

DIVORCE IN JAPAN
WHY IT HAPPENS, WHY IT DOESN'T

by
Hiroshi Ono
EIJS Working Paper Series No. 201
Revised version: January 2006

Divorce in Japan

Why It Happens, Why It Doesn't

(Forthcoming in *Institutional Change in Japan: Why It Happens, Why It Doesn't*.
Edited by Magnus Blomström and Sumner La Croix. Routledge)

Hiroshi Ono
Stockholm School of Economics
European Institute of Japanese Studies
P.O. Box 6501
113 83 Stockholm
Sweden

January 2006

ABSTRACT

We address two empirical questions about divorce in postwar Japan: Why is the divorce rate so low compared to other industrialized economies? And, Why is it rising? We examine patterns of marriage and divorce as a process of institutional change, and discuss how the rising divorce rate in Japan is an outcome of the dynamic interactions between economic development and demographic change at the macro-level, and changes in social norms and attitudes that govern the behavior of individuals at the micro-level.

The divorce rate in Japan is rising because there is a tradeoff between marital stability and gender equality. The drive towards equal status between the sexes narrows the dependency between the spouses, and offsets the costs and benefits of marriage. Lower dependency allows greater voice, and lowers the cost of exiting a marriage. The diversity of family forms such as civil unions and cohabitation allows couples to choose alternatives to marriage, which in turn weakens the institution of marriage. Alternatively, the divorce rate in Japan is low compared to the U.S. and Europe because dependency between the spouses is greater, alternatives to marriage are fewer, and the legacy of the traditional gender division of labor continues to influence the actions and attitudes of men and women.

* Send correspondences to Hiroshi Ono, Stockholm School of Economics, European Institute of Japanese Studies, P.O. Box 6501, 113 83 Stockholm, Sweden. Email: <hiroshi.ono@hhs.se>. This paper was originally presented at the Social Capital Foundation conference, Brussels, May 2004.

INTRODUCTION

The rising divorce rate is a universal feature among industrialized societies, and a natural consequence of economic development and social change. The pursuit of greater equality between the sexes, the availability of alternative arrangements to marriage, and the increasing role of the government in providing welfare for families offset the costs and benefits of marriage. Macro-level changes that affect the economic activities of the society may influence the actions of individuals at the micro-level through the strengthening or weakening of social norms, social relationships, and cultural attributes.

This chapter examines the changes in the patterns of marriage and divorce in contemporary Japanese society. In 2003, the divorce rate in Japan reached an all-time high in the postwar period. There are no signs that the divorce rate will decline in the foreseeable future. This social trend seems incongruous with the behavior of the Japanese who have traditionally valued harmony, loyalty and long-term commitments. Paralleling the decline of lifetime employment in Japan, the media, in particular the Western media, are quick to point out that the rising divorce rate symbolizes a cultural shift, and the demise of traditional values. But the increasing patterns of marital disruption is a universal phenomenon among the industrialized societies, and certainly not unique to Japan. What is more surprising and often overlooked is the fact that the divorce rate in Japan still remains low among the industrialized economies.

A better understanding of marriage and divorce in Japan therefore requires separating the two questions, i.e.: Why is the divorce rate in Japan low by international standards? And, Why is it rising?

Studying the changing patterns of marriage is a study of institutional change. It cannot be done in isolation but rather requires a thorough examination of its complementary institutions, and their influence on individual actions. We first briefly examine the

background factors governing gender relationships in postwar Japan. We then discuss why divorce happens and why it doesn't in contemporary Japan.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOR IN POSTWAR JAPAN

Economic development in postwar Japan was achieved under the implicit assumption that the traditional division of labor between the sexes was the optimal condition for growth. The practice of lifetime employment which flourished in the postwar period strongly favored men over women. The extensive training, generous benefits and internal promotion that characterized the internal labor market in Japan were only available to workers who were able to make long-term commitments. Women, who were expected to make commitments to their families, were effectively excluded from taking up positions in the internal labor market. Women's employment opportunities were thus mainly restricted to the secondary labor market characterized by dead-end jobs, or short-term temporary jobs, and their contribution to the household finance was strictly secondary to their husbands.

Lifetime employment therefore reinforced the specialization between the sexes. Since the desirable jobs were unavailable for most women, their incentive to invest in human capital was low. Specialization in non-market work in turn decreased their prospects for reemployment. Men, on the other hand, were able to devote their lives entirely to market work. Employers became increasingly more reliant and expected nothing less than workers' complete dedication to their work. Moreover, employers expected their wives to support this complete specialization between the husbands and wives. In his in-depth study of the lives of working men in a Japanese bank, Rohlen (1974) explained:

The family recognized by the bank is a nuclear family with the wife and children dependent on the husband-father, who serves as its link with the bank and the outside world. The family is, thus, a dependency of (the bank) and this view reinforces the principle of a strict division of labor between husband and wife. Properly the wife cares for the children and creates a stable and supportive home environment. The bank would strongly discourage any wife from working, for this would take her from her primary roles of mother and wife. (p. 242).

