as follows:

> Most informants, asked about childrearing, elaborated on school problems. Even those women who resumed working outside the home upon the child's school entry tend to be mentally preoccupied with his school performance. Their life histories are dated and punctuated by the children's school years or school events such as 'When my first daughter was about to enter junior high school, ...• (ibid. 192).

Mothers' involvement in school education ranged from activities inside the school to those outside the school. Inside the school, mothers were expected to attend many school events such as cleaning, weeding, sports day, and parent's observation day, and moreover to take part in the preparation for those events as PTA officers who were chosen at a first parents' (virtually

mothers') meeting in April.[9] At home, mothers did not demand that their children share in the housework, rather they encouraged them to study hard instead. In an academic pedigree society, mothers believed that success in entering a good university promised children a bright future. Their obsession with children's academic performance led them to give priority to their children's education over other household duties.

## 4.4    Conflicting views on housewives in the present situation

The 'full-time housewife' depicted in the mass media

These days, it cannot be said that the full-time housewife is the object of admiration for many women. In the late 1990s, the mass media tended to describe a 'full-time housewife' *(sengyo shufu )* in the context that of being depressed and frustrated, feeling as if they were isolated from the rest of society. Books warning of full-time housewives' financial instability and lack of self-esteem have been published one after the other. For example, *The Day the Full-time Housewife Disappears* (Kanamori and Kitamura 1986), and *The Full-time Housewife will Disappear* (Suekane 1994). *Cut the Crap, the Full-time Housewife! (Fuzakeruna Sengyo Shufu)* (Ishihara 1998) became news owing to its 'radical' attack on 'self-justifying' and 'lazy' full-time housewives. The question of whether a 'full-time housewife' is an ideal status for women attracted public (mainly women's) interest, from the perspective that many housewives may see that being a 'full-time housewife' is somehow not worthwhile. For instance, the Asahi Newspaper featured an article entitled 'Full-time housewives suffering from depression' *(Sengyo shufu no yuutsu )* in 1998, seeking opinions from the readers. The editor of the article was surprised because he eventually received a total of 1,995 letters, which far exceeded in number the letters on any other subjects. In the letters, full-time housewives vented their dissatisfaction with their monotonous life. For instance, 'From the time my husband goes out to work in the morning to the time he comes back, I spend 15 hours with only my three-month old baby,

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[9] After the end of the Second World War, PTA activity which was modelled on the American PTA (Parent-Teacher Associations) became incorporated into Japanese school activities in order to promote democratic education, as a part of the post-war educational reform initiated by the GHQ (see Chapter Two) (http://www.nippon-pta.or.jp). In Japanese schools, almost all PTA officers are mothers, except for the president who is regarded as a local celebrity in many areas, therefore it is generally said that the PTA is virtually MTA (Mother-Teacher Associations) (e.g. see Umesao 1982).

without speaking to anybody.' (Asahi Newspaper, 18 November 1998); 'My unmarried friends make fun of me, telling me that "A full-time housewife is a 'person of leisure' *(himajin),* isn't she?" "You are watching *waidosh6* [10] everyday, aren't you?"' (24 November); 'A relationship between my husband and I is equivalent to the one between a master and a maid, because I have no income' (24 November); 'Nobody evaluates highly housewives' unpaid housework.' (25, 27 November). In sum, their messages delivered their discontent with their husbands' indifference to their isolated child-rearing, financial dependency on their husbands, and the devaluation of domestic work. In addition, a nationwide opinion poll conducted by the Asahi Newspaper in 1999, reported that 60% of the female respondents showed negative attitudes towards being a full-time housewife, whereas only 33% of them positively chose 'I want to be a full-time housewife' (Asahi Newspaper 1999). The younger the respondents were, the less they wanted to be full-time housewives. Even when full-time housewives were asked if they actually wanted to be full-time housewives, 50% of them answered 'No' (ibid).

On the other hand, there are also opinions that support positively the role of the full-time housewife. In the newspaper article entitled 'Full-time housewives suffering from depression', which was mentioned above, letters of disagreement with the image of a 'depressed housewife' poured in, too. Finally, the pros and cons were divided almost half and half (Asahi Newspaper, 25 December 1998). While the 'depressed' full-time housewives complained of fathers' absence in child-rearing and a sense of alienation from society, 'happy' full-time housewives explained how enjoyable a housewifely life is. 'I don't like doing housework, but my husband thought that a woman should do all the housework. I argued with him again and again, insisting that men and women are equal, so men do not need to work so hard, and women do not need to do all the housework. Now we respect each other, spending a peaceful life.' (25 December); 'I fully enjoy my full-time housewifely life. I enjoy playing volleyball and softball matches in the community, attending an art class at a community hall, spending much time on interior and exterior design,

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[10] *WaidshO* is a genre of Japanese television programmes. They are broadcast in the daytime, and the viewers are supposed to be mainly housewives. They feature, for example, gossip about celebrities, the latest fashions and cosmetics infonnation. In general, *waidshO* is considered to be not worth the attention of men and women other than housewives.

and going out with other mothers to have fun.' (25 December); 'My husband comes home late everyday and Ihave no friends around, but Iam satisfied with domestic life with my small daughter. I make clothes for her, and often try to cook an "elaborate" meal.' (26 December). Moreover, an unmarried woman who was out of a job wrote that her dream was to be a full-time housewife, and to welcome many guests to a 'warm-hearted' home (26 December). They questioned the notion that financial independence is indispensable for self-esteem, and insisted that full-time housewives have enough time for designing their style of child-rearing and housework in their own way.

It seems that women identify the status of the full-time housewife as one option for women's lifestyles. In reality, mothers with a full-time job need a great deal of effort to handle both professional and domestic responsibilities. It cannot yet be said that child-care support systems are fully equipped, and the majority of husbands simply do not entertain the idea of sharing housework and child-rearing between parents (MPW 1998:72-73). On the other hand, rationalised and mechanised household chores no longer require the full time attention of housewives in contemporary society. In other words, if the housewife's role is defined as the manager of household chores, they do not need to stay at home all the time any more. For housewives, the significance of being a full-time housewife has become the practice of a housewifely life as a source of self-fulfilment, rather than the straightforward accomplishment of household chores with a sense of duty. Here, however, we should bear in mind that the position of the full-time housewife as an option open to women is granted only to women who can afford it, i.e. full-time housewives are 'usually of a social class which is higher than average' (Hendry 1993:240). Ueno stated that full-time housewives are no longer the 'housebound' women that Hannah Gavron described, rather they are becoming seen as a privileged class; they choose to be away from paid work because they want to concentrate on what they want to do and can afford to do so (1994:58).

University-ed ucated mothers' views on the status of the housewife

What do university educated women think of the position of the housewife? In her research on the identity of better educated housewives living in a suburban area, Kunihiro suggested that

both full-time housewives and paid workers tend not to want to identify themselves as 'housewives' (1993:82). Kunihiro claims that the fixed notion that a woman becomes a 'housewife' through marriage is deeply rooted in ordinary people's minds, hence in general a married woman is labelled as a 'housewife' no matter what her occupation is (ibid. 69). However, there are some groups of married women who do not identify themselves simply as 'housewife'. For example, a married woman with a paid job may feel a sense of incongruity on being addressed as 'housewife' (Takeda 1981:12-15). According to Kunihiro (1993), well-educated housewives also have mixed feelings about the status of the housewife.

Kunihiro (1993) suggests that the main reason why married women, especially university-educated women, hesitate to identify themselves as housewives is connected to a discrepancy between the stereotypical image of the housewife, and their own image. In society, in practice, a 'housewife' signifies something more than just a married woman: the housewife is defined as a woman who plays the socially defined housewifely role. In other words, society assumes that on marriage a woman accepts the housewifely role and behaves in a housewifely way. What is the socially defined housewifely role? As Kunihiro points out, the stereotypical image of the housewife is of a full-time housewife who accepts the 'traditional' housewifely figure of a woman who is modest in her behaviour, always saves her husband's face, does housework diligently, and is satisfied with being so for the sake of her family (ibid. 87). Moreover, for university educated-housewives, the stereotypical image of the housewife is of a full-time housewife who does housework and mothering in a 'perfect' way (ibid. 95). Nevertheless, housewives' roles are diversified at an individual level. Society has not caught up with the diversified role of housewife because the framework of the urban social system is based on a gendered division of labour that does not change (ibid. 78). Thus, the gap between wider society and the individual housewife causes many housewives to hesitate to actually identify themselves as housewives.

On the other hand, Kunihiro also states that university educated housewives in urban areas have a high opinion of the housewife's role, whose core is motherhood, in common, even if they cannot fit in with the stereotypical image of the housewife (1993:82). Being a full-time housewife who

does housework 'perfectly' may not attract them, but they have a great interest in the way in which mothering is 'perfectly' accomplished. Today, 'Japanese housewives are child-bound rather than house-bound' (Sasagawa 1996:31). The strong myth of motherhood (see Introduction) in Japanese contemporary society requires mothers to bear the whole responsibility of a child's growth, including physical strength and emotional development (ibid. 32). As I will show in the next chapter, the sphere of a mother's responsibility has been socially expanding, and it is crucial to the housewifely role in the present day. Excessive expectations about the maternal role are related to the tendency of a housewife, as a mother rather than as a wife, to have a great sense of responsibility for managing her household well.

## 4.5    Graduate mothers' views on the housewifely role: findings from fieldwork

Attitudes towards the status of the full-time housewife and the housewifely role again vary between the different generations.

### Group A

When mothers in Group A (aged 51-62) were young mothers with small children, from the 1960s to 70s, becoming a full-time housewife was a very common choice for a married woman. Whether they had a paid job or not, housewives of this generation seemed to fully accept the notion that housework is women's work. Y-san (52) and O-san (61) told me that they like doing housework. For K-san (51), housework chores mean something she has to do in order to spend a comfortable life. 'I don't want to regard doing housework as my purpose in life, but anyway I can't put up with messy rooms. So, I always clean the house up'. K-san

(58) said that she does not want to do housework since it is not constructive at all.

> Housework is nothing more than repetition. There is no progress in it at all. When I was a young mother, I tried to do housework perfectly, but I soon gave it up. I started to enjoy my hobbies instead, because my husband and sons always did as they liked. They were not interested in what I was doing.

Although there are some variations among them in terms of attitudes toward domestic work, they agree that housework remains their duty.

For all that they admit that the full-time housewife used to be regarded as a woman's ideal status in general, no mothers told me that they had the desire to obtain such a position when they were young. Rather, for them, marriage automatically meant becoming the manager of a household.

> K-san (58): Becoming a full-time housewife was a matter of course for me. I didn't have any other choices. My husband lived in another place because of job transfer *(tenkin),* and came back home every weekend. So, it was only I who managed household affairs. I was like a single mother. I was always busy because I put up our relatives for a few days when they came to Tokyo, and my husband often brought his acquaintances to our home. I had visitors all year around, so I didn't have time to think of myself. We even had a bedroom for visitors, and I thought it was my duty to take care of them. I envy young women these days, because they are allowed to have a self-centred life, which was not available to me. I think that young women are happy today.

When she was a young mother, K-san rarely heard the term *shufu* for housewife. 'At that time (the 1960s), becoming a housewife was so familiar to us that nobody said, "I want to be a housewife"'. M-san (62) told me that she had little admiration for the status of the full-time housewife. However, she spent 20 years or so as a full-time housewife, since it was impossible for her to manage both outside work and child-rearing at the same time. Her husband was working hard for a newspaper, spending little time at home. An absent husband left to his wife the domestic responsibilities, so it was the housewife who took charge of household management whether she liked it or not.

One of the reasons why they did not have outside work was that they had little assistance in bringing up their children. Some of the mothers had a few peer mothers in their neighbourhood, and they often left their children in each other's care. However, there were no mothers' circles or mother-toddler groups around them. Moreover, leaving their children in a day nursery was the last option for them. If they needed to ask somebody to take care of their children, their own mothers were the only option. O-san (61) was going to ask her mother to take care of her children in order to work outside, but her mother refused her request. 'I was disappointed at my mother's attitude then, but later I understood that she had a right to enjoy her own life. She chose to live with my brother's family, and began to organise a cooking class'. O-san did not come up with the idea of finding alternative caretakers, so instead she gave up the idea of

working outside. Another reason was that they did not 'need' to be engaged in paid work. Their husbands were white-collar workers in big enterprises, who could take advantage of the Japanese employment system (see Chapter Three). K-san (51) had been working hard since her graduation from university, but it was because she could not put up with financial dependency on her husband. Actually her husband earns more than enough money for his family. Also she had no idea of sharing the domestic labour with her husband like other mothers in her generation did.

Mothers in Group A are wondering why some young housewives in the present day still want to be away from paid work. They consider that women used to have no alternative but to become a full-time housewife a few decades ago, but the situation around women has greatly changed nowadays. Housewives who handle both mothering and working outside were socially accepted by the 1990s, so why do some of them still not want to go outside? They agree that if a woman wants to become a full-time housewife, her will should be respected. Having said that, however, in practice they have a relatively negative attitude towards the status of the full-time housewife.

> N-san (60): A variety of child-care facilities and other arrangements for child-care are available these days. Even so, some women choose to be full-time housewives. They have only one or two children, and spend much time on their own pleasure. The meaning of the full-time housewife has changed from a housewife who has no alternative choices to a housewife who shows off her husband's large income.

> Y-san (52): I think that a housewife should have an outside job. A housewife is like a big boss in her family, isn't she? She can act big at home, so it must be good for her to go outside, experience hardships through work, and learn patience.

> K-san (51): In reality, there are some women who lack the ability and energy (to have professional work). It is good for such women to have the option to become a full-time housewife. If a husband wants to get such a position, he will be accused of laziness. But society accepts wives without occupation, or rather it praised them until recently. I was not interested in becoming a full-time housewife. I wonder how a housewife out of work spends her time everyday. It is stupid of her to see *waidoshO* for hours and it is impossible to play tennis all day Jong.

Despite their relatively strong negative attitudes towards full-time housewives, however, it cannot be said that they fully understand how busy mothers with outside work really are. Through interviews with older mothers, I noticed their critical attitudes towards young mothers

regardless of whether they were working outside or not. They feel the younger generation is much more self-centred: their main concern is how they fulfil their own ambitions, leaving the interests of their children behind. Unconsciously, perhaps, they expect their daughters' generation to embody 'conflicting' housewifely figures, which is totally unrealistic: as a mother who fully achieves her duty as a paid worker just as a man does, and as a mother who devotes herself to her child all day long.

I obtained the impression that mothers in Group A share a sense of obligation that university-educated women should make a contribution to society. They have had a relatively strong desire to take part in social activities. After her children grew up, M-san (62) organised a women's group with other female university graduates to offer women in Ichikawa city opportunities to study women's issues.

> There were few women who entered university in the past, so we thought that we should pass down what we learned to the next generation for consciousness raising. Young women these days are more interested in themselves than in society, thinking how they can spend a comfortable life. I was told once that 'university-educated women of your generation have a responsibility to society', and I agreed with it.

Having given up the idea of working outside, O-san (61) joined some women's groups to improve the social status of women. For her, her social participation signifies 'a hope for creating a better society'. S-san (55) stated that university graduates should make a social contribution because tax is used for their education. On the whole, they have the desire to return the profits they had gained from their education back to society.

**Group B**

In Group B (aged 35-49), mothers' views on the status of the 'professional' housewife are divided according to their positions: some mothers are full-time housewives since they want to be so, and other mothers have outside work since they want to do so.

**a. Full-time workers**

On the whole, it seems to be hard for full-time workers in Group B to imagine living without

paid work. I-san (40) said being a full-time housewife is too risky. 'A full-time housewife has to maintain a good relationship with her husband. Otherwise, she spends a miserable life because she has no income'. E-san (40) also feels being a full-time housewife is a risky business. She is wondering if a full-time housewife actually has an independent self.

> My husband and I bought a house and we share the mortgage payments. We registered the house in the names of both of us, but ifl was a full-time housewife, I could not do it. You can't apply for a mortgage and own a house if you are out of work. I think this is crucial. A full-time housewife is also working at home, but she is not regarded as an adult. She is like an 'attachment' to her husband: she cannot live without him.

T-san (37) told me that she does not have a good image of the full-time housewife.

> My mother and grandmother were working, so I felt I would be working, too. My mother was a part-time worker, because there was no full-time work available for mothers. My mother-in-law has no experience of working outside, but my mother always said that it is a matter of course for women to work outside the home. There are some variations in my mother's generation.

T-san's father was not a serious worker. She remembered how her mother went through a Jot of hardships because of that. K-san (35), who gave up the 'housewifely life' after a few months, said it is a shame that all of her contemporaries at university ended up being full-time housewives. For the full-time workers, financial dependence on a husband is a source of anxiety. They feel that financial dependence is connected to a lack of autonomy within their own lives.

The mothers in full-time work have an image of the 'professional' housewife as a woman who does housework chores 'perfectly', and who is satisfied with it. Asked if they like to do housework, almost all of them replied 'No'. Some mothers said that they like cooking, but other chores, especially cleaning were thought something disgusting. One mother, M-san (39), hires a cleaning lady. K-san (44), however, is the only full-time working mother who does not feel housework is burdensome. She is also the only full-time worker in Group B who wants to become a full-time housewife. She has a full-time job because her husband's employment is not fixed (he has changed his jobs many times). If it is possible, she wants to concentrate on mothering her two children and on the activities of a community group named 'Parent-Child Theatre' *(Oyako Gekij6).* For other mothers, they want to minimise time spent on housework

chores as much as possible. Some mothers told me that in a way, they respect full-time housewives who are working on household chores all day at home.

> M-san (36): After I became a housewife, I realised that we should not devalue full-time housework. They cannot escape from the housework burden all day long, and they have no holiday. I would be exhausted if I had to be with my child 24 hours a day. When I went back to work after child-rearing leave, I was very pleased because I could go to the Joo whenever I want, and I could enjoy having lunch in my office. My baby always put her arm into my food at home.

> T-san (37): I think that a full-time housewife who always cleans the house up and who is so busy looking after her small children, should be regarded as the 'proper' full-time housewife. But, what do people think of a full-time housewife who spends much time watching television or playing tennis? How about a mother who still stays at home after her children have grown up? Are they all 'professional' housewives?

They consider that full-time housewives have different values from them. On the one hand, they think they should accept the existence of full-time housewives who find the 'perfect' accomplishment of housework as fulfilling. On the other hand, however, they are not interested in sharing these values.

## b. Part-time workers

It is assumed that part-time workers have a similar attitude towards the housewifely role as full-time housewives, since part-time work is generally considered to be a working arrangement for domestically oriented housewives. However, I found that part-time workers are not necessarily housewives who want to put their priority on household chores. First of all, asked if they liked to do housework, part-time workers in Group B replied 'No'. Rather, they also identify the full-time housewife as a woman who has different values from them.

> S-san (40): I hate doing housework. (Do you think it is your job?) No, I don't think so. I feel the meaning of housework is much the same as that of taking a bath. I do them because I feel comfortable if my body and rooms are clean. I do cooking to keep my body healthy. I am going to train my son to do housework. I don't think the status of the full-time homemaker is equal to that of the breadwinner. I cannot imagine myself being a full-time housewife. The ideal way for a married couple is to earn money and share housework half and half.

> N-san (40): I don't like doing housework very much, but I think doing housework is important. If we are only working outside, we cannot be mature as humans. However, I strongly feel

that we should not be full-time housewives. My late father always said that men and women should be treated equally, but it was just a public principle *(tatemae)...* In practice, he was very bossy to my mother. She has been a full-time housewife. For me, the position of the full-time housewife is something we should get away from.

A-san (42): I don't want to become a full-time housewife. First of all, I hate doing housework. Career women say what they want to get the most is a 'wife', and I want it, too. I am happy if supper is fixed, clothes are folded up neatly, and the bath is ready when I come back home from work. I clean the house only on Thursday and Sunday, because dust doesn't kill us. I don't want to spend all day long doing housework. I cannot feel a sense of dignity for the status of the full-time housewife.

They agree that the full-time housewife is one option for women's lifestyles: becoming a full-time housewife would be wonderful, 'if she can be satisfied with spending every day on cleaning up all over the house, wiping all the windows, and watering the flowers' (A-san). In other words, they do not oppose the full-time housewife's way of living, but such a lifestyle does not attract them.

Some other part-time workers have psychological conflicts about their housewifely role. Y-san (36) and F-san (42) also agree that they do not like doing housework, but they seem to feel some little sense of guilt for it.

Y-san: I have an ambivalent feeling towards the status of the full-time housewife. I respect a housewife with full-time work, but at the same time, I feel she may be working only for her own satisfaction, neglecting her duties as a housewife. I think the status of the full-time housewife is low in this society. (Why do you think so?) Because a full-time housewife makes no contribution to society. A father makes a contribution to society by making a car in a factory, for example, but a mother does the dishes at home for her family, not for society. Earning money means an evaluation that you are helpful in society. Housework is unpaid, so it may mean a full-time housewife is not helpful.. ..?

F-san: It is difficult to say if the status of the full-time housewife is equal to that of her husband. Some full-time housewives spend much time on doing housework in an elaborate way, but some spend little time on it, don't they? I wonder what is the required standard? If we want to cut corners in domestic work, we can do it as much as we like. I think we should minimise the household burden for working outside. We can buy ready-made food, and leave our children in a nursery. But I cannot do that because I feel guilty. Japanese culture defines good mothers as those who don't buy ready-made food, and I have internalised the idea. In Thailand, for example, everybody eats breakfast outside the home, but we don't have such a custom.

Both of them show mixed feelings about the housewifely role. They are tied down, to some degree, by the idea that the housewife should accomplish her domestic duties prior to fulfilling her own interests. Nevertheless, they also have a desire for professional outside work. They found doing a part-time job which requires a professional skill as a form of solution: Yamamoto-san is a tutor teaching English and Maths to children in a private *(juku)* class, and F-san is an interpreter. Even so they are not entirely satisfied with that arrangement. They feel both housework and professional work are left unfinished, and it is a source of frustration for them.

### c. **Full-time** housewives

In general, people regard full-time housewives as women who love doing housework in a 'perfect' manner. However, what are full-time housewives' own opinions of the role of the 'professional housewife'? Actually, asked if they like doing housework, some mothers in Group B replied 'yes', but other mothers said 'no'.

Even for mothers who replied 'yes', however, it seems that they are less interested in spending every day on doing housework chores in a 'perfect' manner.

> H-san (35): I like being a full-time housewife very much. (Do you think its status is equal to the husband's one?) It is a bit difficult to say. Many men don't think so, I suppose.
>
> I want to make the most of my mothering. There are many full-time mothers who feel isolated from the rest of society, but I don't feel that way. I don't need outside work to fulfil myself. Luckily my three-year daughter is obedient to me. Mothers who are suffering from isolated child-rearing send their children to a three-year class at pre-school *(yochien),* but I want to keep her at home as long as possible. My husband respects my decision, so it is up to me if I choose to be a full-time housewife or not. We don't share housework, rather I order him to do this and that. I want to organise everything in my own way, so I cannot leave the management of household matters to another person. My husband takes care of himself, e.g. making a cup of coffee by himself. He doesn't need a wife's assistance as much as other husbands.
>
> Y-san (36): I enjoy doing housework. I can cut comers in doing it as much as I like if I want to do so, but I want to do the cooking properly. My husband appreciates my housework. I love going outside. I always go out of the house. I go to Disney Land with my children, play tennis with other mothers, and join mother-children activities in the community. When I left the workplace and became a full-time housewife, I felt unhappy as if I was separating from society. But now I want to be with my children. I don't want them to feel lonely. I like playing with children. I prefer chatting

with children to chatting with their mothers.

H-san (39) also said that she likes doing housework since she wants to feel comfortable in clean rooms. She became a full-time housewife because she realised that her firm never gave women chances of promotion. She is interested in gender issues, so she has attended many study groups and lectures on women's issues at city halls. Moreover, her activities with mother-toddler groups keep her very busy.

Other full-time housewives did not hesitate to show their negative attitudes towards the housework burden.

> K-san (38): I know there are some full-time housewives who are proud of their 'professional' role, but I do not want to be like them. My duty is to train members of my family to be able to do housework. When my elder child entered pre-school *(yochien)* and my younger child did not need my full-time attention any more, I gained some free time and thought I should spend more time on activities of the 'Parent-Child Theatre'. I am not interested in cleaning up the house and entertaining guests at home.

