PRAGMATIC SINGLES:

BEING AN UNMARRIED WOMAN IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

by

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The concept of an unmarried Japanese woman carries a variety of changing meanings for both women and men. In the past unmarried Japanese women were viewed as a conceptual anomaly vis-à-vis the dominant rhetoric of universal marriage. In contemporary Japan women are marrying later or even choosing not to marry at all. Demographers view the personal actions by unmarried women as cumulatively accounting for a large component of the declining birthrate. Such analysis of vital records has instilled panic among government officials already fearful of the rapidly aging population and its effect on Japan's future as a nation. In this dissertation I explore how unmarried Japanese women create and sustain their identities despite a public rhetoric that marginalizes, degrades, or even denies their existence as a social category. I argue that unmarried Japanese women are not "parasite singles," the homogenous entity that the Japanese government and media have portrayed them to be. Nor are they a part of an explicit, organized feminist revolution. Drawing upon social theories which examine the tensions between practice and ideology, agency and structure I argue that unmarried Japanese are responding to a specific set of economic, political, and social conditions in which they find themselves. The cultural dialogue associated with "being unmarried" exposes how the government naturalizes and rationalizes the marital union to support its interests in maintaining productivity of the core (male) workforce, and the reproduction of future Japanese citizens. Based on ethnographic data collected in a city in rural Japan, I discuss how linguistic expressions

and metaphors create images of "being married," how normative rhetoric about productivity in relation to women's life course defines appropriate employment and leisure activities, and how unmarried women's bodies are a site of state control through contraceptive regulations and other government policies. A focus on the discourse surrounding unmarried women exposes how they are positioned as key players in the maintenance of latent cultural logics regarding the family, work, nation, and reproduction. Even so, through their everyday enactments of "being unmarried," through resistance and compromise, unmarried women in this local city force and enforce change in the social landscape of contemporary Japan.

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PREFACE

This research would not have been possible without the generosity and support of many institutions and individuals, both in Japan and the United States. As I struggle to find a way to give voice to my gratitude I realize how inadequate such words are. The people of the city of Morioka bestowed their kindness upon me in many ways during my fieldwork. My informants and friends, who shall remain anonymous, shared their lives with me, and for that I will be forever grateful. I would also like to thank Tamotsu and Yoshiko Kawamura for their guidance, patience, and assistance during my stay in Morioka. I would like to acknowledge Yayoi Mita for her assistance with my research. I am grateful to officials from the Morioka City government and the Iwate Prefectural government for their useful information and statistics. I also want to thank Dr. Hiroko Hara at the Ochanomizu University Institute for Gender Studies in Tokyo for her guidance in the field.

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made this journey. Lastly, I would like dedicate this dissertation to my son, Wilson Ortega Noll, who helped me see the world through new eyes and showed me "what makes life worth living."

1. INTRODUCTION

I was referred to the Morioka Working Woman's House by a male employee in the Prefectural Government's Youth and Women's division during my pilot research. The Working Women's House, a non-descript concrete structure, is a city sponsored organization that offers classes and a meeting place for clubs. I was interested in a place where I would be able to meet unmarried women on a weekly basis, and judging from the name of the building, it sounded ideal. I spoke with one of the workers in the office, who was incredibly friendly and supportive. "Yes, yes, women are getting married later and later. There are a lot of unmarried women here in Morioka. The women here are very talkative, especially while they are sewing or cooking. I'm sure they would be interested in your project."

The following year I returned to the Working Women's House with much anticipation. I took out my *meishi* (business card), my letter of introduction, and the project description and entered the lobby of the building. After removing my shoes and putting on slippers, I walked up to the woman working at the reception counter and gave her my materials and explained why I was there. I mentioned that I spoke with a woman the previous year that seemed supportive and I inquired about the current classes or clubs that I might be able to participate in. The women read over my papers and then said that the woman I spoke with no longer works there. "And besides, most of the women who come here are married women. There are a few unmarried women, but the majority are married." "Are the clubs and classes for married women only?" I asked. "No, technically it is for adults over age 18, but I don't think that unmarried women

would feel comfortable here. Most of the women who come here are in their forties and fifties and their children are grown. They finally have some time for themselves so they pursue their hobbies. If you want to talk to unmarried women you should go to the Working Youth's Center." I was disappointed and a bit puzzled. In this context "working" is definitely not the same as paid employment. Moreover, from this woman's comments it would appear that unmarried women were more closely identified as "youth."

I walked across town to the Working Youth's Center climbed the steps up to the second floor of the concrete building. There were two men sitting in the main office, so I spoke to the one closest to the door. I repeated the introduction with my *meishi* and gave him my materials. At this point the other man, who appeared to be older, stood up and offered me a seat at a small couch. I told him that I was referred to him by woman at the Working Woman's House, and I was interested in learning about the clubs and classes that unmarried women attend. The older man said that were several classes held every evening targeted at young people under the age of 29 who work during the day. Most of the participants are women, but there was an English club that had both men and women. I asked why the age limit was 29 and he said that most women were married by then and were more likely to have family responsibilities as they got older. He said that there were a few women who were older and unmarried who still participated in club, but it's because they were long time members. Older women wouldn't feel comfortable here, he explained, even if they weren't married. If a 30 year old unmarried woman came here to join a class, and she had never been here before, he would most likely refer her to the Working Woman's House.

My experiences here in Morioka indicate the extent to which age-grading activities exist at the municipal level. It was not surprising to find that age and marital status in were tightly

linked in the conceptual realm of the program planners in Morioka. Demographic statistics dictate where to invest money to benefit the population. What did surprise me was how "dislocating" an experience it must be for women who do not fit the demographic pattern.

1.1. Background

The concept of an unmarried[1] Japanese woman carries a variety of changing meanings for both women and men. In this dissertation I explore how unmarried Japanese women create and sustain their identities despite a public rhetoric that marginalizes, ignores, or even denies their existence as a social category. Japanese women have been defined in terms of categories such as "daughter," "wife," "mother," "grandmother," and "worker" (cf. Kondo 1990, Lebra 1984, Lock 1993, Roberts 1994, Rosenberger 1987, Tamanoi 1990, Uno 1993). These categories are produced in relation to cultural assumptions about a "natural" progression of human beings according to age, gender, and biological reproductive capabilities. In the past unmarried Japanese women were viewed as a conceptual anomaly vis-à-vis the dominant rhetoric of universal marriage.

The current demographic trends in Japan show a significant portion of women's reproductive years now occur before marriage. If marriage and motherhood are fundamental experiences for Japanese women's identities, delaying these events must also carry significant value. This dissertation takes the state of being a single Japanese woman as a problematic category, which challenges Japanese cultural assumptions of identity and life purpose. A focus on the discourse surrounding unmarried women in Japan exposes how Japanese women in

[1] In this project, I use the terms "unmarried" and "single" to denote women who have never married. In Japanese the technical term for such women is "*mikon*." See chapter 3 for a discussion of labels and terms related to marital status.

general are seen as key players in the maintenance of latent cultural logics regarding the family, work, nation, and reproduction.

The diversity of unmarried Japanese women's life experiences in Morioka challenges theories labels which portray them as a homogenous group of "parasite singles."[2] The Japanese media and the government have given the derogatory label "parasite singles" to unmarried adults who live at home to exploit their parent's resources. Not only are they are viewed as parasites upon their parents, they are branded as parasites upon society for their reluctance to get married, set up new households, and live as productive Japanese citizens. Unmarried Japanese women in particular have been subjected to particularly harsh scrutiny, as their reproductive potential is vital to sustaining Japan's population.

Drawing upon social theories which examine the tensions between practice and ideology, agency and structure, I argue that in "being unmarried Japanese women" my informants are responding to a specific set of economic, political, and social conditions in which they find themselves enmeshed. As individuals, women in a local city like Morioka, make small changes to the social scripts which impinge upon their lives. In enacting this process they forge new identities which demonstrate agency and resistance to social norms and generate demographic changes which echo in the wider population of Japan.

Researchers have focused on contemporary Japanese women's participation in employment and higher education, (cf. Allison 1994, Buckley 1993, Kondo, 1990, Lebra 1984, Roberts 1994) yet virtually none includes the behavior of single women. Clearly, there is a definite need for such studies which center on the beliefs, experiences, and practices of single Japanese women, as they are crucial to Japan's future generations (Steinhoff 1992:1991). Through analysis of single

[2] The phrase "parasite single" began circulating in the late 1990's after I conducted my fieldwork. Sociologist Masahiro Yamada, in his book, *Parasaito Shinguru no Jidai* (The Era of Parasite Singles), is one of the main proponents of this derogatory term.

women's everyday lives, this research illuminates how life course representations of contemporary single Japanese women are created, maintained, contested, and resisted (cf. Lebra 1984, Lock 1993, Tamanoi 1990).

In order to understand how the lives and experiences of young single women living in a city in rural Japan challenge the parasite single characterization, this dissertation aims to:

1) Understand how single Japanese women construct attitudes toward marriage and why they postpone marriage or plan not to marry at all despite overwhelming social pressure to marry;

2) Examine how normative rhetoric about "productivity" in relation to life course defines appropriate occupational roles, employment opportunities, and leisure activities for single Japanese women;

3) Explore how attitudes and beliefs about being a single Japanese woman are reinforced, reflected, and resisted through the use of linguistic expressions;

4) Investigate how ideas about unmarried Japanese women's bodies and reproduction are elaborated through contraceptive ideologies and government policies.

1.2. Research Methods

Research Site

Morioka,[3] a large city in Iwate prefecture in the northern part of the main island of Honshu, is an ideal setting for this research because increased employment opportunities in the past twenty years here have enabled women to delay marriage. Employment opportunities exist as a

[3] Morioka's population is roughly 280,000, as stated in a recent census. Preliminary research funded by the Japan Iron and Steel Foundation Endowment Fund at the University of Pittsburgh was conducted in Tokyo and Iwate prefecture during July and August of 1995. Dissertation fieldwork was funded by a Fulbright (IIE) Graduate Research Fellowship for doctoral research in Cultural Anthropology 1996 and 1997.

result of high-tech industrial development by major Japanese multinational corporations extending south along the Kitakami River. This development, combined with opportunities in service industries and the city's entertainment and outdoor recreational resources makes Morioka a popular place for young Japanese women and men to live.

Selection of Informants

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted over a period of twelve months, from August of 1996 to August of 1997 in Morioka. Informants were recruited initially from groups of women who participated in clubs, classes, and activities at the Morioka City Working Youth's House. Specifically, instructors from the Flower Arranging Club and the English Language Club were the most helpful and cooperative in allowing participation in their club activities. These target groups attracted people from a broad range of educational and employment backgrounds. It was also clear that there were overlapping networks of women among these clubs. Informants from these sites enabled me to develop a larger pool of informants, including married women, by means of snowball sampling. Additionally, purposive sampling was used to find information-rich cases of single womanhood. Selection criteria for research subjects was age (over 20 years old), gender, and willingness to participate in discussions concerning identity, marriage, family, employment, leisure, and contraception. Approximately thirty women were interviewed in depth several times over the course of twelve months, including three married women.

Field Methods

I attended several classes each week at the Working Youths Center, and met with women weekly on a casual basis. Qualitative methods were primarily employed in a multistrategy approach, both systematic and flexible. Specific field methods were chosen to provide a multi-angled view of single women's lives with respect to what they themselves are experiencing, what

images and information about single women are circulating in the general public, and the relationships between these two phenomena.

The following methods were employed to collect data during field research:

(1) In-depth interviews, life histories, and focus group interviews with unmarried women about life, adulthood, work, and leisure; interviews with mothers about unmarried women and generational attitudes toward being unmarried, *ikigai* (life's purpose), and adulthood. The first few months of research entailed data-gathering in a broad fashion using focus group interviews to generate ideas for questions which comprised the interview guide and to identify appropriate media sources, and other issues pertinent to the study. The interview guide was tested on several informants and then revised for use in subsequent interviews.

(2) Participant observation of unmarried women in the context of leisure activities such as participating in classes at the Working Youths House, dining at restaurants, gathering with friends at bars and clubs, shopping, and traveling. This yielded data on identity, lifestyle, attitudes toward marriage, and interpersonal relationships.

(3) Survey questionnaires administered to unmarried women about women's identities, adulthood, marriage, being unmarried, and employment.

(4) Review of media sources such as advertisements, magazines, and television shows to collect information about how images of unmarried women are constructed by the media. Sources were elicited from participants in the interviews and participant observation sessions.

(5) Review of documents such as censuses, surveys, and reports produced by the Ministry of Health and Welfare as well as local municipal agencies on unmarried women to collect

statistics on women's employment and marital status, and attitudes of women toward identity and marriage, and leisure activities.

Theoretical Overview

Theories of social behavior such as those synthesized by Anthony Giddens (1979, 1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), are useful in examining how relationships between practice and ideology, agency and structure are embodied in the experiences and accounts of Japanese single women. These theories explore how such dualisms as agency and structure are mutually constitutive, and how they, in turn, reflect and respond to temporal change. While universal marriage has been the societal norm, Japanese women are postponing marriage or choosing to remain single despite the relatively short time period in which they are considered socially eligible to marry. Such demographic changes are the result of local individual women engaging in small, everyday acts of resistance which highlight the dominant structures they are fighting against. It also underlines those activities in which women make pragmatic choices which reinforce dominant social values, but still allows them to create new identities as unmarried women. Dominant processes not only impinge upon unmarried women's lives, but also enable the creation of identities and agency for meaningful changes in their lives.

Foucault's discussions of knowledge and power are also relevant to understanding unmarried Japanese women's lives as the sites of multiple and sometimes competing social discourses (1978, 1990). Through various networks of power relations, social scripts regarding the necessity of marriage have become internalized in women's bodies. Techniques of power operating through different institutions have created a scientific discourse on population in which "being unmarried" is viewed as a transgression against natural laws.

My Choice of Topic

I first became interested in this topic in the mid 1990's through a rather serendipitous process of examining one phenomenon and becoming aware of another. I was intrigued by the debates over why the birth control pill had not been legalized for use as a contraceptive in Japan, despite being available for over thirty years in the United States. On the other hand, while controversy surrounding women's access to abortion was prevalent in the United States at the time, there were no such similar debates in Japan. Moreover, the majority of abortions in Japan occurred among older, married women, as opposed to in the United States where younger, unmarried women were more likely to have abortions due to lack of contraceptive use. In Japan the out of wedlock birth rate was very low, at roughly one percent of total births. Given such a scenario I wondered how Japanese women made decisions about reproduction and contraception in relation to government policies and wider cultural practices.

After reading the government surveys and other research available such as Coleman's publication of 1983, it became clear that the previous focus of such work was the behavior of married Japanese women and married couples. There had been no research on unmarried Japanese women's beliefs regarding contraception. I thought that perhaps women got married very young and therefore the behavior of couples was the focus given that teenage abortions and unmarried mothers did not appear to be a major policy concern for the Japanese government. When I looked at Japan's population statistics I found that the average age at marriage was increasing, and had been for several decades (see Table X). Yet there was virtually no in depth, academic research on this part of women's lifecycle.

At the same time, demographers were investigating causes for the declining birth rate, in response to the "1.57 shock" of 1989 when the total fertility rate dropped to 1.57, creating a new

public discourse on shōshika mondai or "the problem of a low birth rate society". Researchers such as Ogawa and Retherford had attributed the decline in fertility to the trend toward later marriage. The demographic situation of increasing numbers of unmarried women demanded a qualitative study to understand this phenomenon. It was not until after I conducted my fieldwork that the term "parasite single" gained national attention from Yamada's 1999 book, The Age of Parasite Singles. Thus, my research began prior to the creation of this derogatory category, and provides a unique commentary on how Japanese women's enact "being unmarried."

1.3. Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2: Pragmatic Women and Attitudes Toward Marriage

Previous scholarship about Japanese women has focused on marriage and motherhood as life cycle transitions which are essential components of adulthood (c.f. Lebra 1984, Rosenberger 1987). As Lebra has pointed out, "Marriage is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for making one an adult (*ichininmae*) and a human being in the full sense of the term" (Lebra 1984:78). The purpose of marriage was to have a child and the purpose of having a child was to be considered a whole person. Being childless meant being a child. Although the idea of unmarried people being socially incomplete pertains to both men and women (Edwards 1989), such notions of mandatory marriage, especially proper timing of marriage, are even more salient and more serious for women. A Japanese riddle expresses these ideas, "Why are Japanese women like Christmas cakes? Because they are popular and sell like hotcakes until twenty-five and after that you have a lot of trouble getting rid of them" (Brinton 1992: 80). This riddle introduces the question of how ideas and about marriageable age for women are created, and by whom, and how such ideas affect unmarried women.

Postponement of marriage by women accounts for much of the recent decline in Japan's total fertility rate (TFR), which is currently around 1.32 children per woman during her reproductive years[4]. What emerges from this demographic profile is a new category— "single, adult Japanese women", for which there is no existing cultural model. *Ikigai*, roughly translated as, "purpose in life" (Matthews 1996), a key concept researchers have used to describe Japanese constructions of identity over the life course, is not understood for women who have never married. By the early 1990's Japan had more single women under the age of thirty than any other nation except Sweden, with more than 40 percent of Japanese women unmarried at the age of twenty-nine (Naff 1994). This dissertation examines the relationship between *ikigai* and self identity for single women by eliciting their narratives and comparing them to images produced through the media and national surveys. *Yarigai*, "worthwhile doing" emerged as a more useful concept for such women.

The dominant image of Japanese women as "good wives and wise mothers" (*ryōsai kenbo*) has existed in the public arena since the Meiji period (1868-1910). However, meanings associated with this image varied in relation to the time period, as well as other categories of difference such as geographic location and occupation. Ideas about the place of married women in society are created and manipulated by government, employers, and the Japanese public, including women themselves, to legitimize and sustain key power relations. Buckley astutely characterized the body politics of "being woman" in Japan, emphasizing the malleable nature of the subject.

> The fallacy that there is a condition of 'being-woman' (a fixed ideological construction) obscures the reality of a gender politics

[4] The total fertility rate here is defined as the sum of the age specific fertility rates for women aged 15-49. See the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's website for a summary of vital statistics: http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hw/populate/pop4.html

> within which women are always 'becoming-woman' (a fluid cultural and historical inscription). [Buckley 1993:372]

Married women have been portrayed as creating the central link between family and state by producing future generations (Uno 1993). Despite rapid economic and social transformations which took place in post World War II Japan, such ideologies are by no means extinct. They continue to shape, influence, and interweave themselves into the fabric of Japanese women's everyday lives. While scholars have researched ideas about marriage and motherhood and how such ideas have influenced the lives of married women, single women's lives have been largely ignored by researchers.

Young Japanese women today are socialized by a cohort of mothers who themselves embody the social dissonance which accompanied the postwar period of phenomenal change (Lock 1993a). Following Margaret Lock's studies of Japanese women's menopausal experiences and how the generational attitudes towards menopause affect these experiences, this dissertation considers the influence of mothers' life experiences on contemporary unmarried Japanese women's outlook on marriage and employment. In doing so it draws attention to the durability and flexibility of gender ideologies and explores how contemporary unmarried Japanese women have internalized wider debates about family, motherhood, and employment.