The employment relationship rested on an implicit contract where workers put in long hours and made long-term commitments in exchange for employment security and compensation based on length of service with the employer (the so-called seniority wage system). Workers assessed with reasonable trust and certainty that they can depend on long-term employment and automatic wage growth. Employment and income security therefore made it easier for the worker and his family to predict their economic well-being in the future as long as he remained with the firm. While Rohlen suggests that employers discouraged wives from working (see above citation), another interpretation is that employers provided employment and income security *so that the wives did not have to work*.¹

The promotion of “good wife, wise mother” (*ryosai kenbo*) reinforced, if not encouraged, the specialization between the sexes throughout much of the twentieth century. The slogan traces its origin to the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), when officials in the Ministry of Education began to promote women’s proper role in imperial Japan as “managers of domestic affairs in households and nurturers of children”(Uno 1993, p.294). As Uno explained, “although overt attempts by the state to dictate womanhood have decreased in intensity since 1945, a transmuted vision of women that often emphasized their difference from men as homebound wives and mothers continued to influence state policies toward welfare, education, employment, sexuality, and reproduction at least until the late 1980s” (pp.294-5). According to Ochiai (1997), “in the postwar period, the state of being a housewife became so strongly normative that it was practically synonymous with womanhood.” (p.35).

A notable example of public and private initiatives to influence the management of domestic affairs was the New Life Movement, a set of loosely connected initiatives of government ministries, women's organizations, and corporations which started in the late 1940s (Gordon 1997).² The Movement was targeted not at the men but their wives, and resembled something of a "social education." Companies organized family support groups and designated full-time "family organizers" with the aim of educating wives about the importance of sex roles, reproduction and the definition of "housewife." The wives in turn came to believe that active participation in the New Life Movement would help their husbands advance at work. As Gordon (1998) explained, a number of corporations in the U.S. and Germany offered social services to employee wives in the postwar period, but none were as extensive and sustained as those of Japan's major corporations: "Nowhere else did the business community with state encouragement organize a national campaign to orchestrate training for over one million wives of male industrial workers" (p.78).

Tax and benefit programs introduced in the postwar period were legislated assuming the male breadwinner model, i.e. a family comprised of a working husband and a non-working wife.³ For example, Japan's tax and pension system discourages wives from earning more than 1.3 million yen per year to avoid paying taxes and pension contributions. The current system – sometimes referred to as policies to protect the well-being of housewives (Higuchi 1995) – was originally designed to protect married women from declines in household income when they moved from market to household work. However, despite its intentions, the underlying assumption of non-working wives (or wives as secondary earners) encourages wives to engage in low-paying jobs, and makes them more dependent on their husbands. The weak economic position of wives makes them extremely vulnerable in the event of a divorce.

DIVORCE IN POSTWAR JAPAN

During 1980 and 2003, the divorce rate among married couples in Japan increased from 18.3 percent to 33.1 percent. And yet, despite its recent increase, the divorce rate in Japan remains low by international standards (Table 1). The first column of Table 1 shows the divorce rate per 100 married couples in selected countries. The data can be interpreted as the probability that the marriage will result in divorce.⁴

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Despite significant advances in women's economic positions in the postwar period, Japanese women nonetheless maintained traditional views of marriage and the gender division of labor. Table 2 shows the results of the International Comparative Survey Concerning Issues Confronting Women conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1993.⁵ Women in Japan were less likely to agree to divorce, and were more likely to view marriage as the ultimate form of happiness, show support for the male breadwinner model, and raise children according to their gender roles. Attitudinal surveys taken over time show that both men and women in Japan have become more tolerant of divorce over the last 25 years, but still remain less tolerant than their Western counterparts.⁶ The survey results suggest that the legacy of "good wife, wise mother" and the gendered division of labor continue to affect the behavior and attitudes of Japanese women today.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Examining data across various countries illuminates many of the unique features underlying marriage and divorce in Japan. We discuss below some of the reasons why the

divorce rate in Japan is low compared to other industrialized economies, and why it is becoming more frequent in recent years.

Social norms

The low divorce rate in Japan may be an outcome of the social norms and expectations that influence the transitions in women's life course in Japan. For example, Brinton (1992) explained how Japanese women face normative expectations to marry "on schedule." Using an analogy to Christmas cakes, women who are not married by the age of 25 become, like Christmas cakes, undesirable "leftover goods," i.e., their value in the marriage market declines considerably. Moreover, life course transitions must proceed in sequence, progressing from school to work then marriage and parenting, and this process is irreversible. Comparing data from the U.S. and Japan, she found that the timing of life course transitions such as schooling, marriage, and work was less diverse in Japan than in the United States: Japanese women complete school, get married, and exit the labor force with remarkably similar timing, and there is little deviation from the mean.