> M-san (38): I hate doing housework. I do not think it is 'work'. It is something different from 'work'. I want to minimise the time for cleaning and washing as much as possible. I spend more time on cooking because my child has allergies to some food. Cooking takes time but taking him to hospital takes more time. After I quit my job, I had nothing to do. I stayed at home doing nothing, and watching *waidosho* on TV, but I got bored in two days. I felt as if my brain was melting. (Do you think the status of the full-time housewife is equal to that of her husband?) Maybe it is 'yes', if she does housework chores perfectly, but I cannot do so. I am not interested in it at al1. It is a never-ending task, isn't it? I am staying at home because my son is still small. I feel a strong dilemma.

H-san (49) is positively engaged in study group activities. She basically agrees with the idea that a mother should always be with her children, but at the same time, she has a desire to change the asymmetrical relationships between men and women in society. She insists that domestic work should be paid.

Among full-time housewives in Group B, I found A-san (48) is the closest to the stereotypical image of the full-time housewife. She told me that she does not like doing housework because a housewife has to do it everyday, without any day off, even if she feels a bit sick. In other words, she regards household chores as her duties, whereas many other mothers hope to share the

burden with their husbands and children. Moreover, she considers that the status of the full-time housewife is equal to that of her husband. Furthermore, she is not interested in working outside, despite the fact that her children are already in their late teens. For other full-time housewives, the main reason for being a full-time housewife is that they think that small children need a mother's full attention. Most of them consider that they will find a job, at least on a part-time basis, after their children grow up (they do not have a specific plan for that though). A-san does not go outside very often, but she tries to make opportunities for outside activities, e.g. attending an English class at Gyotoku citizens' hall once a week.

> If a housewife stays at home every day, she doesn't need to do her face and becomes careless about her appearance, doesn't she? We should go outside looking for some stimulation. I heard that it is certain that a woman will get senile if she gives up putting on her makeup.

She puts a priority on taking care of her family. She feels fulfilled in the housewifely role, and is less interested in being involved in outside activities and in expanding her personal network with other mothers.

Another factor differentiating A-san from other full-time housewives is that she actually has a fixed income. I put her in this group since she has identified herself as a full-time housewife, but in fact she is a paid worker. As shown in previous chapters, A-san is in charge of accounting in the family business. Her mother-in-law owns a rental apartment building, but is too old to manage it. She regards the job as 'an extension of the housework chores', but the fact that she has a regular personal income seems to affect her positive attitude towards the housewifely role. My impression is that she thinks highly of the role of the housewife, because at least she herself does not need to feel deeply in debt to her husband financially. During my fieldwork, I came to know another mother who identifies herself as a full-time housewife and who was very satisfied with the role. She is almost the same age as A-san, and also owns rental apartment buildings. She spends some time on the business at home, but for her it is just a part of the housework. She always says that she cannot understand why many housewives want to have paid work outside the home. According to her, a full-time housewife should be proud of her role as a manager of the household affairs and her authority over her family. 'I always make decisions on household

matters. For example, I bought our house while my husband was away from us because of his job'. It seems that a housewife's own income provides her with self-confidence and a sense of equality to her husband, and leads her to have a positive attitude towards the status of the 'full-time' housewife.

## Group C

### a. Full-time and part-time workers

For mothers with outside work in Group C (aged 29-33), being a full-time housewife is something unrealistic. H-san (29) who is the only part-time worker in this group, did not hesitate to show her strong negative attitude towards the status of the full-time housewife.

> I hate them (full-time housewives), because they live on their husbands' salary, don't they? Now I am in a similar situation, but I am different from them because I want to escape from here someday whereas they are satisfied with their present situation. They don't make an effort (to be financially independent).

H-san expresses a sense of guilt about the fact that she is financially dependent on her husband. For her, financial independence is indispensable for establishing an equal relationship with her husband. Mothers with full-time work also have no interest in becoming full-time housewives. First of all, they do not share the idea of the professional housewife as an object of admiration, rather it is something which does not attract them. Some of them told me that they 'respect' full-time housewives, since they regard full-time housewives as women who can put up with what they cannot.

> H-san (31): I respect full-time housewives because they can cope with small children all day long. It's great. They have no place to get rid of stresses stemming from mothering and few chances of social participation. It must be tough being a full-time housewife. If she can fulfil herself by that, it will be alright, but I cannot do that.

> F-san (33): I think a full-time housewife is great, since doing housework and mothering perfectly is wonderful. Before giving birth, I cleaned the house only once a year. I didn't know that the cleaning was supposed to be done every week. My nose was stuffed up with dust. So was my husband's. My mother never let me know how important housework is. Now I have some girls to assist me with my teaching job, and they also do housework for us. (F-san runs a small private-tutoring school *(juku)* at home). My daughter doesn't think doing housework is a mother's duty. She will be surprised when she realises that mothers are doing housework in her friends' houses (laugh).

Apart from H-san, it appears that mothers with paid work do not have strongly critical attitudes towards the status of the full-time housewife. For one thing, they do not have a strong sense of obligation as the manager of a household. They ask their husbands to share the household burden, seeking an equal partnership, and do not hesitate to complain if husbands refuse their request.

### b. **Full-time** housewives

Compared to the older generation, full-time housewives in Group C seem to regard their status as a full-time housewife more positively. In contrast to mothers in Group A, who feel that they had no alternative but to stay at home, younger mothers are aware that they actually chose it. They were not 'forced' to leave the workplace: they had few colleagues who managed both mothering and outside work at the same time, but it was not impossible for them to continue their full-time work. It seems that society has begun to accept university educated mothers continuing full-time work. Therefore the reaction from other people to their decision has also changed.

> M-san (29): My unmarried friend said that she cannot imagine a university graduate woman becoming a full-time housewife, spending time chatting with other housewives during the daytime.

> S-san (31): (Have you heard that a full-time housewife used to be granted high status?) Really? My mother and elder sister are working, so they suggested to me that I should work, too.

> O-san (30): I was told that I am 'wasting my ability' *(mottainai)* by women of my mother's generation. Junior college graduates are engaged in 'women's work' in a bank, for example, but university graduates can work with the same working conditions that men are granted. So they told me that I am over-qualified to be a full-time housewife.

Perhaps, they are the first generation who were asked why they left the workplace after giving birth, rather than being asked why they did not leave the workplace. They feel that they 'chose' to be full-time housewives. This does not mean, however, that they are interested in achieving the 'traditional' housewifely role: a professional housewife who manages the household with a strong sense of responsibility and is satisfied with her altruistic attitude. They do not hesitate to say that they do not like doing housework very much, since they do not feel a strong obligation to do housework 'perfectly'. They stay at home because they judge that it is more beneficial for

personal fulfilment.

Mothers in Group C agree that the last thing they want to obtain is a child-centred life. After their children grow up, they want to find something, e.g. paid work or a hobby, to enable them to lead a full life. The line between full-time housewives and working mothers is getting blurred in their mind.

### 4.6    Conclusion

The relatively high status of the housewife in Japanese society has been established owing to the importance of her duty as the manager of household matters. The 'housewife' in a Japanese context was originally formed from the concept of a head woman in the household with the power to manage domestic affairs and have authority over other women in the household. In a modernising Japan, middle-class married women gained the status of housewife along with domestic power. After the end of the Second World War, housewives lost maids to manage and became the only person to deal with the domestic work, but those who were full-time housewives still were admired as the symbol of a wealthy family. The housewife was the representative of the domestic domain, and her role was regarded socially as being as important as the role of the breadwinner. Socially, the housewife was highly evaluated because of her 'professional' accomplishment in the total sphere of household management including housework and mothering.

At an individual level, however, housewives have had ambivalent feelings towards the high status and the role since the end of the war. There have been arguments about how they should realise and evaluate the fact that housewives do not actually 'work' and depend economically on their husbands. Although housewives lost maids, advanced technology greatly reduced their burden of domestic work. Full-time housewives became labelled as 'lazy', which was a very dishonourable title to Japanese women who were historically supposed to be hard workers. In a way, they began to have to account for the time left in order to claim that they were accomplishing the task of the 'professional' housewife.

The image of a full-time housewife who willingly does housework 'perfectly' does not reflect the real figure. To embody the 'professional' housewife as an object of admiration does not attract many married women any more. In the younger generation, even full-time housewives do not hesitate to show their reluctance towards doing housework. The main duty of housewives gradually has become mothering. Because of the reduction of the housework burden, housewives who did not need to support their household finances began to lead more child-centred Jives. Moreover, they expanded their fields of activity to outside the home, mainly in child-related activities. As a woman's sense of obligation for housework duties became weaker, society and women together began to put an emphasis on the maternal role in order to encourage housewives to fulfil themselves. An image of a full-time housewife has gradually shifted from the 'professional' housewife to a housewife who wants to enjoy full-time mothering.

Graduate mothers' attitudes towards the status of a full-time housewife diversify according to their generation and whether or not they have any paid work. The older generation tends to be critical of young full-time mothers who have the choice of having work outside the home. They consider that they were socially forced to be full-time housewives, hence they wonder why young university graduate mothers are reluctant to go outside to make the most of their educational attainments. In addition, several mothers with outside work are anxious that full-time housewives may behave like a boss at home, lacking the understanding of the outside world since they do not need to experience the difficulties of outside work and of associations with other people in the workplace. Full-time housewives tend to be regarded as women who enjoy self-centred lives.

Today, being a full-time housewife is one optional choice in life for university graduate mothers. For one thing, generally they belong to a social class higher than average, hence they are financially able to choose to be full-time housewives. Although several graduate mothers are dissatisfied with the fact that they are not engaged in full-time professional work despite their higher educational attainments, they prefer staying at home to working as unskilled part-time workers. Moreover, their strong sense of mothering duty makes them hesitate to work outside on

a full-time basis. In a way, some mothers choose to be full-time mothers, at least during the time their children are still small, in order to lead a full life, rather than being always pressed for time due to the double burden of domestic and professional work.

# Chapter Five

# Mother-Rearing

## 5.1    Introduction

The role of housewives in the public sphere, as well as in the domestic one, is mainly related to motherhood in contemporary Japanese society. The public sphere of housewives is not the same one to which their husbands belong: it is the so-called 'community society' *(chiiki shakai).* In her study of urban Japanese housewives in the community, Imamura states that 'For the housewife, the term "community" carries with it geographical connotations of the wider neighbourhood or the suburban city of residence' (1987:104). The concept of community, for housewives, also concerns social relationships established mainly through their association with other mothers, such as through a mother-toddler's group and PTA activities. On the one hand, 'Women become absorbed primarily in domestic activities because of their role as mothers' (Rosaldo 1974:24), but on the other hand, a Japanese woman makes her 'debut' in the community by becoming a mother. 'Motherhood is the peak of a woman's domestic career, demanding full-time concentration and keeping her homebound. And yet, paradoxically, it is motherhood that releases a woman into the public domain' (Lebra 1984:214).

Being a mother is crucial to expanding her network in a suburban community. Mothers are developing their personal network through associations with other mothers by participating in various community activities. Even full-time working mothers who are away from the community during the daytime become involved in community activities to some degree. This also means, however, the isolation of childless housewives in a community society (cf. Vogel 1963).

After an initiation into the community world, mothers, especially those who are away from full-time work, are involved more and more in community mothering activities. They are likely to find that society creates a variety of maternal roles, and that mothers are automatically shaped

into 'proper' mothers by completing the duties assigned one after another. From my fieldwork findings, in this chapter, I will illustrate some parts of this process of 'automation' as carried out in the community. Moreover, I will describe how mothers are initiated into a community society, and how mothers with or without paid work relate themselves to such community activities.

## 5.2    Socialisation of mothers in the community

Mothers are the main actors in a suburban 'community society' *(chiiki shakai),* because their 'salaried man' husbands are 'invisible' there. Husbands are considered to be breadwinners who spend limited time at home and in the community. During the daytime on weekdays, in a suburban town like Ichikawa City, the community becomes a mothers' and children's world. Parks are filled with mothers and their small children, and so are supermarkets and shops. Tape recorders in a supermarket repeatedly play the same phrase in order to catch a housewives' attention, saying *'okusan, okusan,* this fish is a good bargain!'. Shopkeepers assume that the majority of shoppers on a daytime weekday are housewives or mothers. I felt it strange when a middle-aged shopkeeper addressed me as 'mother' *(okasan)* in a supermarket, but for him, a woman in her 30s who is shopping in the daytime must inevitably be a mother of small children. In addition, housewives' groups occupy the rooms of a community hall during weekdays, and the only men participating in such activities are elderly retired men. Under such circumstances, young and middle-aged men, and also women who are not housewives, are almost invisible. Apart from self-employed workers like shopkeepers, men and unmarried women are considered to have a place to commute to, for example, workplace or school, therefore for them the community is the place to come back to. For housewives, however, the community is the place where they actually spend most of their time.

If we take a closer look, however, housewives are divided into different groups within the community. Some housewives are more involved in community activities than others. In the community, housewives are expanding their personal networks and fields of activity, but some of them are in a disadvantageous position in terms of participation in community activities.

Initiation into the community society by becoming a mother

For housewives, initiation into the community society begins when they have a child. A baby gives his/her mother a key to the door of the community network. My informants told me that they found that their children bring them many opportunities for meeting and chatting with other people in the community. F-san (33), for example, was very glad to find that many people spoke to her when she was walking with her baby.

> Although I'd lived here long before I gave birth, I was always walking to the tube station without having a conversation with anyone in my neighbourhood. After having my child, however, many people I didn't know approached us saying 'Boy, how many months is she?' 'She is cute!'. I felt as if I was walking along holding a kind of treasure. People in a waiting room in the hospital spoke to us, too. I was very happy, I felt tired though. I felt like the number of my friends had doubled.

N-san (60) told me that her children were 'diplomats'. Her family frequently moved owing to her husband's job transfer. Soon after they moved into a new place, her children found other children to play with and took them to her new home. 'My children started to establish a neighbourhood network before I had taken any action. Through their new friends, I could establish relationships with their parents. My children were very helpful, because I was shy.' Becoming a mother, according to H-san (39), means that a woman changes her lifestyle to become much more community-centred.

> After giving birth, a mother is walking down the road that she used to drive through, pushing a pram or taking her child by the hand. She begins going to parks and community halls that she'd never stepped in before, and makes friends in the community for the first time. Thus, she changes her patterns of behaviour in every day life.

Mothers I interviewed put an emphasis on how they got involved in neighbourly relationships and peer mothers' groups in the community after having a baby. In a way, becoming a mother means she becomes a visible presence in the community.

A mother's involvement in the community world begins from her participation in local governmental services. The health education section of Ichikawa local government provides a variety of services for pregnant women and mothers, aimed at promoting the healthy growth of children. For women who are pregnant with their first child, four kinds of classes are organised

by the public health centre. The first is a cooking class for new mums, which teaches them how to make baby food. The second is a dental care class for new mums and new babies. The third is named 'class for mothers' and the fourth is a 'class for parents'. The third one and the fourth one aim to provide lectures on basic knowledge about childbirth and child-rearing to mothers only in the former class and to both parents in the latter one. After childbirth, the health education section provides other classes for mothers to teach them how to brush the teeth of a baby, and how to develop the language skills of children under two years old. Moreover, mothers are required to visit the public health centre to have their children's immunisations and check-ups done.

A variety of classes for mothers are aimed not only at providing guidance for new mothers, but also to promote friendship between them. Encouragement of maternal friendships starts even before they give birth. On the Internet homepage of Ichikawa City government, the public health centre introduces a 'class for mothers' and a 'class for parents' as opportunities not only for learning basic knowledge about pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing, but also for making new friends for new parents, mainly mums. After childbirth, the centre offers an activity named a 'Gathering of mothers and children' once a month, aimed at giving an opportunity to mothers with toddlers to meet their peer mothers and receive advice from nurses. Apart from the public health centre, the local government provides a variety of gatherings and support services in order not to let mothers feel isolated. Some mothers I interviewed told me that they had established a peer-group with other mothers whom they met at those classes held in the public health centre.

Mothers themselves play a major role in peer-grouping. H-san (39) and her peer mothers in the community organised a small group of mothers, and later they initiated new members. According to her, there are at least eight private mother-toddler groups in Ichikawa City. Each group has 10 to 30 members and they gather at a community hall or other public institute, three or four times a month. The members are chattering while their children play together, and exchange information concerning child-rearing. H-san and her friends also set up a network linking these groups, and named it the 'Child-rearing Circles' Network'. The purpose of networking was to promote communication between the groups and to expand their activities

from child-centred activities only to wider activities that could stimulate mothers' own cultural or social interests. Another important activity of their networking is lobbying for more public support for child-rearing activities and nursery services.

Mothers' personal networking is expanding through child-related community activities. As children grow up, their mothers are involved in manifold community activities, e.g. PTA activities in pre-school and primary school. Moreover, many mothers encourage their children to learn something outside the school curriculum, such as piano lessons, swimming, and English conversation. Inside and outside the school, mothers have many opportunities of meeting each other and of sharing mothers' duties. Furthermore, if they find other mothers who share the same interest, they can go out together to have fun. Consequently, housewives' involvement in community society starts at the time they become mothers, and develops and expands as their children grow up.

Housewives outside community network: childless housewives

On the other hand, a childless woman has few chances to enter community society unless she does so voluntarily. Among housewives in the community, there seems to be an invisible line between mothers and non-mothers. In other words, married women without children are categorised as single women in a way, because they don't have the 'mediator', i.e. a child, in order to facilitate communication with other housewives. S-san (31) said she is in close association with the neighbours (housewives), but not with childless housewives because she rarely has a chance to talk to them.

> There are some women without children in my neighbourhood. I have few chances to talk with them. When they are pregnant, they will join our circle. Childless housewives including a woman next door go to work. She said that she doesn't want to be alone at home during the day, feeling as if she is left behind by everybody. When she gets her child, she will begin to mix with her neighbours. The members of our circle are full-time mothers, rather than full-time housewives.

Another example is that O-san (30) did not know who lives in her neighbourhood before she left her full-time work. She entered the neighbourhood network after giving birth, through association with her children's friends and their mothers. She suggested that childless couples

may even feel unwelcome at community activities such as a local festival.

K-san (35) told me how miserable a childless housewife's life is. Before getting pregnant, she had been suffering from being isolated in the neighbourhood. She longed to be a full-time housewife, but it was not long before she noticed a childless full-time housewife effectively has no place in the community.

> There were two kinds of young women in my neighbourhood: mothers with small children or working women. I belonged to neither of them. There were few childless housewives (like me) around and my husband was a workaholic. I was very worried, just wondering who I was. I had the impression that a full-time housewife enjoys a happy life.
>
> (As a researcher of gender studies) I was interested in sterile women. I think that they have a similar experience. Many sterile women said that they could not mix with their neighbours. Childless housewives go to work because they cannot stay at home. If they stay at home, they have no access to society. The most unbearable thing for them is that they have no place in the community. In Japan, childless housewives are considered to be misfits.

She was also worried about the reputation that a housewife having neither child nor outside work was lazy. The case of K-san reminds me of H-san's remark. H-san (31) is a full-time housewife with two children and has little interest in working outside, but she wonders why some childless housewives actually choose to stay at home. 'What are they doing at home?', she said to me. It is likely that childless housewives are not considered to have formal 'membership' in the community in a way.

Housewives in another community network: mothers with full-time work

Mothers who are engaged in full-time work also have few opportunities to take part in community activities because they have no time to do so. Before giving birth, they have a chance to attend a 'class for parents' which is held on Saturday or Sunday. However, other classes organised by the public health centre for pregnant women and mothers with small children are held on weekdays. Unless they take maternity leave, many of them have no chance to meet other mothers by attending these classes. E-san (31), a full-time systems engineer, told me that she took part in a mothers' peer group, but all the members except her were full-time housewives or part-time workers. 'I can communicate with other mothers during child-rearing leave, but after

going back to work, I will have to leave the circle'. For full-time workers, the end of the leave effectively means the end of their relationship with other mothers in the community.

The essential difference between full-time mothers and full-time workers is their different timetables. For the former, the daytime of weekdays is a time for community activities, whereas weekends represent these times for the latter. Mothers with a part-time job and self-employed mothers are able to make some adjustments to their schedule on weekdays to attend the activities when necessary, but mothers employed on a full-time basis find it difficult. Although Saturday or Sunday would be another option, the weekend is set aside for family activities for full-time mothers. In other words, these mothers put their priority on staying at home for their husband and children's needs at the weekend. For instance, K-san (44) had an unpleasant experience as a PTA officer of the primary school to which her children went, because she is a full-time worker. She accepted the offer to be an officer on condition that she could not attend any meeting held on weekdays, but despite this, other officers always agreed to have a meeting on the weekday mornings and some criticised her absence.

My task as a PTA officer was standing at the comer of a crossing with a yellow flag in my hand in the morning, in order to guide pupils to go to school safely. My workplace is only 15 minutes' walk from my home, so I could do it. I did my duty, but I was accused by other PTA mothers of not attending the monthly meeting.

Thus, mothers with full-time work tend to find difficulties in being involved in community networks despite the fact that they have their children as 'mediators' between them and the community world.

Nevertheless, some mothers with full-time work did manage to make their own network in the community. M-san (39) and her peer mothers with outside work help each other to bring their children to a swimming club and an English class after school. One mother of the group who can manage to go home earlier from work brings all the children to the classes. E-san (40) said that she had not belonged to any mothers' group, but when her son went to day nursery, mothers with full-time work exchanged information and helped each other out. A network of mothers with full-time work is established though association with day-nursery mothers, and it

rarely expands with the involvement of full-time mothers. In other words, full-time working mothers organise their own community group which suits their specific timetable and needs.

### Child-rearing support for full-time workers

In addition, there is a governmental service aimed at supporting full-time mothers in the community. Ichikawa local government set up a child-rearing support system entitled 'Ichikawa Family Support Centre' in 1999. In the system, mothers are registered either as a 'supporting member' *(kyoryoku kaiin),* or a 'requesting member' *(irai kaiin),* or both of them *(ry6h6 kaiin).* Supporting members are mainly full-time mothers who want to help other mothers in need. Their activities are, for example, to send and/or collect the small child of a requesting member to/from the day nursery, to look after him/her at the supporting member's home until the mother of the child comes home, and to prepare supper for the child. Requesting members are not necessarily full-time workers, even full-time mothers can use the system when they have to go out on urgent business. The service is not aimed at making a profit, hence requesting members pay only 500 yen (app. 2.9 pounds)[1] per hour from seven in the morning to eight in the evening on weekdays, and 600 yen/hour the rest of the time. M-san (36) is one of the beneficiaries of the system. When she has to do overtime work, she asks a supporting member in her neighbourhood to pick up her daughter from the day nursery and to stay with her until she comes home late at night. She told me that this supporting system is very good not only for her but also for her daughter, since she is given opportunities to play with the supporting member's children at their house in a homely atmosphere.

A similar service is also provided by a private organisation. The *'esuku'* is one of the non-profit organisations which established networks for mothers in the community to help each other. T-san (33), who lives in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, asks a mother whom she came to know through the *esuku's* network to pick up her son at the day nursery, when she cannot manage to go home at the fixed time. She pays the mother 2,000 yen (app. **11.4** pounds) for three-hour care including a meal for the child. Her husband is self-employed, working at home, but she does not want to be bothered to ask him to pick up their son. The service of the *'esuku'* is

well-known and very popular among mothers with full-time work because of its inexpensive rate.

A baby-sitter service provided by a private company is also available, but its expensive rate makes mothers hesitate to use it. In the case of the firm 'Family Support', a professional baby sitter costs 1,600 yen/hour (app. 9.1 pounds) from nine to five in the daytime, and 300yen/hour and 500 yen/hour is added to the service from five to eight in the evening and from eight to nine in the next morning, respectively. According to the president I interviewed, one third of the users are full-time housewives. They request the services, for instance, when they are going shopping, attending classes for study or a hobby, hairdressing, or attending ceremonial occasions such as a marriage ceremony or a funeral. In the case of mothers with full-time work, they tend to be professionals such as medical doctors or university lecturers whose income is higher than that of mothers engaged in unskilled labour.