In a survey conducted by the Keizai Dōyūkai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives) in 1997, unmarried men who were asked why they were not married yet responded that (two responses allowed) "they had no chances to get together with women (36%) and that they lacked sufficient money (26%). The top response from women was that they "had not found and ideal partner" (41%) When asked about conditions under which they would not compromise with regard to marriage, "more than 80% of the men and women said that they and their spouses must be in agreement on lifestyles and values." "Among unmarried women in their twenties, more

than 40% added that they would not tolerate a decline in their living standard, while more than 10% stipulated that they would not live with the parents of the husband." Among reasons for not getting married, the "desire to maintain the style and rhythm of one's life" was the top choice for men (82%) and women (74%). Women also answered that "they did not want society to force the traditional division of roles between husband and wife on them" (34%) or that they did not want children (15%)" (Hidetsugu 1999:36). Popular notions regarding the results of such surveys indicate that a psychological revolution has taken place, leaving unmarried women desiring freedom and material possessions, with marriage, husbands, and children viewed as an encumbrance. Listening to the voices of individual unmarried women living in Morioka shows the individual struggles women endure in constructing their attitudes toward marriage.

Chapter 3: Being Unmarried: Labels and Marginality

This chapter examines different terms and labels used to describe unmarried Japanese women. This research follows recent work examining gender and language with a focus on local experiences of situated acts, and the construction of social categories through the use of language. Drawing from theories put forth by Bourdieu, Butler, and De Certeau, among others, this work seeks to understand how labels and words describing unmarried Japanese women both maintain and subvert the social order. The state of being unmarried would seem to some to be a clear cut condition, in particular, the case of never having married. But the meanings associated with never having married, especially in the case of Japanese women, are far from clear cut. They shift and vary in relation to time and place and are constituted by specific historical and cultural practices. It is important to examine unmarried women's subjective experience in relation to ongoing cultural discourses surrounding being unmarried in order to understand how they create identities which are meaningful to themselves and each other.

The rhetoric behind such expressions for unmarried Japanese women originates from the cultural assumption that all people eventually must marry, and to go against such a proscription raises concerns and creates anxiety in the social realm. Japanese men have circumvented this anxiety to some extent by searching for other Asian women as brides. The role of the government in endorsing gender inequalities should not be underestimated. For example, prior to the 1985 changes in the Nationality Law, policies regarding a child's citizenship have favored men and enabled them to have foreign wives and yet still father "Japanese" children. A child whose mother is Japanese but father is foreign was forced to take the father's nationality. As part of legislation enacted to conform to CEDAW (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), the Nationality Law was revised so that children born out of wedlock could be citizens as well as those with foreign fathers (Mackie 2003). Despite the amendments to the law, the underlying message highlights the government's stances on marriage, and by extension, on unmarried women. Japanese women must marry in order to produce Japanese citizens. The focus on Japanese women rather than men in relation to marriage is related to the negative valuation associated with being an unmarried woman in Japan.

Chapter 4: Producing Productivity: Work and Leisure

Unmarried women are faced with contradictory messages from the government in the form of anti-discrimination laws, from companies in their recruiting and employment practices, and through the media which characterizes unmarried women's leisure activities as frivolous. The image of parasite singles implies that such women are not being productive in socially sanctioned ways. This dissertation reveals the complexity of unmarried women's experiences by eliciting personal accounts of their employment and leisure experiences and how these

experiences relate to womens' ideas about productivity. An example of the relevance of this component of such perceptions is how single women are treated in the workplace. Recruiters for Japanese companies sometimes refuse to hire older unmarried Japanese women because they are viewed as abnormal. As Brinton comments, "Japanese society has a highly refined system of both age and gender grading, working against people who do not fit the norms of behavior for their age and sex" (Brinton 1993). White collar company managers feel they will become responsible for the well-being of unmarried women, whose position in society is problematic (Brinton 1993, 104). Single women who have lived away from the parental home are sometimes seen as having less reputable social lives and therefore may not be recruited as employees.

Previous research has shown that employment expectations and restrictions for Japanese women have been informed by ideas of the proper timing of marriage. Young female Japanese office workers, for example, are encouraged to think of the workplace not in terms of a career but rather as "a way station on the route to marriage" (McLendon 1983:156, Ogasawara 1998). Moreover, Japanese firms sometimes view young single women employees as potential marriage partners for their male employees (Brinton 1993:158–159). This illustrates the possible disjuncture between experiences of contemporary single working women and the rhetoric of proper work aspirations. Not only are women viewed as peripheral workers in relation to male workers, their value is tied to the social status of wife, not worker.

Employment expectations and restrictions for Japanese women also have been structured by the presumption that all women are mothers-to-be. Ministry of Labor regulations for women were based on concept of *bosei hogo* (protection of motherhood) which limited women's access to certain jobs. The 1986 Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) calls for increased employment opportunities for women and employment policies which do not discriminate on the

basis of sex (Brinton 1993). Current provisions restrict only pregnant women and mothers during the first postpartum year from particular jobs, rather than banning all women. It is unclear whether recent policy changes such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) have substantially changed employer's expectations of all women workers as wives and mothers-to-be. Moreover, it is unclear whether these policies were intended to actually change expectations or were merely a political gesture towards equality (Brinton 1993, Buckley 1993, Molony 1995). I argue that such policies influence the lives of single working women, not only by how unmarried women are treated by employers, but how they, in turn, construct their career expectations. However, the influence is not always as the government envisions.

In a recent survey by Ogawa he states that 75 percent of women in their twenties supported a lifestyle he called "New Singles" while only 50 percent of the men did (Ogawa 1997). In contrast with Yamada's definition, Ogawa labeled New Singles as "those who want to enjoy single life without worrying about marriage." Such numbers are echoed in surveys conducted by the government and other organizations. It is clear that there is a difference in attitudes between unmarried men and women about "being unmarried." As one informant told me, "Men have to get married in order to move up in the company. They seem more stable and trustworthy if they are married. On the other hand, if women get married they are sometimes pressured to "retire" from their position. If a woman wants to gain seniority and responsibility in the company, she must remain single." As more and more women graduate from four year colleges a new "career consciousness" has emerged which has displaced marriage as a short term goal.

In the past, ideas about appropriate leisure activities centered on preparing unmarried women for the future roles of wife and mother. Whether directly related to "productive" activities such as cooking or more indirectly related to ideas about proper upbringing in order to

become a bride, the repertoire of learning activities were defined in relation to becoming a married woman. Appropriate leisure activities were those that reflected one's seriousness or ability to endure (*gaman suru*), and therefore highlighted positive characteristics of one's personality. Nowadays women engage in activities which focus on their own particular interests such as learning a new sport or a language. Unmarried women in Morioka also reported participating in leisure activities as part of their workplace obligations. For unmarried women, such focus on productivity can apply equally to both work for pay and leisure activities. Their intentions of working hard to better themselves, and engaging in something worth doing (*yarigai*) are more relevant to most unmarried identities than solely reducing their social worth to the type of employment they perform.

Chapter 5: Sexual Bodies, Contracepting and Constructing Families

One powerful discourse has its roots in viewing women in relation to their reproductive capabilities. Japanese women's lives are under current scrutiny by the government, politicians, and the media over the relationship between decline in the Japanese national fertility and delayed marriage, and what countermeasures should be taken by the government to remedy the situation. Such views equate the declining Japanese population and its resulting change in demographic structure with the behavior of single women.

A 1998 position paper by the Keizai Dōyūkai (Japan Association of Corporate Executives) addressed the decline in the birthrate. It proposed that in order to alleviate the baby bust, there should be efforts made to alleviate the stresses associated with marriage and child raising to encourage people to have more children. To this end, it argues for "social approval of cohabitation and common-law marriages, and it calls for legal changes to allow couples to use different last names and to eliminate discriminatory treatment of children born out of

wedlock"(Hidetsugu 1999:36). The motivations behind such papers are obvious. The need for workers and consumers drives the need to understand the underlying social conditions contributing to the decline in the birthrate. Unmarried women in particular are an important part of the equation as they are often seen as the surplus workforce which has enabled the so-called lifetime employment system for the career-track men to be sustained, as well as being seen as potential mothers of the next generation's workforce.

It is this linkage between biological capabilities and the government's policies leaning towards reproductive imperatives which has fueled debates over bodies that matter. Why did it take over thirty years for the birth control pill to be approved for use as a contraceptive, whereas approval of Viagra only took six months? It is clear that in a period of below replacement birthrates, the Japanese government is reluctant to undertake measures that may add to this problem. However, the stories created to legitimize and rationalize the subjugation of Japanese women's bodies through government policies shows the malleability gender hierarchies.

Even more critical is the linkage between unmarried women's aging bodies and the decline in their potential to bear children. As women postpone marriage, the voices become louder and louder in an effort to force women to marry and start a family before it's too late. In a culture in which the out of wedlock birth rate has remained at around one percent since World War II, it is clear that the association between marriage and childbirth is strong. The belief in an appropriate age for marriage is predicated upon a belief in certain medical facts regarding fertile child bearing years. If we remove reproduction from the equation, there is no appropriate age for marriage. Unmarried Japanese women threaten cultural ideas about family and nation. The lack of an organized public movement by unmarried women to demand change in government and corporate policies only highlights the agency that individual women possess. In "being

unmarried" such women challenge gender ideologies by subtly altering existing social scripts which, in turn, generates a larger, wider social impact by increasing the diversity of lifestyles, and at times unexpectedly reinforcing dominant ideologies.

2. PRAGMATIC WOMEN AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE

I met Tanaka-san[5] one evening at the English club at the Working Youths House. Kazuko Tanaka was a 25 year old woman who belonged to the English Club. Keiko Takeshita, Tanaka-san's friend since middle school, was a 25 year old woman who belonged to the sewing club. We agreed to meet one afternoon to see a movie together and then eat dinner. I walked from my apartment to the designated meeting spot, a Mister Donut, located on a main shopping street, a few blocks from the movie theater. Takeshita-san had decided that she wanted to see the film, Independence Day because one of her co-workers at the dental clinic had said that it was worth seeing. I had already seen the movie in the United States. but went along for the company and to talk to them over dinner.

We ate at a small, family owned restaurant that mainly served curry and spaghetti. Both Tanaka-san and Takeshita-san commented that the couple that ran the restaurant were very nice and seemed to enjoy working together. I asked them how long they thought the couple had been married. Takeshita-san replied, "Probably a long time. I think she must have been married by the time she reached our age." Then she asked me, "How old were you when you got married?" I said that I was 23. She quipped, "Just like a perfect Japanese daughter!" I asked her to explain her comment and she said that some people here, mostly older people, believe that a woman has to marry by the time she's 25 years old. Then she asked me what was considered *tekireiki* (marriageable age) in the United States. As I tried to explain that there wasn't a particular age at

[5] All Japanese names in the text are pseudonyms. They are written following the Japanese practice of family name preceding the personal name.

which people were expected to marry, though, like in Japan, older people were more likely to have different ideas about appropriate marriage timing.

Tanaka-san commented that people consider her and Takeshita-san to be the right age to get married. "I don't like to think about marriage. It's not that I don't want to get married some day. I just want to do certain things before I get married, like more traveling abroad. If I get married, I'd like to be able to continue my hobbies, but I fear that it won't be so. On the other hand, I worry that the longer I wait to marry, the harder it will be to find a "*pātonā*" (partner). If I wait until I'm 28 or 29 maybe no one will want to marry me." Takeshita-san agrees and laments that fact that people only seem to look at a woman's age and no other characteristics. "I don't think it's important to marry by the time you reach a certain age, but with everyone else thinking that it is, it makes me think that maybe it is important. I am trying to fight it, though. I don't want to be rushed into something I will regret just because of my age. It's hard for me to think about the future or have long-term goals. But I do know that I don't want to get a divorce. Once I get married that's that." Takeshita-san paused and then smiled, "Maybe I won't get divorced because I'll never get married."

Introduction

The question of how single women create and sustain an identity despite a rhetoric that bases Japanese women's identities on roles of marriage and motherhood is central to this project. This is not to say that all single Japanese women share the same ideas of what it means to be single or a woman, as I will discuss later. Rather I seek to show how individuals, when faced with the complexities of life, respond in both anticipated and unanticipated ways which, at times, both create and hinder social change and how the notion of pragmatism plays a role in their decisions.

The overall public rhetoric regarding unmarried Japanese women comprises two interrelated threads. First, demographic conditions have recently made marriage and family a priority concern for Japanese policy makers. The age at marriage in Japan has been increasing recently for both men and women and has been seen as one of the factors contributing to the declining fertility rate, which was 1.32 in 2002 (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor).[6] This decline has caused concern among Japanese government officials, not to mention ordinary Japanese citizens, over the disproportionate growth of the elderly population and the subsequent burden on the social security system. Unmarried Japanese women have been blamed for their role in this demographic change, with the media citing women's so-called aversion to marriage caused by their reluctance to give up an extravagant lifestyle in order to take care of a husband and family. It is important to point out that the declining fertility rate is also associated with ambivalence among young couples to have children, or to have only one or at most two children. However, this demographic group has not been as vilified by the press in connection to the declining birthrate as have single women who may be referred to as "parasite singles."

The second point in the public rhetoric concerns ideas about what constitutes a productive Japanese life. In the not so distant past, a productive life for a Japanese woman was inevitably tied up with a reproductive life. "*Ryōsai kenbo*" (good wives, wise mothers) is still an image in people's consciousness, even if used only jokingly. Despite recent advances in equal employment opportunity for women, the dismal economic climate of late in Japan has caused a backlash against unmarried working women who have been accused of stealing jobs from men who have families to support. Moreover, unmarried women are also viewed as the cause of the perceived degrading morality and vitality of Japan, along with the previously mentioned

[6] Japan's TFR (total fertility rate) was 1.42 at the time of my fieldwork.

declining birthrate. They, rather than unmarried Japanese men are seen as reluctant to settle down, preferring to live at home and spend their disposable income on themselves. Unmarried Japanese men are often characterized as hardworking, trying to establish themselves in their career and subjected to the mercy of wily, manipulative, demanding Japanese women.

Stereotypes of married Japanese women abound in the literature in linguistics, history, and culture: demur, polite, unassuming, and self-sacrificing. Such stereotypes are both domestically and internationally created and maintained through the media. Clearly, being unmarried is not merely the opposite of being married. Nor is it an entirely new social category. For example in Japan in the 1920's, the so-called "modern girl" (*modan gāru*) or "*moga*" for short, appeared in the media as a self-absorbed, hedonistic unmarried women who sported daring fashions and rejected current societies expectations to be a "good wife and wise mother." The era of the *moga* is not the first time in Japanese history that the so-called marital conventions have been challenged (Sato 2003) and is perhaps best viewed as one characteristic of the complex portrait of Japanese women in a historical snapshot of time. Andrew Gordon astutely noted, "observers wonder whether the modern girl was a harbinger of a transformation with profound political implications, of just a selfish and shallow parasite. Then as now, the new woman was counterposed to an image of the timeless tradition of "woman's role" as if such a tradition existed and as if it were only now for the first time being challenged" (Gordon 2001). I argue that the paths that unmarried women's lives take are an indication of the myriad of pragmatic strategies used to negotiate the social conventions of the time.

Historical Changes in the Meanings of Marriage

It is necessary to briefly discuss the historical meanings of marriage in Japan. This serves as a backdrop against which contemporary unmarried Japanese women construct and

conceptualize what marriage or non-marriage means to them. My intent is not to provide a linear history of marriage practices, but rather I present an overall, albeit brief, outline of how present-day marriage practices came into existence and how cultural meanings associated with being married have changed over time. An examination of the historical context of marriage demonstrates how certain beliefs about marriage are enduring and yet at the same time new manifestations of older discourses.

During the Tokugawa, also called Edo, period (1600-1868) a variety of marriage patterns existed across Japan. Marriage practices varied in relation to both political or geographic area as well as social position within the feudal system. The feudal system placed samurai at the top of the social hierarchy just below the imperial family, followed by peasants, artisans and merchants at the bottom. Furthermore, there was considerable variation in such practices even within each class. Walthall wrote of the differential access to resources among women from farming families in the Tokugawa period (Walthall 1991). There were also rules which prohibited marriage outside of one's feudal class.

The Meiji period (1868-1910) ushered in broad new changes to social policies affecting families. In particular, there was a "samuraization" of marriage and inheritance practices. In the feudal system, samurai families practiced a system of primogeniture, with the oldest male typically named as the successor and head of household to inherit the family business or property, but there was variation according to geographical region of Japan. The *ie* or stem-family household system was the patriarchal, patrilocal family structure that the Meiji government required all families to adopt. The Meiji Civil Code (1898) established such social changes in its efforts for Japan's modernization. Prior to this code there was no universal form of marriage or family. Part of this new regime involved recreating women's primary roles as

"good wives, wise mothers"[7] (Bernstein 1991). To this end, women were encouraged to become educated so that they could better perform their duties as the caretakers of the new family and dutiful citizens loyal to the emperor. This was in contrast to women's roles during the Tokugawa period in which childbearing and child rearing were not necessarily the most important duties for women.

Under the Meiji regime, all family members were registered at birth into the family register or *koseki*. Permission of the household head was required for marriage for up to age 30 for men and age 25 for women (Mackie 2003). Moreover, under this new family system when a woman married she entered her new husband's household, and she was added to his family registry and removed from her natal registry. If there were no male heirs, the family could adopt a son-in-law, a practice which occurred in some agricultural regions of Japan, such as Iwate prefecture. Adultery by the wife was grounds for divorce by the husband, but the reverse, adultery by the husband, was not grounds for divorce for the wife. Also, in the case of divorce, the husband usually was given custody of the children, and despite the "good wife, wise mother" teachings, "the preservation of patriarchal lineage was seen to be more important than emergent views of the importance of the bonds between mothers and their children" (Mackie 2003: 24).

In the later years of Japan's imperial expansion, for example during the Taisho period from 1912 to 1926, and in early Showa period from 1926 until the end of World War II, the Japanese government continued to rely on "*ryōsai kenbo*" ideology to promote the importance of women's domestic roles in the maintaining and sustaining the household. However, the meanings associated with this ideology were altered to include women's participation in patriotic organizations and employment in factories by women to support the military efforts. At the

[7] See Bernstein 1991 for an in-depth discussion of the effect of Meiji polices on different classes of women, and the diversity of women's experiences. Uno 1993 specifically addresses the influence of *ryōsai kenbo* on both pre- and post war state polices.

same time women were encouraged to produce more children to create a large army under the new slogan, "*umeyo fuyaseo,*" or "propagate and multiply."[8] Another slogan, "*fukoku kyohei,*" "rich country strong army" was used to encourage agricultural productivity, but also the migration of unmarried women from rural areas to work in factories and eventually marry and reproduce the family system (Miyake 1991, Tamanoi 1998).