Low variance and irreversibility may explain the low divorce rate and the conformity in the timing of marriage and family formation in Japan. One-parent families and out-of-wedlock children, for example, are very rare (Table 1). Cohabitation, although widespread in other countries, is virtually non-existent. In 1999, the cohabitation rate among females in the age group 20 to 24 was only 2.3 percent in Japan compared to 77 percent in Sweden and 63 percent in France (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 1999; United Nations 2000).

Hence, the divorce rate might be higher in Japan if marriage were to be regarded as more reversible. On the other hand, the divorce rate in Japan might be even lower if

cohabitation or other forms of family formation were to become more acceptable as an alternative to marriage.

While irreversibility may restrain some couples from getting divorced, it may also restrain others from getting married. Tsuya, Mason and Bumpass (2004) hypothesize that the price of marital stability in Japan may be the increasing reluctance of young women to enter into marriage, and that this partly explains recent patterns of delayed marriages in Japan.⁷

The stigma of divorce

Divorce may be more stigmatized in Japan because of the greater importance of extended family and kinship ties in marriage. As exemplified by the expression, “when you get married, you get married for the people around you” (Brinton 1993, p.99), marriage in Japan has been based less on personal preferences, but more on the wishes of the (extended) families and kin. Compatibility between the families plays an important role in marriages especially if they were arranged. In the event of difficulties confronted in marriage, it is common for a woman to seek approval from her family before she decides to divorce (Vogel 1991).

The higher prevalence of arranged marriages and the strength of intergenerational ties suggest that marriage in Japan is “a more rigid social institution involving the interests of and influences from the extended family and kinship... (in contrast to the marriage in the U.S. which is) primarily a matter of individual choice for the happiness and well-being of couples and their children” (Bumpass and Choe 2004, p. 20). The stigma attached to divorce is therefore likely to be greater in Japan, because divorce is not just a private affair – a breakup of the couples – but a breakup involving the extended families.⁸

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Numerous studies have documented the extraordinary measures taken by Japanese couples whose marriages have deteriorated, but who remain together to avoid the stigma of divorce either for themselves, or for the sake of their children. For example, Yamashita (1986) described a case of a “nondivorce divorce” where one couple who had been married for 15 years was barely on speaking terms, but the husband would not grant divorce claiming it was disgraceful. Similarly, Iwao (1993) used the expression “divorce within the home,” and described one woman who planned her divorce for over 10 years waiting for the right timing, in her case, for the children to marry and move out of the household.⁹

While the relationship between arranged marriages and divorce has not been well established, it is conceivable that the recent increase in divorce rates is linked to the decline in arranged marriages during the same period (Figure 1). Arranged marriage was the norm for much of the postwar period, and it is only in recent years that the proportion of arranged marriages has been overtaken by the proportion of marriages out of love. The stigma of divorce is conceivably weaker if the marriage evolved out of love because the ties between the extended families are weaker, and the couple need not be concerned with disgracing the reputation of the intermediary. As Iwao (1993) explained, “divorce is now easier because it is considered a private (i.e., between the couple themselves), rather than a family (in the sense of the extended family) matter” (p. 119), and couples feel less inclined to “keep up appearances.” She concluded by explaining that the divorce rate in Japan will rise gradually as the social sanctions and obstacles against divorce are lifted.

Economic dependency

Women’s economic dependency in marriage is a crucial determinant of divorce in contemporary societies. Economic independence is determined by earnings power, and

influences each spouse's ability to walk away from marriage. Using the analogy to Hirschman's "exit, voice and loyalty," Hobson (1990) explains that women with low earnings potential have weaker voice and fewer exit possibilities. The greater likelihood of divorce in contemporary societies is the outcome of the decline in loyalty between spouses, and women's lower economic dependency which have lowered the costs of exiting marriages.

Specialization within the household limits women's opportunities in the labor market and makes them financially vulnerable in the event of a divorce. As Oppenheimer (1997) explains, "extreme sex-role specialization in marriage is essentially a high-risk and inflexible family strategy unless accompanied by supplementary support mechanisms" (p. 447). In this regard, marriage is similar to an implicit long-term contract that protects women from their husbands against abandonment and other adversities (Becker 1993). Advances in women's educational attainment and labor force participation increase their earnings capacity, reduce the advantages of the sexual division of labor in marriage, and make women less dependent on their husbands. Women with higher earnings are therefore more prone to divorce, and this pattern is consistent with the evidence from other countries.¹⁰

The costs and benefits of marriage are determined by the nature of investments undertaken in marriage. England and Kilbourne (1990) distinguish between general and relation-specific investments; general investments comprise education and other investments in human capital that will benefit the marriage but that are not specific to the marriage. In contrast, relation-specific investments such as the socialization of children and forming emotional attachments to in-laws are not portable or transferable outside of the marriage. In general, women make more relation-specific investments and less general investments than men. This asymmetry contributes to women's higher dependency on their husbands, and weakens their ability to walk away from marriage (England and Kilbourne 1990).