Another characteristic of the service offered by the private firm is that the majority of the baby-sitters are highly educated. The users of the service expect something 'valuable' beyond just a baby-sitting service. The mothers expect a baby-sitter to follow their own child-rearing principles, and to look after a child in the way which suits the child individually. Moreover, they tend to require the baby-sitter to have professional child-rearing skills. To meet these demands, the firm employs many women qualified as pre-school teachers, day nursery nurses, and teachers of primary, middle, or high schools, while non-profits systems require their child-minders only to have mothering experience. Nearly half of the baby-sitters are university graduates, and around 40% of them are graduates of junior colleges or specialised schools for child-minders. In addition, the president of the Family Support is a graduate of Tokyo University. Thus, a professional baby-sitting service actually provides employment opportunities for university graduate women.

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1 One pound = 175 yen.

### 5.3 Creating compliant mothers through school and community activities

### 5.3.1 Encouragement of pairing a mother with her child

Nevertheless, many 'major' community activities supporting mothers with small children are organised still based on the idea that a mother's physical presence is very important for the growth of her children in good condition. Almost all the child-related activities in the community require mothers to accompany their children. Many advertisements for children's groups and circles that are placed in community papers circulated in Ichikawa City, reveal the underlying assumption that children's participation in these groups depends on their mothers' positive commitment.

Young mothers are encouraged to go out and to communicate with others since isolated mothering is regarded as a source of a mother's child-care anxiety or fatigue and a potential cause of child abuse as a result. As shown in the previous chapter, in the post war period young housewives desired to live in an urban area, and enjoyed their monopoly of managing the household affairs in a nuclear family. It is generally said that urban families in the 1960s represented so-called 'my-home-ism' *(mai-hOmu-shugi),* being orientated towards the nuclear family, which respects the 'privacy' of family life, rather than the continuous *ie* family. Ochiai points out, however, that there was a tendency for urban Japanese families in the 1960s, especially families with infants, to turn to their kinship networks for help to a large extent, rather than to mutual support from within the neighbours' network (2000:95-127). She states that closed urban nuclear families were actually not as isolated as generally believed: young mothers with infants were on visiting terms with their parents, siblings (esp. sisters), and parents-in-law (ibid.). According to Ochiai's research, in the 1980s kinship networks which mainly consisted of parents, siblings and parents-in-law became weaker as the number of siblings decreased (ibid.). Fewer siblings of mothers (and fathers) also indicated that their children had fewer cousins to play with, therefore mothers needed to expand their networks to obtain child-rearing support in the neighbourhood (ibid.). Mothers became 'isolated' compared to former generations, and lost opportunities to learn how to bring up children from their own mothers or sisters. Subsidised by the central government, according to Arichi, in the 1980s local governments started to organise classes for pregnant women to teach them how to give birth, breastfeed, and bring up children,

for the first time (1993:111). As mentioned above, these public classes also provided women with chances to meet other pregnant women and mothers to establish new friendships and promote networking. Thus, mothers these days are encouraged socially to go out from home and to take active part in mothering networks in the name of raising their children in a proper way.

Private mother-toddler group activity: 'Children's Square'

Mothers' involvement in child-related community activities begins before their children are enrolled in a pre-school. Here I present the case of my interviewees, H-san (35) and Y-san (36), who were full-time housewives with small children. They were very busy with community activities during the weekdays. Both of them lived in Urayasu City, next to Ichikawa City. Urayasu City is famous for the Tokyo Disney Land located in the city, and many mothers go there frequently with their children to have fun or dinner. H-san especially was a great fan of Disney goods, so she enjoyed visiting there with her daughter a few times a week. Moreover, it appears that young mothers living in this area are relatively keen on child-related community activities and education for children. H-san told me that the number of applicants soon reaches the fixed limit for some popular activities. Her daughter was just three years old when I interviewed H-san, but she was already projected to spend quite busy days with piano and ballet lessons from the coming April. Y-san ran private piano lessons and English classes at home for children of her fellow mothers. Her daughters were four and seven years old when the interview took place, and they joined her classes too. (Y-san has also joined a tennis circle and loved to go out, so it seemed to be difficult for her to find spare time for my interview). H-san planned to run a small private English class too in order to meet the demands of mothers who did not want to have their children join Y-san's class: they considered that joining the class later than other children would be disadvantageous for their children's progress. H-san, Y-san, and mothers in their peer group were spending very child-centred lives. They were involved in child-related activities willingly rather than with hesitation or passive attitudes.

Moreover, H-san and Y-san had joined a community group named 'Children's Square' *(Chairudo Hiroba)* once a week. Children's Square was aimed to offer small children of

the age of two or three, before entering pre-schools, physical exercise activities in a public gymnasium. This group occupied the whole hall for one and half an hours, reserving it only for its members. There were a few classes in a week, and each class had around thirty pairs of mothers and their children. The classes fonned a one-year course, starting in the last week of March and ending in the following March. Mothers believe that small children need regular exercise to grow up in a healthy condition, but they are afraid to have their children play outside because they consider that outside is dirty and dangerous. Outside the building, there may be found dangerous or dirty things, such as pieces of broken glass and cats' droppings in the ground, and children might be injured or even worse be killed in a traffic accident or be kidnapped. Another important factor is that they do not need to worry about contact with people outside their group, as long as they are playing inside the facility with the doors closed to non-members.

For all that the Children's Square was a private play group, the contents of the activity were highly formalised and ritualised. The group activity was run by one couple who were called 'instructors' *(sensei),* in their 30s or 40s, and four mothers were chosen as 'officers' *(yakuin),* to be in charge of administrative jobs such as planning the annual schedule of monthly events (e.g. outing *(ensoku)* or Christmas party) and booking the hall of the gymnasium every month. On the first day I observed this activity, in the third week of March 1998, the children were playing freely with their mothers in the hall where some play tools such as balloons and a kind of mattress to jump on had been placed, during the first thirty minutes. Then, they had ten minutes break (the hall was cleared during the break), and group dancing followed. After the dancing, the mothers and children sat in a big square (rather than in a circle). This was the time to celebrate the birthdays of the children born in that month a few years ago. The children were called by the female instructor, one by one, to be handed a birthday present, a hand-made paper toy. (The male instructor was absent on that day because he was attending the graduation ceremony of a local primary school as the PTA president). Then, all the children were called, by full name, one by one to receive a small sticker for their attendance notebooks. The rest of the time, around thirty minutes, was spent doing the closing ceremony of the one-year course. The officers made a brief farewell speech to everyone, and new officers of the classes for next year, including H-san

as the president, gave bunches of flowers to the old ones. Then, the old officers requested the new ones to make a brief speech. Lastly, the instructor called pairs of mother-child by tum, in order to give them the certificate of completion of the one-year course, a small bag made of cloth, and a new photo album. She requested the mothers to come to her, with their children, as the album was too heavy for small children to carry. They were also handed photos of their children taken during the year, and were ordered to put them in the album at home. During the ceremony, some children were sitting close to their mothers and the others were running around in the hall, whereas their mothers were following the procedure of the event as ordered.

During the event, a mother was encouraged to pair up with one of her children and to pay full attention to him/her. Basically, mothers are not only observers of the children playing but are also active players. The instructors are playing with the child members, the male instructor, the only adult man, seems to be regarded as important especially for boys to play wildly with. However, the instructors encourage mother-child bonding, and mothers should be playing and running with their children, rather than letting children play with each other. If a mother brings two children, a helper mother will be in charge in one of them as it is thought to be hard for one mother to pay full attention to more than one child romping. Y-san was one of the helpers as paid staff: she paid attention to the whole group playing and supported the mothers. (Her children had already left Children's Square because they had reached school age). One day I saw a young father standing with his infant in the hall. At first glance, I expected that he might be a 'brave' father to take part in this event where only mothers and toddlers are involved. However later I found that his wife was there, too; she was in a dancing group, with their elder child. Each child was paired with his/her mother in the dance. It was obvious that he hesitated to join in the dancing circle. After the dance, he escaped from the hall, leaving the infant to his wife, and was standing at the end of the corridor talking on his mobile phone. After the closing ceremony, I saw him talking on a public phone in the corridor as a stream of mothers and children passed, going home. It seems that his presence was necessary rather than voluntary, in order that his wife could concentrate on communication with one child. In this regard, this group activity provides each child with a situation which lets him/her monopolise his/her mother.

**Public mother-toddler group activity: 'Mobile House for Children'**

Encouragement of the monopoly of a mother by one child was also observed, in a more obvious way, in another play group. A local government office of Ichikawa organises a play-group activity named 'Mobile House for Children' *(!do Kodomo Kan)* for three-year children and their mothers. There are some permanent facilities called the House for Children *(Kodomo Kan)* in Ichikawa City, and in areas without such facilities, like Gyotoku, a group activity named Mobile House for Children is offered. In Gyotoku, three city workers are dispatched to the Gyotoku City hall from the Central House for Children of the Ichikawa area, the centre of the city, in order to carry out a one-hour activity twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday, from May to March. When I observed the activity in 1998, a group of three young female instructors who were qualified as kindergarten *(yochien)* or nursery *(hoikuen)* teachers were dispatched, and they had six classes during the week. According to the public newsletter of Ichikawa City, activities of the House for Children are regarded as part of the public enterprise to support parents with small children, aimed at 'the development of sensibility *(joso)* and healthy growth of children through playing'. One of the instructors told me that the encouragement of contact or affectionate touch *ifureai)* between a mother and her children is the main purpose of this group activity, therefore one-to-one contact between them is stressed. Children who join this activity should be at the age of three, and mothers are required to leave their other children at home or in other people's care.

Moreover, mothers had to take part in the play together. During the first thirty minutes of the activity, the participants played in a group. They sat in a double circle, the inside line consisting of the children and the outside line consisted of the mothers. Each mother and her child sat close together. The instructors stood at the centre of the circle, leading some games for the children (and mothers) to play. The participants also sang, danced, and so on, with a musical tape playing. The second thirty minutes, the mothers and children were divided into small groups. Then the instructors handed out pieces of paper to each child, and explained how to make a paper plane. Having completed the planes, the children were asked to draw a picture on them. For all that they were divided into groups, the mothers were talking only to their own children: few conversations were observed even between mothers belonging to the same group. The instructors were walking around pairs of a mother and her child, speaking to each mother. The whole structure of the event

was almost the same every time, i.e. playing in the whole group for the first half an hour and playing of a mother-child pair for the rest of the time, but the contents were different each time. The instructors arranged various kinds of games, for instance, walking in circle lines in a funny way or cutting pieces of paper with pictures and advertisement photos and putting them on a blank sheet of paper to make a kind of collage. At the end of the activity, they told the mothers to continue the game arranged for small groups at home. In a way, the mothers learn how to play with their children through the activity. Every activity was under the control of the instructors.

### 5.3.2   Assignments for mothers

Learning motherly tasks

At the Mobile House for Children activity, mothers were not allowed to be just observers: they were given specific duties. The one-hour event began with a check on attendance. At the entrance to the room, mothers picked up a name card for their children, and pinned it their children's chests. Like at the Children's Square, each child was given a sticker every time as proof of attendance and a small notebook for putting his/her collection in. The stickers were designed cutely, and children with many stickers on their notebooks were rewarded with a special stamp on them for their constant attendance. This encouragement of constant attendance for the children may produce in their mothers a sense of responsibility for bringing them to the event every week. Each child was also given another notebook which was used by his/her mother and the instructors. The mothers were asked to write some comments in the notebooks about their children's growth and submit them to instructors the last week of every month, and the instructors gave them back with some suggestions to mothers the following week. In addition, at the beginning of the year, mothers were required to prepare a small bag, preferably a handmade one, for these two notebooks to be put into. The shape and size of the bag were specified by the instructors, so in fact mothers were ordered to produce it by hand.

All the activities were guided by the instructors. They instructed not only the children, but also mothers who were older and had more experience of mothering. Through observation, what impressed me the most was that the instructors were quite young: all of them seemed to be in their early 20s, which meant that they were younger than most of the mothers. An age difference,

as well as a social status and an occupational position, is one of the crucial factors in establishing and maintaining vertical human relations in Japanese society where 'notions of hierarchy are extremely important' (Hendry 1995:77). For example, the level of speech, in terms of politeness, is altered according to whether the status of a speaker is superior or inferior to that of a person who is spoken to (Suzuki 1986:144). An age difference is not an absolutely decisive element in ranking members of a certain group, but it affects more or less the relationship between them. In the case of instructors and mothers of the Mobile House for Children, their hierarchical relationship was somewhat complicated: the instructors were superiors in the sense that they played a leading role in the activity, but they were inferiors in the sense that they were younger than the mothers.

This paradox may affect the attitudes of the instructors towards the mothers. It seemed that they were dissatisfied to some extent with the attitudes of some of the mothers who did not obey the rules of the activity, but they did not express it directly to mothers as far as I could see. One day, for example, a mother brought two children and her mother (or mother-in-law), despite the rule that a mother is allowed to bring only one child. She was playing with her elder child who was supposed to register as a proper member of the group, and her younger child was with her mother sitting in a comer of the room. Another example was observed when one of the instructors was reading a book to children sitting in front of her. The participants were divided into two groups of mothers and of children, which was uncommon, and the mothers' group was instructed to sit behind the children's. Despite an unspoken rule or 'common sense' that everyone should concentrate on the reading, some mothers were having a chat with each other. Later the instructors told me that such behaviour of mothers was bothersome, but they did not say so to the mothers themselves who were actually older than they were.

Nevertheless, the fact that the instructors took notice of the mothers' behaviour during the event showed that mothers who joined this activity, not only their children, were the object of education, too. Moreover, they imposed some homework duties on the mothers as mentioned above, such as making bags and writing some comments in a notebook. I never saw the instructors asking the mothers to express their opinions or views on the activity. Although it was

unclear whether the instructors were aware that part of their job was education for mothers, in effect they tried to educate mothers in a less obvious way. Actually, the instructors did not have full autonomy in managing the event. Rather, they appeared to follow faithfully the instructions provided by the headquarters of the House for Children. The Ichikawa local government is an agent which attempts to educate mothers through the dispatched instructors. The instructors are not high-pressure supervisors of mothers, but they deliver a message from the government to mothers in terms of a 'proper' motherly attitude. A pre-preschool group activity is the first step for a mother and her child to be socially educated, and so she begins to be shaped into a socially defined mother herself step by step.

Mother-made goods: maternal duties defined by pre-school

A child's entrance into pre-school is the next step for their mothers to learn how they should behave as 'good' mothers. The mothers' commitment to school activities is indispensable in pre-schools. In Japan, there are two types of institutions for children before entering compulsory education (which starts when children reach the age of six), i.e. kindergarten *(yochien),* and day nursery *(hoikuen).* The kindergarten is an establishment whose main aim is to educate children of the pre-school ages in order to enable them to behave 'properly' in a group of people outside the home (Hendry 1986:119). The day nursery shares this purpose too, but they have the additional role of supporting the care of children whose parents, especially mothers, cannot fully attend to them because of full-time work or illness. In contrast, the kindergarten is for children of mothers who are expected to stay at home, therefore many kindergartens manage their daily activities on the supposition that mothers of the children have enough time to get involved in them. The day nursery, however, also expects mothers of the pupils to support their activities, but the number of tasks day nursery mothers are expect to manage is much less than that of kindergarten's.

Pre-schools, especially kindergartens, seem to take a variety of measures to impress on mothers the importance of paying full attention to their children. In this section, I will focus on mothers• duties in preparing for pre-school entry in order to illustrate an example of the way in which pre-schools encourage mothers to spend child-centred lives. I gathered handouts that some of the pre-schools in Ichikawa City gave to mothers of the new children before entry. They provide school

information for the newcomers, for instance, how to pay the nursery fee, a list of habits that the children should acquire before entry (e.g. washing hands before a meal, and changing clothes by themselves), a structure of daily activities, and an annual timetable of school events. Moreover, some of the kindergartens give the mothers details of the way in which they should train their pre-school child at home. Kindergartens stress the importance of good partnership between them and the mothers in socialising the children. They define the kindergarten as 'the extension of home' (Soya Kindergarten), and that 'the primary teacher of a pre-school child is his/her mother' (Sofia Kindergarten). Kindergartens make efforts to have the mothers understand that first and foremost a mother is responsible for bringing up her child.

Kindergartens' instructions in the handouts are detailed particularly regarding children's belongings which they will bring to the kindergarten everyday and which they will leave in the kindergarten. The mothers are required to prepare a variety of bags for their children to put things in, such as a lunchbox and pairs of indoor shoes. As regards what kind of things the mothers have to prepare before enrolment, there are variations between kindergartens, but it seems that there is a broad consensus that kindergartens demand mothers at least have the skill of how to handle a sewing machine. The shape and size of handmade goods are illustrated with simple drawings on the paper circulated to the mothers. For example, Soya Kindergarten requires the children to bring a school bag (it should be bigger than 25x32cm) and a bag for picture books (bigger than 27x38cm). Apart from these two bags, the mothers are also demanded to produce a bag for a mug (20x18cm), for a pair of scissors (25x1Ocm), for a pair of indoor shoes (28x18cm), for clothes for outdoor activities (30x25cm), for a lunchbox (free size), and a luncheon mat (15x20cm). All the bags but the lunchbox one should be with a strap to carry or to hang on a hook. Except for the school bag, mothers are 'allowed' to buy bags if they are appropriate sizes. Another example, a school bag designated by Tsukushi Kindergarten is the size of 35x40 cm with two pockets (18x14cm each) for a pair of indoor shoes to be put into. The bag for a mug is the size of 13x18 cm with a strap which should be shorter than 42cm. Moreover, Ichikawa Saint Maria Kindergarten requires the mothers to produce a bag for picture books (30x40 cm), for an attendance notebook (18x23 cm), and for a change of clothes (30x30 cm) for their children. The material of these handmade goods should be a cloth such as quilting. Furthermore, to write

children's names in the right places on each item is also one of the mothers' important duties. Tsukushi Kindergarten uses two sheets of paper to illustrate how to put a child's name on each item such as a pair of scissors, castanets, a mug, towels, clothes, a felt pen and its cap.

It is obvious that mothers are expected to spend considerable time at home making preparations for their children's kindergarten entry. Surrounded by mother-made products, pre-school children are aware of the presence of mothers even while they are in a kindergarten away from home. In other words, these products in some way make up for the absence of the mother. Allison, who analysed the mothers' tasks assigned by a kindergarten, suggests that 'women are what they are through the products they produce' (1991:203). Completing the tasks, mothers internalise the idea that a mother's full-time devotion is indispensable in bringing up their children. The kindergarten is the first educational institution not only for children but also for their mothers to learn who they are and what qualities they should have.

Public day nurseries of Ichikawa City expect less of the mothers of the children in providing handmade goods in comparison with kindergartens on entry. The day nurseries keep the children for much longer hours than kindergartens do; parents can leave their children at a day nursery at a quarter past seven in the morning at the earliest, and pick up them at a quarter past seven in the evening at the latest. In the afternoon, the day nurseries set a naptime for a few hours for the children. Therefore, the mothers are instructed to prepare duvet covers for a set of *futon* (Japanese mattress and quilt), a pair of pyjamas, and extra underwear. Sizes of the covers are fixed, and the mothers have to produce them by hand if they are not available in a shop. Like kindergartens, mothers are also required to prepare a school bag and a bag for a pair of indoor shoes, for example, but the sizes of these bags are not specified. All the things have to have the child's name, but there is no description about how to put the child's name on each item. On the whole, mothers of day nursery children may spend much less time on pre-school entry than kindergarten mothers do.

However, we should take into account that in general the day nursery is less prestigious than the kindergarten, and some mothers feel a strong resistance to sending their children to a day nursery

(Fujita 1989:77). During fieldwork, I often heard mothers who sent their children to a kindergarten saying that day nursery children were pitiful *(kawaiso),* or look lonely *(sabishiso),* because they are separated from their mothers for so many hours. Moreover, several mothers were anxious that children of mothers with full-time jobs may do something wrong which might lead to juvenile delinquency owing to a lack of their mothers' full-time supervision. Separation of a mother and child is never praised, therefore day-nursery mothers are not allowed to go shopping before collecting their children. Day nursery teachers believe that 'proper mothers hurry to collect their children, since they feel guilty for the separation' (Sasagawa 1996:42).

### 5.3.3 Mothers' contribution by labour

'Officer' in a pre-school activities

To become an officer *(yakuin)* of a mothers' group is unavoidable but the least desirable duty to many mothers. In the Children's Square, four of the mothers were chosen to be officers who were in charge of the arrangement of the activities. When I observed the activity, the officers had just been replaced because it was the beginning of the new year. The new president was Hirami-san (35), and other officers, i.e. vice president, secretary, and treasurer, were her close friends. They knew the former president well, so it seemed that the arrangement of the new officers was made through talks between a few of the mothers, the former president and her friends. Hirami-san told me that she did not willingly gain the post of president, but she thought it was not a bad idea that the posts of officers were occupied by four close friends.

In the case of the Mobile House for Children, all of the mothers of the fonner year automatically become members of the 'Mothers' Club'. According to the organiser, a local government office, the Mothers' Club is a group of mothers who support the activities of the Mobile House for Children as volunteers for a year, and they are encouraged to promote friendship among the members. They gather once a month to produce birthday presents for the new children, and to make preparations for the summer festival and Christmas party. The Mothers' Club also needs four officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, per class. In March, during my fieldwork, the three instructors of the Mobile House for Children gathered all the mothers of each class to choose new officers for the coming year. The instructors expected voluntary offers from

mothers, but it seemed that few mothers were actually interested in becoming officers. The instructors stressed how little responsibility officers were expected to have. One of the instructors tried to persuade them, saying as follows:

> The title 'president' doesn't mean that she is responsible for all the activities. That is nothing more than a name for an officer. There is no rule about the management of the Club. You can do everything in your own way. Last year we made birthday presents for your children, but you don't have to do the same thing this year. You don't need to participate in our meeting every month.....

For all her efforts, the mothers remained silent, and finally they began to leave one after another, saying 'I have to go home now' 'I'm sorry but I can't do that'.

At a pre-school level, some mothers are very busy with PTA activities while others are not. Some kindergartens are very enthusiastic about PTA activities, so the officer mothers have to spend a Jot of time in a kindergarten for meetings or preparation of school events. On the other hand, day nurseries do not have such a PTA organisation which demands the mothers to devote themselves to it. A day nursery also organises some events such as a Sports Day for its children, but day nursery teachers and mothers do not spend as much time and energy in making preparations for them as kindergarten's does. M-san (36), a full-time working mother of a day nursery child, explained as follows:

> In a kindergarten, a Sports Day is a very big event. The PTA mothers are called to the kindergarten very often, and they are required to produce this and that every time. The children are also busy with drills before the event. My friend said that both a mother and her child get completely exhausted after the event, and the achievement of such a hard task makes them feel fulfilled. On the contrary, in a day nursery, a Sports Day is much less organised. The teachers make a plan for the event, but the mothers don't prepare anything beforehand. We didn't care about some changes in the schedule on that day. We felt at ease and enjoyed the event.

Many kindergarten mothers also join private mother-child groups in the community, therefore they have many opportunities to become officers, where as day-nursery mothers have little experience of working as officers.

**PTA activities as mothers' duty: primary school**

When children enter a primary school, PTA activities become a duty for all of the mothers. It

seems, however, that many mothers do not want to become PTA officers, if possible. In a primary school, PTA officers are chosen at the first meeting held by each class in April, but many of the mothers are deliberately absent to avoid being selected. Therefore, the mothers selected tend to feel it is 'unfair' *(zurui).* It is hard for mothers with full-time work to attend a meeting held in the daytime of weekdays, but even so they are criticised for their absence. Y-san, a vice PTA president of Niihama Primary School in Ichikawa City, criticised mothers who refused to become PTA officers because of their outside work. 'I am disappointed with some mothers who prefer making money to PTA activities. It doesn't matter to take a day off a year, does it? They say they are too busy to be PTA officers, but full-time housewives are busy, too'. Being engaged with full-time work is not an acceptable reason for the refusal of an offer. All the mothers are demanded to become PTA officers at least once before their children graduate from a primary school.