Post-War Changes to the Family System

The changes to the Japanese constitution following World War II regarding marriage and family system centered on the egalitarian principles of mutual consent. Article 24 of the revised Civil Code enacted in 1947 states,

> Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis.
>
> With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes. [Mackie 2003:129]

Government Surveys

Government surveys provide a background into the general trends regarding Japanese women's attitudes toward marriage. Ideological forces which surround and inform women's attitudes are also apparent in such reports, but are sometimes cloaked in the guise of scientific truth. Young asserted that ideological knowledge refers to "facts and meaning which have entered into the consciousness of a particular person and now affect that individual's choice of socially significant action" (Young 1983:204). In this way, demographic science has produced

[8] See Tamanoi 1998 for an examination of rural women's roles in relation to nationalism and gender.

authoritative knowledge about private, life-cycle events, which is then subject to social commentary and acted upon by individuals. The effect of such aggregate knowledge is to reinforce and perpetuate key power relations in society. As Young argued, "in industrial societies the most powerful ideological practices are ones which claim that their facts are non-ideological because they are scientific" (Young 1983: 209). Foucault suggested similar ideas about the coercive forces hidden in demographic reporting. He focused on sex and sexuality as the critical juncture linking the production and regulation of bodies (Foucault 1990). Using this form of logic, government surveys can be considered a normalizing force in shaping not only the sample respondants' ways of thinking, but also those who read the final analyses. They are "institutions of coercion" because they "discipline individuals and exercise forms of surveillance over everyday life in such a way that actions are both produced and constrained by them" (Turner 1997:xiv).

The National Survey on Family Planning has been conducted since 1950 by the Population Problems Research Council in cooperation with the Mainichi Shimbun, a prominent Japanese newspaper. It was not until the 1990 survey that unmarried women were polled. Previous surveys included only either married couples or married women. This omission indicates two important ideas: first, unmarried Japanese women's beliefs and attitudes regarding marriage, sexuality, and contraception have only recently become a matter of national importance, and second, unmarried women, as opposed to unmarried men, are the target of national scrutiny as they have been "rediscovered" as an important link in larger demographic concerns. By examining national survey results I compare attitudes found in the survey results with women I spoke with in Morioka. In doing so, I will uncover not only differences between local

experiences and national representations of unmarried women, but also the contradictions between subjective experience and ideology.

In the 1998 National Survey of Family Planning by the Population Problems Research Council unmarried women were asked specific questions regarding their marriage intentions. (PPRC 1998). According to this survey of those women who want to marry eventually, their reasons for postponing were, in order of frequency (up to two answers permitted):

38.3% Want to pursue study or work
31.6% Have no suitable partner
29.5% Will lose freedom if married
26.7% Too young
19.4% Want to enjoy hobbies
12.7% Will become financially strapped
8.6% Do not have enough funds for marriage
5.4% No answer
1.3% Other answers
0.9% Have to take care of parents/brothers and sisters

Of those women who replied wanting to pursue study/work/hobbies or felt they would lose their freedom, the reasons they felt that marriage was incompatible with such things:

30.2% Because I will have to concentrate on housework
26.7% Because I will have children and they will take up my time
17.0% Other answers
9.7% No answer
8.5% Because as a wife and daughter-in-law I will have to meet parents' expectations
7.9% Because as a wife I will give priority to husband's work

Such surveys indicate that the main reasons women postpone marriage is to have the freedom to pursue their interests whether it be school, career, or hobbies. Women believe that once married their domestic chores will take up much of their time and prevent them from doing such things. This is in contrast to those scholars who argue that it is women's desires to maintain an extravagant lifestyle that keeps them from wanting to marry (Yamada 1999). Moreover, the

desire for a suitable partner is an important factor to consider. If a woman is able to find a partner who is willing to help with domestic chores and childrearing, then perhaps she will be able to pursue her interests even after marriage and therefore be more willing to get married.

Of those women who replied that they have no suitable partner, when asked if they hope to find a partner, their answers were (up to two):

76.9% Am doing nothing in particular
12.9% Often go to parties and take part in group trips and outings
11.6% Have asked friends and/or colleagues to introduce me to someone
6.1% Have asked parents, siblings and /or relatives to introduce me to someone
4.8% Other answers
3.4% No answer
2.0% Go to matchmaking parties
0.7% Have signed up with a matchmaking agency
0.7% Have asked superiors at work to introduce me to someone

It is interesting to note that the most common answer reveals that women are doing nothing to find a partner indicating that perhaps it is not so much the problem of meeting men, but meeting a compatible man. Of the married women surveyed, 39.3% dated for one year or less before getting married and 72% categorize their marriage as a "love match". If asked if they would marry the same man:

25.2% Yes
36.1% Probably
25.4% Probably Not
10.4% No
3.0% No Answer

In light of these statistics which show that over one-third would probably not marry the same man, it is understandable why women might want to take time and carefully consider what qualities are important in a life partner. According to the survey, the reasons bear out unmarried women's concerns about marriage:

38.3% We have incompatible personalities
24.1% Husband doesn't cooperate in household and childcare chores
22.3% Don't get along with husband's parents (relatives)
22.3% Other answers
17.8% We have incompatible hobbies
15.6% Husband's income is too low
7.4% I can't enjoy my own hobbies
6.5% Husband doesn't get along with my parents (relatives)
6.0% I can't go on working the way I want to
4.0% Husband interferes too much in the way I do housework and raise the children

All of the unmarried women I spoke with said that they wanted to marry someone who would help with chores and child raising and a partner to enjoy life with--sports, hobbies, etc. It was clear that for many women, such characteristics clashed with those their mothers' may have desired when they were unmarried. And even today, the desires unmarried women professed with regard to the "perfect mate" are precisely those which have caused conflict in the marriages of the government survey respondents. It remains unclear whether women's attitudes are a reaction to the survey questions or similar surveys found in women's magazines.

A Marriageable Age

Informants expressed a range of attitudes, from desperately wanting to marry as soon as possible, not really thinking about it, to being adamantly against it. Moreover, the fact that some of the women in my study were dating married men, certainly calls into question what women's expectations are for marital behavior of both men and women. And such attitudes cannot be mapped onto a tight grid according to age or career aspirations, or education level because of the diversity of experience and the need to understand each individual case on its own merit.

In Japan marriage is seen as a key stage that every person must go through in order to become "an adult (*ichininmae*) and a human being in the full sense of the term" (Lebra 1984:78). "It is considered inhuman not to marry," commented one Japanese professor. Given this cultural grounding it is interesting to try to understand how unmarried people view themselves and what

has changed socially to enable such a change in thinking. How can an "adult" person resist cultural traditions that dictate how one becomes a "human being" and still maintain an identity that has meaning for oneself? Lebra remarked that the inevitability of marriage is a potent idea, in particular for women: "A woman without marital experience is considered deprived of meaning in her life, whereas men are seen as able to enjoy their lives at least through their work" (1984:78). Perhaps it is this notion that for women, marriage is the ultimate, inevitable event in life rather than just one of several possible life cycle events. If this is the case, then women must be deriving meaning in their lives from something other than marriage that allows them to postpone or even refuse to marry.

Age Grading

It is clear from my example regarding the differences between the Morioka Working Youths Center and the Morioka Working Women's Center that age grading exists with regard to program planning at the municipal level. Traphagan referred to age grading as, "the institutionalized ordering of people on the basis of age by which membership in one graded age group precludes membership in any other and is a basis for social differentiations by virtue of membership in that group" (Traphagan 1998:338). In the context of my research, age grading is a conceptual tool to categorize women in relation to the marital transition. Age grading as a symbolic discourse is evident in discussions of *kekkon tekireiki*, (appropriate marriage age) which is commonly referred to as simply *tekireiki*. The ways in which women are encouraged to marry "on time" indicate how age grading operates in everyday life.

Brinton wrote that in the case of Japan, "not only is there a strong normative consensus on age at marriage, but the statistically low variance in behavior is striking" (Brinton 1993:97). Based on her findings, Brinton shows how marriage norms for women provide an excuse for

employers to discriminate against women based on statistics for the mean age at first marriage. The theoretical feedback model which Brinton posits between Japanese employment practices toward women and marriage norms has real consequences for women's lives and how they view the life opportunities available to them. This is evident in the dilemmas expressed to me by my informants.

The idea of marriage postponement necessitates discussion of the concept of marriage timing. In Japan *tekireiki*, or marriageable age has been undergoing radical changes in the past few decades. In a government survey conducted in the mid 1970's, *tekireiki* was around 22-25 years of age for women. In my research women saw *tekireiki* as a meaningless concept for them, and they staunchly believed that the idea of marriageable age was different for each person, to be decided by each person. Of course, they conceded that their parents and older relatives had believed that age 25 was around the appropriate age to be married. This leads to various labels attached to women who were still unmarried after age 25.

Attitudes toward marriage in Japan necessarily incorporate ideas about time and life-cycle and the aging of women's bodies as they relate to childbearing. Demographic terms become popularized and used in everyday speech, though often with meanings quite different from the original intended usages. As Krause noted, "contrary to the popular usage, the demographic term *fertility* refers to the number of live births women on average have in a certain population. When demographers speak of declines in fertility, they do not mean increases in infertility or decreases in fecundity (the ability to have children) but rather declines in births" (Krause 2001:601). Nevertheless, that postponement of marriage (presumably by women) causes national concern points to the underlying focus on reproductive capabilities or rather a reproductive imperative for all women. Lock, in her research on menopause in Japan writes,

"the aging female body, a potent and malleable signifier provides not only a locus for medical practice, however, but a synecdoche for women's position in society. Conflated in the debate about aging women and the health or otherwise of the bodies is an argument about "what women are for" (Kaufert and Lock 1991) and to what extent they should be granted freedom to shape their own lives independently of the needs of society" (Lock 1993, xliii). A snapshot of Japanese demographic patterns accurately illustrates Lock's assertions. Until recently the majority of women married (98%) and did so in their twenties. Family size was completed by the time the mother was in her mid thirties and the virtually all (99%) of children were born to married couples.

Statistics

Table 1 shows the trend toward later and fewer marriages in Japan. In particular, the proportion of the Japanese population that has never been married has been increasing since 1960, and this is true for both males and females. Table 2 and Table 3 show similar data in a different format, providing a breakdown by age group and sex for the years 1930, 1970, 1990, and 2000.

Table 1 Proportion Never Married, Singulate Mean Age at Marriage , Japan: 1920-2000

Year	Male		Female	
	Proportion Never Married 1) (%)	Mean Age at First Marriage	Proportion Never Married (%)	Mean Age at First Marriage
1920	2.17	25.02	1.80	21.16
1925	1.72	25.09	1.61	21.18
1930	1.68	25.77	1.48	21.83
1935	1.65	26.38	1.44	22.51
1940	1.75	27.19	1.47	23.33
1950	1.46	26.21	1.35	23.60
1955	1.18	27.04	1.46	24.68
1960	1.26	27.44	1.87	24.96
1965	1.50	27.42	2.52	24.82
1970	1.70	27.47	3.33	24.65
1975	2.12	27.65	4.32	24.48
1980	2.60	28.67	4.45	25.11
1985	3.89	29.57	4.32	25.84
1990	5.57	30.35	4.33	26.87
1995	8.99	30.68	5.10	27.69
2000	12.57	30.81	5.82	28.58

Source: March 2003, Population Statistics of Japan, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, p.76.

1) The Proportion Never Married was calculated as the mean value of the proportion remaining single at ages 45-49 and at ages 50-54, for women and men respectively.

Table 2 Proportions of Currently Married Population, By Age Group and Sex, Japan

Proportions of Currently Married Population								
	1930		1970		1990		2000	
Age Group	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total 1)	60.9	61.4	64.1	60.3	63.8	60.4	61.8	58.2
15-19	1.0	10.3	0.6	1.8	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.9
20-24	19.6	60.1	9.8	27.7	6.2	13.5	6.8	11.3
25-29	68.7	87.6	52.9	80.4	33.9	57.5	29.6	43.5
30-34	88.5	90.7	87.3	90.0	65.2	82.7	54.9	68.9
35-39	92.0	89.2	93.9	89.6	78.1	87.3	69.2	79.2
40-44	92.1	85.4	95.3	86.9	84.3	87.1	76.1	83.3
45-49	90.3	79.3	95.6	82.7	88.5	86.4	78.8	83.7
50-54	87.6	71.1	95.2	75.1	90.4	84.2	82.2	82.4
55-59	84.1	60.5	93.7	66.8	91.3	79.9	85.6	80.3
60-64	78.9	47.1	90.5	58.2	91.4	73.0	87.2	75.7
65-69	72.3	35.0	85.0	46.0	90.2	61.0	87.4	67.8
70-74	62.6	22.5	77.3	32.1	87.4	45.1	86.1	56.1
75-79	51.5	13.0	66.9	18.7	81.4	29.8	82.4	38.7
80-84			53.5	9.3	71.2	16.4	76.3	21.5
80+	36.5	5.4						
85+			37.6	4.3	52.3	6.1	59.5	7.7

Source: Population Census, http://www.ipss.go.jp/English/S_D_I/Indip.html
Notes: Percent distribution by Marital Status
1) Population 15 years old and older

Table 3 Proportions of Never Married Population, By Age Group and Sex, Japan

Proportion of Never Married Population, Japan								
	1930		1970		1990		2000	
Age Group	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total 1)	32.3	21.2	32.3	24.9	31.2	23.4	31.8	23.7
15-19	99.0	89.3	99.3	97.9	98.5	98.2	99.5	99.1
20-24	79.6	37.7	90.1	71.7	92.2	85.0	92.9	87.9
25-29	28.7	8.5	46.5	18.1	64.4	40.2	69.3	54.0
30-34	8.1	3.7	11.6	7.2	32.6	13.9	42.9	26.6
35-39	3.9	2.4	4.7	5.8	19.0	7.5	25.7	13.8
40-44	2.4	1.8	2.8	5.3	11.7	5.8	18.4	8.6
45-49	1.8	1.6	1.9	4.0	6.7	4.6	14.6	6.3
50-54	1.5	1.4	1.5	2.7	4.3	4.1	10.1	5.3
55-59	1.4	1.3	1.2	2.0	2.9	4.2	6.0	4.3
60-64	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.6	2.0	4.2	3.8	3.8
65-69	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.4	3.4	2.5	3.9
70-74	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.0	2.3	1.7	4.0
75-79	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.1	0.8	1.7	1.2	3.2
80-84			1.1	1.0	0.7	1.3	0.9	2.2
80+	0.7	0.7						
85+			1.2	1.0	0.7	1.0	0.8	1.6

Source: Population Census, http://www.ipss.go.jp/English/S_D_I/Indip.html
Notes: Percent distribution by Marital Status
1) Population 15 years old and older

Table 4 shows the percentage of men and women never married as a proportion of the total population of the city of Morioka. From 1980 onwards there is a trend towards an increase in the proportion of the population who have never married. Without knowing the underlying population age distribution, it is difficult to establish that this trend in proportion of unmarried is due to a decline in marriage rate or due to a change in the population's age distribution. Table 5 indicates that the average age at marriage has increased for both men and women in the city of Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, and in Japan as a whole.

Table 4 Population Never Married, Married Widowed, or Divorced, as a Percentage of the Total Population of Morioka

	Male				Female			
Year	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Never married	Married	Widowed	Divorced
1960	37.6	59.1	2.5	0.8	31.6	52.9	12.6	2.8
1965	36.3	61.1	2.0	0.6	32.1	54.2	11.3	2.3
1970	32.8	64.6	1.8	0.7	29.5	57.0	10.9	2.6
1975	29.4	68.0	1.8	0.8	26.7	60.0	10.8	2.4
1980	31.3	65.9	1.8	1.0	26.6	60.1	10.4	2.9
1985	31.6	65.3	1.8	1.3	27.0	58.9	10.6	3.5
1990	32.4	63.8	1.9	1.6	27.8	57.1	10.9	3.9
1995	32.8	63.0	2.0	1.9	27.6	56.7	11.3	4.1
2000	33.5	61.5	2.2	2.4	28.2	55.2	11.7	4.7

Source: February 2002, Kazu ni Miru Morioka-shi no Josei, Morioka Women's Center, p. 7.

Table 5 Average Age At Marriage

Year	Morioka		Iwate		Japan	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1950			24.8	21.8	25.9	23.0
1955			25.7	22.8	26.6	23.8
1960			26.4	23.5	27.2	24.4
1965			26.7	23.8	27.2	24.5
1970			26.5	23.7	26.9	24.5
1975			26.5	24.1	27.0	24.7
1980			27.2	24.6	27.8	25.2
1985	27.3	24.9	27.2	24.6	28.2	25.5
1990	27.6	25.3	27.5	25.0	28.4	25.9
1995	27.7	25.8	27.6	25.5	28.5	26.3
1999	28.1	26.3	27.6	25.7	28.7	26.8

Source: February 2002, Kazu ni Miru Morioka-shi no Josei, Morioka Women's Center, p. 6.

Changes in the timing of marriage and in overall attitudes toward marriage cause social repercussions which effect all generations of Japanese people. Unmarried women are seen as a threat to the "natural order." Despite the fact that the *ie*, the extended stem-family, has been abolished by the Japanese post war constitution, familial ties and social obligation associated with the *ie* remain. One of the government's concerns about the effects of current trends in marital and fertility patterns is the burden of the elderly population. Japan has one of the highest life expectancies in the world and that, coupled with smaller families, causes a major threat to the care giving of elders. Daughters-in-law previously took care of their in-laws; however, in an era of fewer children parents must turn to others for care, causing further stress to the welfare system. Now some unmarried daughters care for their parents instead of raising their own families.

Compared to European countries and the United States, where the rate of out-of-wedlock births is high, Japan's out-of-wedlock birth rate has remained phenomenally low, at around one

percent of total births since 1960 (Tsuya and Mason 1995). Given this scenario it is clear that because of the link between marriage and childbearing, changes in attitudes toward marriage and marriage timing have profound effects on Japan's total fertility rate. During my fieldwork I only met one unmarried mother. Unfortunately, she told me that she was too busy caring for her child and working to participate in my research project. Ezawa has conducted interesting research on "lone mothers" in Japan. She argues that government policies favor women as stay at home mothers unless they are unmarried or divorced, in which case they are viewed primarily as workers (Ezawa and Fujiwara 2003).

The women I spoke with came from a range of educational and socio-economic backgrounds. However, there was no clear cut pattern to their ideas about when they wanted to marry or marriage in general, for that matter. Several researchers have written recently about the timing of marriage vis-à-vis education level and economic resources. Using data from the Tenth National Fertility Survey, Raymo's analysis indicated that "regardless of educational attainment, Japanese women are marrying later than in the past, and it appears that an increasing proportion of the currently unmarried are likely never to marry" (Raymo 2003 (1):99). In another study, Raymo challenges the popular belief that living with one's parents encouraged marriage postponement. He concluded that although men and women who live with their parents do tend to marry later, there is no clear indication that family wealth is the main factor in this trend (Raymo 2003 (2)). Among my informants the women who had the least intact family, defined as living parents or still married parents, were more likely to have a negative view of marriage and not feel particularly pressured to marry in the near future.