Mainly as the result of the specialization between the sexes, Japanese women still remain highly dependent on their husbands. Women's economic positions are still vastly inferior to men's, as indicated by various international comparisons that consistently rank Japan low on the gender equality indicators.¹¹ In comparison to the United States and Europe, married women in Japan make less general investments because they are assumed to be secondary earners, and they make more relation-specific investments because the importance of maintaining relationships between the extended families is primarily the responsibility of wives.

A notable example of gender inequality in Japan concerns the labor force participation of women over their lifecycle. Low variance and age-congruity that characterize lifecourse transitions in Japan lead to remarkably similar patterns in the timing of women's entry and exit from the labor force. The three key transitions – entry into the labor force after schooling, exit upon marriage or childbearing, and re-entry upon completion of some family responsibilities – progress in sequence and on schedule over the lifecourse, and result in the so-called M-curve of women's labor force participation over their lifecycle (Figure 1).

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

In particular, the massive exit from the labor force upon childbearing is one of the most pronounced in the industrialized economies, and leads to an acute drop in labor force participation among women in the 30-39 age group. As shown in Table 1, the proportion of working mothers (defined as the share of mothers with children under six years in the labor force) was only 34 percent in Japan, which is the lowest among the countries reported here. In other words, as late as 1999, two out of three mothers in Japan were fully specialized in the household, and were fully dependent on their husbands for family earnings. Women's high

economic dependency on their husbands makes them financially vulnerable in the event of divorce, and this is one of the strongest deterrents of divorce in Japan.

In the postwar period, the proportion of women advancing to university education in Japan increased gradually, and the gender gap in educational attainment and wages has narrowed. Women are better endowed with general human capital and therefore are less dependent on their husbands. The cost of exiting marriage is now lower which may explain the greater likelihood of divorce in recent years.

The rise in the divorce rate in the 1990s coincides with the widely publicized view of the demise of lifetime employment.¹² The economic stagnation of the 1990s and threats of restructuring and downsizing may have compelled some housewives to reconsider their total dependency on their husbands. The percentage of mothers who continue working after having children, and the percentage of working women in the 30-39 age group grew steadily throughout the 1990s leading to the flattening out of the M-curve distribution of women's labor force participation (Japan Institute of Labour 2003). The 1990s therefore exposed the weakness of the specialization model: Complete specialization between the sexes entails considerable risks (Oppenheimer 1997).

An inherent problem is that the temporary or permanent loss of one specialist in a family can mean that functions vital to the well-being of the complementary specialist and children are not being performed. Husbands/fathers can die or become ill or disabled; they can lose their jobs and have difficulty finding another one... The result is that the family is left without its major source of income. Except for employment-related shifts, there are similar problems involving the wife-mother specialist. In that case, there could be no one to take care of the children or the home. (p. 447).

Women's decreasing dependency on their husbands may be linked to the rise in divorce rates in the 1990s, suggesting that the patterns of divorce may have a transitory component. Employment security and automatic wage growth could no longer be taken for granted; the future of the family's well-being was no longer predictable nor stable. The prospect of economic uncertainty "pushed" many housewives into the labor force, which in

turn lowered their economic dependency, and gave them greater voice to walk away from marriage. It is thus likely conceivable that the women will be “pulled out” of the labor force if the economy recovers and employment stability becomes the norm once again.

Role of the welfare state

The social structure of modern society differs markedly from that of primitive tribes and villages in that traditional family roles are being replaced by welfare services (Coleman 1990). This transition can be seen as a natural consequence of economic development where interpersonal relations are replaced with institutions more complementary to a market-based economy (Stiglitz 2000). Caring for the children or the aged, for example, has long been the primary function of families, but is now increasingly subsidized by the state, especially in the so-called welfare state economies of Scandinavia. For example, in Sweden, generous maternal (and paternal) leave benefits and subsidized childcare programs allow women to balance their work and family obligations. These benefits lead to a higher proportion of working mothers in Sweden as illustrated in Table 1 and Figure 2. Further, women who exit marriages in Sweden are not forced into poverty because the welfare state provides a wide safety net for single mothers that includes income transfers for children, housing subsidies, and reduced costs for daycare and other social services (Hobson 1990).