Y-san was concerned to involve all the mothers in the PTA activities. She belonged to PTA administrative board *(hombu)* consisting of main officers, e.g. president, vice-president, and treasurer, of a PTA organisation, and she went to the school almost every weekday to attend meetings and to make arrangements for a variety of school events. Her family ran a laundry shop, but PTA activities were given priority over family business in her daily routine. 'My mother-in-law encourages me to devote myself to PTA activities. She regrets that she could not spend much time with her own children because she was working hard to improve their lives'. (Later I found that her family owns a lot of land and many buildings in Ichikawa City, so it was likely that they could afford to take on a temporary worker to make up for her absence in the shop). While she was at home, she also spent considerable time on PTA activities, such as making preparations for the PTA general meeting. She said she really enjoyed engaging in PTA activities.

> Once a mother becomes a PTA officer, her connections expand and her tasks increase in number and amount. It took me five years to become mature through working for the PTA administrative board. When I took up PTA activities, I could not accept other people's opinions, but now I can do that. Moreover, I learned that we should not demand a reward for our devotion.

Nevertheless, she cannot tolerate mothers who want to keep their distance from the PTA world.

Teachers and other PTA administrative board members of Niihama Primary School also shared the belief that all the mothers should make a commitment to PTA activities, therefore they subdivided the tasks of PTA officers. In other words, they arranged or created some tasks to suit mothers with full-time work. One of those tasks was the laundering of classroom curtains. The child of a mother who is in charge of the laundry takes the curtains of his/her classroom home at the end of every term, in order to have the mother complete her duty. To achieve this aim, the curtains were made of washable material, not being suitable for dry-cleaning. Moreover, Niihama Primary School sets up a 'Clean Up Day' on Saturday once a term, in order to give not only the PTA officers but also other mothers of the students the opportunity of serving the school in someway. On the Clean Up Day, the mothers are required to clean up their children's classroom or to weed in the schoolyard, and they are also asked to work with their children.[2] Niihama Primary School attempts to involve as many mothers as possible in their activities to make a partnership with them and also to share the responsibility of educating their students. Mothers are expected to become aware of their motherly duty through their voluntary labour. In other words, a maternal role is expected to be achieved not only inside the home, but also within the society to which her child belongs.

PTA Mothers' service in the community

Mothers' voluntary service in the name of PTA activity is not just limited to the labour associated directly with the interests of their children in school. Niihama Primary School's PTA organisation set up some committees, under the administrative board *(hombu).* Each committee consists of PTA officers who were sent from all the classes from the first grade to the sixth (one officer per class). One of the committees was a 'committee of public health' *(kosei iinkai),* whose main tasks were sorting out recyclable articles collected and cleaning up of the collection sites. One of the collection sites was situated in the school grounds, and recyclable things that the students bring from home, such as newspapers, magazines, empty bottles and tins, were dumped

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[2] A 'Clean Up Day' was held on Saturday to enable fathers of the students to take part in the event, too. The school arranged tasks such as painting fences or planting trees for the fathers, different from mothers' tasks. It seemed that the headmaster and the officers of the PTA administrative board considered they should offer a masculine task to fathers. The headmaster wanted to make the day attractive to the fathers

there. Members of the public health committee took turns to gather at the site on every Tuesday, and they sorted out the materials collected to make them ready for sale. The money made through selling the items was a source of finance for the PTA activities.

The 'workplace' of members of the public health committee was not only to be found inside the school. They were also assigned to tidy up collection sites named 'station' *(suteishion )* outside the school. In the community, collection sites for recyclable items were placed in front of an apartment complex, company housing, or a big building. In the school district, there were 33 separate places for the residents to dump empty bottles and tins for recycling. 19 places out of 33 were looked after by the PTA officers. Each officer took charge of one site. They were asked to come round their 'station' at least once a week in order to sort out bottles and tins dumped in a big basket and put them in two hemp sacks respectively. They were also required to take away rubbish put in the basket and to tidy the place up. The bottles and tins were collected by Ichikawa City twice a month. The officers were given washing-up liquid, rubber gloves and a yellow annband by the PTA administrative board members for the work. The armband said 'Niihama Primary School PTA'. The officers were encouraged to put it on their arms to show the residents of an apartment complex where the collection site was placed, in order to indicate that they were not suspicious strangers. Their labour might not be rewarded with appreciation expressed by the residents (because most of them might not know the fact that PTA mothers of a primary school did voluntary work in their residence), but the PTA organisation was in fact financially rewarded for it by the local government. With the reward, the PTA administrative board members purchased equipment necessary for their activities.

### 5.3.4   Education for mothers

Education for mothers at school: 'Class for Home Education'

A 'Class for Home Education' *(Katei Kyoiku Gakkyu)* is organised by the educational committee *(kyoiku iinkai),* of Ichikawa local government to educate mothers of compulsory school students. The mothers are treated as 'students' in the class, and in tum they are called 'classmates' *(gakkyusei).* It is not a duty for the mothers to join the class, hence the percentage of 'classmates'

who were otherwise rarely involved in school activities.

is actually quite low. As with the selection of PTA officers, the organisers' most pressing issue is how to involve more mothers in their activities.

The main activity of the Class for Home Education is to organise seminars for mothers of the students. In the case of Niihama Primary School, for example, they organised ten seminars in 1997. The seminars were held on weekdays, and around forty mothers took part in each seminar. The annual theme of study was 'To cultivate a pressure-free relationship between a parent and child' *(yutori aru oyako kankei wo sodateru)*. Speakers of the seminars varied from primary school teachers, a fire fighter, a university professor, a dietician, and an instructor in home education. The subjects of the seminars included 'How to cultivate a pressure-free relationship between a parent and child' (by an instructor of home education), 'How to give first aid to children in case of emergency' (by a fire fighter), 'The role of family at home' (by an university professor), 'Let's have a well-balanced diet' (by a dietician), and 'Treasure the parent-child touch *(fureai)'* (by a primary school teacher). To make a change, perhaps, one seminar was entitled 'To make contact with a wild bird'. The arrangements for the seminars were made by officer mothers, again. To encourage participation, the 'students' with good attendance were rewarded by an 'award for good effort' *(doryoku shO)* at the end of the year.

The underlying message of the 'Class for Home Education' is that a woman should grow into a mother just as her child grows up. Socially, childbirth in itself does not make her into a mother, rather she needs to be educated in how to be a 'proper' mother. Annual themes of the 'Class for Home Education' held by public primary schools in Ichikawa City stress socialisation of both children and their mothers, for instance 'Is child-rearing parent-rearing?' (Kokubudai Primary School), 'Bring parent and child up together' (Nakakokubu Primary School), 'Lively *(ikiiki)* child-rearing, parent-rearing' (Yuridai Primary School). The idea of educating both children and mothers was also stressed by the headmaster of Niihama Primary School. At the general meeting of the PTA organisation, he made a speech, 'It is important to educate children and adults together. Sometimes adults learn from children. I would like to establish the system of education to encourage children and adults to grow up together.'

Education for mothers in the community: 'Seminar on Home Education'

Education for mothers is also carried on outside the children's schools. At the public citizens' hall of Gyotoku, I attended a meeting entitled 'Seminar of Home Education' *(Katei no Kyoiku Koza)*. The meeting was organised by mothers who were followers of the Tokyo Institute of Home Education which offers lectures and seminars for mothers with dependant children, all over the nation. At a lecture meeting of the Tokyo Institute of Home Education held in Tokyo in 1997, the Minister of Education was invited to make a speech. In his speech, he expressed his anxiety about a lack of awareness among parents these days in terms of the significance of home education. In the public citizens' hall, the mothers held a meeting once a month to let other mothers know the significance of mothers' education for their children at home. The number of mothers who attended the meeting I attended was not many, less than ten, but mothers have many other opportunities to hear a lecture with a similar tone. Instructors of the Seminar on Home Education are often invited by a primary school to give a lecture to mothers of the pupils, as a part of the activities of the Class for Home Education.

At the meeting, N-san, an instructor of the seminar, emphasised that a mother should take full responsibility for the growth, mental development in particular, of her child. According to her, there are three kinds of education: school education, home education, and social education. Among the three, she said, home education is the most important. She took it for granted that a teacher of home education would be a mother.

> The first place for educating a child is inside the mother's belly, so a mother is the first teacher to the child. A British proverb says, 'One mother is worth one hundred teachers'. The first person who holds a child after his/her birth is his/her mother, not his/her father. The character of a child is shaped by his/her mother. I am so scared (that a child may have a defect in his/her character if the way in which the mother raises him/her is not appropriate). Only a mother, who is always with her child, can sense a change in her child, so it is her duty to find and to solve any problem of the child.

Her definition of home education is that 'both a mother and her child learn things and develop mentally together': a philosophy of home education is education for parent-child *(oyako kyoiku),* so a mother should be scolded herself if she does something wrong, for instance, when she smashes a plate into pieces. As long as a mother is shining like the sun, she stressed, her child

will grow in excellent condition. After the meeting, N-san told me that when her child was small, she learnt many useful things at lecture meetings of the Seminar on Home Education. For example, she was taught that a mother and her child should always 'face each other' *(mukiau):* i.e. a mother should always be with her child thinking about him/her. As the result, she believed, her son gained a good evaluation at primary school: his teacher had a high opinion of him being cheerful and creative. Thus, she started to support the activities of the Seminar of Home Education, with confidence, to spread what she learnt among other mothers.

Nevertheless, it seemed that not all mothers were satisfied with the teachings of the seminar. One of the aims of the seminar was to give advice to mothers who were troubled about child-rearing, but a gap between the instructor and a mother with a family problem was observed. Actually, the mothers' attitudes were rather passive: few mothers expressed their own opinions at the meeting. Only one mother, who was not a regular member of the group, asked the instructor some questions. She said that she had attended the meeting for the first time because she did not know how to handle her teenage daughter who was disobedient.

The mother: My daughter hates studying. I want her to study hard, so what should I do?
Instructor (N-san): You should not say, 'You have to study!'. Rather, it is better to say gently, 'It is better for you to study, isn't it?'
The mother: It's too idealistic, I think. Should I repeat the same phrase again and again until she starts studying? In reality, I get frustrated everyday. I cannot keep peace of mind.
Instructor: Why don't you grow up with your child?
The mother: I think it is an idealistic idea, too. In reality, I cannot catch up with my child as she grows so rapidly. So I don't know how to instruct her.
Instructor: A mother wants to teach her child, but in fact she doesn't know everything. You should always listen to what your child says. You should say, 'My opinion is this, but how about yours?' or 'I learnt from you', rather than saying 'You have to listen what I am saying'.
The mother: I cannot behave like a perfect mother.
Instructor: A mother's smile is very important. You should be like the 'sun' of your family.

After the meeting, the mother expressed her dissatisfaction to me with the advice that the instructor gave her. What she wanted was more specific advice like a useful tip on how to make her child do homework voluntarily. On the one hand, she wanted to know how to teach her child for the sake of the development of the child, but on the other hand, the instructor aimed to tell

mothers how to learn from their children in turn for their own development. I felt that the distance between their opinions was partly caused by their conflicting understanding of who should be the target of home education, the mother (the assumption of the instructor) or her child (that of the mother).

## 5.4    Mothers' views on their socialisation process in the community

Some university graduate mothers are critical towards school activities which rely heavily on their obedient co-operation. For instance, I-san (40), a high school maths teacher, who had studied women's studies at graduate school was indignant with the attitudes of PTA administrative board officers and teachers of her children's primary school, since all they expected PTA mothers to do was volunteer service for the school. A school should, if necessary, hire a paid worker to weed the schoolyard or to wash the curtains, she insisted.

> Instead of volunteer labour, I think that parents should discuss more serious matters with teachers at a PTA meeting, for example, what kind of educational policy should be shared by teachers and parents and how to solve a bullying problem at school. In fact, however, these issues are taboo as subjects of the meeting.

F-san (42) feels that it is unfair that both mothers with full-time work and full-time mothers are expected to share the burden of PTA officers on an equal basis. 'Even a divorced single mother has to accept the offer to be a PTA officer. She has to work full-time to earn her family's living. I cannot understand why she has to take a day off to attend a PTA activity'.

The majority of mothers, however, simply accept what is imposed on them as a motherly duty. Their passive attitudes may be partly explained by the assumption that their performance in PTA activities will reflect in the way their children are evaluated or are treated by teachers. One mother told me that in a primary school mothers do not strongly oppose the way a school manages PTA activities, because they feel that their children are in a way like hostages taken by the teachers. Another example is Y-san, a vice president of the Niihama Primary School PTA, whose first motive for starting her commitment to PTA activities was 'a slightly wicked

idea' *(chotto yokoshima na kangae)* that her daughter's class teacher would give her special treatment. 'Unfortunately', she laughed, 'it was just my misunderstanding. But some mothers still suspect that I am working hard as a PTA officer in the hope that teachers give my child an advantage over other pupils. Everyone believes that a child's grades will improve if his/her mother becomes a PTA officer'.

Overall, however, university-educated mothers I interviewed agree to the mothers' involvement in PTA and other mothering community activities. S-san (40), a part-time pharmacist, said that full-time work is not an acceptable reason to refuse to be a PTA officer. Although she criticised an unspoken rule of the PTA activity, which is that the officer should be a mother, not a father, except for the president, she insisted that mothers should share the duty as much as possible. Moreover, she said that a mothering group in the community is a good thing for mothers since it gives them chances to talk about problems they have in common. T-san (37), a primary teacher, hopes that full-time mothers and mothers with outside work would help each other in managing a PTA activity. 'If mothers leave everything to a school, they will lose opportunities to see what their children are doing at school'. N-san (40), a part-time day nursery nurse, said that PTA activity is worth doing. 'A PTA officer has to go to school very often, so she has many chances to see how her child is getting along at school, which is good. Moreover, she can talk with other mothers and teachers, and get to know the atmosphere of the school'. K-san (51) regrets that she concentrated on the pursuit of her career and did not positively take part in mothering group activities when she was a young mother. 'Now I find that I have few friends in the community. I know many mothers, who joined PTA or other mothering activities in the past, and have cultivated a friendship between them, and after their children grow up, they enjoy taking trips and going out together'.

Incidentally, several mothers found a loophole in motherly tasks, especially in terms of mother-made goods: they actually asked other woman to produce those for them. One of the mothers who joined the Mobile House for Children told me that her mother actually made the two bags which were supposed to be made by her for her son. Another example was a full-time working mother with a university degree, who gave up making duvet covers to meet the demand of her

son's day nursery, and rushed into a shop to order those instead. In February and March, some women with good sewing skills put personal advertisements for making 'mother-made goods' in a community paper, for mothers who do/can not make them, in order to meet the pre-school or primary school entry in April. There are even several shops aimed at helping mothers without enough time or skill to produce goods. One of the shops in Tokyo, which produces school bags, shoe bags and the like, receives more than 100 orders from January to March (Asahi Newspaper Weekly AERA, 18 June 2001). Thus, mothers adapt and cope with the situation in their own inventive ways, rather than displaying overt disagreement with school policy.

### 5.5 Conclusion

Motherhood is an important part of a woman's role that initiates her into a community society. Becoming a mother does not in fact confine her at home, rather it releases her to go outside the house.

From local government and schools' points of view, the main aim of drawing mothers out of the home is to educate or 'programme' (Allison 1996:152) them. Mothers are given various tasks by mother-toddler groups or schools, without being asked if they want to do it or not, and are instructed on how to do them in detail. Mother-toddler groups and schools give mothers orders one after another on the premises that they are full-time mothers. By following these instructions, a woman with child is 'automatically' socialised to be a 'mother': a mother is raised by the community. Schools promote the idea of 'parent-rearing', which means not only should a child grow up properly, but also his/her parent(s) need to grow up mentally. Although they use the word 'parent', it actually signifies 'mother', not 'father', since the 'sun' of the family should be a mother. The 'sun' needs to be educated to shine brightly.

However, public and private services to support mothers with full-time work also started in a positive way. There seems to be a kind of contradiction in the attitude of local government. On the one hand, schools and public playgroup activities stress a mother's full-time attention to her child, but on the other hand, the child-rearing support system for working mothers is actively

promoted. In the community, networks of mothers with full-time work are also expanding by helping with the care of each other's children. Although the encouragement of a mother's full-time presence at home with her children still strongly remains, society's attitude towards mothers also has been changing according to mothers' own changing needs and attitudes. In the next chapter, I will examine mothers' community activities with less emphasis on motherhood.

# Mothers' Activities in the Community



1. Mothers at a staff meeting at Gyotoku citizens' hall (the Gyotoku women's college course).



2. Mothers at a seminar: a Korean mother gives a talk on the cultural differences between Korea and Japan (the Gyotoku women's college course).

3. An annual festival of the Ichikawa Gyotok:u Parent-Child Theatre at a park. Mothers put on the same costume as their children did.



4. A mother-made attraction for children at the festival (the Ichikawa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre).

5. Mother-Children's meeting at a community hall (the Ichikawa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre).



6. A year-end party of voluntary staff at their office, which lasted until midnight (the Ichikawa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre).

# Chapter Six

# Community Activities as Alternatives

## 6.1    Introduction

In the  preceding chapter, I illustrated the  way women are raised and shaped into  becomi ng mothers in a community society, through their commitment to various child- and school-related activities. On the whole, in these activities, mothers' attitudes are quite passive as if they were students who are learning a new subject. Some of the mothers are involved in the administrative tasks of activities as officers (and they are strongly encouraged to do so), but even then they usually just complete their tasks mechanically as ordered, rather than attempting to make changes or reform the way the activity is organised and managed.

Nevertheless, not all the community activities associated with mothers are organised to produce compliant mothers who devote themselves solely to the interests of their children. A community society also provides activities that satisfy mothers' own particular interests, apart from simply . the care of children, and promotes community networks of mothers who share the  same concerns. For a mother who stays at home or in the community most of her time, a community activity is also an opportunity for self-fulfilment through communication with people outside the family network.

Community activities have therefore provided mothers with opportunities to expand their world. Starting from a local mothers' network or PTA activities, mothers become involved in a variety of social activities; e.g. an anti-nuclear movement, chemical-free food promotion, and political activities. After a Japanese fishing boat fell victim to a U.S. nuclear test carried out around Bikini island in 1954, the nation-wide network of mothers *(Nihon Hahaoya Taikai)* took  action  to protect against nuclear tests in the name of a mother's duty to protect life (Hasegawa 1989:72). Another well-known housewives' social activity is the co-op activity, especially a group named 'Life Club Co-op' *(Seikatsu Kurabu Seikyo)* which started up in 1965 in one community in

Tokyo and has expanded to many urban areas in Japan. With the slogan 'We can see the world from a kitchen' *(daidokoro kara sekai ga mieru),* the housewives aim to change the material-oriented society: their social activities vary from the elimination of synthetic detergents, promotion of safe food and the recycling of goods, to anti-nuclear and peace movements (Sato 1995:172). They have criticised the male-oriented social climate that has given priority to industrial progress and the efficiency of life as a system of the alienation of humanity (ibid. 159-60). The 'Life Club Co-op' has also promoted their habit of sending members to a local conference demonstrating their principles in practice in society (Watanabe 1995).

Generally, many of the housewives who are involved in such activities are from relatively wealthy families with husbands earning a high income, and are highly educated mothers without paid work (Sato 1995:178, Watanabe 1995:211). Many university-educated mothers without full-time work among my interviewees also belong to various community groups such as mother-toddler groups or study groups. A 'community society' is the place where mothers are socialised to be socially accepted mothers on the one hand, and on the other where they find something which gives them a sense of fulfilment through participation in various activities apart from those available through professional paid work. With my findings from fieldwork, I will examine the way community activities shape university graduate mothers' attitudes and views on their lives, and also how mothers in turn shape the community as their fields of activity are expanding and diversifying.

6.2   The effect of university educational attainments on mothers' activities

In a community society, university-educated mothers often play a leading role in the management of a women's group. From her research on housewives in an urban community in the late 1970s, Imamura stated that women leaders of child-related activities tend to have at least a junior college education (1987:118). This tendency was also seen in the community where I did my research. In general, it is likely that university graduate mothers have a stronger desire for social participation, and more of a sense of self-determination than women from a lower educational background do. Many university-educated mothers without full-time work I

interviewed had the experience of being a community group's leader, such as a president of the kindergarten PTA or the representative of a mothering group. Some of them criticised mothers who are involved passively in PTA and other activities. S-san (40) said, 'Kindergarten mothers do not make an effort to produce a better outcome. They just do what they are asked to do'. From her experience as a kindergarten PTA president, A-san (42) said, 'I realised that full-time housewives don't know what an organisation is and how it works. For example, they cannot understand why the approval of the committee is necessary for a revision of PTA regulations'. Complaining about other mothers who lack communication skills and a sense of responsibility, many university-educated mothers undertake the position of a leader and get actively involved in community activities.

In a community society, educational attainments are not taken into account in many cases when selecting a leader for a mothers' group. Unlike a company society where one's educational background can be inferred from the post or type of job assigned, a mother's educational attainment is not easily disclosed in a community society. Mothers rarely talk about each other's academic background, since they regard it as a touchy subject, as mentioned in Chapter One. For one thing, terms like 'high school leaver' *(kOsotsu)* often carry somehow insulting implications, so that people hesitate to ask one's educational background directly. On the other hand, those who have a university-level academic qualification also often hesitate to talk about the subject. They are afraid of being asked, for instance, 'You can do this job much better than we do, because you graduated from university' or 'You are somehow different from us as you are smarter than we are'. In particular, mothers who graduated from a prestigious university tend to harbour such fears.

Several university graduate mothers in a community society seek other mothers with the same academic background, expecting to share a similar sense of values. K-san (38), a full-time mother who graduated from the prestigious Keio University, told me that she does not want to let other people know her academic background.

Mothers with low academic qualifications tend to see me as a kind of more upper class person than

they are. Some do not accept me unless I modestly say, 'I am not the kind of person you may think' *(sonna koto nai desuyo)*. Otherwise, they think of me as an idiot who doesn't know social manners. It annoys me. But I can talk with university-educated mothers without caring about such a thing.

She does not consider that academic background is essential in judging people, and nor do other university-educated mothers I interviewed. Nevertheless, they tend to want to have university-educated women as friends on the assumption that they will share many things in common, such as language or the way of thinking. Y-san (36) said that she senses some kind of a psychological distance from mothers in her neighbourhood. 'I was told indirectly that I am not a member of their group. My job is as a private tutor, but an 'ordinary' housewife (who didn't graduate from university) cannot take a teaching job. They might feel I look down on them'. F-san (33), who also works as a private tutor, asked me to introduce her to other university graduate mothers in the community since she wanted to have friends who would share the same interests.

## 6.3    Study groups

A study group in the community is somewhere that one can easily find university graduate mothers. For my research, I joined two study groups organised by the lchiakwa local government. One was a course named 'Gyotoku *uman karejji'* (women's college) and the other one was named 'Ichikawa *josei daigakuin'* (women's graduate school). Both of their names sounded as if they might be academic facilities, but actually they are not related to official education at all. Therefore, attendance does not actually lead to any academic qualification. These are educational opportunities offered to citizens as part of a scheme called a 'lifelong learning course' *(shOgai gakushu),* at a public facility of Ichikawa City. Unlike a real college or graduate school, the students are not required to pay fees or to take an entrance exam. And the content of study is not necessarily academically oriented. Even so, many university-educated women, especially those who do not have a full-time job, are meeting up at these courses seeking some kind of intellectual stimulation.

Promotion of lifelong learning *(shOgai gakushu)* is a part of the educational policy of the central

government in Japan. The Ministry of Education aims at the realisation of a lifelong learning society 'in order to create an enriching and dynamic society in the 21•[1] century'.[1] They present four reasons for the need to create a lifelong learning society: '(l) the need to remedy Japanese society's preoccupation with academic credentials; (2) increased demand for learning activities in a developing society; (3) the need for learning in response to social and economic change: and (4) the need to revive and improve the educational strengths of the home and the local community' (ibid.). In order to meet these social demands, the government aims to provide 'learning opportunities to all strata of society, including young people, adults and women' (ibid.). Facilities for lifelong learning activities are mainly located in public halls at a local community, therefore lifelong learning is also encouraged in the hope that these activities 'deepen a sense of community among local residents' (ibid.).

In Ichikawa City, a variety of lifelong learning courses are offered at citizens' halls *(kominkan)*. There are fifteen public citizens' halls in the city, and each facility organises lifelong learning courses aiming to give learning opportunities to citizens who stay mainly at home during weekdays; e.g. children, housewives or senior citizens. Various subjects are arranged, but many of them do not deal with academic matters. Rather the subjects are relevant to practical affairs or cultural interests. In Gyotoku citizens' hall, for instance, programmes such as 'Karate for beginners', 'History of Gyotoku', 'Leaming how to cook Thai cuisine', and 'How to write an essay' were arranged, when I entered a Gyotoku women's college course.