Arranged vs. Love marriage and Divorce

Some informant's attitudes highlighted a possible connection between the perceived trend away from "arranged marriages" to the so-called "love marriage", and the increase in the divorce rate in Japan. Given the focus on marriage type in Japan, that is, arranged marriage versus love marriage, in both the popular press and academia, it must be noted that it is somewhat misleading to create such an opposition that it implies that there exist two mutually exclusive scenarios. This is not exactly the case in Japan, as even so-called "love marriages" may involve some "arranged" components. Nevertheless, the terms do have meaning for the women I spoke with, and national surveys often include questions regarding marriage type[9] The question still remains whether women's conceptualizations of arranged versus love marriage are in line with the definitions in the surveys, but again, this problem is revisited on numerous occasions when dealing with survey data.

Increases in the divorce rate were seen as the result of the shift in responsibility of the marriage from outside parties, as in the case of arranged marriages, to the married couple themselves. As families and "go-betweens" (*nakodo*) play a smaller roll in the marital union, their reputations might be seen as less at risk, and therefore the stakes are lower if the marriage fails. This forces couples to examine their own reasons for remaining in the marriage without having to worry about the effect their actions may have on others. Of course, this is not to say that there won't be social repercussions from a divorce, but that the severity of the sanctions against divorce have in general eased somewhat, according to the women I spoke with. Some were quick to point out, though, that in Morioka, the stigma of divorce still carries some weight,

[9] See Appelbaum 1995 for a discussion of arranged marriage, with an emphasis on those which are professionally arranged.

compared to, say, Tokyo, where the image of fast-paced technology goes hand in hand with fast living.

The following are responses to a question in the 1998 National Survey of Family Planning that asked unmarried Japanese women who intend to marry whether they prefer an arranged marriage or a love marriage (PPRC 1998:.49, question 39b):

Arranged marriage:	1.0%
Love Marriage:	64.8%
Either will be all right:	18.8%
No answer:	18.1%

Married women were asked a similar question regarding the type of marriage they had (1998:31, 20d):

Arranged marriage:	24.8
Love marriage:	72.0
Other answers:	2.1
No answer:	1.0

The responses may appear to be self -explanatory, but deceptively so. A previous question to married women, "How did the two of you meet?" illustrates this dilemma (1998: 31, 20c). The responses were as follows to the question:

At school:	7.1%
At work or through work:	32.5
We knew each other from childhood; we were neighbors:	2.3
Through a non-school activity:	5.0
Through parents, relatives, or siblings:	16.9
Through friends, colleagues, or job superiors:	23.8
Through a marriage broker:	1.1
We met in town or during a trip:	6.4
Other answers:	3.2
No answer:	1.6

The difficulty in understanding the concepts lies in distinguishing between meeting and matching. Compared with the previous questions, we expect the percentage with the arranged marriage scenario to add up to roughly 24.8 percent. The question remains, then, which of the above categories constitutes "love marriage" and which constitute "arranged marriage"? We assume that the response, "through a marriage broker" qualifies as an arranged marriage. We also might assume that the remaining arranged marriages met "through friends, colleagues, or job superiors," as this portion amounts to 23.8 percent. But it is not altogether obvious. Perhaps some of those women who responded that they met "through parents, relatives, or siblings," considered their marriages to be arranged. The point is that there is considerable variation in how one meets a prospective spouse, even if the perceptions related to marriage typology remain a fixed dichotomy.

One informant said that Morioka would be a difficult place to be a divorced woman.

> Everyone knows everyone else's business. I can't imagine being able to find someone to date after being divorced. It's like the job situation here. If you quit your job you have to find a completely different kind of work because no one will hire you. It's like an unwritten rule. I guess they (companies) don't want to feel like they are stealing each other's employees away. It's probably different in a larger city or in Tokyo. I don't know for a fact, but…(Hishikawa-san, age 35, unmarried, unemployed).

This is an interesting juxtaposition of the marriage market with characteristics that mimic the labor market (See Raymo, Brinton). Even if the women perceive that the stigma of divorce has lessened, the terminology used to describe divorced people retains its negative connotations. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of such terms).

Some researchers might argue that if divorce becomes more common, marriage should become easier (Tsuya 1994). The rationale behind such a position is that the decision to marry

would then seem more reversible and perhaps more easily entered.[10] Tsuya shows that since the mid 1960's the divorce rate in Japan has been increasing and the ratio of divorce to marriage has also increased since 1970. Moreover, roughly 70% of divorces are initiated by women (Fujimora-Fanselow and Kameda 1995:xxv). The effect of such phenomena on women's lived experience is somewhat hard to gauge. One could argue that the increase in divorce shows a decrease in the social stigma attached to divorce, or perhaps it shows a decrease in the concern of other people's reactions to one's personal relationship decisions. Kimura-san, a married woman in her late forties made an interesting comment about married couples who really should divorce but stay together for what they rationalize as the sake of the child.

"It's easy to understand the parent's actions. When parents divorce, their children are often ridiculed and bullied at school by other children. I've heard stories from friends who claimed that sometimes even teachers make derogatory comments to children of divorced parents." Parents try to sacrifice their own marital happiness so that their children will not suffer such treatment in school. It is as if the children reinforced the wider societal ideals by providing the reason for remaining married.

Consequently, children who grow up in such a family may have a different view of what marriage should entail. Kimura-san reflected upon the effect of such an environment on the children and commented, "It's not good for children to see their parents fighting all the time. In a lot of families the husband doesn't spend a lot of time with the family because of work obligations. So if the only time he spends with the family is spent yelling at his wife, that doesn't leave a very good impression of married life for the children, does it?"

[10] See Brinton 1993 for a discussion of marital patterns in Japan with respect to reversibility.

One unmarried informant, Sachie Yamada, said that her sister was in a bad marriage and her husband was sometimes physically as well as emotionally abusive.

> My mother encouraged her to divorce her husband. She said that my sister could move back with her and she would help raise her two grandchildren while my sister went to work. I think in the past this type of attitude might be unusual, but my mother is a very strong woman. She saw how a few of her friends suffered through abusive marriages and she didn't want my sister to go through the same troubles.

I asked if her mother was concerned about what other people would think if her sister divorced. "I think she was concerned, but more concerned about the well-being of my sister and her children. Since my father died my mother seems to devote herself even more to me and my sister. She just wants us to be happy with our lives." Yamada-san works part time and helps her mother and sister out when she can. "My sister is still looking for a job, but I think she will find one soon. My mother thinks she is lucky that there are more job opportunities for women now." An increase in the number of educational and job opportunities have enabled women to look at both marriage and divorce in a different light. However, as the Chapter 4 shows, the perception of increased job opportunities may be just that, a perception with a very different reality.

As divorce becomes more common unmarried women begin to come into contact with women who have been divorced. Divorce is no longer merely an abstract condition or a population statistic. As a consequence some unmarried women view divorce as something to avoid by being careful about whom they chose to marry. Ehara-san said that one of her friends got married but the relationship only lasted one year. "Luckily, they didn't have any children. Even so, it was devastating for my friend. She thought that the marriage would make her feel happy and fulfilled. I guess you could call her a romantic." This indicates how an increase in the divorce rate might encourage marriage postponement as women try to choose the perfect

partner. It may even act as a deterrent to marriage. Emotional security is an important consideration. Women may be even more reluctant to marry unless they can be sure it will not end up in divorce. Ehara-san reflected upon her friend's situation.

> My friend's divorce made me really think about why people get married. She was a bit old-fashioned in her thinking. I was never the type who believed that marriage was the key to happiness for women. My mother believes this and sometimes mentions it to me, but I ignore it. But, I guess I really didn't think about the possibility that being married could be a bad thing or that choosing a love match was a big responsibility. At least her marriage wasn't arranged. If it had been, I think if would have been more difficult for her (to divorce). It would be an embarrassment to her family.

Another effect of an increase in the divorce rate on women's attitudes toward marriage is that it indicates that marriage does not necessarily always bring financial security. It is in this specific context which unmarried women in Japan are faced with difficult choices. If marriage no longer provides the financial security that women had relied on for generations, and current employment opportunities for older women are limited, how should unmarried women plan their lives? Being employed prior to marriage does not always translate to marketable skills later in life. This is increasingly the case in the present global marketplace where even Japanese men experience unemployment despite biases in government policies which prioritize their labor over women's. The financial futures for women who remain married are very uncertain. Several of my unmarried informants agreed they would end up getting married because they would probably have no other way to support themselves. However, few characterized marriage postponement as a possible hedging strategy aimed at strengthening their career potential to counter balance any financial risks if the marriage did not work out.

Government pension policies also discriminate against single women and contribute to the economic uncertainties associated with old age. Pension benefits for women have been

determined based on their husband's position. This creates a situation in which unmarried women who've been working their entire lives, contributing to the pension plan may receive less money than dependent wives who have contributed little (Mikanagi 1998, Rosenberger 1991). In this context, government policies privilege women who marry over those who work but don't marry, illustrating powerful ideas about women's roles which ultimately influence their lives at an economic level.

Feminism, Agency and Marriage

Unmarried women I spoke with all described the urgency they felt at this time in their lives. Being unmarried is a time of great uncertainty and stress for Japanese women. Through their everyday activities they react to the pressures that Japanese society places on marriage, and, to the extent they can, pragmatically decide their futures. Japanese media depictions of unmarried women have in the past focused on the materialistic attitudes which reject family forming tendencies. Recent media images of unmarrieds as "parasite singles" lumps all single people together regardless of their individual situations. This is not a useful depiction of the conditions women's lives. In my research there were some women who desperately wanted to get married as soon as possible, others who thought they would probably eventually marry, and then a few who saw no purpose in marriage. Moreover, one must look at the idea of marriagability in the context of attitudes toward marriage. In his work on the plight of rural Japanese men who seek brides, Knight created a contrast between the involuntary bachelorhood of men versus the voluntary singlehood of women (Knight 1995). To frame the situation in such a way gives women agency and power over men, but also blames women for the current demographic situation of declining fertility.

Tsuya's analysis of the 1988 National Family Survey of Japan found that: 1) young single women were much more likely to approve of singlehood than young single men, 2) young single women have more "emotional" expectations of home life, 3) urban upbringing was associated with less traditional attitudes toward singlehood, 4) unmarried women who were university educated or living in a large city were more likely to have a more pragmatic approach of traditional expectations of home life (her explanation was that they would have more money and therefore could more easily access emotional support from outside sources.) 5) Urban dwellers were more likely to cite entirely emotional reasons for having children (Tsuya 1994: 109). By examining survey data one may be able to obtain a glimpse of overall social trends, but careful interpretation is necessary. Tsuya suggests that "because younger individuals who took part in the survey expressed much less traditional attitudes than older respondents, it seems likely that Japan's recent fertility decline has been due in large measure to the individualistic attitudes of the younger Japanese." Though her observation may indeed be true, it is not clear whether younger respondents were more comfortable revealing their true feelings rather than providing answers that were deemed culturally appropriate or proper, compared with the older respondents. A few informants I spoke with did mention that they believed that they could be freer about voicing their feelings after they got older.

It is important to understand how one defines "individualistic" in the context of a survey response. As discussed previously, the nature of survey research predetermines the responses to questions, and with the exception of the equivalent of "other," there is little leeway with regard to individualistic behavior. Some researchers equate individualism with less traditional behavior, as Tsuya does in her distinction between women's survey responses as being either "emotional" or "pragmatic." For example, in response to a question about the functions of the

home, Tsuya considers the following two responses as "pragmatic" and traditional: 1) a place for economic support; and 2) a place to produce and raise children. Tsuya considers the following three responses to be "emotional" and less traditional: 1) a place for marital affection between the husband and wife; 2) a place for comfort; and 3) a place for mutual mental growth among family members. Tsuya's categorization of the responses for a question regarding the benefits of children as "emotional" included: 1) children brighten family life; and 2) childrearing is a joy. "Pragmatic" responses included: 1) children are necessary because they become wage earners; 2) parents can depend on children in old age; 3) children inherit the family name and property; and 4) children ensure succession of the family line to posterity. Given this typology it appears that Tsuya equates emotional, less traditional responses with an "individualistic" attitude. However, the change in economic circumstances in Japan in the past few decades may render some of the "traditional" responses as no longer applicable. For example the concept of inheriting the family business has increasingly less relevance as workers began to work outside of family businesses as employees in large corporations.

It is problematic to attribute individualistic attitudes of women as the cause of fertility. If one is trying to determine the ultimate cause of marriage postponement, if there is such a thing, using the scenario of individualistic attitudes only serves to push the explanation to a different level. I believe that thinking about where such attitudes came from is a starting point. Certainly the people surveyed were not raised in a vacuum, but rather in certain social, economic, and historic circumstances, and in part by their families. Families, parents and the educational system also have a role in fostering the so-called less traditional attitudes toward marriage and family.

In addition to evidence that women may postpone marriage to find the ideal partner, there is also an indication of a more detached attitude toward the convention of marriage. One unmarried woman, Ohira-san, age 39, commented that for some women marriage is just a ceremony to please their parents.

> Some women get married just so their parents stop harassing them about it. Then they go and do whatever they to, have affairs, work, or travel. I think it would be unusual for a Japanese woman to say that she really doesn't want to get married. Anyone with a boyfriend would probably say that they wanted to get married.

If postponement of marriage was seen as selfish behavior, this type of attitude, i.e. getting married just to appease one's parents, could also be construed as selfish. In this case, marriage is viewed as instrumental to providing women their freedom. The revelation that getting married could also be seen as resistance to gender norms serves as an important reminder regarding the interpretation of demographic trends, in particular vital statistics. Moreover, it emphasizes the contradictory ways in which resistance can take place. In this example, getting married was a strategy for maintaining a lifestyle that could be considered very similar to "being unmarried."

Women's images of marriage, both literal and figurative, are formed and reformed throughout everyday life in Japan as they are elsewhere in the world. They are not a static answer to a survey, but rather a socially positioned view from a historical point in time. From unmarried women's experiences in their natal families and conversations with married friends to representations in popular culture, in particular women's magazines and television shows, women are enmeshed in what it means to be married or unmarried in Japan. By comparing individual narratives we begin to understand how unmarried women choose between competing ideologies during this time of changing gender constructions. It also becomes clear that the choice of a certain strategy, using the above discussion of marrying to appease one's parents, is

in itself another strategy. This provides women the freedom to live their lives and at the same time abide by the social rules, if only superficially.

How Japanese women react to the marriage and employment system is indicative of their strength to even consider a reaction. In a similar vein, though albeit a completely different culture, Mahmood analyzed the feminist project in the context of the Muslim women's movement. Mahmood cites Butler, who draws upon Foucault's theories,

> the paradox of subjectivation, insomuch as the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent.... Such a conceptualization of power and subject formation also encourages us to understand agency not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable. [Mahmood 2001:210]

Rosenberger (2001) wrote about several differing opinions among unmarried Japanese women: some were supportive of women's desires and efforts to take control over their lives. Others viewed them as being self-focused rather than networking with other single women, while still others saw them as being co-opted by the educational system and the culture of mass consumption (Rosenberger 2001:196). Such discord among the goals and attitudes of unmarried women in Japan is a reflection of the wider debates in feminism in Japan (cf. AMPO 1996, Rosenberger 2001, Mackie 2003).

While unmarried women in Japan have captured the attention of government officials, business and the media, it is not due to an explicit, organized feminist movement but rather a result of the cumulative actions of women. I argue that the unmarried women in Morioka are reacting to a certain economic, political, and social environment which they currently find themselves. A recent New York Times Magazine article posits, "Japan's young women are

shunning marriage, spending big and still living with their parents. Are these "parasite singles" the harbingers of a feminist revolution of have they just gone *wagamama*?" (Orenstein 2001:31). *Wagamama* means selfish, strong willed with a somewhat negative connotation. The question poses a mutually exclusive relationship between wanting a feminist revolution and being *wagamama*. By this logic, if remaining unmarried is seen a selfish act, then the result cannot be revolutionary. I disagree with this, but there are some feminists who have argued that if the goals are not explicitly feminist, then the movement is not either (Chafetz 1995). Moreover, while the demographic changes have occurred as a result of women's postponement of marriage have brought attention to the unique problems women endure in the family and workplace in Japan, they nevertheless ultimately reinforce the status quo of marriage, even if it is a "belated" marriage.

In examining the feminist movement in Japan, it is quite clear that, like debates in the United States, there is no one feminism or one coherent set of feminist goals. The feminist movement in Japan is sometimes viewed as more a creation of the media. For example, the Equal Opportunity Law which took effect in 1986 was heralded by the media as a new beginning for women in the workforce. In reality, there was no penalty for companies who violated the covenants of this agreement. Even so, the media depictions of a "modern working woman" made an impression on many young women in the 1980's. Several informants who graduated from four-year colleges commented that they found the images of being a career woman (*kyaria uman*) appealing so they went to a university instead of a junior college. Some were then disappointed after graduation in not being able to find jobs and learning that their counterparts who had either gone to a junior college or just had a high school diploma were making more money and gaining seniority. One informant, Tanaka-san, commented, "Having a 4-year degree

made it harder to get a job. Even if I wanted to get married right now, I couldn't because I have no money and with only a part-time job, it's difficult to save." Tanaka-san's dilemma of not having enough money highlights the disjuncture between following an idealized career trajectory and the reality of the corporate work environment and employment policies of the Japanese state. "Having it all," is a phrase used by the popular press in the United States to characterize the challenges faced by women juggling family and career responsibilities. In an ironic reversal of consequences, Tanaka-san's case illustrates how in an effort to "have it all" she ended up neither, without a career and without good marriage prospects compared to classmates from high school who did not go to college.

Some feminist theorists have examined individual actions or identity in relation to existing social structure by returning to Foucault's ideas of how processes of bodily description can result in the formation of an autonomous subject. Of course this does not apply to all feminists or feminist theory, but McNay reiterates the fluidity with which gender identity has come to be understood.

> feminist theorists, in particular, have focused on this question of embodiment because it is crucial for analyzing how the effects of dominant, sexualized notions of 'Woman' upon the dispositions and practices of women may be oppressive but are not completely determining. There is a shift, therefore, from understanding the sex-gender-system as an atemporal structure towards an alternative concept of a series of interconnected regimes whose relation are historically variable and dynamic. This idea of gender as a historical matrix, rather than a static structure, is regarded as offering a more substantive account of agency [McNay 2000:13].

Such theories are useful in understanding the dilemmas faced by unmarried women in Japan. The idea of marriage timing points to conditions which may require individuals to reflect upon their life contexts and make changes which previously would have been unthinkable for them given the social circumstances.