In contrast, the male breadwinner model that characterized postwar economic development in Japan assumed that the welfare of the families was a private affair, and the responsibility of the wives. The lack of welfare services in Japan discourages women from seeking full-time jobs, increases wives’ dependence on their husbands and further deters women from divorce. Less support for the welfare of single mothers in particular may explain the lower incidence of one-parent families in Japan relative to the countries of Scandinavia (Table 1).

The strength of intergenerational ties and support is one example where the extended family substitutes for the welfare state in Japan. Co-residence with parents or in-laws allows wives to alleviate the burden of household responsibilities with the extended family. Sasaki (2002) finds that co-residence increases the probability of labor-force participation among married women with young children (under six years).

Demographic change

One of the noticeable patterns in the postwar period is the increasing rate of divorce among older couples. The proportion of divorce cases among couples married for over 20 years increased from 3.1 percent in 1947 to 16 percent in 1996 (Ministry of Health and Welfare statistics cited in Iwai [1999]). In 1970, the average duration of marriage at the time of divorce was 6.8 years, but by the mid-1990s it had reached 10 years indicating that many more couples who had been married for a decade or more were starting to divorce (Curtin 2002). Advances in the economic position of women and the decline in the stigma of divorce as previously discussed are some of the factors behind this trend.

Improvement in life expectancy may be another source of late-life divorce. The average Japanese woman can now expect to live until the age of 85. If the husband retires at the age of 60, this means that the typical couple can expect to live together for over twenty years after retirement. Since men have devoted most of their lives to work, many Japanese couples are not accustomed to spending so much time with their spouse in close proximity. If the couple does not get on well or one has less tolerance than the other, then increases in longevity increase the possibility of a late-life divorce (Curtin 2002). Iwao (1993), for example, documented one case of a “retirement divorce” where the wife left her husband on the day of his retirement. Although such extreme cases tend to be overblown by the media,

there is now growing anecdotal evidence that retirement divorce has become more common than it has been in the past.¹³

The increasing divorce rate is also associated with declining fertility, although the causation is not clear. With the secular decline in the birthrate, the couple is, at any given age, less likely to have any children, and is more likely to have fewer children. Children constitute a prime example of investment in “marital-specific” capital (Becker 1993). Because one of the main costs of divorce is the cost imposed on the children, having fewer children or no children at all lowers the cost of divorce. Indeed, divorce is less likely in the presence of children, especially young children (Ono 1998, Waite and Lillard 1991), although this effect is somewhat endogenous: “Expectations about divorce are partly self-fulfilling because a higher expected probability of divorce reduces investments in (marital) specific capital and thereby raises the actual probability” (Becker 1993, p. 329). In other words, if women perceive that the marriage is more likely to end in divorce, then they are also less likely to have children.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The divorce rate in Japan is rising. There is no single cause for the weakening of the institution of marriage in Japan. Rather, the changing pattern of marriage and divorce is the outcome of the dynamic interactions between economic development and demographic change at the macro-level, and changes in social norms and attitudes that govern the behavior of individuals at the micro-level.

One of the lessons from the United States and Europe concerns the tradeoff between gender equality and marital stability. The drive towards equal status between the sexes narrows the dependency between the spouses, and offsets the costs and benefits of marriage. Lower dependency allows greater voice, and lowers the cost of exiting a marriage. The

diversity of family forms such as civil unions and cohabitation allows couples to choose alternatives to marriage, which in turn weakens the institution of marriage. The divorce rate in Japan is low compared to Western societies because dependency between the spouses is greater, alternatives to marriage are fewer, and the legacy of the traditional gender division of labor continues to influence the actions and attitudes of men and women.

Achieving gender equality is now a key policy issue in Japan. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law was introduced in 1986 and revised in 1999; more recently, initiatives have been introduced to eliminate gender bias in the tax and benefit system, and to improve the welfare of single-parent families. These initiatives are all carefully modeled from their predecessors in the United States and Europe. In other words, gender equality in Japan will be achieved by emulating aspects of the U.S. and European model.

There are, however, counteracting pressures to preserve the institution of marriage and family. A notable example of this concerns the debate concerning whether spouses should be able to keep their family names after marriage. Originally proposed in 1991, the issue has not yet been resolved and the debate is ongoing (Iwai 1999). The extent to which Japan internalizes Western values while preserving traditional values will have a profound influence on the future of marriage and family formation in Japan.