### 6.3.1 The Gyotoku women's college course

A lifelong learning course entitled Gyotoku women's college was set up in 1989 by S-san, a female city office worker. Before that, according to her, in Gyotoku citizens' hall, some lifelong learning courses had been designed for women to provide cultural activities with a feminine flavour, such as cooking or handicraft classes. However, S-san wanted to start a

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[1] Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology,
http://www.sta.go.jp/english/org/eshisaku/eshougai.htm

new type of programme arranged for women to provide an opportunity for them to 'think about a lifestyle which suits each individual's personality' *Uibun rashii ikikata wo kangaeru ).* What she suggested was a seminar which gives housewives a chance to study women's issues, for example, women's history in Japan, women's participation in political activities, and a job-hunting seminar for full-time housewives. In addition, she wanted participants of the seminars to take active part in these programmes from the planning stage. Therefore, she sought volunteer staff from among women who had applied for her new course, and left all the preparation of the individual programmes to them. Her new course was quite different from the way other courses were prepared: the arrangement of other courses was made directly by city officers, not by the actual participants. 'What I intended to do,' she said, 'was to satisfy the demand of young mothers who wanted to learn new things, such as women's rights or something like that. And I wanted the participants to create a seminar from their point of view'. Another new thing that S-san attempted to do was to set up a creche for the seminar attendants. 'Other city officers did not understand why a creche was necessary. They may not understand it even now. Everyone thought that mothers should join such an activity after their children grow up, but I persuaded them to include expenses for baby sitters in the budget for the course'.

From its start, Gyotoku women's college aimed to make housewives more aware of social issues around them. The course offered a two-hour seminar on Tuesday mornings for two months in spring and autumn. I applied for the spring course of 1998, and started to get involved in the activity as a member of the staff from the autumn course. The structure of each seminar was that a guest speaker gave a lecture for the first hour, and after that the students were divided into groups of five or six to exchange opinions about the lecture. A topic for each seminar was selected beforehand by volunteer staff, and a large variety of subjects were incorporated into the eight-week course. In the spring term of 1998, seminar topics were as follows: (1) learning how to communicate with other people to enrich your human relationships; (2) learning how to express yourself to make a good impression on others; (3) study of global warming and environmental problems; (4) financial advice on life insurance; (5) how to find a job; (6) how to cope with menopausal disorders; (7) the basic knowledge of colour schemes in furniture and clothes. Finally, the students had a meeting to exchange opinions about previous seminars on the

last day. In the autumn term, the topics were: (1) changing family and motherhood, (2) family of the 21[11] Century; (3) practice in debate for beginners; (4) seeking a lifestyle which suits you; (5) nursing of the elderly; (6) learning about other cultures; (7) the present situation of women's political participation; and (8) exchange of opinions about previous seminars. Subjects of the seminars ranged from relatively academic matters to practical affairs in order to stimulate the maximum interest of the participants.

Self-organised programmes: volunteer staff

The arrangement of the programmes of the Gyotoku women's college course was made by one part-time city officer and volunteer staff. The title of the part-time city officer was 'social education instructor' *(shakai kyoiku shidoin)*, which suggested that she was in the position of instructing, while the participants of a course, including staff, were in the position of being instructed. Actually, the relationship between the social education instructor, N-san, and the staff was not vertical, rather they were working on an equal footing in the process of making programmes. N-san was in charge of the administrative tasks as a representative of the citizens' hall side, but regarding the operation of programmes, she very much relied on voluntary contributions of the staff.

The number of volunteer staff was not fixed: N-san recruited new members at the end of every term. The staff did not have any duties imposed on them, so some left after one term, or even during the term, but some remained for more than a few years. When I was involved, the number of staff was around ten.

The staff took a part in making the programmes from the planning stage, being guided by a social education instructor. Before each new term, the staff and N-san had meetings every Tuesday for a few months to make preparation for the seminars for the next term. The first thing the staff had to do was the selection of the seminar topics. According to N-san, topics related to gender issues, education, the social welfare system, and environment problems were regular subjects every term. In contrast, subjects related to political campaigns and religious activities were regarded as taboo to deal with, because the public citizens' hall is a subordinate

organisation of the educational committee of local government. Like other educational institutions under the jurisdiction of local government, such as public kindergartens or primary schools, activities organised by the public citizens' hall are not allowed to support a specific political party or religious group. After the topics of the seminars were selected, staff had to decide who would take charge of each seminar. Each member took charge of two or three seminars; their tasks started from the selection of a guest speaker, and setting a meeting with him/her to discuss the content of the talk followed. Moreover, they were expected to study the subject of the seminar they took charge of. On the day of the seminar, members who were in charge set up a reception desk to check the attendance of the students and to give out handouts. They also arranged a room for the creche, made tea for the guest speaker, and led the seminar.

The aim of the course: searching for self

To provide an opportunity for a woman to think about herself *(jibun),* not about her husband or child, was one of the main aims of the course. Volunteer staff set a theme for the course each term, and the word *'jibun'* was frequently used in it. For instance, the theme of the spring term of 1998 was 'Creating self, making friends, and studying society to enrich your life' *( Yutaka ni ikiru tame nijibun dukuri, nakama dukuri, shakai wo manabu),* and 'Studying society to produce a lifestyle which suits you' *(Jibun rashiku ikiru tame ni shakai wo manabu)* was for the autumn term. These themes were cited in a community paper introducing lifelong learning courses organised by all citizens' halls in Ichikawa City and distributed to all the households in the city, in order to attract the readers' interest. It seemed that self *(jibun)* was used as a key term to arouse women's curiosity.

Here, the word 'self' *(jibun)* is used in the sense that women should raise their self-esteem. I heard the phrase, *Jibun rashiku,* in particular quite frequently in the guest speaker's talks and meetings of the staff throughout the course. *Jibun rashiku* means somehow suitable for one's lifestyle, expressing one's self, and they are quite popular terms to designate a 'person's individual sense of style – whether fashion or lifestyle' (Matsunaga 2000:44). The phrase is used with a positive connotation. Moreover, *jibun rashiku* implies the emancipation from external pressure which imposes a fixed social role on an individual, such as a mother's role or a wife's

role.[2] 'Let's lead a life which fits your sense of style' *(jibun rashii ikikata wo shiyo)* is a slogan frequently used to raise women's consciousness. For instance, the theme of the Women's Week in 1999 set by the Ministry of Labour was 'Towards the 21•[1] Century – Creating a society which enables individuals to lead *ajibun rashii* life'. In this regard, the idea *of jibun rashii* is based on the modification of traditional womanly roles. More correctly, the notion of *jibun rashii* encourages women to have an ability of self-determination to choose the kind of lifestyle they would actually like.

N-san, a social education instructor, was eager to provide opportunities for housewives in the community to consider *a jibun rashi* lifestyle through the Gyotoku women's college course. She did not have an academic background in studying gender or women's issues, but she told me that she had become interested in social problems associated with women since she married into her husband's family which emphasised the traditional values of a continuous *ie* family. As a daughter-in-law *(yome)* of the family, she said, she had had a lot of trouble associated with human relationships among the family members, for instance, a deep-rooted discord between her mother-in-law and her father-in-law's sister, and a gap between the gender consciousness of the family members. At a staff meeting, N-san repeatedly told us, 'The Gyotoku women's college provides an occasion for women to express themselves *(jibun)* as individuals, not as someone's mother or someone's wife. I want them to find out what their real selves are'. N-san hoped that students of the course would become aware of the social environment around women, and that their social participation would be much more promoted through a network established among them. For her, the final purpose of the Gyotoku women's college was to expand women's networks in the community to support and to stimulate each other in creating the *jibun rashii* lifestyle of each woman.

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[2] When it comes to a man's lifestyle, a 'life which suits your style' *(jibun rashii ikikata)* often refers a man who quits work and stays at home to be a homemaker; e.g. a newspaper article entitled 'Men who chose to be "househusbands" - value child-rearing above work - *"jibun rashiku"* ' (Asahi Newspaper, 16 March 1999).

**The attitude of the students**

Many of the students joined the course in pursuit of social participation and new friendships. For a mother with a small child, the Gyotoku women's college was attractive because this was the only course with a creche among all the lifelong learning courses held by the Gyotoku citizens' hall at that time. Some mothers even came from outside the Gyotoku area by bus or train, since it was quite unusual for a citizens' hall to arrange a creche for participants in a lifelong learning course. Moreover, the mothers were longing to have the opportunity to make new friends outside a mother-child community group and a neighbours' group. On the last day meeting of the term, many students complained that they had only a narrow circle of friends in the community. Even if a mother has many acquaintances in her neighbourhood, she may not consider them to be close friends because her relationship with them has been mainly developed simply through child-related neighbours' grouping and they regard such a relationship as superficial. For many mothers, this kind of relationship does not deserve to be called friendship, as what disappoints them is that their chief topics of conversation are only child-related matters. Moreover, how to get along with the neighbours or other mothers in child-related groups is a source of suffering to many mothers. Many of the students of the Gyotoku women's college course wanted to learn how to keep an appropriate distance from other people (mainly other mothers) to avoid such troubles.

It seems that mothers' anxiety over human relations with their neighbours and other mothers is chiefly caused by their assumption that one of the important motherly duties is to keep friendly relations with others in the community. For example, kindergarten mothers go to a kindergarten to collect their children around noon or two o'clock, and after the collection they frequently go to one of the mothers' place to have their children play together. Some mothers follow other mothers even if they do not like to do so, because they are afraid of becoming isolated from the circle of mothers with whom they have to associate until their children's graduation from kindergarten, or even after their entry to a primary school. Some mothers hesitate to refuse an invitation to lunch or tea by other mothers, for fear of making the human relationship worse. They are afraid of being excluded from a potential network of mothers, since the isolation of a mother in turn means the isolation of her child from other children.

A well-known murder case by a kindergarten mother, which occurred in 1999, showed clearly how a lot of young mothers worry about human relationships with other mothers in daily life. What happened to the 35-year-old full-time mother was that she killed a 2-year-old girl since 'she could no longer pretend that she was a friend of the girl's mother' (Asahi Newspaper 1999)[3]. According to one of the newspaper reports, she and the victim's mother 'became acquainted three years before when their sons entered the same kindergarten' (ibid.), but 'she was stressed out physically and mentally because she had to convince acquaintances that she and Haruna (the victim)'s mother were good friends' (ibid.), As a result, 'such stress led her to believe that she had to kill Haruna' (ibid.). This murder case created a nation-wide sensation among mothers with dependent children. Apart from criticism directed against the mother, many mothers voiced their private fear that 'I felt as if it were my own affair' *( hitogoto ni wa omoe nakatta)* (Asahi Newspaper, 11 December 1999). Mothers complained of how fake friendships among mothers are troublesome, and that their husbands do not understand the fact that the association within a mothers' narrow circle is a source of huge stress to them (Asahi newspaper, 11 December 1999).

Mothers consider that the refusal of an invitation or a request and disagreement with others' opinions is something impolite or even downright rude, since these attitudes are often regarded as selfish *( wagamama ). Wagamama,* which consists of *waga* (self) and *mama* (as it is), also means self-centred or egotistic, and it is considered to be characteristic of an untrained child (Hendry 1986:90, 1995:47). In the course of the process of socialisation of children, they are trained to consider others before they speak to them or take action in order to avoid hurting others' feelings (ibid.). Therefore, it is social consensus that adults should not behave in a *wagamama* way. A mother of my Group A, K-san (51) complained that young women these days do not know how to associate with others in an appropriate manner.

> Young housewives these days often refuse to receive a present or food sent from their mothers or mothers-in-law living in the country. I know that what an old woman sends doesn't always suit young people's taste, but it is common courtesy to receive it in appreciation of her kindness. You can dump it later.

Actually, it is true that young mothers are confused in that they do not know what an appropriate manner in association with others is. Children are encouraged to 'try and put themselves in the shoes of others before acting' (Hendry 1995:47) to avoid being *wagamama,* but young mothers are mentally stressed by attempting to put themselves in the shoes of others. In other words, mothers are frustrated and anxious about the impression their own behaviour might make on other people, or mothers, and are over-sensitive to their reactions.

The desire to avoid the situation of disagreement arising between members of a group may explain why the attitudes of students of the Gyotoku women's college course were generally quite passive. For instance, many of them hesitate even to make a comment in front of the others. After the talk of a guest speaker, few of them would dare to ask him/her a question. Obviously, they were not accustomed to expressing their opinions or to making comments in public. It seemed that many of the students were satisfied just with being separated from their small children for two hours, or with listening to a lecture without asking any questions. They also enjoyed chatting with other students in a smaller group after the lecture, but hesitated to voice their opinions openly in front of the whole group. Therefore, many students did not attend the meeting on the last day of term because at the last meeting they were expected to discuss what they thought of previous seminars, in the whole group. What students wanted to obtain by taking part in the course was real friendship and knowledge of how to keep good relations with others, rather than active involvement in women's networks to raise their own gender consciousness, as N-san hoped and expected.

University-educated mothers as volunteer staff

Nevertheless, some mothers wanted to do more than just listening to a lecture and chatting. Such mothers apply to be staff to get involved in the activity more positively. At the end of every term, two or three out of around forty students join the volunteer staff. Although they found this opportunity a first step in their social participation, they did not have a specific plan for further action as yet. Through activities as a member of staff, I found more than half of the members had

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graduated from university. At least five mothers were university graduates, including my two interviewees (H-san (39) and S-san (40)), and one mother was a student of the University of the Air (see Chapter One) at that time, while the other four or five mothers were junior college or high school leavers.

On the whole, volunteer staff shared a feeling of fellowship and enjoyed friendship amongst themselves. (Emotional conflicts between individuals sometimes occurred though). After a weekly meeting, we very often went to a cafe to have lunch together. The mothers did not hesitate to refuse the invitation to lunch if they had another appointment or if they just did not feel like joining in, because the refusal in this case would have little likelihood of leading to future trouble *(ato kusare ga nai).* Unlike a PTA activity, staff members did not need to have a sense of motherly duty towards the group, and also unlike a mother-toddler group activity, they did not need to feel peer pressure as mothers. In the case of this volunteer work, they just left the group if they got disappointed in an association with other members; it would not negatively affect their children's daily lives. In other words, staff members enjoyed friendship between themselves since their relationships were freed from the bounds of motherly obligation and duty.

Staff mothers found pleasure primarily in chatting at a cafe after a meeting, and being able to express their dissatisfaction or frustration which they could not openly voice at a PTA meeting, a neighbours' gathering or even at home.

> K-san (43): I am very busy with the activities of my son's kindergarten. The teachers call the mothers to the kindergarten so often even for a trivial matter. I should've chosen another kindergarten.
>
> S-san (40): Kindergarten teachers are too young to instruct mothers. They don't know how to raise children. A kindergarten employs young women because they are a cheap labour force.
>
> K-san: I am sure that all the kindergarten mothers are dissatisfied with the way the kindergarten handles them, but they never express it.
>
> H-san (39): Mothers should voice that complaint to society.
>
> S-san: A city officer often came to my son's kindergarten to make a speech for mothers. I always got angry at his way of speaking because he treated us as if we were children.

Moreover, another mother, Y-san (39) who took up a corresponding course of the

University of the Air, told me that she wonders why kindergarten teachers take it for granted that every mother inherently has the skill of needlework. Sharing in similar frustrations, they make the feeling of fellowship between them stronger. Several said that they felt at ease joining this circle of mothers and chatting frankly with them.

A gathering of the staff was also occasionally held in the evening, and venting complaints about their husbands often became a topic of conversation. At the end of the year, they had a year-end party at an *izakaya,* a kind of pub that serves alcohol and a variety of food. One mother complained bitterly that her husband considered that she should be charge of looking after his parents in future. Another mother said that she was dissatisfied with her husband's attitude because he was upset about her absence from the home. Moreover, Y-san (39) told us that she was surprised when she realised that her husbands' parents and relatives in the country were very conservative in their ways. In that community, she said, women are treated as if they were servants of men, and her husband has somehow internalised the idea himself. On the whole, it seemed that their husbands did not fully approve of their going out, leaving them and their children at home at night and at the weekend. Nevertheless, husbands' disapproval did not seem to be strong enough to stop their wives going out drinking until late at night. More than half of the mothers went home before midnight, but five of them moved on to another pub and were drinking and chatting until around one o'clock in the morning.

Intellectual stimulation also attracted staff members of Gyotoku women's college. H-san (39) with a 3-year-old daughter, who had applied for the course to find her own sense of lifestyle, said that she was happy to acquire knowledge of social affairs by attending the seminar and found it quite stimulating. 'Listening to a lecture, I feel as if I use another part of my brain which I never use when I am chatting with my daughter or other mothers in a mother-toddler group'. She added that 'Everyone came here to live in *a jibun rashii* way'. Students of Gyotoku women's college, the staff in particular, felt relaxed by being free from their motherly role for at least two hours. For them, Gyotoku women's college was where the idea of a way of living that suits an individual's style *Uibun rashii ikikata)* can begin to be realised.

Gap between mothers and others

On the other hand, it seemed that some guest speakers assumed that students joined the programme as a extension of the motherly or housewifely role. They considered that the students, almost all mothers without full-time paid work, were proud of being full-time housewives (and mothers) and that they would therefore oppose full-time working mothers. In other words, housewives who get involved in a community activity in the daytime during weekdays are seen as women who chose to stay at home since they want to put a priority on a family-centred life, being satisfied with being devoted mothers. For instance, a female lecturer who was explaining a life insurance scheme said 'You all take good care of your husbands, don't you?' and ' It is important always to talk with your husband (whom you respect)'. Moreover, she stressed that she too was a married woman who shares the same values as full-time housewives. Another example was a woman doctor who talked about menopausal disorders. She tried to avoid giving the impression that she might look down on women who were out of paid work, saying 'I am working as a doctor because I am not like you all who can handle housework perfectly. I have no talent to be a full-time housewife'. Thus, they made an effort to show their admiration for the full-time housewife on the assumption that their audience was made up of housewives whose main interests would be in family-related matters.

A male university lecturer in sociology, who made a speech on motherhood, showed a video of a TV programme featuring a child abuse problem at the beginning of his seminar. It seemed that he thought that the behaviour of mothers in the video, who wounded or even killed their children, was very shocking to the students. After the seminar, however, S-san (40) said 'The lecturer said "You all became filled with anger at those mothers in the video, didn't you?", but in fact I understand them. Every mother could get mad if she is with only her child in a room for a long time'. Several agreed with her, and the target of their criticism was actually the husbands of the mothers in the video, who did not notice what had happened to their wives and children until the child abuse became very serious.

Although some mothers felt a sense of incongruity with the family-centred mother figure imposed upon them, this did not necessarily mean that they were strongly dissatisfied with their

present situation. The causes of their complaints varied from a husband's lack of awareness of child-rearing to a society which does not allow a mother to have a job except as a cashier in a supermarket or a waitress in a restaurant. Y-san (39) told me that she was wondering if a university graduate who works in a supermarket should really be praised as a working mother. Another university-educated member was planning to get full-time work after her children grow up, but she already realised that there would be a very slim chance of getting anything with good working conditions.

Nevertheless, at the same time, they were also quite satisfied with their lifestyle that involved financial dependence on their husbands and that enables them to spend a certain amount of their time on pleasure. S-san (40) often told me how she is satisfied with the present arrangement of her life, having a gentle husband, sweet son, part-time work with good pay as a pharmacist, and some time left over for fun. Y-san (39), who criticises male-dominated society, also insists that full-time work does not always emancipate a woman, rather a woman has the right to choose to stay at home to enjoy her life. Overall, mothers enjoyed the friendships established through a community activity like being staff at the Gyotoku women's college, and they got rid of the stress of daily life by socialising with friends who share a similar sense of values. This was where a gap between N-san, a social education instructor of the course, and some staff members and students was often observed. On the one hand, N-san wanted to encourage students of the course to be more interested in the present situation of oppressed women in society, and hence to be more independent and assertive. Staff members basically agreed with her stance, but some of them expressed hesitation in fully accepting her assumption that women need to be socially emancipated, on the other hand.

### 6.3.2   The Ichikawa women's graduate school course *(Josei Daigakuin)*

Nevertheless, some of the staff members also applied for another public lifelong learning course organised by the Women's Centre of Ichikawa City in seeking more academic stimulation. All of them had had the experience of studying at university. The course was a new lifelong learning course entitled 'women's graduate school' *Gosei daigakuin)* set up by Ichikawa City local government in 1998. The local government organised a lifelong learning course entitled

'women's university' *(josei daigaku)* from 1993 to 1997. The 'women's university' was a six-month course and offered a seminar once a week. The 'women's graduate school' was newly set up as an advanced course of the 'women's university'. It started in October 1998 and ended in March 2000. Three-hour lectures and seminars were offered twice a month at the Ichikawa Women's Centre.

The women's graduate school course focused on providing gender studies to the students. The contents of the programme were lectures and seminars on a variety of gender issues, such as 'gender and education', 'gender and family', and 'gender and labour', and the students were expected to write an essay as the outcome of their study at the end of the course, March 2000. According to the Ichikawa Women's Centre, the aim of the course was to train the participants to have the qualities of leadership in order to put women's views into the decision-making process of various community groups in actualising a gender-equal society. As the title 'graduate school' showed, the organiser attempted to make the programme much more academically-oriented than an ordinary lifelong learning course held in a citizens' hall. Therefore, university professors or lecturers (some of them well-known professors in the field of gender studies) were invited as guest speakers each time. Moreover, three female 'real' graduate school students who were working on gender-related studies supported the students throughout the course, guiding them in their studies, for example, on how to collect study materials or to write an essay or report. Their title was 'tutor' *(chuta)* and they were financially rewarded for their work by the local government.

Like Gyotoku women's college, the women's graduate school course encouraged citizens to get involved in personally designing the programme to educate them. The planning of a course programme was made by staff who had been selected from applicants for the position, half a year before the course started. The tasks of the staff were the planning and management of the whole programme, the selection of lecturers and meeting them to work out the details, and then leading the seminar. Unlike the tutors, they were engaged in those tasks on a voluntary basis. From the government side, a director of the Ichikawa Women's Centre, S-san, took part in a staff meeting which was held two or three times a month. Some city officers from the Women's

Centre supported the management of the course as the secretariat. Thus, women's graduate school was also formed as a self-organised programme by citizens themselves.

S-san made a positive commitment to the operation of the programme. She considered that participation in various parts of society by women who have leadership skills is indispensable for modifying a male-centred society, and encouraged the staff and students of the course to raise their own consciousness. She did not like to talk about herself much, but later I heard that she may be a single mother and had lived in England for a long time. Actually, it could not be said that Ichikawa city officers in general are as aware of gender consciousness as she is. For instance, S-san told us that some of her female assistants in another section of local government were afraid to have her as their boss, because they had the fixed idea that a 'feminist' like her would hate women wearing makeup. Moreover, one male worker of the Women's Centre honestly confessed that he can hardly tolerate the idea of sharing the housework burden equally between husband and wife. In other words, S-san was an exception even among staff of the Ichikawa Women's Centre, and it seemed that her special effort had made a great contribution to starting up the course.

The average age of the staff and students was relatively high. The number of students was 30 (including one man and myself), and two of them were in their 60s, eleven in their 50s, ten in their 40s, three in their 30s and four of them did not reveal their age. A creche was arranged in the centre, but only one or two participants used it during the course. Almost all the participants were mothers, but their children had reached school age or were already grown up. One of the staff members used the creche a few times to leave her granddaughter. I heard from one staff member that the course was originally set up to educate and train young women (and men) in their 20s or 30s to have leadership skills, but unexpectedly the majority turned out to be women who were older than the age of forty. The ages of staff also ranged from their 30s to 60s: two in their 60s, one in her 50s, two in their 40s, and two in their 30s.

On the first day of the course, the opening ceremony started with a brief speech by the Mayor of Ichikawa City. It is quite unusual for a lifelong learning course held in a citizens' hall in

Ichikawa to have a mayor on the opening day (or on any day through the course). Although he left the room immediately after finishing his speech, his appearance gave us the impression that the programme was somehow special. The rest of the ceremony was spent on the introduction to the programme.