Mother's influence on women's attitudes:

Kimura-san who is married and in her late forties said that beyond a doubt, the most important influence on women, especially in terms of attitudes toward marriage, is their mother. In many instances my informants spoke about their mothers, but there was no consensus on how the influence was manifested, whether negative or positive. Obviously, women's mother's lives provided a reference point for their attitudes toward marriage and it is no surprise that this influence cannot be categorized as positive or negative. Unmarried women examine aspects of their mother's marriage and pragmatically judge each component for relevance to their own lives. It isn't an all or nothing approach to marriage, but a more nuanced and complex examination. The most prominent components that women spoke of were about the relationship with their husband, whether to work while married with children, relationships with in-laws, and the overall purpose of marriage.

One point that is clear is that of those women who do not want to marry or do not see it as a necessary life cycle event, their mothers were either deceased or, if living, had encouraged their daughters to pursue their dreams outside of marriage. Women who believed that their mother's life was unfulfilling and characterized by a lack of freedom also sought something better for themselves, either within marriage to an understanding partner, or by not marrying at all. The following quotes show both appreciation for what their mothers' experienced and ambivalence about wanting the same life for themselves:

> My mother has a very hard life. She farms and sells vegetables. After seeing how hard it is to be a farmer's wife, I know I don't want that kind of life. My mother lived in a farming family and was 17 when her mother died and her father died when she was in junior college. So she married a farmer thinking that it was the best thing to do. But in retrospect, it has probably been a very hard life (Fukuda-san, age 31, unmarried, elementary school teacher).

> My mother is a full-time housewife and I sometimes feel like I want that kind of life. When I was younger, right after high school I took bridal training classes because I really wanted to get married. I still take flower-arranging classes but it's because I like doing it and I want to excel at it. It's funny because now I'm one of only a few friends from high school who isn't married. I still want to get married some day and be a housewife and help and support my husband. My mother keeps saying, 'hurry up and get married and stop being so choosey' but I feel like I need more to my life than just being a wife (Hishikawa-san, age 35, unmarried, unemployed).

On the other hand, some women did express an overall positive reaction to their mother's marriage and made a point to learn from it. For example, Sugimoto-san, a 24 year-old unmarried woman who works part time doing clerical work at a dentist's office commented,

> My mother is a full-time housewife and has worked hard creating a family. This is why I think it's important to be full time housewife and to work at creating a happy family life. I've always liked doing things with my family so marriage and family seem like the happiest kind of life to me (Sugimoto-san, age 24, unmarried, part time clerical worker).

The compatibility of combining a career with raising children

Stores and shopping areas in Morioka are filled with mothers carrying their children on their backs or riding on the front or backs of their bicycles. Mothers wearing aprons can be seen walking the aisles of grocery stores. I often went shopping with my informants who commented how it was necessary to shop every day to be a good wife. I felt overwhelmed managing my miniscule household of one and could not imagine working full time and having the responsibility of raising children as well without help from one's spouse.

Informants drew upon their mothers' experiences or what they witnessed of how their mothers negotiated work and in doing so created their own goals for their future. Some

unmarried women whose mothers worked were empowered by this example and wanted a similar lifestyle.

> I will probably work even after I get married because my mother works and still raised a family. Of course, my mother's mother lives with us and took care of my brother, sister, and me while my mother worked. My mother also seems to have her own life in addition to being a mother. I want to try too, if possible (Tanaka-san, age 24, unmarried part-time clerical worker).

> My mother worked then got married and quit work. She went back to being a kindergarten teacher after my younger sister and I were in middle school. It was very hard for her but she really enjoyed her work. I plan to do something similar, but I do want to work after I get married. So it's important for me to find a partner who will let me work. Even if he is a doctor, it's still important for me to work. It's not an economic thing. Most of my friends are the same way. They say they won't marry someone who won't let them work (Hashimoto-san, age 24, unmarried clerical worker).

Other women whose mothers worked were determined to stay-at-home-mothers if they have children.

> My mother was an office worker doing tax related work until she was around 60 years old. Even though I have two older sisters, I was always lonely as a child because when I came home from school my mother wasn't home. I don't want to work if I have children because I don't want them to feel left out and lonely like I did (Morimoto-san, age 26, unmarried news reporter).

> My mother worked after she had children and it was a lot of work for her. She was so busy all the time that sometimes she couldn't eat. I don't want to live like that. I don't think I can work and be married. I am envious of the women around me at work who can work at a job and then go home and work hard there too. I wish I could do that, but I don't think I can (Murayama-san, age 24, unmarried, part-time clerical worker).

> I think one influence from my mother is that I would prefer to have a lifestyle where I can spend time with my family. My mother is a nurse and sometimes works nights, so when I was growing up, a neighbor often took care of us. My mother couldn't come to my school for special events, or help me after school. It was lonely. I prefer not to have that kind of life. On the other hand, I learned to do a lot of things on my own because there was no one else to do it for me (Hayashi-san, age 26, unmarried, office worker).

Other women who had stay-at-home-mothers thought that they would prefer to have a career as well as a family.

> My mother is a full-time housewife and said that she never had time for herself while my younger sisters and I were children. I guess that's why I want to continue to work even if I have children. I think it's good to work because eventually your children leave for school so you will have work to go back to. My *senpai* (superior) at work changed how I thought about marriage. Until about a year ago, I thought I didn't want to get married and just work. My senpai got married and she seems really happy, so I think that maybe it is a possibility (Obuchi-san, age 25, unmarried, civil servant).

> When I was around 20 years old, my mother was my role model. She was a full-time, stay at home mother who was like a guardian angel to my younger sister and me. She also got along well with my father. I wanted to be that kind of mother. When my father died six years ago, I realized that my mother had no way to earn her own living. She had worked for about two to three years before getting married but had no real current job experience. It's hard for her to get a job because she's too old, but my father died rather young, around 52 or 53 years old. It's very sad. It's made me realize that I need to make my own life for myself and be financially secure and not have to depend on a man (Yamada-san, age 33, unmarried, part-time teacher).

Type of marriage partner

Survey research has indicated that there is a difference between unmarried men and women in terms of what they seek in a spouse (Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor). In general, women want a partner, someone they can talk to, share their life with whereas men want

someone to stay home and raise their children. For the most part, my informants replied that they were seeking a life partner and didn't want to be seen as just a mother to a man's children. They also thought that it would be very difficult to find a man who shares their views on marriage as an equal partnership. It is interesting to note that women's comments on my current life situation varied by age. Younger women thought that it was great that I had such an understanding husband who would allow me to continue my education.[11] Even more astonishing to them was the fact that he would allow me to live in a foreign country for a year to conduct my research. They said that most Japanese men would not approve of such a situation. Older married women wondered who was taking care of my poor pitiful husband. They also commented that I was not being a proper wife. Some said that at least I didn't have any children, because to continue to work away from one's family in such a way would be unthinkable for mother.[12]

It is clear from the following women's comments that the relationship between their mother and father provided a negative marital role model.

> Another thing about my mother's life is that my mother and father are not equal partners. My father's life, needs are always seen as more important. I don't want to be like that. I want my husband to be my equal. It may be difficult to find someone with so many restrictions, though…(Hashimoto-san, age 24, unmarried clerical worker).

> My mother has worked in the city construction planning office even though she is married with children, so I want to work at my career as a teacher even if I'm married. My father is an oldest son, and I see that my mother sometimes has problems with her in-laws. I don't want to marry an eldest son. Besides, I am an only child so if possible, I will bring in a husband (Koizumi-san, age 26, unmarried, elementary school teacher).

[11] See for example Kelsky 2001 on attitudes of Japanese women toward images of both Western men and women.

[12]However, it is common for husbands to work away from their families, a situation called *tanshin funin*.

My mother always "gave." I don't see her in a negative way, though. She's been a good role model, maybe not ideal, but good. I don't want to be treated the way she is treated by my father, though. I want to be appreciated for the things that I do-cooking, looking after husband, and not to be taken for granted. My mother's life hasn't been easy. She thought of divorce when I was small, but she stayed married for my sake since it would have been too hard financially as well as socially. Children of divorced parents are often bullied at school. Now my parents are happy, but they were very unhappy for a while. My mother didn't want to make me unhappy because of her wrong decision. I really appreciate that sacrifice. It has influenced me subconsciously. I guess I want something different out of marriage, someone different, maybe a foreigner (Hosokawa-san, age 25, unmarried part time teacher).

My mother's life is very hard. She married a farmer and had to look after the cows. She worked really hard and never had any time to sleep, but my father went out drinking a lot. They weren't happy together and both my mother and father considered divorce many times. When I look at such a marriage, it seems pitiful. My mother has no confidence in herself and is too stubborn to divorce. My father lives in Chiba and has lived there since I was in elementary school. He only comes home for holidays. My mother was from a nearby town and her marriage was arranged when she was 19. I want a different kind of marriage. I was groomed in school to become a good farmer's wife, but I don't know if that's the right life for me (Kaifu-san, age 39, unmarried department store worker).

I don't want a marriage like my mother had. My mother's life was raising kids and taking care of the family and my grandmother. My father was the oldest of five children and mother married into his family when she was 23. My father died when I was 29 (he was 58), but before that he drank a lot. It was a very difficult marriage because of his drinking. I would have divorced a husband like that but my mother said for her it was unthinkable. She said that children with divorced parents seem pitiful. My mother also worked part-time as an office worker for the sake of the family. She quit that job last year. While my father was alive, mother did all of the housework. My father was like a traditional Japanese father. He did nothing but drink. I want a marriage of equal partners. I want my husband to help with the housework. When we get old, I want to support each other. I also don't want

> to marry an oldest child or have to take care of his parents like my mother did (Uno-san, age 35, unmarried, temporary city hall worker).

There were also women who said that their mothers begged them not to marry someone like their father, and that they wanted their daughter to learn from their mistakes. Mothers hope that their daughter's spouse will have positive personality traits that her husband did not have. So desperate and forceful are such feelings that this crusade is considered by some to be the mother's lifelong ambition.

Not only are urban women reluctant to see their daughters marry farmers, but farmer's wives also dream of a different life for their daughters. As Knight argued,

> the origins of today's 'marriage problem' (i.e. non-marriage) appear to lie in the marriages of the previous generation and in particular, in the extreme disaffection on the part of one of the spouses (the wife). And from the point of view of family and village community, disaffected wives makes for poor mothers who, overprotective of their daughters, indirectly deprive their sons of brides and their families of future heirs. [Knight 1995:11]

Based on the discussions with informants, such statements appear to have some merit. Yet it is more than simply the marriages of previous generations that have given rise to negative feelings toward marriage. Marriage is a part of a complex system of relationships encouraged by the Japanese state in order to fulfill certain goals of the ruling political parties which are not surprisingly tied to the capitalistic concerns of large corporations. The concept of marriage in itself is not to blame for the postponement of marriage by contemporary Japanese women.

Nomura-san, age 39, spoke to me readily about how when her mother died when she was in middle school and forced to take care of her father and house. This was a source of ridicule for her because it was seen as inappropriate for her age by her peers. One time she said that one of her classmates found a rice paddle in her knapsack and laughed at her for carrying around such a

thing. A symbol of power for a Japanese housewife, the rice paddle represents the housewife's control over affairs of the household. Yet for Nomura-san it was an object of torment and a reminder of her anomalous home situation in relation to her peers.

At that time Nomura-san found solace in dance and continues with this activity even today. She views dance as her life purpose. She was 25 her father died. At once her identity as daughter and caretaker fell to the wayside and her identity as a single woman came to the foreground. She commented that in some respects she felt a new sense of freedom. She now could focus on own needs. She works temporary jobs through an agency because it allows her the flexibility to pursue her dancing. Though Nomura-san said that doesn't really think she'll get married, she commented that if she found the right person she would consider it.

> I don't think I want to have children, but if I found the right person I might get married. My relatives tried to set up *omiai* for me when I was younger but I refused. Now they've given up on me.
>
> My dance teacher told me that I probably won't be able to get married because I've already found satisfaction in my life through dance. My friends think it's natural for me to be unmarried because I need to be free.
>
> If my parents were alive I think they would be sad and angry with me for not having gotten married yet. Maybe I would have gotten married by now.

The "unmarriageable"

In the past, women's socialization at home and school was focused on enabling women to become "good wives and wise mothers." As part of a annual holiday known as Girl's Day in which each family girls put up a special doll display on March third**.** There is a belief associated with this annual event, that is, if the set is not put away in a specified amount time, it is said that the daughter will not be able to marry in a timely fashion. Several informants commented that they had heard of this warning. Yamada-san remarked that she thought it was just a way to scare

children into cleaning things up and not a curse or anything like that. The mere existence of this admonition reflects the vulnerability of young Japanese girls to such gender ideologies.

Thus yearly at an early age women are instructed that marriage is an important life and that marrying "on time" is an important part of this process. The repetitive inculcation of such messages over time gives power to their meaning, and helps to naturalize the idea of appropriate marriage timing for women. Interestingly, when I asked informants whether there was a similar warning addressed to boys who do not take down their carp displays on Boy's Day (May fifth), they could not think of one. Moreover, the flags displayed for Boy's Day are usually outside of the home, available for all to see, whereas the doll collections associated with Girl's Day are inside the home.

Lebra wrote that to prevent deviant behavior women are told, "If you act like that you will not be wanted as a bride" (Lebra 1984:80). Such statements are leveled at women under the cultural assumption that one of the worst fates to befall a woman would be for her to remain unmarried. Moreover, it is assumed that all girls and women will naturally want to be married and that such a desire will be strong enough to discourage any behavior that could be considered not only unbecoming, but even disqualifying for a bride-to-be.

For Japanese men there do not seem to be as many admonitions linking improper behavior with being unmarriageable. Some researchers have argued that the reason some men cannot find brides is unrelated to unbalanced demographics or women's intentions to prolong singlehood. Knight suggests, following the popular spiritualist Myohoin, that it is the spirit world in the form of the suffering of an aborted fetus that prevents its sibling from marrying. The blame is put on the mother as "the mother denied adult maturity to the aborted foetus, so now the foetal spirit obstructs the attainment of full maturity - i.e. marriage- on the part of its grown up sibling"

(Knight 1995:12). Such beliefs absolve unmarried men of personal blame for their status, and according to one informant, this effect is not only limited to unmarried men**.** Kaifu-san, an unmarried woman in her forties who had gynecological problems, said that she knew her mother had had at least one abortion in her life. Even though she normally does not think about spiritual things, Kaifu-san said that she has a feeling that somehow her health problems are related to her mother's previous abortion. Consequently, in she believes that the gynecological troubles have probably contributed to her difficulty getting married.

Knight pointed out an entry in a Japanese telephone directory for a matchmaking service that supplies foreign brides, indicating that characteristics that might normally cause a man to be seen as unmarriageable were not a problem in the context of international marriages.

> school record, height, co-residence, occupation, family status, age - these are not questioned at all. Blue collar, farming, fishing, medium or small business, shop labourer, -all are possible. Light disablement also possible. (Except those of odd character, or those lacking sympathy or vitality). [Knight 1995:15]

While such a list highlights characteristics which might render a person ineligible for marriage, it also exposes key cultural messages about race. Japanese men who are deemed ineligible for marriage to Japanese women are still suitable for other Asian women. This practice is in contrast with unmarried Japanese women who are dissatisfied with the social and economic structures in Japan and go abroad, as Kelsky (2001) has shown. Women I spoke with in Morioka said that it was a very much personal choice related to individual personality. While the Japanese media are quick to highlight characteristics such as the three "H's", height (tall), high income, and high education, the unmarried Japanese women in Morioka are not so tied to those categories. Similarly, while a few found the idea of marrying a foreigner as an interesting possibility, it was definitely not a unanimous opinion.

I asked my informants what types of characteristics would make a woman unmarriageable. In addition to overall issues related to the disposition of the woman's family, informants mentioned that personality traits such as being unwilling to compromise or being selfish might also cause difficulties. Only a few women brought up the possibility of an unmarried woman as one who does not like men, or one who is a lesbian. A history of health problems was believed to cause to problems in finding a mate, especially if the problems were genetic, gynecological, as Kaifu-san's situation indicated, or if they were associated with a history of mental illness in the family. None of the women made any mention of physical attractiveness, education, or career. In the case of unmarriageability of men, mental illness was also seen as a potential negative characteristic. There was no mention of physical conditions associated with possible virility or fertility as being of issue. This indicates that the ability to bear children is seen as an important criteria for marriageability for women. The lack of similar scrutiny of men does not necessarily translate to an absence of concern in this matter. It is more of an indication that the surveillance of women's bodies, in particular gynecological health, through the monitoring of menstrual cycles, is more routine. This type of surveillance underlines cultural ideas of the purpose of marriage.

Purpose of Marriage

It is necessary to examine unmarried women's beliefs about the purpose of marriage as this relates directly to why and when they would ideally get married. In this context, women are not speaking of government policies relating to citizenship or dependent benefits, or other such legal requirements, but rather on the level of their daily lives, and the realties of a union with another person. Unmarried women appear as agents negotiating the existing social and economic structures, at times climbing, rebuilding, and reshaping them.

Some unmarried women saw marriage as a union between themselves and a life partner (pātonā).

> Marriage prevents you from being lonely by letting you live with the one you love (Obuchi-san, age 25, unmarried, civil servant).

> I think the purpose of marriage is to broaden your way of thinking so that you have two people's views instead of one. My parents though think about family and continuing the family and children. That is their idea of marriage (Hashimoto-san, age 24, unmarried clerical worker).

> The purpose of marriage is the opportunity to share the rest of your life with someone. When you find that special person whom you are happy with, then you get married and have a family. For me, I don't want to get married yet, so marriage holds no purpose for me now. My parents believe that the purpose of marriage is to have a family, children (Tanaka-san, age 24, unmarried part-time clerical worker).

> Marriage is two people living together and having kids together. Very basic. My parents think that the purpose of marriage is to be like everyone else--married that is. Since everyone else is married you must marry also. My parents are very worried about me and tell me to hurry up and marry (Fukuda-san, age 31, unmarried, elementary school teacher).

> I think marriage is so people can stay together and be happy. Life is easier if you are married… You take care of each other emotionally, mentally. Look after economically. My parents probably think that the purpose of marriage is to have economic stability. My mother thinks it's important to have a family and experience being a mother….I feel like I need to be married in order to be free. Especially marriage to a foreigner (Morimoto-san, age 26, unmarried news reporter).

Morimoto-san doesn't see marriage as a way to fulfillment in the patriarchal sense, but as a way to express her self more freely. The explanation of her feelings began with a comment about being a "banana," that is, yellow on the outside but white on the inside. She felt somewhat stifled by life in Morioka and in Japan. She said that she thought that Americans were lucky to

be able to have such freedom in their lives. Kelsky's research addresses this issue in detail. Among my informants, Morimoto-san was the only one openly professed such "occidental longings" (Kelsky 2001).

Listening to the voices of these unmarried women, we also hear the voice of their parents, in particular mothers, who grew up with a different set of values.

> I think the purpose of marriage is the chance to start a new life, do new things and share new experiences with your partner. I think it's important to live your own life first, have your career and do things you want to do. For example I went to Africa to work. It was great to experience such a different culture and I might not be able to do that if I was married. That's why I'm not married I guess because I can't find someone who I think will understand that I need to pursue my career. (Ito-san, age 29, unmarried, veterinarian).