REFERENCES

- Becker, Gary S. 1993. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Brinton, Mary C. 1992. "Christmas Cakes and Wedding Cakes: The Social Organization of Japanese Women's Life Course." Pp. 79-107 in *Japanese Social Organization*. Edited by Takie Sugiyama Lebra. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- . 1993. *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bryant, Taimie L. 2001. "Marital Dissolution in Japan: Legal Obstacles and Their Impact." Pp. 372-377 in *Japanese Law in Context: Readings in Society, the Economy, and Politics*, Edited by Curtis J. Milhaupt, J. Mark Ramseyer and Michael K. Young. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bumpass, Larry L. and Minja Kim Choe. 2004. "Attitudes Relating to Marriage and Family Life." Pp. 19-38 in *Marriage, Work and Family Life in Comparative Perspective: Japan, South Korea and the United States*, Edited by Noriko O. Tsuya and Larry L. Bumpass. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Coleman, James S. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Curtin, J. Sean. 2002. "Living Longer, Divorcing Later: The Japanese Silver Divorce Phenomenon." Glocom Platform from Japan. August 5, 2002.
- England, Paula and Barbara Stanek Kilbourne. 1990. "Markets, Marriages, and Other Mates: The Problem of Power." In *Beyond the Marketplace: Rethinking Economy and Society*, edited by Roger Friedland and A. F. Robertson. Pp. 163-88. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Gordon, Andrew. 1997. "Managing the Japanese Household: The New Life Movement in Postwar Japan." *Social Politics* 4: 245-283.
- . 1998. *The Wages of Affluence: Labor and Management in Postwar Japan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Higuchi, Yoshio. 1995. "Sengyo shufu hogo seisaku no keizai-teki kiketsu" (The Economic Consequences of Policies to Protect Full-time Housewives). In *Jakusha hogo seisaku no keizai bunseki*. Pp. 185-219. Edited by Tatsuo Hatta and Naohiro Yashiro. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha.
- Hobson, Barbara. 1990. "No Exit, No Voice: Women's Economic Dependency and the Welfare State." *Acta Sociologica* 33: 235-250.
- Ishizaka, Iwao. 1973. "Shushin Koyo, nenko chingin to shokunokyu" (Lifetime employment, seniority wages and job performance pay). In Ichiro Nakayama and Miyohei Shinohara (eds) *Nihon Keizai Daijiten*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 403-4.
- Iwai, Noriko. 1999. "Divorce in Japan: Historical Changes and Current Issues." In *With This Ring: Divorce, Intimacy, and Cohabitation from a Multicultural Perspective*. Edited by Robin R. Miller and Sandra Lee Browning. Pp.53-77. Stamford: JAI Press.
- . 2002. "Shiawase de nakereba rikon shita houga iika?" (Is it better to divorce if one is not happy?). In *Nihonjin no Sugata* (Japanese values and behavioral patterns seen in the Japanese General Social Survey). Pp. 65-71. Edited by Noriko Iwai and Hiroki Sato. Tokyo: Yuhikaku.
- Iwao, Sumiko. 1993. *The Japanese Woman: Traditional Image and Changing Reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Japan Institute of Labour. 2003. "The M-shaped Distribution of Working Women Becoming Smoother." *JIL Labor Flash*. Vol.41.
- Kato, Takao. 2001. "The End of Lifetime Employment in Japan?: Evidence from National Surveys and Field Research." *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies* 15: 489-514.
- Moriguchi, Chiaki and Hiroshi Ono. 2006. "Japanese Lifetime Employment: Response to Crisis in Historical Perspective." In Magnus Blomström and Sumner La Croix (Eds). *Institutional Change in Japan*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. 1999. *Eleventh Japanese National Fertility Survey, Volume 2*. Tokyo: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research.
- Ochiai, Emiko. 1997. *The Japanese Family System in Transition: A Sociological Analysis of Family Change in Postwar Japan*. Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation.
- Ono, Hiromi. 1998. "Husbands' and Wives' Resources and Marital Dissolution." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 674-689.
- Ono, Hiroshi and Marcus E. Rebick. 2003. "Constraints on the Level and Efficient Use of Labor." In *Structural Impediments to Japan's Economic Growth*. Edited by Magnus Blomström, Jennifer Corbett, Fumio Hayashi and Anil Kashyap. Pp. 225-257. Chicago: NBER and University of Chicago Press.
- Oppenheimer, Valerie Kincade. 1997. "Women's Employment and the Gain to Marriage: The Specialization and Trading Model." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23: 431-453.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2003. *Society at a Glance*. OECD Paris.