After the ceremony, the explanation of the course structure and the self-introduction of all the participants was carried out in a less formal atmosphere. The reasons for participation in the course varied.

> S-san (the Director of the Centre): Women's silent revolution has already started. Society has changed to some extent, but there are also a lot of customs which remain firmly unchanged. I hope that you will all play a leading role in various activities in community society.
>
> A-san (60): I am worried about the way in which I will spend the rest of my life in peace in Ichikawa.
>
> Y-san (50): I moved to Ichikawa only eight years ago, so I don't have a strong attachment to this community yet. I wanted to start something new here.
>
> F-san (49): I want to know why so many families are ruined recently. None of my friends says that they enjoy a happy family life.
>
> N-san (61): I have taught *ikebana* (Japanese flower arrangement) and (Western) flower arrangement for more than forty years. I noticed recently that many of my students are stressed. The oppression of women in society and at home is a source of their stress, but few of them realise that. I want to become capable of saving them.

Although many of them had not actually heard the word 'gender' before, they showed strong curiosity about social problems associated with women and the motivation to study. Among the students, there was one man in his 60s who had retired from an electric railway company. He also did not seem to understand what gender issues mean at all, but said that he was looking for a lifelong learning course to help him enjoy his life after retirement.

**Characteristics of the participants**

One of the characteristics of the participants, students and staff, was that on that whole they were well-educated, despite the fact that the average age was high. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the percentage of female university graduates in their 50s and 60s is quite low. In the results of my investigation, however, at least 14 out of 35 women had received university education: two

women in their 60s, six in their 50s, four in their 40s, and two in their 30s, including my five interviewees (F-san (42), H-san (39), H-san (49), K-san (58), and S-san (4?)). From her research on urban housewives in the 1970s, Imamura points out that highly educated women tend to choose a programme that stimulates their intellectual interest when taking up lifelong learning, rather than choosing a cooking class or a handicraft one (1980:157). The participants may have been attracted to the title 'graduate school' which implied that the course is somehow more advanced than other lifelong learning courses on offer.

As well as being better educated, the majority of elder participants seemed to be relatively well-off with a middle-class background. On the day of the opening, a lot of elder participants were well-dressed in a suit or a formal dress, which surprised me turning up in my jeans, contributing to creating a formal atmosphere. Almost all of them were also engaged in other women groups in the community, already being involved in activities which aimed at the improvement of women's social status. Moreover, some played a leading role in those activities. In other words, they could be described as women's-centre-goers. Ichikawa Women's Centre is a stronghold of a variety of women's study or hobby groups whose members are in their 50s or over. Those groups have organised a women's association entitled 'Gathering of Women in Ichikawa' *(Ichikawa Josei no Tsudoi),* and the president, the vice president, and the secretary general of the association also joined the women's graduate school course as students. As a part of their activities, Gathering of Women in Ichikawa sometimes organises a lecture meeting, inviting a university professor or feminist activist as the speaker, at Ichikawa Women's Centre. Although the meeting is theoretically open to the public, almost all the audience seemed to be members of the association. When I had a chance to attend the lecture meeting, I was the youngest participant surrounded by well-dressed elderly ladies. Some of the ladies even wore *kimono* which is usually seen only on a formal occasion.

The other characteristic of the participants was that only a small number of them had a full-time paid job. The lectures and seminars were offered on a Saturday afternoon, twice a month, in order to enable a woman (or a man) with a full-time job to attend them. However, as far as I know there were only three full-time workers among the 36 women. One of them was a staff

member in her 30s, working for a newspaper, but she did not turn up to the latter half of the course. The rest of them were students: one was an expert in social insurance in her 30s, and the other was one of my interviewees, S-san (4?), an expert in water analysis. Both of them missed seminars frequently owing to overtime work on Saturday. The rest of the women were divided into two groups, part-time workers and full-time housewives, roughly half and half. The type of occupation of the part-time workers included dietician, interpreter, high school teacher, flower arrangement teacher, office worker, and nursery nurse, rather than 'housewifely part-time work'.

The attitude of the participants

The majority of the elderly participants did not have to earn their living, or at least they did not claim to do so. Some had paid work, they said, because they wanted to make full use of their ability or skill outside the home. This also means that they stayed at home unless they gained a job which attracted their interest or if they found alternatives to satisfy their desire for an activity outside the home. Such a woman http://home.they/can be called 'a lady of leisure' *(yiikan madamu),* which sounds a bit out of date. 'A lady of leisure' indicates a married woman who can afford a lot of money and time for socialising and entertainment. As Imamura suggests, women who attend a lifelong learning course seeking for intellectual stimulation may in fact be classified as 'ladies of leisure' (1987: 121). When H-san (49), who is a full-time housewife herself, insisted that women should work outside to realise equality of the sexes in society, at the seminar, several in their 50s or 60s refuted her opinion, claiming that the housework burden used to be very tough and time-consuming (so they were unable to have outside work). They agree with the idea that young women these days should have paid work even after marriage or childbirth, but they do not accept the idea that they themselves should have worked outside the home.

Although many participants showed a negative attitude towards being full-time housewives and agreed with the idea that financial independence is necessary to raise women's status in society, it does not mean that they have an intention of making a genuine effort to change their own lives which economically depend on their husbands. Several expressed desire for outside work, but

they had no idea how to go about finding it. Some highly educated elderly students never had the experience of engaging in paid work, and they had only a vague idea that working outside must be something good. This caused a gap between younger participants and elderly ones in terms of the purpose of gender-related studies. Two full-time workers in their 30s and 40s wanted to study practical issues related to women in the workplace. One of them, S-san (4?) works in a company as a manager. She applied for the course seeking an opportunity to meet other women with a management post, who might face similar problems to hers. She was the only female manager in her office. Another younger student who had wanted to study women's problems in the workplace and in the labour market left the course a few months later. The majority of the students were interested in the study, but they were not so interested in actually putting what they learned into practice. As Imamura suggested, 'Participants in a course on women's problems indicated that for the most part they found the study interesting but had no intention of changing their own lives' (1987: 122).

The purpose and meaning of the study

In the former half of the course, the students took an active part in the programme. The main content of programmes for the first six months was lectures by university professors, lecturers, or lawyers. The structure of the three-hour programme was planned so that a lecturer gave a lecture for one and a half hours and the rest of time was used for questions and comments to the lecturer. But almost all the lecturers used up more than two hours for their talk, so that the students often had little time to ask questions. Compared to the students of the Gyotoku women's college course, mothers who studied in this course were less hesitant to voice their opinions and to ask questions. Some of the students complained to the staff that they wanted to have more time for making comments.

The staff members received a variety of complaints from the students. According to a staff member in her 30s, the complaints varied from the attitudes of other students to the content of lectures, such as 1. The same students make comments every time; 2. Some students are always noisy, so I cannot concentrate on the lecture; 3. I cannot understand well what the lecturer is talking about. It is too difficult for me; and 4. I got fed up with the word 'gender'. She said that

elderly students in particular made a lot of complaints to the staff, and the staff were kept very busy dealing with them. They depended too much on the staff, she complained, 'They have no idea about solving problems by themselves'. Worse, she added, elderly members of the staff also lacked the notion of doing things by themselves: they were self-assertive in a meeting, but depended on younger members for the practice. Another member of the staff, who was in her late 40s, deplored the sense of dependency of the students, too. She planned a trip to the Women's Centre of Chiba Prefecture, located in another city, and several students joined it. What disappointed her was that some of them asked her to take them to the centre with her, because they were reluctant to find out how to get there by themselves. 'They said that they cannot go there unless someone guides them'.

As the course came towards an end, the students gradually lost their interest in the study. The main cause was that lectures were not offered in the latter half of the course. Instead of a lecture, a seminar was held; the students were divided into three groups, and three tutors took care of one group each, instructing the students how to do research related to gender issues and to sum up the investigation's findings as an essay. Although producing the outcome of the study in a written form was the main assignment of the programme, many students felt it nothing more than a burden to achieve this task. It took a few months for some just to decide on the topic of an essay. The students complained of the heavy burden of the assignment to the staff, and the tutors complained to the staff of a lack of students' eagerness to study. As regards the aim of the study, the gap between students, tutors, and staff became wider and wider. For one thing, all the tutors were in their 30s, so it was likely that some elderly students felt resistance to being instructed by a woman who was so much younger than they were. Moreover, the tutors expected the students to work hard to produce an essay of at least an undergraduate student level, but many were not interested in meeting those demands. K-san (58) told me that 'I did not come here to write such an essay'. The staff made an effort to lighten the burden of the assignment; for example, they accepted a short description of a student's impression of the programme, instead of actually doing research and writing an essay. Finally, 22 students submitted their papers, and seven of them left the course before the submission. Papers submitted were printed and were gathered into a book, and the book was distributed to the participants of the course and several women's

centres inside and outside Chiba Prefecture. On the closing day of the course, the tutors expressed their disappointment with the poor quality of the essays, but it seemed that many students could not get the point of their dissatisfaction.

What the tutors did not realise was that the purpose of a study group in the community is not necessarily to study in an academic way. At a lecture held during the course, I frequently heard several students in their 50s or over make comments, such as 'I heard a very good talk today' *(kyo wa tottemo yoi ohanashi wo kikimashita )*. This expression was also heard at another lecture meeting held in the Women's Centre. It may be a common courtesy to pay a speaker compliments on his/her speech, but gradually I felt that this expression might signify something more than just a compliment. In a way, hearing a talk (especially that of people who have a high social position such as a university professor) is the real purpose of a study group activity. In other words, women of a study group tend to be satisfied with just attending a lecture; they are not really interested in leading themselves to further study. University-educated women in their 50s or over gather at the Women's Centre seeking cultural enrichment. They have intellectual curiosity about social problems associated with women, such as domestic violence or women's low status in society, but hesitate to disclose their own problems. Because, again, they have no intention of changing their own lives. Thus, they enjoy attending a lecture, and go home with the satisfaction that 'I heard a good talk today'. Besides, attending a lecture is an opportunity for meeting 'upper-class' people in an academic pedigree society, that is university professors and other university-educated women. This is a formal occasion which deserves people being well-dressed. For elderly university-educated women, this sort of event is one of the community activities which fits their sense of lifestyle.

## 6.4    The mother-child group: Ichikawa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre

A study group is not the only community activity in which a university-educated mother may get actively involved. A mother-child group is, for instance, also an activity where they might fulfil themselves in the community. For my research, I joined a self-organised mother-child group entitled 'Ichikawa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre' (Ichikawa Gyotoku *Oyako Gekijo)*. The group

is quite a large organisation, and the number of members was roughly between 460 to *550* during my fieldwork. The majority of the members were mothers in their 30s or 40s with their children, and a few fathers were registered as members, too. The members rented an apartment room and used it as their office.

The Ichikwa Gyotoku Parent-Child Theatre (hereafter referred to as 'Parent-Child Theatre') is a group activity whose main purpose is to produce an ideal environment for raising children in a local community, in order to enrich their children's lives. It is a local branch of a nation-wide association, the Children's Theatre *(Kodomo Gekij6).* According to the only paid staff of the Ichikawa Gyotoku branch, K-san, the Children's Theatre was founded in 1966 in Fukuoka, Kyushu. At that time, she added, colour television had become widespread all over the country, so children began to stay at home, instead of playing outside. The Children's Theatre aims to bring children back out of the home. They assume that trends in Japanese society have been detrimental to children, becoming excessively economically oriented, and such a material world has in tum badly affected children's behaviour and mental development. Thus, the Children's Theatre has tried to establish a social environment which cultivates children's ability to 'live a humanitarian life' *( ningen rashii ikikata).*

The Parent-Child Theatre stresses that children's sensibility should be enriched. There are two main activities organised for the members: 'regular meetings' *( reikai)* and 'self-arranged activities' *(jishu katsudo).* The 'regular meeting' is an activity that provides opportunities of seeing plays, concerts, and puppet shows to the children. They considered that a cultural activity such as seeing a play or listening to music enriches children's sensibility and has a very good effect on their mental growth. They said that children do not need to understand everything in a play, but hope that they are impressed with seeing a live performance. The 'self-arranged activities' means that they arrange a variety of events themselves, such as a summer camp, an annual festival, bazaars, a Christmas party, and so on, throughout the year. One of the main aims of the 'self-arranged activities' is to encourage the children to communicate with people outside their family and school mates. In other words, what the Parent-Child Theatre want to actualise is to bring children up in a local network which they believe used to be common practice in

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Japanese society a few decades ago, before the economically oriented society was established. They deplore the present situation where children have no place to play in the concrete jungle, and moreover that in an apartment complex they do not know their neighbours very well. Thus, one of the main concerns of the Parent-Child Theatre was to arrange better surroundings for the mental growth of their children.

Complicated system for the unification of members

As an organisation, the Parent-Child Theatre has a quite complicated system. It took me a long time to understand it. There are many kinds of meetings in the whole organisation. Firstly, a new member has to join a group called a 'circle' *(sakuru)*. The 'circle' is the smallest and most basic unit in the organisation, and it consists of more than three families (mothers and their children). Each circle has a monthly circle meeting, and mothers of a circle exchange opinions about the activities and events they have taken part in or that they are planning. They also pay dues to the circle leader on this occasion. From each circle, a leader and a 'committee member' *(iin)* are selected, and they attend other meetings. Several circles join together in making a larger group called a 'block' *( burokku).* The Parent-Child Theatre is geographically divided into eight blocks per primary school district in the Gyotoku area. Committee members of circles are representatives of each block, and representatives from all the blocks gather to have a committee meeting twice a month. At the meeting, they introduce opinions and comments collected at circle meetings to each other in managing the whole organisation and in making the arrangements for new events. Moreover, they bring the outcome of a committee meeting back to each circle. Besides, circle leaders and committee members take part in a circle leaders' meeting within the block, which is held once a month. At a circle leaders' meeting, members mainly discuss activities within the block, such as a Christmas party or a cook-out in a park. In addition, an ad hoc committee meeting may be organised to prepare for a big event in which all the members participate, such as a summer camp or an annual festival. At these meetings, the main task of the participants is to express their opinions. Through such a complicated system, the Parent-Child Theatre makes an effort to pick up as many individual members' opinions as possible, by giving them many chances to make their voices heard in various meetings.

As regards the management of the whole organisation, there are officers who are called 'steering committee members' *( un 'ei iin).* The officers include a president (one of my interviewees, K-san (38)), two vice presidents, and K-san, a paid member who is in charge of administrative work. They were always busy with the arrangements of all kinds of activities; for example, the negotiation with a theatrical company, the booking of a room of a citizens' hall for 'block' or other meetings and of a public hall for a performance, the arrangement of a campsite and the transportation, and the drawing up of the budget. Moreover, they attend the various meetings mentioned above to lead and encourage the participants to give voice to their feelings and opinions. In other words, the officers are involved in all the activities concerned with organising the whole group. At an officers' meeting, the president, K-san (38), told other officers as follows:

> At a committee meeting, please do not ask a committee member (iin) a simple question, such as 'What do you think?', because many of them hesitate to express their opinions directly. It is better to say, 'My opinion is this, but how about yours?'.

The officers have a meeting twice a month, and moreover, they frequently come to the office to do their jobs. They are engaged in various tasks to make the activities of the Parent-Child Theatre run smoothly.

Another important task of the officers is to reinforce the policy and principle of their activities to each other. At an officers' meeting, they repeatedly bring up their principle that the 'ties of people' *( hito to hito no tunagari)* are essential to achieving a better society. In a way, they distrust contemporary society. Mothers who are actively involved in the organisation consider that present society is much too materially oriented, and that it deprives children of humanity and the ability or power to live humanly. An officer reported at the meeting as follows:

> Many of the children helped in the preparations for a festival. One child asked us, 'what is the reward (money or a thing) for my contribution?'. A mother answered, 'everybody will give you a big clap'. I thought it was an excellent answer.

How to teach children that material affluence is less important than spiritual welfare, is one of their main concerns. To train children to have the ability to live humanly, for example, the

officers even attempted to have the children experience the inconvenience of country life. When they chose a place for a summer camp, they were specifically looking for a campsite without a flush toilet. K-san (38) repeatedly said, 'The Parent-Child Theatre gives us something we can't buy with money. Our activities are not the necessities of life, but we need them for life'. At many of their meetings, the officers often remind the participants of the importance of spiritual values. Also they stress their principle that friendly relationships with other people enrich a child's personality.

The officers also emphasise the importance of the 'feeling' or 'thought' *(omoi)* of member mothers. The 'feeling' in this context means mothers' motivation for the activities: a belief that the Parent-Child Theatre gives the members mental enrichment, and affection for the activities and the other members. They consider the activities of the Parent-Child Theatre as different from school-related ones such as the PTA or the Class for Home Education, because it is not forced and self-organised. In school-related activities, as we saw, a mother is expected to be socialised through completing tasks assigned by a pre-school or a primary school. In the case of the Parent-Child Theatre, however, the activities are not considered to be motherly obligations or duties, rather it is to give pleasure not only to children but also to the mothers. The officers repeat that mothers should enjoy the activities before thinking of the interests of their children. The 'feeling' that the Parent-Child Theatre is an irreplaceable venue for mothers and children to gain mental satisfaction, supports their active involvement in the organisation. At meetings, the officers frequently ask the participants, 'Why do we join the Parent-Child Theatre?' to make sure of their motivation. The answer is 'feeling' that invisible things, such as affection, pleasure, and ties of people, are important for a humanitarian life. Their emphasis on 'feeling' also demonstrates their negative attitude towards the evaluation of people's abilities by the visible evidence of things such as money or a school report.

University-educated mothers who play a leading role
Compared to the study groups depicted above, the proportion of mothers with a university qualification in this group seemed to be low. Among the 16 officers, for example, there were only two university graduates as far as I could confirm, and one mother was taking a

correspondence course with the University of the Air. From my interviewees, not only Kurihara-san (38) but also K-san (44) was involved in this organisation.

As the president, K-san (38), who was a full-time mother of two daughters, was spending very busy days involved with the activity. She told me that it is basically better for a wife to have a paid job, too, and to share the housework burden with her husband on an equal basis. In fact, she had prepared herself for finding a new job after her second child had been born. At that time, however, her husband became very busy with his job, so he began to come home later. K-san wanted to talk with him about sharing housework, but they could not even find the time to talk for a few years. Having being selected to be the president, she spent almost every day doing volunteer work as the president. Although the officers spent a lot of time on the activities, many of them have a 'housewifely' part-time job at a supermarket, a factory and so on. K-san, however, seemed to have no time left for outside work at all.

It appeared that K-san's critical attitude towards a materialist society also affected her choice to be away from paid work.

> I don't want to be engaged in work which supports mass consumerism. The last job I want to get is in the manufacture of arms. I don't like working in a *pachinko* parlour, either, because I hate the gambling industry. I understand that there are people who have to work even in an arms factory to make a living though. I often wish I could put myself in the situation where I have to earn living. Unfortunately, I don't need to work since my husband earns enough money for the whole family.

On the one hand, she had a strong desire to work outside, but on the other hand she felt resistance to working only for moneymaking. She was strongly in sympathy with the principle of the Parent-Child Theatre, where children need to cultivate their ability to lead a humanitarian life. Working for a non-profit organisation to produce a better society was a work style she was seeking. It can be said that K-san's involvement in the activities of the Parent-Child Theatre was some kind of substitute for paid work.

K-san (44), was another university-educated mother who was involved actively in the Parent-Child Theatre. She was a 'committee member' *(iin)* of the Minami-Niihama block, so she

was less busy than the officers were. But she seemed to spend very busy days since she was also working at a bank on a full-time basis. K-san told me that she was one of the oldest members of the Parent-Child Theatre, who had joined the group more than ten years ago. The Parent-Child Theatre was the only child-related activity she had been engaged in. 'If it is possible, I want to spend much more time for the Parent-Child Theatre, since I gain a lot of things through these activities'. According to K-san, the Parent-Child Theatre is largely different from PTA activities. 'The Parent-Child Theatre is a place for mothers to talk about the ideal way of raising children. We share the aim to arrange better circumstances for children's growth, and to work together. On the contrary, mothers don't talk about such things at a PTA meeting, and they don't help each other'.

Like K-san (38), K-san (44) was also worried that the present society may be having a bad influence on their children in terms of mental development. She insisted that the academic pedigree society should be improved. 'I cannot understand why children these days have to study so hard. The pressure of study takes away from children time to think of self . She had a bitter memory of her own high school days.

> In my school, the students studied hard to enter a highly ranked university. I am ashamed to say it, but I didn't notice that it was disgusting to tell lies to friends to win. I pretended not to study hard, telling them the story of a TV drama I had never seen.

She said that she always thinks of what is really important for children's happiness. 'What we are doing is like turning small stones over one by one. It takes ages, but someday all the stones will be turned over. I hope that the accumulation of our little efforts will finally change the whole society for the better'.

Gap between highly motivated mothers and other members

K-san's (38) strong 'feeling' *(omoi)* towards the idea that society should be improved was, however, not always shared by other members of the group. When the murder case by a kindergarten mother mentioned earlier occurred, she suggested to other officers sending a message to a community paper to appeal to isolated mothers to ask for help. However, her

proposal met with little response in the officers' meeting. 'I was told that it might make mothers more nervous', she told me, 'it might only be me who wants to actualise child-rearing in collaboration with people in the community'. Basically, it seemed that all the officers agreed that children should be raised within a group of people, but they tended to have little interest in problems outside the group and their families. Moreover, on the whole, members other than the officers had passive attitudes towards self-organised activities, like I observed in Gyotoku women's college. They feel happy to have many opportunities to meet other mothers and children in the community and enjoy friendship between them, but some of them found taking part in meetings and the arrangement of events a burden.

Besides, K-san (38) attempted to make the organisation more official by registering it as an NPO (Non-Profit Organisation), but not many other members showed a positive attitude towards her idea. She wanted to put more emphasis on the social contribution aspect of their activities than of just being a local mother-toddler group. However, other members, especially non-officer mothers, seemed not only to be little interested in her idea, but also to be a bit wary that their activity might lead to be more politically-oriented. As Imamura pointed out, a mother may still view 'the world outside her home in functional terms': housewives are not interested in problems beyond their own families (1987: 110). Finally, the organisation achieved registration as an NPO, perhaps partly because not many members either strongly agreed or disagreed with K-san's idea.

Both university graduate mothers, K-san (38) and K-san (44) are highly motivated to improve society through their activity. They feel resistance to excessive commercialism in contemporary society. K-san considers that residents of a company society do not know much about the world outside. What they try to achieve is to revive neighbourhood networks and to spread the idea that spiritual values are essential to live a humanitarian life. Their 'feeling' *(omoi)* might be stronger than that of many of the other members, in terms of the extent to which they consider how the organisation makes contribution to society as a whole. The activity of the Parent-Child Theatre seems to be something more than a motherly obligation or duty for them, rather a type of social participation which suits their sense of style and is a source of their self-

fulfilment.

## 6.5    Conclusion

Not all community activities aim to encourage mothers to be aware of their motherly duty. Mothers also join a variety of community activities to satisfy their own interests and to seek stimulation. They are automatically involved in motherly activities which have the educational purpose discussed in the preceding chapter, but mothers who spent most of their time in the community are in effect seeking an opportunity of taking up something not related to their maternal role. Although they find the child-rearing network and mother-child groups in their neighbourhood quite helpful, at the same time they often also feel that relationships established only through mothering activities are superficial friendships. And what is worse, for several mothers, how they should associate with other mothers in such a group is a source of frustration.

Many university graduate mothers have a chance to play leading roles in community activities. In a mothers' group, as officers, they are actively involved in managerial tasks for the group which may offer intellectual and mental stimulation, and expand their personal network. Thus they may use opportunities to seek friends who share similar interests and to have fun together. Again there is a generation gap: some elderly university graduate mothers hesitate to act independently. They gather to seek academic stimulation, but their activity might end up as study for the sake of study. However, active involvement in the community provides mothers not only with a sense of fulfilment, but also a chance to fill their time, when their children are already grown up.

What younger university-educated mothers with a high motivation for community activities seem to be seeking is something more valuable than just having fun. Their purpose is to modify the society they live in. They are aware of various social problems, such as gender-inequality or excessive materialism, but they also believe that making a profit should not be the entire goal in life. Ironically, as Hendry ( 1999:55) points out, their criticism against the established social system may lead to the devaluation of the social structure which enables their husbands to earn enough money to allow them the time to enjoy their activities. Several university graduate

mothers are strongly aware of that contradiction, and feel a dilemma about it. However, they prefer to seek social change. Thus, they make a positive commitment to community activities as an alternative to full-time work in order to make a social contribution and to lead a full life.