> In my opinion, the purpose of marriage is for spiritual peace of mind and stability, spending your life with someone who understands you. But my parents believe that the purpose of marriage is to create economic stability. That's why they don't like it that I'm 35 years old and not married. They say I'm too picky and that I shouldn't worry about finding a soul mate. That will come later my mother says (Hishikawa-san, age 35, unmarried, unemployed).

Ito-san also reflects on how her friends view marriage, as well as her mother's attitude.

> A friend of mine thinks that the purpose of marriage is to have stability, mental, emotional, and most importantly for her, economic. She doesn't want to work so she will need someone to support her. For me, I just can't imagine if I like someone to spend the rest of my life with them and have children. So I guess I really don't know what the purpose of marriage is. If you don't really want children, then maybe there is no purpose. My mother would be mad if I said this, though. She only seems to care about what the rest of the world thinks. A woman who stays single and doesn't marry isn't natural, so I have to get married. For her the purpose is to be normal and like everybody else (Ito-san, age 29, unmarried, veterinarian).

> The purpose of marriage is the opportunity to share the rest of your life with someone. When you find that special person whom you are happy with, then you get married and have a family. For me, I don't want to get married yet, so marriage holds no purpose for me now. My parents believe that the purpose of marriage is to have a family, children (Tanaka-san, age 24, unmarried part-time clerical worker).

Women also spoke of marriage in terms of larger interests, such as those of their family, or the desire to have children.

> I think the purpose is simple: to live with the person you love. But the reality is not so simple. I am an only child and I have an *ie* so if possible, I need to bring in a husband and have a family (Koizumi-san, age 26, unmarried, elementary school teacher).

> I think the purpose of marriage is to create a new family and be happy. Even without children it's still a family, but I want to have children so that's the purpose for me. My parents think the same way. My family life has always been happy so I think my parents want me to be able to have the same kind of happy life that they created for my sister and me (Sugimoto-san, age 24, unmarried, part time clerical worker).

> Marriage is like a step in a staircase--marriage, having a family, raising children. I don't have siblings but my parent's said that it's ok not to have a *mukōyoshi*[13]. My father was a *mukōyoshi* and I guess they understand why I don't want it. My parents think of marriage as a necessary, normal, natural thing. (Hata-san, age 29, office worker at a television station).

Other women revealed that either they did not know what the purpose of marriage was, or they didn't really think about it.

[13] Mukoyōshi is a Japanese word that refers to the marriage pattern in which the groom "marries into" the bride's family and takes her family name as his own. This occurs in cases when there is no male heir to inherit property or a business. Under the Japanese family system, the *ie*, must be continued.

> I really don't know the purpose of marriage. I guess that's why I'm not married. If I can't find someone to marry then maybe I won't be married. It doesn't really concern me (Mori-san, age 30, works in advertising).

> I really haven't thought of the purpose of marriage. I just want to get married as soon as possible. I want to be able to say that I have a husband. My parents think that the purpose of marriage is in order to become an adult (*ichininmae*) and to support each other. They worry that I don't have a boyfriend and worry about marriage for me (Murayama-san, age 24, unmarried, part-time clerical worker).

> The purpose of marriage? That's very difficult. I think it is to have a baby officially. It is very difficult to be a single mother in Japan so some people get married because they want to have a baby or they are already pregnant. I don't really know what the purpose is. Maybe to find a life partner. My mother thinks that the purpose of marriage is to provide security, economic and emotional. My mother worries that if I don't get married, I'll be lonely. Also there is the problem of a pension. The money the government provides is not adequate to live on if you don't marry. (Yamada-san, age 33, unmarried, part time teacher).

> The purpose of marriage is to learn to give instead of taking, to learn to share with another person instead of thinking only of yourself. You have to learn to give your time and energy to someone you love. That is why everyone must marry because everyone must learn these skills to be a good human being. I think that's why people look down on unmarried people. They're seen as not having mastered such skills. Marriage gives women prestige through their husband's company's name. It makes you seem trustworthy (Hosokawa-san, age 25, unmarried part time teacher).

I was intrigued by the idea of getting prestige through marriage. Can women get prestige on their own without getting married?

> Hosokawa-san: Yes but there are far fewer opportunities. You must try very hard even if you work for a good company. My parents think that you must be married to be successful, especially at work. It's very important. It's a social thing.

One study of class structure in Japan showed that married Japanese women described their social status in terms of their husband's jobs despite whether or not they themselves were employed (Shirase 2001).

Government Pronatalist Policies

Unmarried women's attitudes toward marriage are a melding of reactions to media images of marriage, women's personal experiences of the marital relationships of friends and family, as well as local ideas about the importance of marriage. Vestiges of Japan's pronatalist wartime state also factor into how contemporary women view marriage. In 1941 the Japanese government issued a mandate to increase the Japanese population and proposed that the average age at marriage be reduced. To assist with achieving these goals municipal matchmaking facilities were created to encourage citizens to do their part to help with the wartime effort by getting married and having children. The municipality of Morioka has a municipal marriage consultation department located in the city administrative office building. It was created in the 1960's to address the problems people were experiencing in finding a mate. The municipal match-maker informed me that many municipalities have similar offices throughout Japan.

> Not every city has them or even every prefecture. Tokyo used to have a municipal match-making office but not anymore. Private match-making companies have taken over much of this business even though they charge high fees. Here in the municipal offices in Morioka, the service is free. There used to be more than ten counselors working here, but now there are only two. A lot of people prefer to find a partner on their own. That is, a love match instead of an arranged marriage (municipal matchmaker in Morioka).

New policies have been created recently by the government to encourage childbirth and marriage. The Angel Plan was introduced in 2000 and the Plus One Plan, enacted in September

of 2002, which also contains incentives for married couples to have more children, includes a ¥3.1 billion budget for matchmaking services for local governments (Watts 2002).

Conclusion

The voices of these women show the complexity and diversity of opinions on marriage-related issues. Rather than succumb to a stereotype of being a parasite single, the women I spoke with carefully, pragmatically weighed out their options and tried to find a path that worked for them. While some wanted to follow in the footsteps of their mothers, the reasoning behind their decisions is anything but clear cut. The social and economic pressures for these women are diverse, as are the various career opportunities compared with previous generations. Consequently, this is reflected in the variability of their responses and their awareness of the differences among other unmarried Japanese women. The idea of the incompatibility of work and marriage, both as witnessed in the struggles of their own mothers, as well as viewed as a reaction to government policies figure heavily in unmarried women's deliberations, as I discuss in Chapter 4.

In the past, being an unmarried woman in Japan has been viewed as a social anomaly. Recently changing attitudes toward *tekireiki* and about the purpose of marriage highlight unmarried Japanese women's potential to make decisions about their future that would have been unthinkable for women in their mother's generation. Their experiences and opinions about what it might mean to be married show a refashioning social scripts, without complete abandonment of past social conventions. .At the same time, the social context of women's lives is informed by government surveys and opinion polls related to the decline in the nation's fertility rate. Government plans which specially target the low birthrate affect women more explicitly at a material level. By championing projects which aim to create a more healthy social environment

for raising children, the government demonizes unmarried women for their contribution to the *shōshika mondai* (problem of low-birthrate society). Through such policies, unmarried Japanese women's identities are called into question as postponement of marriage is labeled as a threat to society. In the Chapter 3 I examine the discourses surrounding "being unmarried" and how unmarried women both resist and employ those labels which degrade and marginalize them.

3. LABELS AND MARGINALITY

At the time I conducted my research the phrase "parasite single" had not yet been created to refer to unmarried Japanese who live with their parents. Instead, a phrase that had meaning for the previous generation of women was used to describe the situation and state of being unmarried in the context of a perceived time period of marriageability called *teki reiki*. This phrase was "kurisumasu keiki" (Christmas cake). The following account gives an introduction to the nature of labels and how they are used, resisted, and in flux.

Tanaka-san and I left the English Conversation club one Tuesday evening and walked to Douter, a Japanese coffee shop located on one of the main streets in Morioka. The English Conversation club could be characterized as a social club with an occasional English lesson thrown in. During club hours, conversation was held in both English and Japanese, with drills performed in English, and gossip and socializing in both Japanese and English. Tanaka-san was trying to improve her English speaking skills, but we often ended up discussing topics about English in Japanese.

On this particular meeting, I said that I didn't really know what "american coffee" meant noting the menu at the coffee shop. Tanaka-san seemed a bit surprised and replied, "but, it's in English, isn't it?" I agreed that it indeed was the English language, but it didn't really correspond to any specific drink that I knew. I wasn't sure whether it was espresso and water, similar to what the drink café americano would be at a Starbucks, or whether it was just regular coffee. This lead to a discussion about other English words that are used in Japanese but do not

have a specific meaning that would make sense to most Americans. I brought up the example of "Christmas Cake" or *kurisumasa keiki*, in Japanese. Tanaka-san said that she had vaguely heard of this term but wasn't quite sure of the meaning. I said that even though I understood the meaning of the words "Christmas" and "cake," together, the phrase had no meaning for me. She said that she thought it was slang for unmarried women, she had never heard anyone use it in conversation. I told her that another Japanese friend in Morioka explained to me that it referred to cakes that are sold at fancy department stores just before Christmas day, December twenty-fifth. On the following day, no one wants them anymore and therefore they are difficult to sell. This corresponds to the idea that the twenty-five is the age by which a Japanese woman should be married. It follows that a woman who turns twenty-six is not easily sold on the marriage market. This seemed to make sense to Tanaka-san and she thought it was rather funny because she was twenty-five years old and not married or even close to getting married.

The next day Tanaka-san and I met again for coffee after she got off from work. She said that at lunch that day she asked some of her female co-workers if they were familiar with the term *kurisumasu keiki*. She said that the women who were younger, around age twenty-three had no idea what she was referring to. The older women, those twenty nine and older, grew defensive and asked her why she would ask about such a rude word. Tanaka-san said that after their conversation the older women didn't want to talk to her.

The social world of words

This chapter examines different terms and labels used to describe unmarried Japanese women. This research follows recent work examining gender and language with a focus on local experiences of situated acts, and the construction of social categories through the use of language. As Rose and Sharma stated, "Local practices determine and maintain hegemonic

ideologies; they are where discourses live and breed, grow and die. Local practices are also the site where social meanings attach to linguistic forms and features, rendering the individual a constitutive part of any social order" (Rose and Sharma 2002:1). Drawing from theories put forth by Bourdieu, Butler, and De Certeau, among others, this work seeks to understand how labels and words describing unmarried Japanese women both maintain and subvert the social order. Such theories focus on the individual and agency in the social sphere by invoking differential capabilities of the actor, and the potentiality of certain practices.

Research surrounding gender inequality as expressed in the Japanese language is not new (see for example Nakamura1990, Hio 2000). Linguists have focused on honorifics, politeness, "Japanese women's language", femininity, pitch, pronouns, and sentence-ending particles. However, given the recent focus on unmarried women as "parasite singles", it is important to revisit and rethink some of the ways terms referring to unmarried women are marked. The rhetoric behind such expressions for unmarried Japanese women originates from the cultural assumption that all people eventually must marry, and to go against such a proscription raises concerns and creates anxiety in the social realm. The focus on Japanese women rather than men in relation to marriage is related to the negative valuation associated with being an unmarried women in Japan. Individuals draw on existing constructs to interpret practices or people as gendered, and in this way create and restrain ideological meanings. A Japanese woman who is not married and is of marriageable age (*tekireiki*), or beyond, is in a double bind with respect to how others view her. If she remains unmarried by her own choice, this is viewed negatively by others, and she is described as selfish, too career-oriented, unfeminine, and not family-oriented. If she is unmarried but not by choice, her reputation, personality, character, health, and family all come under suspicion. The list of adjectives is invoked as both the cause and effect for the

presumed unfortunate situation of being single. Such linguistic practices are rich sites for investigating questions of identity, ideologies, and individual women's relationships to power.

Language categories, including metaphors "are culturally constructed within social groups; they change through history and are systematically related to other areas of cultural discourse such as the nature of persons, of power, and of a desirable moral order" (Gal 1995:171). Whereas previous work focused on the passivity of women in relation to the masculine lens of language, more recent work has infused a sense of agency with regard to unmarried women shaping and changing language in subversive ways (Bucholtz et al. 1999).

Beyond objectification, previous researchers have discussed how terms for Japanese women in general reduce women to the status of objects. This metaphor is extended to perishable food items in the case of unmarried Japanese women. Such conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary but rather evoke a sense of coherence with an unstated logic, and serve as a basis for and encourage the maintenance of key cultural stereotypes. Caitlin Hines in her article, "Rebaking the Pie: The Woman as Dessert Metaphor" analyzes how the woman as dessert metaphor in the English language evolved and goes beyond just objects but is extended to sweet things and pieces or slices of a whole (Hines 1999). Unmarried Japanese women have been referred to not only as food items, but unlike the dessert metaphor in English, the have been given a shelf life or expiration date, after which they are no longer seen as desirable or useful.

Cohen argues, following Fernandez (1982), "individuals struggle continuously against uncertainty, the 'inchoate,' 'the dark at the bottom of the stairs', and employ cultural tropes to secure themselves" (Cohen 1994:139). "Metaphor provides a way of making the private public, of externalizing the self by providing terms for the expression of sentiments which may be otherwise inexpressible or unintelligible to others and is presumable, therefore, an essential

means of engaging in meaningful social interaction" (Cohen 1994:139-140). By examining tropes and metaphorical expressions related to unmarried women, we can gain valuable insights into their experiences and social worlds, and how such marginal categories are both constructed and resisted.

In using the terms trope and metaphor, I am referring to the broad category of figurative usages of language described by theorists (cf. Thompson 1990). Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney discusses Friedrich's definition of trope as "anything that a poet, politician, pundit, or everyman uses or employs whether intentionally or unintentionally to create poetic texture and effect, poetic meanings and poetic integration (Ohnuki-Tierney 1991: 26). Ohnuki-Tierney argues that in the Japanese language the word for human, *ningen*, literally means among humans and therefore individuals can only be represented in reference to others (1991: 164). The marginality of unmarried Japanese women can be understood, in part, if we follow this train of logic one step further. The basic relationship of a man and woman as husband and wife is perceived to be the foundation for a harmonious family, and to oppose such a relationship by simply being unmarried causes concern among Japanese citizens. Exposing the harmonious Japanese family as a myth created in service of the government and corporate interests does not lessen its hold on people's ideas of appropriate behavior.

The use of specific speech styles to convey meaning has deep roots in linguistic anthropology. Of particular importance for the context of my research is the act of labeling and being labeled as an unmarried Japanese women. In Okamoto's article, "Tasteless Japanese," she argued that:

> Japanese women strategically choose particular speech styles to communicate desired pragmatic meanings and images of self. In other words, the choice of speech styles is a means by which women express and construct their identities and relationships.

> Young women's use of unfeminine or direct speech styles is not simply an exception to 'Japanese women's language' but a meaningful choice based on their understanding of themselves as young unmarried female students in specific interpersonal relationships and sociocultural contexts (Okamoto 1995:317).

The women I spoke with demonstrated a deliberate choice of words to describe themselves, sometimes using what might be considered derogatory words among themselves in a joking way. As one informant, Ito-san said, "we call ourselves "Christmas Cake" in a teasing way. Especially when I talk to my unmarried friends who are 39 years old and live in Tokyo. We joke about it all the time. They aren't offended at all. I guess because they are happy with their jobs and their friends."

If we examine the concept of marginality, we simultaneously construct the idea of "belonging." In the case of Japan, it is necessary to understand where one stands in order to know how to behave properly, Ohnuki-Tierney posits, "pronouns and speech level are chosen on the basis of the self as dialogically defined in relation the specific other in a given context of discourse" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1991: See also Lebra 1976, Valentine 1991). The concepts *uchi* and *soto*, roughly translated as inside and outside, have been written about extensively in other works (Lebra, Bachnik, Kondo, Ohnuki-Tierney), and are examples of Japanese social categories which relate to the idea of belonging. Unmarried Japanese women may be seen by society as marginal, but how do they feel and act?

Dorinne Kondo described the complexities associated with how workers rewrite the meanings of idioms to their advantage.

> These complexities should, in the end, call into question a schema of "hegemony" countered by "authentic resistance," instead drawing attention to the multiplicities, open-endedness, and contradiction that inevitable accompany the crafting of identities and lives within a matrix of power and meaning. This should further underline the point that hegemonies are never simply put in

> place, but are always contested and therefore must always be reasserted. And neither "hegemony" nor "resistance" is a simple, unproblematic category; both are alive with changing, multiple meanings and subverted by unintended consequences. [Kondo 1990:202-203]

Drawing on this insight, I argue that the unmarried women in Morioka that I spoke with created themselves in ways that sometimes reinforced their marginality, but also linked their identities with unmarried women in Tokyo and even nationally by becoming an important part of the national demographic picture. The resulting demographic changes and media attention were not the results of intentional acts by these women, but an unintended consequence which has forced the Japanese government and corporations to re examine their policies concerning the treatment of women at home and in the workplace.

A simple translation of the categories *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) as directly apply to unmarried women, that is, married women as *uchi* and unmarried as *soto*, is misguided. However, the feelings that unmarried women have invoked from such categorization is relevant. For example, one 25-year old informant, Takeshita-san told me about a wedding of a friend of hers from high school. She said that she was looking forward to the wedding to see old friends that she had lost touch with, and hadn't really thought much about whether they would be married or not.

> At the reception I realized as I became reacquainted with my former classmates that one by one, most of them were at least engaged, if not already married. I was shocked, and I feared that perhaps I was the only one from our class that was not married. Even though admittedly I rarely ever thought about getting married, and wasn't even sure if I wanted to marry, to be confronted with the reality in this way made me uncomfortable. You know that I'm usually an easy going type of person, but as the party wore on, I began to search for other women my age who weren't yet married. When I would talk with a woman, I first looked at her hands to see if she had on a wedding ring or engagement ring, or whether, if she wore a kimono, it was the

> married woman's style or not. After finally finding a few other unmarried women, I was overcome with a sense of relief.

I mentioned that I didn't think that wearing a wedding band or engagement ring was indicative of marital status in Japan, as it might be in the United States. She replied, "That's true, but because we were at a wedding, I guess marriage and whether we were married or not was on everyone's mind. Well, the women at least. I don't know how the men think." The idea of being singled out as unmarried among her former classmates was a designation that clearly made her feel uncomfortable despite her previous statements of indifference to marriage.

I asked her if seeing men her age unmarried made her feel relief and she said that it didn't seem to matter. I mentioned to her that many of my single friends in the United States complained that all the men they meet are already married. I asked if she had similar feelings and she replied,

> No, not at all. It's not so much finding a husband that seems important as it is the status of being married. I don't usually think about my life in this way and maybe I'm strange compared to other Japanese women. I don't think about marriage the way some other women I know do. We say, *kekkon gambo*, because they really, really, want to get married. I'm not usually that way. I'm more of a "*mai peisu*" (my pace) kind of person.