- Rebick, Marcus E. 2001. "Japanese Labor Markets: Can We Expect Significant Change?" In *Japan's New Economy: Continuity and Change in the Twenty-First Century*. Edited by Magnus Blomström, Byron Gangnes and Sumner La Croix. Pp.120-141. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Retherford, Robert D., Naohiro Ogawa and Rikiya Matsukura. 2001. "Late Marriage and Less Marriage in Japan." *Population and Development Review* 27: 65-102.
- Rohlen, Thomas P. 1974. *For Harmony and Strength: Japanese White-Collar Organization in Anthropological Perspective*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sasaki, Masaru. 2002. "The Causal Effect of Family Structure on Labor Force Participation among Japanese Married Women." *Journal of Human Resources* 37: 429-440.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2000. "Formal and Informal Institutions." In *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective*. Edited by Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin. Pp.59-68. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Tokyo Metropolitan Government. 1994. *International Comparative Survey Concerning Issues Confronting Women*. Tokyo: Tokyo Metropolitan Government.
- Tsuya, Noriko O., Karen Oppenheim Mason, and Larry L. Bumpass. 2004. "Views of Marriage among Never-Married Young Adults." Pp. 39-53 in *Marriage, Work and Family Life in Comparative Perspective: Japan, South Korea and the United States*. Edited by Noriko O. Tsuya and Larry L. Bumpass. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- United Nations. 2000. *World's Women*. New York: United Nations.
- Uno, Kathleen S. 1993. "The Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother'?" Pp. 293-322. In *Postwar Japan as History*, Edited by Andrew Gordon. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vogel, Ezra F. 1991. *Japan's New Middle Class: The Salaryman and His Family in a Tokyo Suburb*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Waite, Linda J. and Lee A. Lillard. 1991. "Children and Marital Disruption." *American Journal of Sociology* 96: 930-953.
- Whiteford, Peter and Jonathan Bradshaw. 1994. "Benefits and Incentives for Lone Parents: A Comparative Analysis." *International Social Security Review* 47: 69-89.
- Yamashita, Katsutoshi. 1986. "Divorce, Japanese Style." *Japan Quarterly* 33: 416-420.

NOTES

¹ This point is explicitly made in Ishizaka (1973) who explains that an employment relationship must take into consideration the well-being of the family; workers must be compensated sufficiently to sustain a reasonable quality of life, not only for themselves but also for their families.

² The current discussion about the New Life Movement draws significantly from Gordon (1997, 1998).

³ See Ono and Rebeck (2003) for review of literature concerning the impact of tax and benefit schemes on women's labor force participation in Japan.

⁴ Another common statistic used in international comparisons is the divorce rate per 1000 persons. However, while alternative forms of marriage such as cohabitation and civil unions may be widespread in other countries, marriage and family formation in Japan is still relatively homogenous. The high proportion of cohabiting couples in other countries, for example, does not appear in the divorce statistics in the event of a breakup when they are reported as divorce per 1000 persons. Hence the divorce rate per 100 married couples is a more appropriate measure when accounting for the diversity of marriage and family formation.

⁵ Results are based on a random sample of women aged 20 years or older in the six countries.

⁶ Survey results from the Prime Minister's Office (cited in Iwai 2002) indicate that the proportion who agreed to the statement, "it's better to seek divorce if unsatisfied with one's spouse" increased from 21 to 53 percent among men, and from 21 to 55 percent among women between 1972 and 1997. See also Retherford et al (2001) for an international comparison of these survey results.

⁷ Japan is now one of the latest-marrying populations in the world. Between 1975 and 1995, the mean age at marriage increased from 24.5 to 27.7 years for women and 27.6 to 30.7 years for men; during the same period, the proportion who will never marry increased from 5 to 15 percent for women and from 6 to 22 percent for men (Retherford et al 2001).

⁸ The social sanctions for divorce may not be symmetrical for men and women. For example, Iwao (1993) explained that divorced women in the prewar period were viewed as "damaged goods" because women were expected to be virgins at marriage.

⁹ Similarly, Bryant (2001) describes one woman who waited for eight years for her two sons to start their careers before she initiated the divorce.

¹⁰ Becker (1993) explained that the growth in the earnings of women has been a major cause (and also a result) of the growth in divorce in the U.S.

¹¹ See for example, statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

¹² The empirical evidence on the decline of lifetime employment is mixed, and it is hasty to assume that the institution of lifetime employment is defunct. See for example, Kato (2001) and Rebeck (2001) who argue that there were little signs of change in the Japanese employment system during the 1990s. See also chapter by Moriguchi and Ono (forthcoming in this volume) for discussion concerning the future of lifetime employment.

¹³ See for example, Sakurai, Joji. "Divorce rate for Japan's elderly couples is growing." *Associated Press*. March 19, 2000, and "Divorces hit all-time high in Japan, as more middle-aged couples split." *Canadian Press*. September 17, 2003.