# Conclusion

# Vomen and Social Change

On the one hand, the increase in numbers of university-educated women symbolises one of the great social changes that took place in post-war Japan. On the other hand, the tendency for many of them not to return to work after giving birth looks on the surface like an unchanged aspect of Japanese society. This thesis has examined in detail what these women are doing and how they find fulfilment in everyday life. Here I draw the threads followed in each chapter together.

**University as a place to grow in personal stature**

Firstly, my findings indicate that university is not an institution for the limited elite in Japan any more. Even for a girl, entering university is the most desired option to choose if she has reached a certain academic level and, more importantly, her parents are wealthy enough to support their daughter's continued education. In the educational system which strongly encourages students to study hard to gain success in life, both boys and girls make an effort to go to as highly ranked a university as possible. In post-war Japan, the image that university education provides the students not only the ticket to a good job opportunity but also to a good future life has been widely shared. Failure to enter university can be shameful enough to be a cause of an inferiority complex for ambitious young men and women, and some of them continue being haunted by this complex.

One thing that makes especially women feel inferiority is that they share the notion that university is a place for self-development. A university is not particularly expected to produce students well equipped with occupational skills and abilities to obtain a good job after graduation. However, my investigation reveals that many people have a vague image that students will enrich their personality and acquire wide knowledge, maturity, and thoughtfulness through study, part-time job experience, and an expanding personal network. A university is regarded as a place to shape the students, make them more mature and to enrich their later life.

Although university graduate women have been at a disadvantage in the field of employment, they have been relatively satisfied with their educational attainments because of the belief that they obtained something important for life through their four years at university, as we saw in Chapter Two. Even mothers in their 50s and 60s say that going to university was not a special effort at all for them and people around them. In fact, they were not inspired very much by the idea that women should have a professional job to be independent. However, especially the older generation considers that they should return what they gained at university to society. They are strongly motivated to take some part in society, having a sense of obligation as women educated at the highest educational institution.

Changing society

Secondly, my findings demonstrated occupational problems associated with university graduate mothers. Supporting Moore's thesis, I found it essential to see the interrelation between women and social attitudes towards them in order to explore the effect of social change on women, 'rather than assuming that the process of determination is always unidirectional' (1998:184). Women's role and duty are socially defined, but individual effort to achieve self-fulfilment may have the effect of modifying social norms.

In Chapter Three, we saw that several university-educated mothers got disappointed with the treatment of women and mothers in the workplace, and left there on giving birth. Some of them have a strong desire to have a professional job again, but their attempts are of little avail. However, they are not interested in so-called 'housewifely part-time work' which is available to middle-aged mothers. They want to obtain a job worth doing. Otherwise, they will not enter the labour market again. On the contrary, continuous full-time work costs mothers' full energy to manage a double burden of work inside and outside the home. As part-time work does not always mean a job with shorter hours, full-time work in many cases does not mean 'only' full-time work; full-time work is accompanied by overtime work. They have seen many of their female colleagues and seniors leaving the workplace to be full-time mothers, questioning if it might be better to follow them. Nevertheless, mothers with full-time work do not have much incentive for quitting the job as long as they are

satisfied with it, because they well know that once they leave, they cannot return to the same position.

Actually, the social climate towards university graduate women and mothers with full-time work has been changing in favour of ambitious women. Mothers have become able to choose their life in contemporary Japanese society; at least they are not 'forced' to stay at home. As we saw in Chapter Three, several university-educated mothers pursue a career even after childbirth, if they have strong motivation. They have relatively professional jobs which require abilities and responsibility. Gradually, people began to ask university-educated mothers for a reason for quitting work, rather than a reason for continuing work. The expansion of public and private child-care support systems described in Chapter Five backs up full-time working mothers with small children in a variety of ways, and contribute to changing the social norm that a mother should make herself available anytime at home for her child.

The fact that some university graduate mothers are managing to balance professional and family responsibilities may cause a sense of inferiority for other such mothers without full-time work. The youngest full-time mothers I interviewed (Group C) are relatively satisfied with staying at home with their small children, as illustrated in Chapter Four, partly because they used to manage the same work in a finn as men did, working from nine to midnight. They felt it was enough. On the other hand, several mothers who had entered employment before the 1986 EEO Law was enacted (Group B), thought that if they had continued full-time work, they would have been able to manage to balance work and the family. Some of them expressed dissatisfaction at doing part-time work, despite the fact that their jobs require a professional skill, because they feel as if they are only half accomplishing jobs both at home and in the workplace. Many university-educated mothers have a strong desire to make full use of their abilities, and to actively relate themselves to the wider society.

**Generational conflicts**

The generational difference mentioned in the previous paragraph illustrates the third finding, namely a discrepancy between the gender consciousness of different age groups and their occupational statuses. Indeed, this may be standing in the way of strong ties between mothers of different

generations. Rosaldo suggests that 'extra-domestic ties with other women are, then, an important source of power and value for women in societies that create a firm division between public and domestic, or male and female, roles' (1973:39). However, mothers do not always share the same interests. Women's social differentiation is a very important issue when women's position and situation in society are examined. The fact of being a woman is not high on all women's lists of priorities. Differences in class, race, education, and occupations construct a hierarchical relationship between the women. Moreover, as Lebra points out, even the same woman may have different views according to the shift of life stages (1984:306).

University graduate mothers in their 50s and 60s have strong feelings that they could not work or continue to work due to the social climate when they were young housewives. It seems that they did not particularly oppose the idea that women's place was at home then, and that they enjoyed housewifely and motherly roles in their own way. However, they feel that they were 'victims' of society, being forced to be full-time housewives.

Nevertheless, the older generation also has a relatively strong idea that a mother should be 'perfect' to raise her child in a proper way. Their lack of experience as mothers with full-time work leads to a lack of imagination about how heavy a burden a full-time working mother shoulders. Some young university graduate mothers, with or without a job, feel loaded with the expectation of their mothers' generation: be a working mother with a professional job and be a perfect mother at the same time. On the one hand, people might get used to coming up with new ideas about their society or absorbing new concepts from outside, but on the other hand, they may wish to retain a set of social values as unchanged.

from the older generation's point of view, younger women in their 20s and 30s who graduated from university tend to take university education less seriously. Older generation women from a university educational background tend to have a strong gender consciousness, in a way, insisting that women's participation in society should be much more promoted. Therefore, as we saw in Chapter Four, they cannot understand why young university graduate mothers are satisfied with 'just' being at home with their children; they think they look self-centred, lacking the motivation to improve society. The

older generation sees young university-educated mothers as women who interpret a woman's 'traditional' domestic role as one for women who want to enjoy a self-centred life without hard work outside the home.

## Low opinion of the housewifely role, high opinion of the motherly role

Fourthly, my findings suggest that few people expect a housewife to spend all day long doing only housework. The exclusion of childless housewives from community networks, mentioned in Chapter Five, indicates that marriage is not a reason for a woman to leave the workplace nowadays

When mothers in their 50s and 60s were still young mothers, they did not think of sharing housework with their husbands. Some of them still do not have the idea of sharing, but as their husbands are approaching retirement age, wives begin to ask them to take charge of some part of the housework. In contrast, younger mothers do not hesitate to insist on housework-sharing, even if they are away from work. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, few mothers have a high opinion of doing housework in a 'perfect' way. They cannot be satisfied with only the perfect accomplishment of the housewifely role, i.e. the management of household, child-related matters, and housework. Even mothers who enjoy a full-time housewifely life do not hesitate to express their lack of interest in doing housework.

The 'professional' housewife is not an object of admiration for university-educated mothers. Even a full-time housewife feels resistance to identifying herself as a 'full-time housewife'. They want to claim that they are not 'ordinary' housewives who enjoy the perfect accomplishment of housework and household management. Moreover, they are afraid that a full-time housewife may be seen negatively; being 'lazy', with no interest in society, a lack of knowledge, and being 'bossy' towards her family. Society has begun to have a negative attitude towards the full-time housewife whose main (only) concern is supposed to be the interests of her family and who is reluctant to be involved in activities outside the home.

As we have seen in Chapter Five, various community activities organised by the local government and schools attempt to pull mothers out of the home to train and shape them to be compliant mothers

with appropriate knowledge. Society is not interested in a childless housewife, but a mother needs to be 'properly' raised.

Motherhood is a reason for mothers to leave the workplace. Mothers have gained autonomy through child-rearing. Doing housework means to deal with materials, but child-rearing is more important for them since it is the work of raising a human being. They clearly distinguish child-rearing from housework. Mothering is seen as being more important than making money or doing washing.

However, few young mothers want to stay in the position of a full-time mother on a permanent basis. The last thing they want to choose is to be child-bound mothers for life. Rather, they hope to spend a full life with involvement in things which stimulate their interests and aspirations. Mothering is one source of self-fulfilment, but it does not occupy a mother's whole concerns. At first glance, they do not seem to have a strong feeling of obligation to return their academic profits to society, but seeking an opportunity for social participation is also a matter of course for many young university-educated mothers.

The idea of gender-specific domains

Jn previous chapters, we have seen that the notion of complementary functions for men and women's roles is still strong in Japanese thinking. The idea that men should develop manhood and women should develop womanhood in order to help to each other is widely pervasive in every sphere of Japanese society. Even a man is not regarded as perfect; he needs a woman's help. Therefore, it is a possibility that gender-segregation is not identified as discrimination or unfair, rather it is something necessary to have men and women cooperate with each other in making a peaceful community.

This helps to explain the monopoly of women in a suburban community. Gender specification in socially defined roles does not necessarily signify that women are confined to the domestic sphere. Mothers make up their public sphere where a variety of women's groups are formed. Apart from being involved in an established community organisation, such as the residential union and the PTA, where a man is placed as the head while women are engaged in daily work,

women take part in various self-organised activities in suburban community society. Here they seek an 'actual self which is freed from housewifely and motherly roles. Thus, mothers are actively involved in a public domain named 'community society' *(chiiki shakai).* In other words, they have a place to go outside the home. For them, social participation does not necessarily mean working outside.

## Community actMties as worthwhile alternatives

As illustrated in Chapter Six, university-educated mothers tend to gather in community activities with an academic flavour. To study for self-development is a strong motivation for them to take part in life-long learning courses held in a community centre. A study group activity has a similar function as university education does; through the activity, mothers expect to develop themselves and enrich their Jives by gaining new knowledge and joining a community network. To study is something much more worth doing for better-educated women seeking self-fulfilment than to work in a supermarket or a factory, if they do not need to earn the money. For them, social participation does not mean going out to work for money. In other words, for them, the engagement in paid work would need to be a part of their self-development. Otherwise, they do not have a reason to work.

Especially, university graduate mothers in their 50s and 60s positively take part in the activities of study groups. During fieldwork. depicted in detail in Chapter Six, I met many women in this generation who were gathering at lecture meetings held in a local community centre. The subject of the lecture was in many cases a gender-related issue, such as domestic violence, or gender-equal society. It was somewhat strange for me to see older women, many of whom had been away from work for years, gathering to hear the talk of a university professor or lecturer who insists women should be financially independent to realise an equal partnership with men. During the lecture meeting, there were many middle-aged women who may be from a lower educational background and who work part time, and perhaps many of them will never before have heard the term 'gender issue'.

My findings also show that several university graduate mothers show a relatively strong sense of resistance against a money-oriented society. This also explains why they prefer a community activity

to paid work. Some university-educated mothers are satisfied with the mother-child activity, simply regarding it as an opportunity to meet peer mothers and their children for having fun. They enjoy being mothers and motherhood. However, other university-educated mothers attempt to improve the material-oriented society through community activities. They emphasise the importance of invisible things, such as affection and friendship. They believe that it is essential to improve society to have people who do not need to make profit.

**Beyond work or non-work**

University-educated mothers actively involved in the community have also noticed the limitation of their activities. As we have seen in Chapters Five and Six, community activities suffer from the passive attitudes and dependency of some member mothers. In other words, officer mothers often feel isolated from other members of the organisation, who are reluctant to accept the duty of becoming an officer or to attend regular meetings, and who are much Jess interested in society outside the home. Many university-educated mothers play a leading role in these activities, since they tend to have stronger social, political, and/or ecological awareness than mothers from a lower educational background do. They are seeking the next stage of their activities, beyond community society.

What university-educated mothers want to achieve is a life that suits their own style *(jibun rashii ikikata)*. Positive and negative images of the full-time housewife and mothers with work may affect their choice in lifestyles, but mothers have already started to give first priority to their own interests. Such a 'self-centred' attitude for women used to be regarded as *wagamama,* but nowadays this negative term has begun to be replaced by the term *'jibun rashisa'* . Beyond the conflicting image of a working mother versus a full-time mother, they are seeking how they can make full use of their abilities and feel fulfilment in a way they choose at every comer of their life. Despite all the older generation's anxiety, moreover, younger university-educated mothers are making a positive contribution to society. They seek to make their lives worthwhile, and reject the accusation that their lives are *mottainai.*

# Appendix I

# Figure 0.1
## Rate of Participation in Higher Education by Year
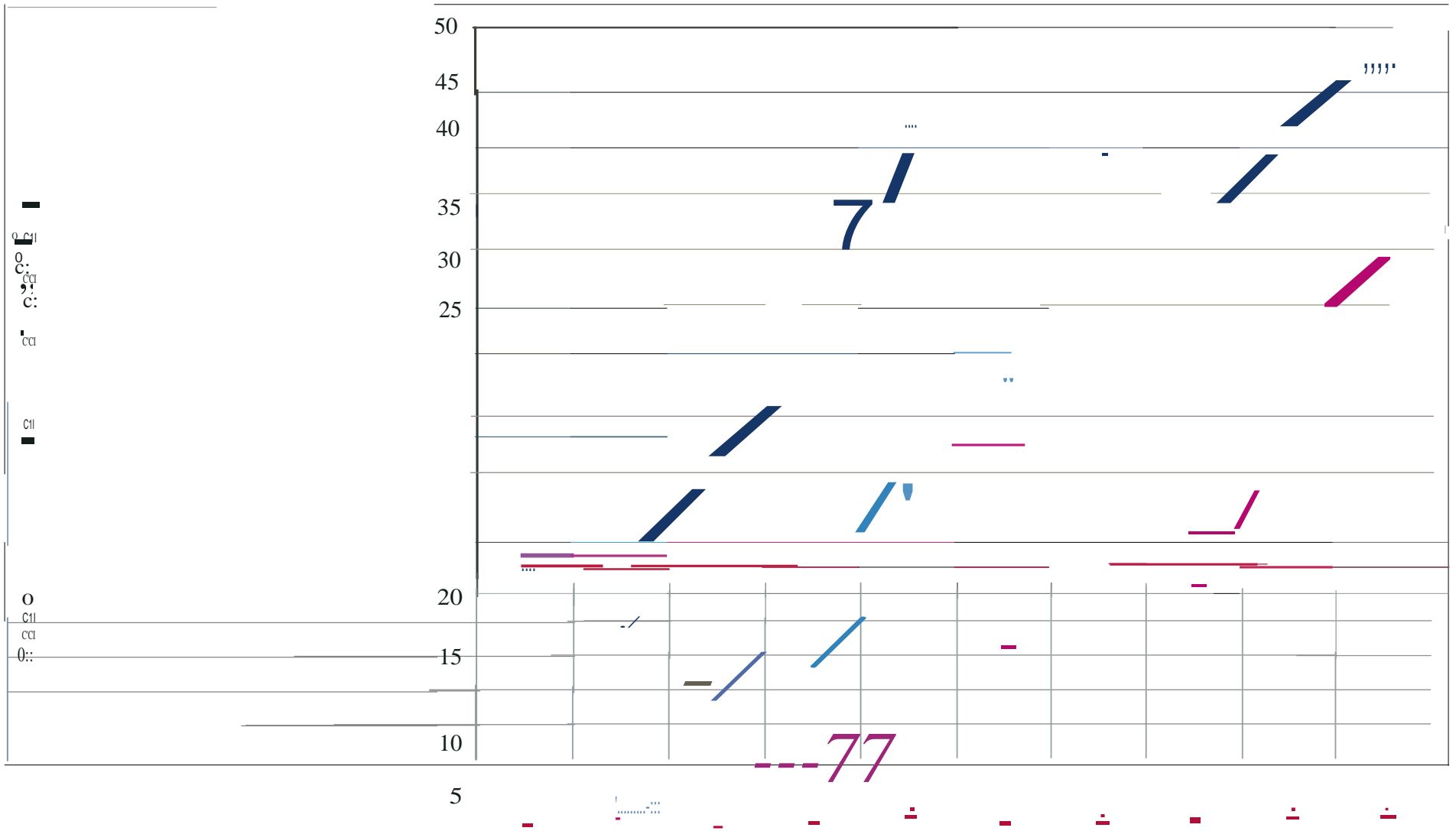
| | 1955 | 1960 | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -+-- Men's attendance at universities | 13.1 | 13.7 | 20.7 | 27.3 | 40.4 | 39.3 | 38.6 | 33.4 | 40.7 | 46.5 |
| - women's attendance at universities | 2.4 | 2.5 | 4.6 | 6.5 | 12.5 | 12.3 | 13.7 | 15.2 | 22.9 | 29.4 |
| _.....,._ Men's attendance at junior colleges | 1.9 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 2 | 2.6 | 2 | 2 | 1.7 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| Women's attendance at junior colleges | 2.6 | 3 | 6.7 | 11.2 | 19.9 | 21 | 20.8 | 22.2 | 24.6 | 20.2 |

Source: Ministry of Education, Basic School Statistics (Gakko Kihon Chosa), cited in Ministry of Labour, Women's Bureau (2000:app.54)

**Figure 0.2**
**Female Labour Force Participation Rates by Educational Level and Age (1999)**



| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65- |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| --+-- High school leavers | 70.5 | 81.3 | 63.4 | 54.9 | 61.2 | 71.1 | 72.8 | 67.5 | 57.1 | 35.2 | 16.4 |
| - University graduates | | 93.4 | 84.1 | 62.4 | 60 | 62.9 | 66 | 57 | 56.1 | 28.7 | 18.9 |

**Age**

**Figure 1.1**
**Female Labour Force Participation Rate for Ichikawa Residents by Year and Age**



| | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -+-1989 | 72.6 | 57.4 | 35.6 | 58.7 | 64.9 | 75.5 | 56.4 | 41.9 |
| - 1994 | 82.3 | 61.9 | 38.1 | 59.5 | 71.4 | 72.3 | 61 | 61 |

Age
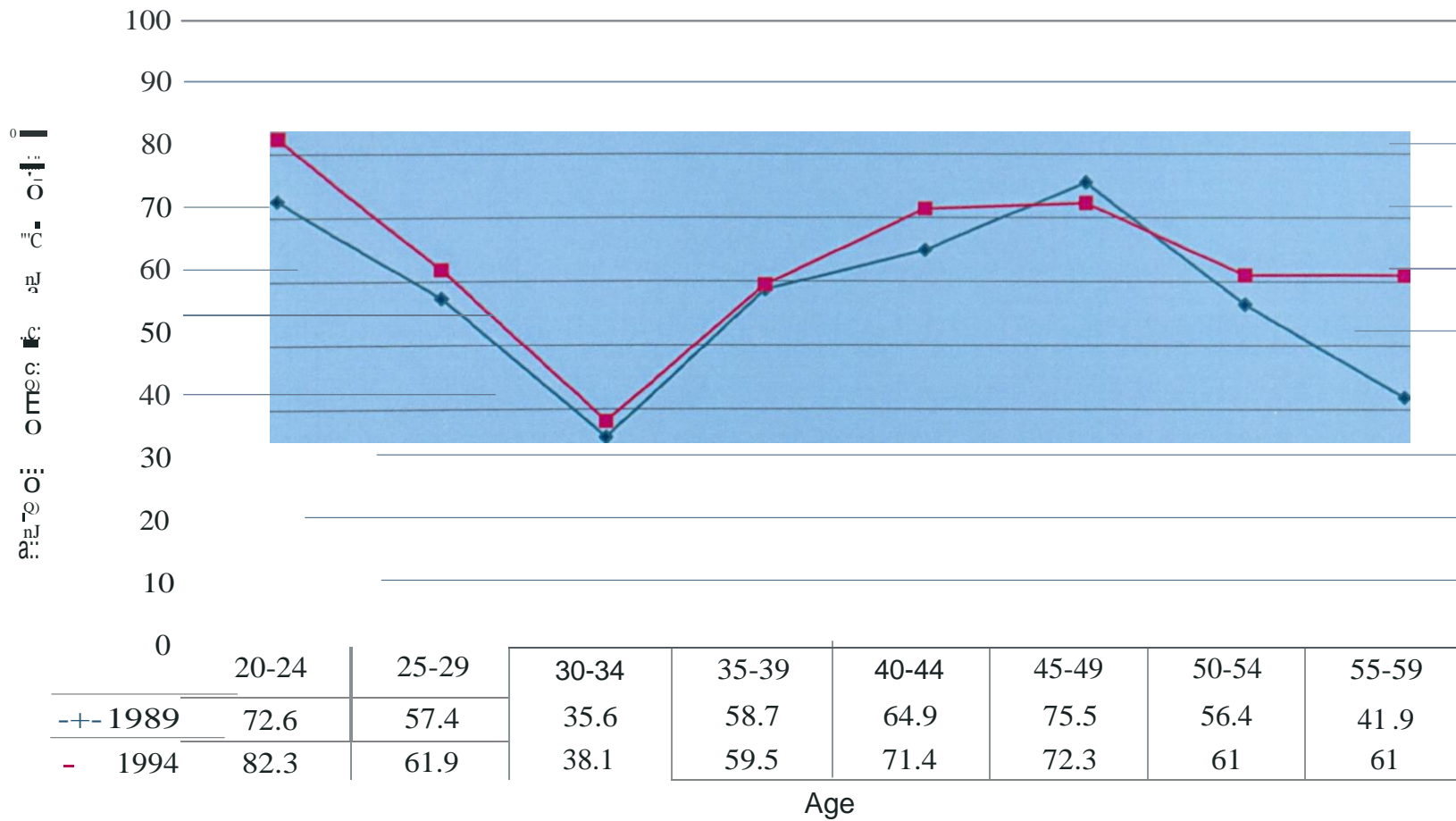
**Figure 2.1**
**Number of Male and Female University Students by Year**
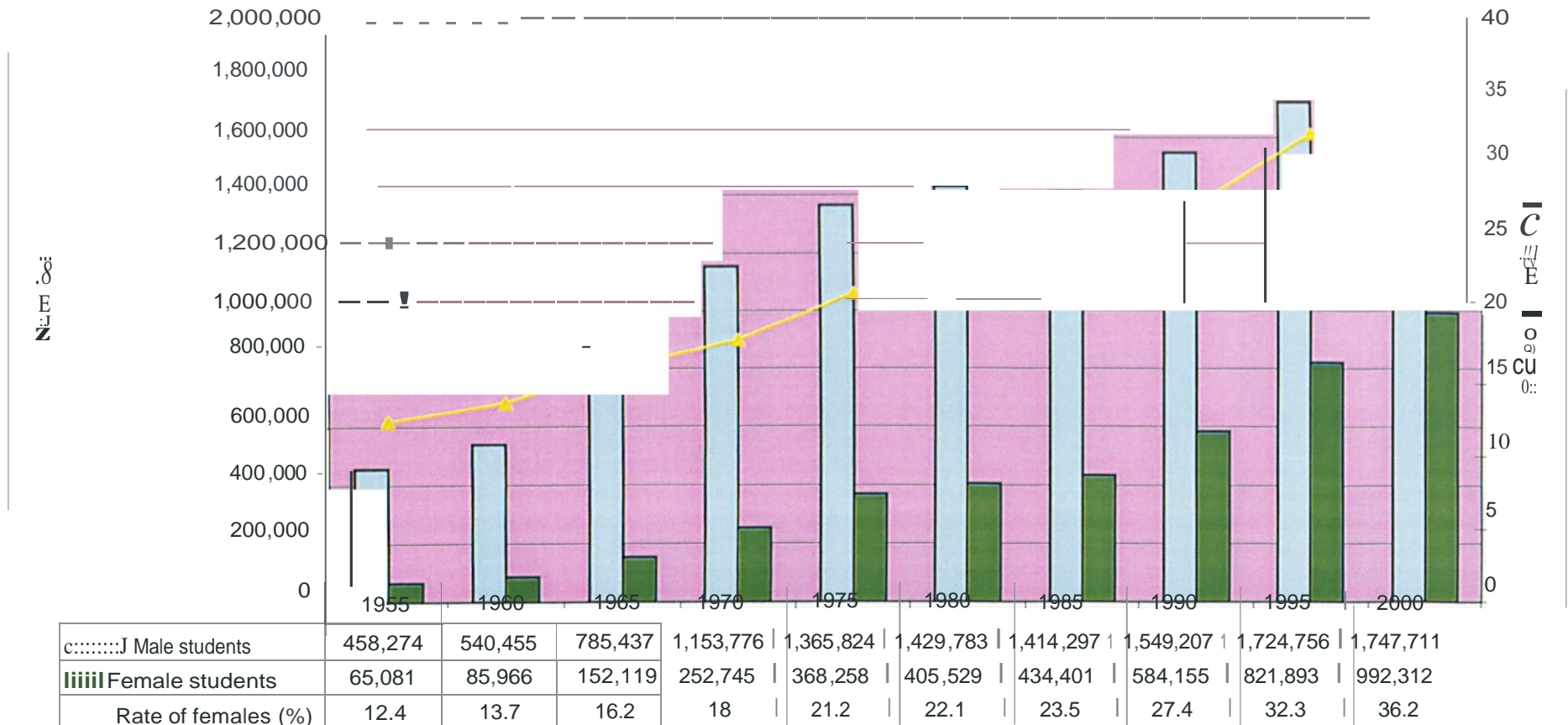


| | 1955 | 1960 | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| c::::::::J Male students | 458,274 | 540,455 | 785,437 | 1,153,776 | 1,365,824 | 1,429,783 | 1,414,297 | 1,549,207 | 1,724,756 | 1,747,711 |
| liiiil Female students | 65,081 | 85,966 | 152,119 | 252,745 | 368,258 | 405,529 | 434,401 | 584,155 | 821,893 | 992,312 |
| Rate of females (%) | 12.4 | 13.7 | 16.2 | 18 | 21.2 | 22.1 | 23.5 | 27.4 | 32.3 | 36.2 |