It was clear that her concern for how she appeared to others changed how she viewed herself, even if only temporarily. She had not been in touch with these women, and yet because they were former classmates, she measured herself against what these women deemed to be important life accomplishments. Her self description as a "my pace" kind of person meant that she prefers to do things on her own schedule, at her own pace rather than follow the crowd or some other arbitrary schedule.

<u>Labeling unmarried women</u>

The terms and phrases listed below were derived from conversations with key informants about such labels for unmarried Japanese women, review of media representations depicting unmarried women, and review of scholarly publications that brought attention to such terms. After assembling the list and discussing it with informants, key features were elicited. The first and foremost feature is the literal meaning of the term and what the kanji characters symbolize, who typically uses the term, men or women, and of what, and who is the referent, i.e. who the term is describing, man or woman of what age.

After examining the distinctions among terms, several points became clear to informants as we discussed them. One informant said,

> Now that I am thinking about the Japanese words for women or unmarried women, I realize that there is a lot of discrimination in the language. Previous generations like my parents were taught that we need to catch up to the West industrially. I think we need to catch up and change our perspective on the words we use. I also think that because we Japanese think that it is very necessary to consider what the people around us think, words that we use to describe ourselves or others become really important. Maybe my opinion seems strange or different from the other people you speak to, but this is my way of thinking.

There were also differences of opinion among the women about the usage of words and phrases, for example how women in Morioka believe that their Japanese usage differs from women in Tokyo. I am not referring to dialect, per se, but rather the feeling voiced by informants that certain words might be more "natural" in Tokyo, and though perfectly understandable by women in Morioka, the social circumstances would probably not be relevant to use them.

Tekireiki

This term is roughly translated as "suitable age." In the Japanese characters there is no direct indication to its specific usage, but people seem to know that it refers to the suitable age for marriage. The ideas of what constitutes *tekireiki* as circulated in the public domain has changed over the years, and can be seen in demographic changes. However, it remains to be a more salient feature for women's lives than men's lives. There also seems to be an upper age limit for women. This is congruent with the ideas that divorce is frowned upon and that divorced women will have a difficult time remarrying. The linkages to fertility are also clear, and images of an aging female body are also apparent.

Dokushin

The gloss for "*dokushin*" is, "unmarried". The two kanji characters comprising the term carry the meanings "alone" and "body." Informants responded that it is used for both men and women, over age twenty-five, who have never been married. Some informants believe that it can also be used for people who were divorced, although there was some disagreement on this aspect of usage (See "*batsu-ichi*", below). Women said that it can be used to refer to oneself, as in the phrase, "I'm still single." The majority of informants thought that while it technically can be used for any age person, it seemed to be more appropriate for younger women, younger than age 35. I asked what term would be used for older unmarried women and many women paused, and some even said that there were so few that they didn't really think about it, but that they would probably use *"kekkonshiteimasen"*, which means not married. This is interesting because it highlights the differences in the use depending on the age of the woman.

Shinguru ("single")

Shinguru is used in women's magazines, especially for titles of articles in order to catch people's attention. It is a romanized form of the English word "single" and because it is a foreign word interpreted as being stylish or popular among the younger generation. Informants claimed that while it is not used much in everyday speech, it can be used for men or women, usually under age 30 who have never been married. Many of the informants said that it was also used to refer to someone who not currently in a relationship. It is sometimes used to describe someone else, as in "she's still single" and although women said it could be used for oneself, women disagreed on the likelihood of this. One informant said that she thought that people in Tokyo probably used *shinguru* more than in Morioka because Morioka was more conservative. She went on to explain that there was a somewhat carefree and independent connotation to the word, and she said that it seemed to fit the Tokyo lifestyle because of the anonymity it allowed. She also said that she did not think it was used very often for men because they don not seem to be as carefree in general as women. Another informant said that while it has positive connotations (similar to above), older people tend to view *shinguru* negatively, as in a person who calls herself *shinguru* "shows too strong a personality and doesn't listen to others." Another informant said that she didn't think it was used for men, or at least not here in Morioka. According to another informant, *shinguru* was used to refer to a woman who couldn't get married because she was too old or sickly. When I asked whether this was true for men as well she said that it felt strange to think about using it for a man. This reinforces certain social rules about the appropriate age for marriage and the criteria for marriageability. When asked if the term could be used for divorced people, just about every woman mentioned something about another term that was used for the case of a divorced person, *"batsu-ichi."* I will discuss this term later in this section.

Mikon

The word *mikon* literally means "not yet married." The expectation for eventual marriage is embedded in the first kanji character, which implies an anticipated, impending status change from being single to being married. There was some confusion over the usage of the term among informants, though there were some areas of agreement which I will discuss below.

All women agreed that it is usually only used to refer to unwed mothers (*mikon no haha*), and therefore, they believed it had a negative connotation. It is not used in everyday speech, but can be seen in written, official documents such as demographic statistics and reports from the government. The term that is used to contrast with *mikon* in government documents is *kikon*, meaning already married. As one informant noted, "We don't use *mikon* in speech, but maybe that's because there aren't that many unwed mothers in Japan, and especially Morioka, though I've heard stories on television that say the numbers of unwed mothers are growing." When I asked her about why "especially not in Morioka," she said that the negative views were so great that it would be difficult to live that kind of lifestyle in a conservative place like Morioka. If a woman has an illegitimate birth, she must list it on her family register and this document is sometimes requested by employers or even prospective spouses. She went on to say that it might only carry positive connotations for celebrities like actresses or singers who can show that they can have children and a career, though she thought that such children seemed lonely and sad without a real sense of family. Another woman said that she thought it was not used for women who are under age 30, but she didn't know why.

Another informant said that being *"mikon no haha"* was considered worse than being divorced and pregnant because at least a divorced person has being married. In this case it appears that the status of being pregnant is secondary to being a parent to one's child. When I

asked if there was a term for unwed fathers such as *"mikon no chichi,"* most of the women I spoke with laughed and said no. One informant asked if there was such a term in English and I explained that there is the phrase, "deadbeat dad," but that it was only in the case of fathers of children who fail to provide financial support for their children. To my knowledge there isn't a general term in English, though different cultural groups may have some sort of designated word. Two women said that *mikon* could probably be used for men, but they personally wouldn't do it.

Other scholars have made noted other meanings for *mikon*, specifically for divorcees. Buckley's interview with Toyoko Nakanishi, founder of the Japan Woman's Bookstore revealed some of the cultural nuances with this term, though none of women I spoke with referred to *mikon* with respect to divorce.

> The Japanese word for divorce is *rikon*, and a divorcee is called *mikon*, literally "postmarriage." You were either premarriage, married, or postmarriage. A recent pun has been the use of the word *hikon* to replace *mikon*. The character for *hi* means anti-and so postmarriage is redefined as antimarriage. A much more affirmative statement for the identity of a divorced woman. [Buckley 1997:195]

Hikon

Of all the terms, this term had the widest range of answers. The general meaning of *hikon* is a person who has decided never to marry. Most of the informants said that it was rarely used, roughly three-fourths of them said they had never heard of it and don't know whether it is used for men or women. One informant said that she thought it was used for women older than 30 years old who preferred to live with a man, but not marry, though in Japan this is not very common. She said that she had heard it used for actresses. Another woman said that it was a new word created about ten to twenty years ago and used in novels to refer to women who wanted to be independent. Refusal to enter the marriage system, and take their husband's name is another description given for *hikon*. Those women who had heard of the term before believe

that it is used in written Japanese to describe women but it is not used by women to refer to themselves in spoken language. One informant, Hishikawa-san, age 35, commented that she had never heard of women in Morioka having such strong convictions.

In the above terms there is an indication that when the term has a negative connotation, this can be circumvented if one is in a position to live above the social rules, e.g., celebrities. Though under constant scrutiny by the media, such women bend or break the social rules and are still sometimes idolized (perhaps because of their ability to ignore such social constraints).

The next three expressions refer to context or conditions rather than labels or names for unmarried women. The examination of such phrases exposes inequalities in society's expectations for the marital behavior of women versus men. It also highlights the changes in terminology that the women believed had taken place since their parent's generation.

Hitori-gurashi

Hitori-gurashi means to live by oneself and can be used for men and women of all ages. It usually refers to people living away from home at college or starting their first job, but is also used for elderly people who are have lost their spouses. There does not appear to be a negative connotation for men, only for women. One informant, age 35, who lives with her parents said that she thought it could be used in a positive way, showing independence and the ability to earn one's income and live without constraints. One the other hand, she said that this last aspect was the reason why it was sometimes seen as negative. Without supervision women may engage in relationships which damage their reputation and then they would be considered *"fushidara"* or "loose". Another informant, age 26, said that her father forbade her from living on her own as a working woman without being married. She said that he believes that women are wild and need to be supervised. Her brother lives in Tokyo and attends graduate school and her sister is also a

student in Tokyo. He allows this because her sister is in school and not really on her own yet, and he acknowledges that there is a different standard for men. She said that she finds it so irritating, but what can she do? (*Shikata ga nai*) The double standard is not new in Japanese culture, yet few women seemed to be upset by it.

While I was living in Morioka a weekly television drama produced by TBS (Tokyo Broadcast System) was broadcast called "*Hitori-Gurashi*"[14]. One of my informants alerted me to the show because she thought I might find it interesting and relevant to my research. It is about a young woman in her late twenties named Miho, who works at a department store and lives on her own in an apartment in Tokyo. The show examined her relationships with her family and friends, male and female, and their opinions regarding her living alone. When I asked informants about this show, about half had watched it and said that it didn't seem realistic to them. Tanaka-san replied

> Well for one thing, someone who works as a sales clerk in a department store in Tokyo probably can't afford the apartment that the main character in the show has and the type of lifestyle she leads. Some of the situations she describes are true, though. For example, in one episode she talks about all the things that women can't do if they're by themselves, like going to a movie or having a drink at a bar.

When I asked why such activities weren't possible for unmarried women, she said that they were possible, but that most people wouldn't do them because it would look bad to other people, especially being at a bar. In other words, certain leisure activities were unfit for unmarried women who were by themselves. I wondered if a married woman had similar restrictions on her behavior. Kimura-san, married housewife said that a married woman probably does not have time to even think of those things unless her children are grown. Comparing these two situations

[14] TBS translates "Hitori- Gurashi" as "Living Single". See their web site for program listings. http://www.tbs.co.jp/eng/catalog/english/drama.html.

points to cultural ideas about how and where well-behaved women should spend their time. Unmarried Japanese women should be living in their parent's home because it is assumed that when they marry, they will either move in with their husband's parents, or into their own home as a couple (cf. Suzuki 2001, Raymo 2003b).

This particular portrayal of an unmarried woman living alone did not characterize it as taboo, but it was clear from the title and the story lines that it was not viewed as entirely favorable either. For example, as expected Miho's parents are concerned about her welfare. Her best friend, Kyoko, on the other hand, offers to move in with her and Miho rejects her offer. Kyoko is insulted but also says that it is strange for a woman to live alone.

Another stereotype raised in the drama relates to homosexuality. Perhaps an unmarried woman who lives alone is a lesbian, as one of Miho's female friends first expresses jealously toward her lifestyle, then tries to seduce her. Congruent with the cultural ideal of universal marriage is the discourse surrounding compulsory heterosexuality in Japanese society (cf. Hattori 1999, Chalmers 2001). Scholars such as Foucault have posited that the reason such behaviors are viewed as deviant is because they are sexualities which are not procreative in nature (Foucault 1990).

From the perspective of employers living alone carries bad connotations for women who have never been married, but is expected of men at some point in their careers. Cohabitation with one's parents is seen as appropriate behavior for unmarried women, and those who live alone are discriminated against in the job market because they are considered to have a questionable background. When used to describe someone living alone as a result of a scholarly or professional pursuit, *hitori-gurashi* has the feeling of hardship or endurance (*gambaru*). It is seen as the current, temporary situation for the sake of one's career, and this is viewed in a

positive light. Thus for men *hitori-gurashi* is more likely to be characterized by others as something that "can't be helped" and perhaps even worthy of pity. For a woman, it shows a strong attitude and elicits an interrogation of the woman's character and family.

When asked why unmarried women who lived alone were discriminated against in the workplace, one married informant, age 45 said. "I think it has to do with a saying, '*doko no uma no hone ga wakaranai'*, which refers to when you don't know where a person is from, or who their relatives are, then you really don't know anything about them. That is why employers prefer to recruit unmarried women who live at home because they believe they will act more responsibly." When I asked about unmarried men living alone she said that because it is expected of them, nobody questions their character. One informant describe to me the various allowances paid for by her employer, the prefectural government. She said that is why they prefer women to live at home so they don't have to pay an extra moving allowance or housing allowance.

One informant said that there is the connotation of loneliness associated with older people living alone. When I asked at what age she felt that people would perceive loneliness, she said over age 35. This age limitation highlights the feelings of belongingness that are necessary to be a full human being. It appears that until this age, women who live by themselves are looked at suspiciously, but then after age 35 they are seen as pitiful and lonely. The possibility that it is a woman's choice to be by herself is often not considered. Thus the images of *hitori-gurashi* were related to knowing a person's background, willpower, ability to make own decisions, loneliness and appropriate relationships with others, and age.

Ichinin mae

The phrase means to become independent of one's parents, literally, "one person". The process of becoming "*ichinin mae*" appears to differ for men and women, though there was some disagreement according to informants. There is no exact age when this happens, but rather it depends on the person and situation, or as women told me, "case by case." ['Case by case' is a phrase often used a replacement for 'it depends.' It is another one of those phrases that Japanese people think English speakers use frequently and they were surprised when I sometimes told them that it wasn't actually used in daily conversation.] While there are no concrete criteria, there are certainly areas of one's lifestyle that fall under scrutiny. For men, according to one informant, "to become *ichinin mae* you have to get a job with a good company and become financially independent and able to marry and support a family." It is clear from this quote that the idea of "becoming a *salaryman*" is a part of Japanese ideas about what it means to become *ichinin mae*. The bias towards white collar employment as a marker of success in the context of the male lifecourse is not a new theme in studies of Japanese social phenomenon. What is new, however, is the rejection of such a lifestyle in favor of a more balanced and fulfilling type of employment, and the accompanying rejection by Japanese women of white collar employees as potential mates. One informant, "for men, if they are married they have to be responsible, so being married makes a person *ichinin mae*. People even talk about it in speeches given at wedding receptions."

For women, being *ichinin mae* doesn't seem to be financial in nature, perhaps more psychological, becoming more mature. One informant commented that more important than financial considerations was the criteria of being responsible and able to make one's own decisions and live with the consequences without help from one's parents. Some informants said

that for women getting married and having children makes one *ichinin mae*, but other women said that this was not the case.

Another informant said that the phrase was also used to describe a tradesperson, like a carpenter or sushi chef, who, after being an apprentice, opens his own independent business and becomes *ichinin mae*. In this case it seems somewhat masculine, so the informant began to question whether the phrase is used for women at all. She was not alone in this regard, as several informants said that *ichinin-mae* was not used for women at all. Does this mean that it is something that being a woman prevents one from achieving?

As far as age considerations go, one informant said that although it doesn't happen at any particular time, you wouldn't use it for someone older than 40. The assumption is that by age 40 it is expected that a person would already be *ichinin mae*.

What is clear from the discussion of this term is that there are changes taking place surrounding the meanings of this term between generations. Many informants would start by saying, "well some people, maybe older people like my parents think this, but I don't." Changes in the economic position of women and their ability to support themselves financially factor into this phenomena of changing usages and understandings. Some of my informants also feel that there is a difference between how Tokyo women would respond to such a question, since they are seen as being on the cutting edge of new ideas and attitudes. The creation of a new consciousness or a re-evaluation of what it means to be *ichinin mae* is taking place and the tension between older ideas and newer realities is evident in the discordant nature of the women's narratives.

Dokushin shugi

Literally translated means "single-ism." Some informants replied that it was used to refer to a person who is strong, independent and not married, but perhaps in a relationship. One informant says she thinks of a woman in her late 30's or 40's who chooses to remain single. "Of course," she goes on, "once they are in that age range other people think that marriage is no longer an option. If a person uses it for themselves, they are seen as someone who is confident in who she is and the choices that she makes. But older people often see it as a negative term or use it with a negative tone to speak about women who are not married." Another informant said that she did not think that such women existed in Morioka because the social pressures to get married are too strong to resist. Another informant was adamant that it had a positive connotation, especially if used for oneself.

Dokushin kizoku

Literally translated means "single aristocracy." This refers to the lifestyle that unmarried people have, the ability to use their money for their own needs and not worry about housework, cooking, or cleaning. This was another expression in which informant's ideas about meaning and usage were sometimes contradictory. One informant commented that it could be used for women or men, but it seemed to be used more often for men. Given that Japanese government surveys indicate that Japanese men do little housework whether married or not, I thought that this label which glorified the unmarried lifestyle seemed to be somewhat odd. Another informant was adamant that *dokushin kizoku* was not used for women at all. When I asked her why that might be the case, she paused and said that perhaps it was because men are the ones who have the financial means to support themselves and women have a harder time doing so. Thus in this case the luxury refers to being a person who need not worry about everyday things.

Another informant said that it was only used for people who did not live at home. She said, "It means that they don't have to answer to others and can spend their time and money on themselves." Another informant echoed this idea and said that *dokushin kizoku* implies a certain level of selfishness. Her married friends jokingly call her this when she travels abroad and they are unable to. "They think I can do whatever I want and go wherever I want to because I don't have to worry about taking care of my husband or family. Of course, it's just a stereotype." Another woman, age 32 said, "My mother calls me this because I think she envies me that I have time to myself. When she was my age she was already married with children." The images of time and money to lavish upon oneself are connected to the idea of aristocracy or luxury.

Yet another informant says that it refers to women who refuse to enter the marriage system, similar to the meaning of *hikon*. She said that she thought it was used jokingly or as an insult referring to women who refused to marry. She explained that, "People may want to view unmarried women as carefree and not serious about life, and the object of envy. The fact of the matter is that such women should be pitied. By choosing not to marry they are now left with nothing but themselves, no family or husband. And this is not an enviable position to be in"

Such incongruities warrant a discussion of the perceived differences or similarities between *dokushin-shugi, dokushin kizoku*, and *hikon* according to the women I spoke with. Whether such differences are particular to the fieldwork location or not is difficult to tell. As one informant, age 36 said, "*Dokushin shugi* by itself has a positive connotation, but when used to refer to others, somehow there is a negative feeling. A person doesn't use it for themself. It refers to a way of thinking, *shugi*, a "personal policy". It is not used jokingly, as *dokushin kizoku* might be. *Dokushin kizoku* is an older term that came about during the bubble economy of the 1980's. It was for people living on their own with only themselves to think about and to spend money on.

It was not used for those people living at home." "Parasite single," mentioned below was the term eventually coined to describe this situation. *Hikon*, as described earlier differs from *dokushin shugi* in that *hikon* describes a person who is not married but without the expectation of getting married in the future. It doesn't describe a way of thinking, but rather a current condition.