Table 1 Divorce, marriage and family statistics among selected countries (%)

	Divorce per 100 married couples ¹	One parent families ²	Out of wedlock children ²	Working mothers ^{1*}
Japan	33.1	4	1.1	33.7
U.S.	50.6	25	25.0	61.2
Belgium	59.8	13	11.0	66.2
Sweden	53.9	19	47.0	76.1
Finland	53.2	-	-	58.8
U.K.	52.7	19	30.0	55.5
Austria	49.8	-	-	66.0
Luxembourg	48.0	10	12.9	56.8
Germany	44.3	12	15.5	52.8
France	40.9	13	28.4	58.6
Norway	39.7	19	40.9	72.8
Netherlands	39.3	10	11.4	66.4
Denmark	37.5	18	46.0	74.3
Portugal	30.0	6	14.7	69.8
Spain	16.5	5	10.0	43.3
Greece	15.4	5	2.0	46.6
Italy	12.5	7	6.3	46.9

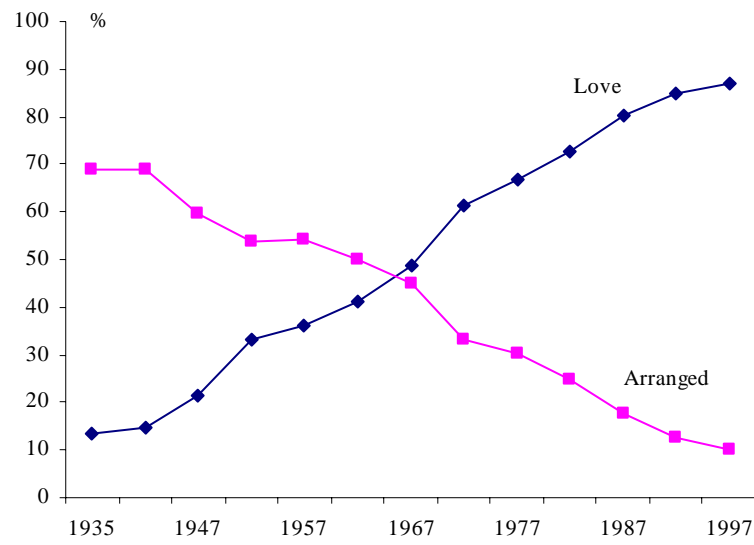
[SOURCE: ¹ OECD (2003), ² Whiteford and Bradshaw (1994)]

* Out of wedlock children defined as the number of births outside of marriage divided by the total number of births. Working mothers defined as the proportion of mothers with children under 6 years old in the labor force.

Table 2 Views on marriage and family among selected countries – Women only (%)

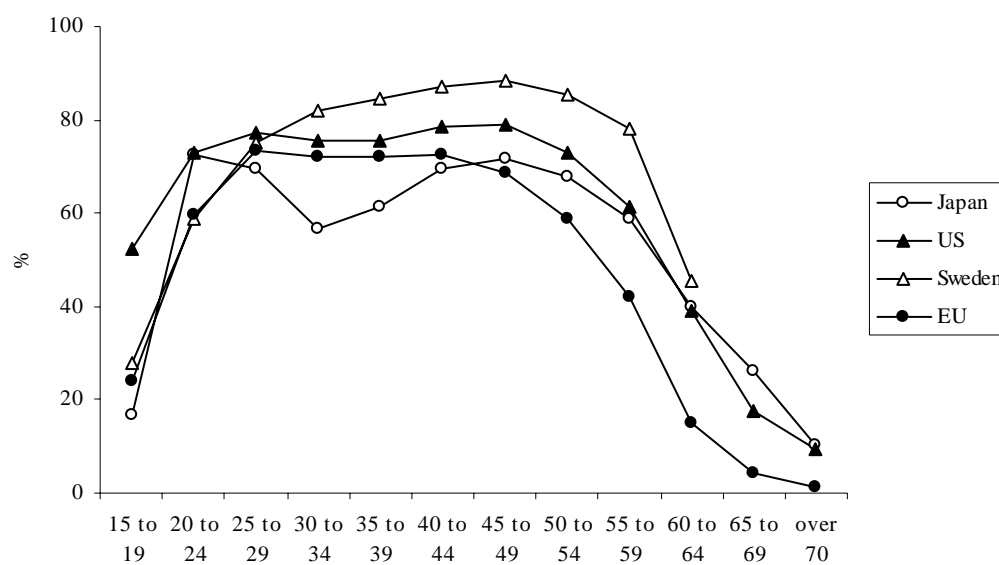
	Japan	U.S.	U.K.	France	Germany	Sweden
If and when one cannot find satisfaction with a mate, it is better to get a divorce	44.6	69.9	82.8	83.1	80.9	65.3
All things considered, women's happiness lies in marriage, so it's better for women to marry	78.2	28.8	37.0	51.8	40.9	18.4
The husband should be the breadwinner, and the wife should stay at home	55.6	23.7	20.3	22.4	24.8	12.8
To teach a boy to behave like a boy and a girl to behave like a girl	45.6	28.2	15.8	24.1	14.8	6.3

[SOURCE: Tokyo Metropolitan Government 1994]



[SOURCE: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 1997]
* The sum of love and arranged marriages do not add up to 100 because of the small percentage of persons in the “other” category.

Figure 1 Types of marriages in Japan



SOURCE: ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics, selected years (1997 to 1999)

Figure 2 Women's labor force participation rates in selected countries