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2001, http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statisUgif/81.gif

**Figure 2.2**
**Number of Four-year Universities by Year**



| | 1955 | 1960 | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DPrivate | 122 | 140 | 209 | 274 | 305 | 319 | 331 | 372 | 415 | 478 |
| f!!J ocal | 34 | 33 | 35 | 33 | 34 | 34 | 34 | 39 | 52 | 72 |
| DNational | 72 | 72 | 73 | 75 | 81 | 93 | 95 | 96 | 98 | 99 |
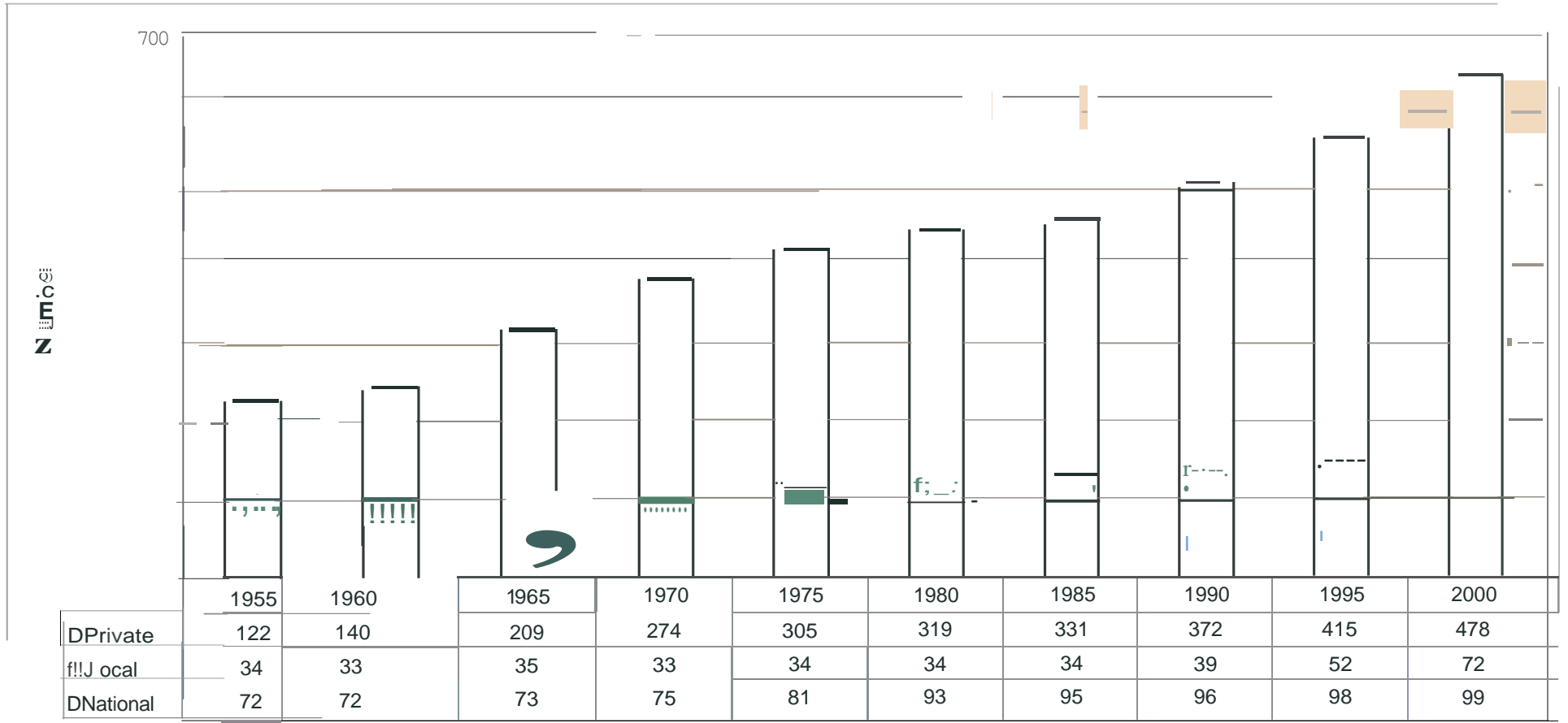
Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Teconology, 2001
http://www .mext.go.jp/english/stat isUgif/81a.gif

**Figure 3.1**
**Rate of University Graduate Women in Labour Force by Year and Age**

| | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65- |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -+-1989 | | 92.7 | 74.3 | 53.7 | 56.7 | 59 | 68.7 | 60.7 | 52 | 36 | 22.4 |
| ----1999 | | 93.4 | 84.1 | 62.4 | 60 | 62.9 | 66 | 57 | 56.1 | 28.7 | 18.9 |

**Age**
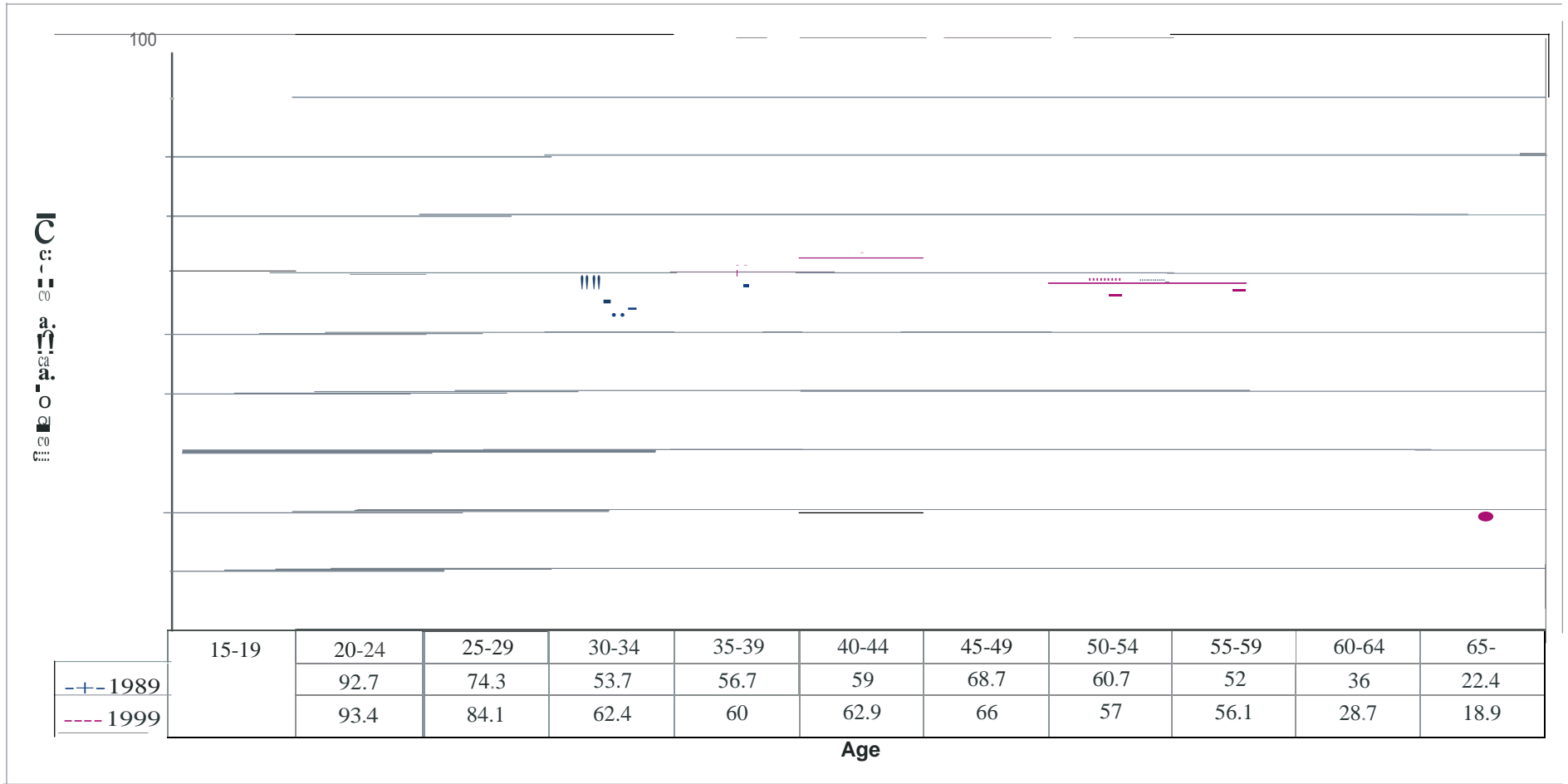
Source: Ministry of Labour, Women's Bureau (2000)
Note: 'University graduates' include those who completed a postgraduate course.

Figure 3.2
Women in Different Employment Statuses (1994)
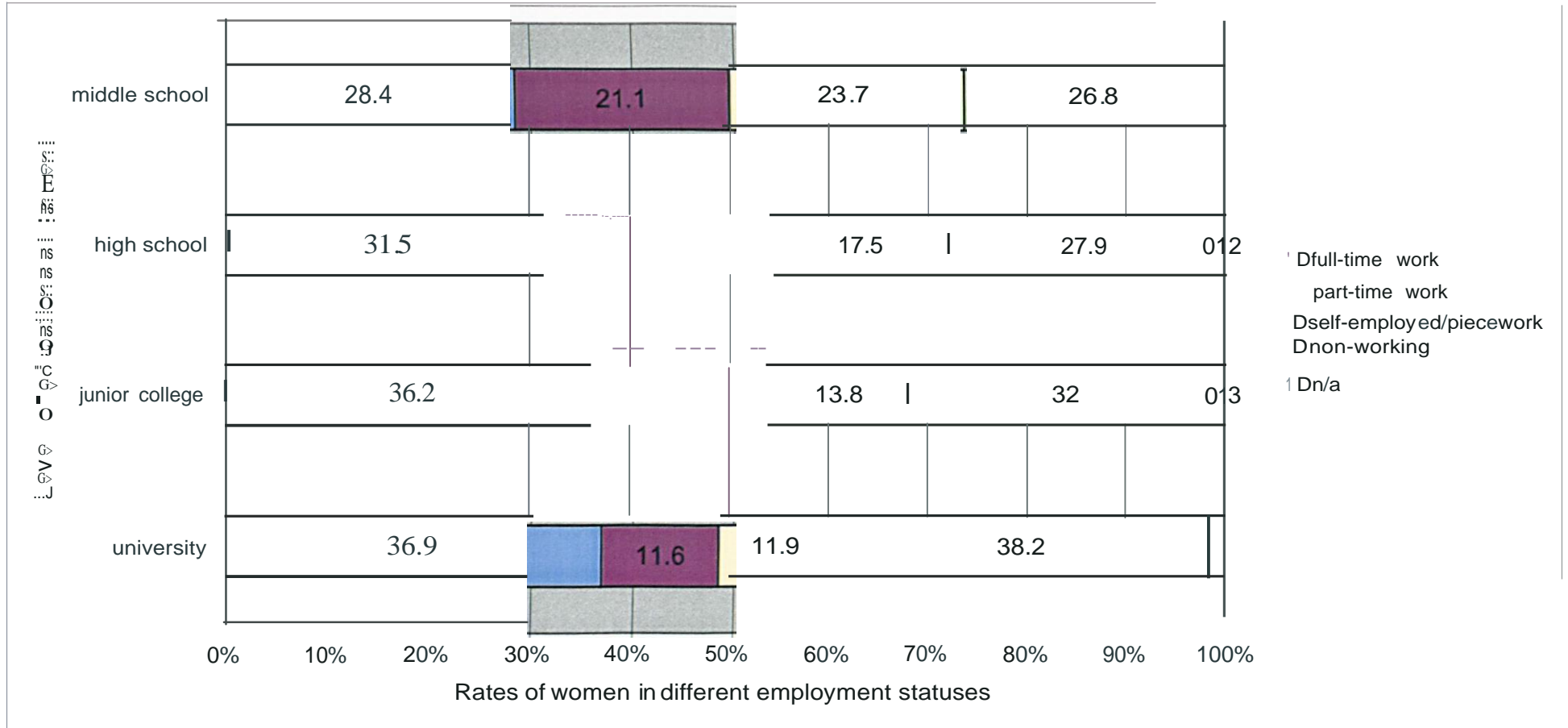


| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| middle school | 28.4 | 21.1 | 23.7 | 26.8 |
| high school | 31.5 | 17.5 | 27.9 | 0 12 |
| junior college | 36.2 | 13.8 | 32 | 0 13 |
| university | 36.9 | 11.6 | 11.9 | 38.2 |

Dfull-time work
part-time work
Dself-employed/piecework
Dnon-working
Dn/a

0%  10%  20%  30%  40%  50%  60%  70%  80%  90%  100%

Rates of women in different employment statuses

Table 3.1
Life Courses of Girls' High School Graduates in Pre-war Japan

| Japanese calendar | Western calendar | number of graduates | continuing education | % | entering employment | % | the others | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Taisho 3 | 1914 | 12,607 | 2,171 | 17.2 | 535 | 4.2 | 9,901 | 78.5 |
| 4 | 1915 | 13,784 | 2,622 | 19 | 838 | 6.1 | 10,324 | 74.9 |
| 6 | 1917 | 15,730 | 3,180 | 20.2 | 767 | 4.9 | 11,779 | 74.9 |
| 7 | 1918 | 16,734 | 3,520 | 21 | 1,244 | 7.4 | 11,970 | 71.5 |
| 8 | 1919 | 18,048 | 3,836 | 21.3 | 1,807 | 10 | 12,405 | 68.9 |
| 9 | 1920 | 20,711 | 4,863 | 23.5 | 1,989 | 9.6 | 13,859 | 66.9 |
| 10 | 1921 | 24,675 | 5,891 | 23.9 | 1,955 | 7.9 | 16,833 | 68.2 |
| 12 | 1923 | 32,438 | 8,620 | 26.6 | 2,541 | 7.8 | 21,277 | 65.6 |
| 13j | 1924 | 38,858 | 10,502 | 27 | 2,644 | 6.8 | 25,712 | 66.2 |
| 14j | 1925 | 41,023 | 11,216 | 27.3 | 2,742 | 6.7 | 27,065 | 66 |
| 15j | 1926 | 52,083 | 13,645 | 26.2 | 2,775 | 5.3 | 35,663 | 68.5 |
| Showa 2 | 1927 | 58,082 | 14,870 | 25.6 | 2,971 | 5.1 | 40,241 | 69.3 |
| 3 | 1928 | 62,860 | 15,556 | 24.7 | 2,820 | 4.5 | 44,484 | 70.8 |
| 4 | 1929 | 67,656 | 15,442 | 22.8 | 3,345 | 4.9 | 48,869 | 72.2 |
| s | 1930 | 70,220 | 15,778 | 22.5 | 3,397 | 4.8 | 51,045 | 72.7 |
| | 1931 | 72,954 | 14,960 | 20.5 | 3,779 | 5.2 | 54,215 | 74.3 |

Source: Koyama (1991)
Note: These numbers are from the National Survey on Girls' High Schools of each year, but they might lack some accuracy (Koyama 1991:99).

# Appendix II

# Interview Questions

## 1. General background

1.1. Composition of family and age

1.2. Where are you from?

1.3. Educational background of mother

1.4. Which university/ faculty did you choose?

## 2. University education

2.1 Why did you study at that university?

2.2 Did you have any future career/life plan before entering?

2.3 Did you get a job in relation to your study?

2.4 What is the meaning of university education to you?

## 3. Paid work

3.1 Occupational history

3.2 How did-do you feel about each job?

3.3 What were your main reasons for choosing/leaving/changing that job?

3.4 What were your main reasons for *not* leaving/changing that job?

3.5 How does being a mother affect your work/workplace?

3.6 What is the meaning of paid-work in general to you?

3.7 What is your ideal job? If you are out of work now, do you have any plan to work?

3.8 Do you think a university degree makes mothers overqualified to find a job?

## 4. Domestic work

4.1 Do you like housework?

4.2 Division of domestic work in your family

4.3 Your opinion of the status of the 'professional' full-time housewife

4.4 Do you think being a full-time housewife means a waste of university education?

4.5 What is the meaning of housework in general to you?

4.6 If you are a full-time housewife or part-time worker, do you imagine that your partner would ever quit his job?

4.7 If you are a full-time worker, would you like to stay at home if possible?

4.8 How do you feel about the social climate that mothers are considered to be responsible for most domestic work, even they are engaged in full-time paid-work?

5. Social actMties

5.1 Do you participate in any mothers' group?

5.2 How do you feel about mothers' groups and their activities?

5.3 How did/does having a child affect your social life?

5.4 Do you feel an external pressure to be an 'ideal' maternal figure?

5.5 Have you come across conflict between full-time working mothers and full-time mothers?

6. Personal interests

6.1 What are your hobbies?

6.2 Are you engaged in any social activities apart from those of mothers' role?

6.3 Are there any activities you would like to begin/continue for personal fulfilment?

6.4 What is your ideal lifestyle for your future?

## List of Interviewees

| | Name | | Faculty of university | Occupation | Marital status | Address |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G | Kosakai | 51 | English | self-employed technical translator | married, girl 25y, boy 22y | Urayasu (Chiba) |
| R | Yoshida | 52 | Literature (Japanese) | part-time primary school counselor | married, girl 25y, boy 23y | Ichikawa |
| O | Sudo | 55 | Law | women's issues adviser | re-married, girl 23y, boy 19y | Kawasaki (Kanagawa) |
| U | Kondo | 58 | Liberal Arts (English) | full-time housewife | married, boys 32y, 30y | Ichikawa |
| P | Nakagawa | 60 | Education (Physical Education) | part-time counselor | married, boy 34y, girl 31y | Ichikawa |
| | Oshima | 61 | Politics (Journalism) | full-time housewife | married, boy 35y, girl 33y | Ichikawa |
| A | Migiya | 62 | Literature (Social Welfare) | part-time social worker | married, girls 35y, 32y | Ichikawa |
| G | Hirami | 35 | English | full-time housewife | married, girl 3y | Urayasu (Chiba) |
| R | Kiwaki | 35 | Education (Psychology) | full-time junior college lecturer | married, boys 7y, Sy | Takarazuka (Hyogo) |
| O | | | Family Sociology (MA) | | | |
| U | Matsui | 36 | English | full-time worker (trading firm) | married, girl | Ichikawa |
| P | Yamamoto | 36 | Literature (Sociology) | part-time *juku* tutor | married, boy 5y | Funabashi (Chiba) |
| | Yanagawa | 36 | Liberal Arts (English) | full-time housewife | married, girls 7y, 4y | Urayasu (Chiba) |
| B | Takechi | 37 | Education (Maths) | full-time primary school teacher | married, girl 4y, boy 10y | Sagamihara (Kanagawa) |
| | Kurihara | 38 | Law (Politics) | full-time housewife | married, girls 9y, 6y | Ichikawa |
| | Machino | 38 | Applied Biotechnology | full-time housewife | married, boy 2y | Ichikawa |
| | Shibata | 38 | Economics | independent writer, translator | divorced, girl 2y | Shibuya-ku (Tokyo) |
| | | | Sociology (MA in UK) | | | |
| | Tamari | 38 | Literature (German) | part-time worker | married, boy *By* | Ichikawa |
| | Hara | 39 | Foreign Language (English) | full-time housewife | re-married, girl 3y | Ichikawa |
| | Maeda | 39 | Education | full-time researcher | married, boy 6y | Yokohama (Kanagawa) |
| | | | MBA in US | | | |
| | Endo | 40 | Law | full-time business consultant | re-married, boy 13y | Yokoyama (Kanagawa) |

## List of Interviewees

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Itagaki | 40 | Education (Maths)<br>Women's Study (MA) | non-regular high school teacher | married, girls 9y, 4y | Chiba (Chiba) |
| | Nakayama | 40 | Natural Science (Philosophy) | part-time day nursery nurse | married, boy 10y, girl 8y | Ichikawa |
| | Sato | 40 | Pharmacy | part-time pharmacist | married, boy 7y | Ichikawa |
| | Aburatani | 42 | General Culture | part-time dental assistant | married, boys 16y, 13y | Ichikawa |
| | Furuse | 42 | Foreign Language (Comparative Cultures)<br>Art History in East Asia (MA) | part-time interpreter | married, boy 11y, girl 8y | Ichikawa |
| | Kataoka | 44 | Liberal Arts (English) | full-time lottery seller at bank | married, boy 17y, girl 15y | Ichikawa |
| | Abe | 48 | Law (Management Law) | full-time housewife (family business) | married, girl 19y, boy 17y | Ichikawa |
| | Horiuchi | 49 | Education (Natural Science) | full-time housewife | married, boy 16y, girl 11y | Ichikawa |
| | Saito | 4? | Agriculture | full-time engineer | married, two high teens(boys) | Ichikawa |
| G | Hayashi | 29 | Literature (Japanese) | part-time worker (publishing firm) | married, 2 children 5y, 1y | Ichikawa |
| R | Maekawa | 29 | Maths | full-time housewife | married, 2 small boys | Ichikawa |
| O | Makabe | 30 | Maths | full-time housewife | married, girl 1y | Edogawa (Tokyo) |
| P | Egashira | 30 | Home Economics | full-time systems engineer | married, girl 2y | Urayasu (Chiba) |
| U | Orihara | 30 | Education (Maths) | full-time housewife | married, girls 3y, 1y | Koto-ku (Tokyo) |
| | Hirose | 31 | Literature (Psychology) | full-time speech therapist | married, boy 1y | Kita-ku (Tokyo) |
| C | Hori | 31 | Literature (Sociology) | full-time housewife (piecework) | married, boy 5y, girl 2y | Chiba (Chiba) |
| | Nakamura | 31 | Education (School Education) | full-time system engineer | married, girl 1y | Urayasu (Chiba) |
| | Suyama | 31 | Education (Society) | full-time housewife | married, 2 small children | Yachiyo (Chiba) |
| | Fujii | 33 | Sociology | self-employed *juku* tutor | married, girl 5y | Ichikawa |
| | Taguchi | 33 | Home Economics {Jr. college) | full-time business consultant | married, son 6y | Kawasaki (Kanagawa) |

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