Indeed, stereotypes point to tensions in the social order and ambiguity resulting from perceived instability in the social realm. After discussing these expressions with women, it became clear that in their everyday lives although they may use such terms, but they didn't think about their classification or that their interpretations would be different from other women. One woman said after hearing another say that *dokushin kizoku* wasn't used for women asked her co-workers the next day, and they agreed that it was not. But women from her sewing class said that it could be used for men or women. In the end she decided that it was too confusing and that she didn't want to use the term at all.

Parasaito-Shinguru

The term "parasite single" was popularized by sociologist Masahiro Yamada in his 1997 book, *Parasaito Shinguru no Jidai*, The Era of Parasite Singles. He defines parasite singles as "young men and women who continue living with their parents even after they become adults, enjoying a carefree and well-to-do life as singles" (Yamada 2000). He claims that roughly 60% of single men and 80% of single women between the ages of 20 and 34 live with their parents, about ten percent of the Japanese population in 2000. Yamada blames such singles for the poor performance of the Japanese economy, the declining birth rate, and a general lack of work ethic and spirit of achievement in the population as a whole. Of my informants, only two lived alone, and one of those women initially lived with her mother and older sister's family and later moved

into her own apartment. All others lived with one or both parents. Living by oneself is not always easy to do, as discussed previously, yet Yamada is convinced that it is single people's selfishness that is at the core of Japan's social and economic problems.

Yamada presents Japan as a homogenous country in which lifestyles and ways of thinking are uniform throughout the 47 prefectures. Women in Morioka are clearly aware of the differences in their lives, experiences, and opportunities, as compared to women living in Tokyo. Most of my informants brought up such regional differences when I asked about their lives. Many had experienced living in Tokyo for a short amount of time or visited friends who had relocated there. Tokyo women, on the other hand, have images of what it might be like to live in Morioka, but they are usually not based on real experiences, but rather media representations of *inaka*, or countryside, in general. That Morioka is a large city in a rural prefecture points to the complexities of labels such as rural/urban, not the mention the diffusion of media in the form of magazines, radio, television and movies.

The term "parasite single" was not used by the women I spoke with at the time of my fieldwork, but I believe it is necessary to address his arguments, as later discussions with my informants included this term. First, Yamada assumes that all unmarried children living at home are "parasites." This is clearly not the case, and each family has its own reasons for the living arrangements of its members, not necessarily based on the desires of individual people, but rather on perceived common good. Several informants said that they lived at home so that they could help their parents or other family members who were ill. Being a "parasite" relates to ideas about productivity which I examine in the chapter on work and employment, but I will discuss it briefly here as well. Even my informants who graduated from four-year universities and lived at home did housework and helped at home in addition to paying for room and board. Several of

these women spoke about helping a married sister whose husband worked long hours or otherwise neglected spending time with his family. Sachie, who worked part-time as a teacher, said that she was living at home to help take care of both her mother and her sister, who lived next door and had a child. She often helped out when her sister was sick or her child was sick, as her sister's husband was rarely at home to help. Another woman who worked full time helped out at home with her sister and her sister's child who had recently come to live at home again after a divorce.

Another informant, an only child, was a part-time English teacher and lived at home with her parents and her dog. She said that her mother was in poor health and she had to take her to her doctor's appointments several times a week because her mother didn't know how to drive. Her father, who worked as a dentist, was often too busy with work or out drinking to properly care for her mother.

> I feel sorry for my mother because I think she feels abandoned. She and my father never seemed to have a good marriage. My father always treated her as an inferior and didn't respect her. When I was away at college my mother was very depressed, so I want to try to help her as much as I can before I have to marry and move away. My dog is sick as well and my mother can't really take care of him, so it's as if everything at home is my responsibility.

I asked her if her parents wanted her to bring a husband into the family, a *mukoyōshi*, since she was an only child. She said that it was not that important to them since her family didn't own a business or anything like that.

> My father does not expect me to take over his dental practice because I didn't really show an interest in it. My cousins on my father's side will probably do that. So I am free to do what I want to. I was unable to get a fulltime job after graduating from college, so I went to graduate school. I know that I'll get married someday and probably move away, but for now I enjoy this time that I can spend with my mother. I guess I am a little selfish.

Another informant's mother was in ill health so she had to cook dinner for her family and do the housework in addition to her part-time job. She said that she enjoyed helping her mother and she thought that her mother was proud of her ability to take over the household duties.

> My mother expected me to live at home once I graduated from college. Once when I was in college she tried to call me and couldn't get a hold of me. She was really anxious and worried. She left many messages for me, but I was out with my boyfriend. When I finally called her back she cried and cried and said that she wished I lived back at home. She didn't even know that I had a boyfriend and she said that I didn't sound like her daughter anymore. That really hurt me and we both ended up crying. Now I'm happy to live at home and have a family life. My parents sometimes want to know who I'm going out with, but they're not too restrictive. I even spend time every week knitting with my mother and her friends. Some people might think it's strange, but this is the kind of life I want when I have a family of my own.

Yamada attributes the decline in the Japanese economy to the failure of singles to leave their parent's homes and set up their own households, which would create a demand for housing and durable consumer goods. He acknowledges that parasite singles generate demand for luxury items, but believes that this is not enough to offset the decline in other areas of consumer spending. The decision to leave one's parent's home is a complicated one which must address suitable employment, adequate income, approval of one's parents, and most importantly, cultural expectations. Most of the women in Morioka that I spoke with said that their parents expected them to live at home until they got married. Indeed, the parental home has been considered the proper place for unmarried women to live, and as stated earlier, employers prefer not to hire women who don't live with their parents. On the other hand, some employers act as surrogate parents by setting up single sex dormitories to enable unmarried women whose parents do not live within commuting distance to work for the company.

Cultural ideas about the proper place for women have strong roots, for example, in *ryosai kenbo*, or good wife, wise mother. One woman said that if a woman lived in the same city as her parents but alone, people, the neighbors would wonder why and think that she was doing bad things, like having sex. Another woman said, "it is the belief that young women are wild and can't control themselves and that is why they must stay with their parents. Men on the other hand are seen as having more restraint and therefore don't need to be supervised so closely." Differences between Morioka and Tokyo living were also prominent in women's ideas about leaving home. One informant said,

> In Tokyo, there are more job opportunities, the salaries are higher, but perhaps less of a need to leave one's parent's home because of the job opportunities in the vicinity. There is also more of a feeling of being anonymous, or at least it seems like there wouldn't be as much talk if you didn't live at home. In Morioka, there are fewer job opportunities, fewer apartments, and lower salaries so your choices are to live at home, or move to a larger city and look for a job and you will be discriminated against because you don't live at home. Or you might have a good job and live alone in Morioka, but people will talk about you and it may give your family a bad name. Not everybody worries about this kind of talk, but some people still have old fashioned ideas.

Ikazugoke

Literally means "cannot go old woman" referring to a woman who is now too old to get married. All informants said they had heard of this term and that it was very rude. One woman says that to her it seems to refer to a woman around age 35 who is still unmarried.

Ikiokure

This term is similar to *ikazugoke* in that it is slang for a woman over age thirty who isn't married. It is often assumed that if she hasn't married by this time, she probably will not be able to get married.

Otsubone

Several informants commented that *otsubone* was used for female office workers who refused to marry and retire. A Japan Times article defines *otsubone* as "godmother figures" who command power and respect in the workplace. (Japan Times, December 16, 2002)

Orudo missu

Orudo Missu is the Japanese pronunciation of "Old Miss," another slang word with bad connotations. It refers to a woman who is not married or in a relationship, but wants to be and exhibits manic behavior. Again, informants commented that this was used for females.

The next few terms are related to food and the idea of spoilage, going bad, playing on the theme that women's lives (in particular their reproductive capabilities) have a limited period of usefulness. The idea of usefulness relates to the underlying discourse regarding "what women are for." Lock also talks about such themes in her work on menopause (Lock 1993).

Kurisumasu Keiki

As mentioned earlier "*kurisumasu keiki*, or Christmas cake," is a fancy, expensive cake that is sold before Christmas. On the day after Christmas, it suddenly becomes stale and is longer wanted, so it is on sale because it is hard to get rid of. Interestingly, older informants in their mid-to-later 30's knew this term, but many of the younger women had never heard of the term. Several informants said that they used it jokingly among friends but it would be considered rude to say it to people outside their circle of friends. This points to the fact that *tekireiki*, the appropriate age for marriage, has been increasing over the years. The irony here lies in the realization that the metaphors which are age specific also become obsolete as newer terms assume their place. Such terms still carry negative meanings for some older women who, despite being able to resist the constant harping of outside voices urging them to marry, remain

ambivalent about being unmarried. They can still feel the memory in their bodies. Younger women without such past experiences have no bodily memories and remain unaffected by the term.

Toshikoshi soba

This refers to the noodles that are eaten on New Year's Eve. Again, the connection is the date, 31, and meaning you must be married. There was some confusion over whether it was used for men or women. One informant said that Christmas Cake was for women and *Toshikoshi soba* was for men. The term "*oomisoka*" which means refers to New Year's Eve is also used, and again there was discussion over whether this was used only for women or men or both.

Urinokori

This refers to items that no one wants to buy that are left on the shelf at the store. This term originated in the Edo period referring to prostitutes who were unable to attract customers. There is no similar word used for men, according to my informants.

The above terms related to food and timely consumption do not equally apply to unmarried men. As one 30 year-old man I spoke with commented, "we don't think of our marriagability as declining due to age like women do. We have pressure to marry from the employment standpoint, but not because we "go bad" if we age." The employment standpoint refers to the idea that in order to succeed in a company one must be seen as stable and mature and marriage is one way of conveying this. A man interviewed in the Japan Times echoes this difference in attitude toward aging between men and women, "I'll lose physical youthfulness and stamina, but in the future I'll have a higher salary and social position instead. I don't think all women will find me attractive, but I'm pretty confident I'll still be marriageable...It may sound arrogant, but

men who have a high level of education and an above-average salary would probably think they can find a spouse anytime" (JT May 25, 2000).

When I asked about what people thought about women who were unmarried and in their thirties or forties. Most informants responded that although it could be that particular person's choice, this was not very common and especially hard to do in Morioka. They said that most people would wonder what was wrong with that person, maybe they have some mental problem or difficulty getting along with people that prevents them from marrying. Or perhaps they have a chronic health problem that would mark them as an unsuitable partner. For women in particular, the inability to have children or having experienced gynecological problems is a bad characteristic. One informant who was in her forties says that she still has hopes of getting married some day but because of her "female problems" which make her unable to have children, she fears that this may not happen.

Workplace or employer's expectations of women

OL (Office Lady)

"Office lady" is a widely used which refers to female clerical employees (Lo 1990, Ogasawara 1998). As Ogasawara noted, it is seen on a daily basis in newspapers, magazines and heard in conversation, yet the precise meaning of the term is ambiguous. There is no official government term for this employment category, but the term Office Lady was chosen by readers of a Japanese women's magazine, Josei Jishin (Japan Times, December 16, 2002). According to a Japan Times article, "Nowadays the term "OL" (office lady) is seen as semiderogatory (about time, too), and some companies have trashed it completely and started using simply *jyosei shain* (women employees) to differentiate them from *sogoshoku* (general worker), which is not gender specific but is used to describe women who take on the same responsibilities as their male

colleagues." (Japan Times, Kaori Shoji, December 16 2002). The author goes on to comment that Japanese men have the convenience of just calling themselves "salary man" (white collar worker), while women are still negotiating the expectations of older male managers who operate on an employment model which is out of sync with the capabilities and aspirations of women.

Shokuba no hana

Shokuba no hana or "workplace flower" refers to unmarried women who are hired into a Japanese company specifically because they are pleasant to look at. They are not expected to work very hard and are sometimes "married off" to male employees or clients with a "*kotobuki taisha*" congratulatory retreat from the workplace). One informant said that she was at the wedding of a coworker at a large advertising company in which her boss made a speech at the reception, he praised her as being a *shokuba no hana*. "He said that she brightened up the office and now that she was married she would surely be missed." The bride in this case was a college graduate and planned to continue to work but it was clear that her bosses' expectations followed the traditional pattern of behavior for women employed in white-collar occupations. Some observers may consider her boss' behavior as arrogant to presume that marriage naturally implied retiring from work. While this may or may not be the case, it is more likely that a less intentional but by no means less powerful process is at work. By making the transition from marriage to leaving work seem natural and honorable the hegemonic forces remain hidden.

Is it possible for a *shokuba no hana* be a married woman? According to informants the expression usually is reserved for unmarried women; however women in general are subject to different expectations for workplace behavior as compared to men. From my experience in Japanese financial institutions, we were told that we should try not to yawn while at work. A married American female coworker of mine was told by her supervisor, "It makes people tired if

they see you yawn. You need to be aware of how your acts and appearance affect other people. Smile, be happy, and look nice. And when I say "good morning," I expect you to respond back energetically." Again, the concern with external appearances as opposed to intelligence or capabilities highlights the hurdles that women with higher education must confront.

One woman I worked with at a Japanese financial services firm was an older unmarried Japanese woman who was fluent in English, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. She had moved to Brazil with her parents when she was a child, but later moved back to Japan and then to the U.S. When I commented to one of her superiors that they must be pleased to have such a talented person working for him, he replied, "But she's stupid. Look at her age yet she's not even married." Marriage is a criterion for success for women despite valuable talents and abilities. Men too are judged by both coworkers and their superiors if they are not married. However it is women who receive the harshest criticisms.

Koshikake

This term translates as "seat warmers" and refers to the idea that unmarried women are not serious about work and should be considered nothing more than seat warmers biding their time until they get married and retire from the workplace (Japan Times December 16, 2002). This is the rationale often given by managers in response to questions over equal employment opportunities for women, despite laws which prohibit such discrimination.

Furukabu

Furukabu literally means "old tree root" or "old stump" and is sometimes used to describe OL's who have stayed on too long in their position in the eyes of the coworkers. The shelf life of the *shokuba no hana* is limited and this label is soon replaced with *furukabu*, along with hints such as "isn't it time for you to marry?" One informant said that she heard friends refer to their

unmarried female supervisors in such a way, but she called her supervisor "*seracansu*". When I asked her what this meant she said that it was a really old fish. My dictionary said "celacanth: an extinct type of fish." I found this interesting, given that my informant was unmarried had no plans for getting married.

The next group of expressions represents several terms used for people who were previously married but are no longer. These, too, came out of conversations with women and discussions of the previous markers of being unmarried. Words that convey negative ideas about the loss of marriage, either through divorce or by the death of one's spouse, reinforce the social necessity of marriage, particularly for women. This category of terms is particularly interesting because even if one has experienced the expected rite of marriage, it is the condition of being a married person that confers the most social benefits in the eyes of others. If one were to envision a scale of the social categories based upon one's marital state, being divorced or widowed was a step up from never having married, but still a category to be avoided if possible.

Miboujin

This term meaning person who is not yet dead, is for women whose husbands have died. Again, the cultural ideas of proper timing and reasons for living for women are embodied in this term.

Gosai

Gosai is used to refer to the second wife in the case of divorce. It literally means after wife.

Yamome

This term is for men whose wives have died. This is not widely used, and as one informant said, she doesn't know the kanji character for it. But she did comment that there was a connotation of a man being free, which is in contrast to the term *miboujin*.

Batsu-ichi

Batsu-ichi literally means "one strike," as in "one marriage gone bad, so there is a mark against you because maybe there's something you did to cause the divorce or have some kind of personal flaw," according to informant Yamada-san. She proceeded to explain that when you receive papers back from your teacher in school, a *batsu* is the mark for incorrect answers. Unlike other terms this can be used for either men or women.

Demodori

The dictionary definition for this term is "a divorced woman (back at her parents' home)" (Kenkyusha 1983:856). Informants indicated that you probably wouldn't use it for older women, say in their fifties or sixties who had divorced their husbands after raising children. It is more likely to be used for younger women without children. One informant said, "I don't know if you use it if a woman brings her children back to her parent's house to live. Somehow I feel like it's just for women without children. You don't use it for men." This expression has negative connotations and was described as being used by "older people." As another informant explained, "We have a marriage system where the woman enters the household of her husband when she gets married. Of course, she can still visit her parents, but the idea is that she's a member of a different household. If they divorce then she returns to her family. That's why we say *demodori*, which means to go out and then return." When I asked her what about the case of men who marry into women's families (*mukoyōshi*) who divorce, she thought about it and then

said that while it probably happens, she has never heard of a special term for them. This indicates not only that women are more likely to be seen as the reason for a couple's divorce, they also must endure more social criticism as a result of divorce.

The importance of analyzing these expressions and their usage and connotations is that attitudes toward divorce and marriage are interdependent. That is to say, if divorce is frowned upon, then the act of marriage is not something to be taken lightly. As discussed in the chapter on marriage, as divorce becomes more widely accepted, it has two affects on unmarried women: one, that they see examples of what a "bad marriage" is and try to avoid such a relationship and are choosier in their partners, and two, they are aware that if things don't work out they can always get a divorce. Their decision to marry is not irreversible; on the contrary, they need not remain in a bad relationship and they can marry again rather than live a life of loneliness.

One important thing to note about all of these expressions is that I have tried to indicate that they are not timeless, bounded, and unchanging entities. On the contrary, the meanings are changing and fluid as evidenced in the contradictory responses given by my informants regarding usage of expressions. Moreover, the references to "usage by older people" which implies that such a pattern was in effect for generations, is in fact, misleading. The experiences described in The Women of Suye Mura indicate that marriage was not as formalized as is now in Japan (Smith and Wiswell 1982).

Unmarried Women Describe Themselves

When speaking with informants, certain themes emerged with respect to characteristics or personality traits of unmarried. First, when speaking of women in general, the words women themselves used were strong and positive for the most part. Words such as powerful, strong (*tsuyoi*) and free (*jiyuu*) were used frequently. Their own descriptions depict a sense of being

carefree that is not present in any other part of the life-cycle for men or women. As one woman said, "Before you marry you are not tied down and you have the freedom to do what you want to and not worry about what surrounding people think." Yet as these words are spoken, a feeling of marriage pressure is often an underlying theme that pervades the conversations. Despite the carefree image they use to describe unmarried women in general, some women are very much concerned about what other people think and must endure the scrutiny of others on a daily basis. One informant, age 29, a veterinarian,

> My married friends tell me how lucky I am to have the freedom to do what I want to do but the reality is that my mother makes comments to me every day about getting married. Every day! I'm an easy-going person, but my mother causes me stress. I usually try not to care about what other people think. I'm a "my pace" kind of person. But my mother constantly forces me to think about getting married and she complains that her friends and our neighbors always ask her why I'm not married yet. She's more worried about how my behavior reflects on her than how her constant nagging affects me. It's very stressful in my house. I wish I didn't live at home.

Other expressions which were not as positive include the term "*kawaisou*," or "pitiful." "Unmarried women might have money and a good job, but they still seem pitiful because it's unnatural to remain an unmarried woman." "*Wagamama*" or "selfish" was also a description that others, mostly older married women, used for unmarried Japanese women and men. Though most of the women viewed "being able to do as you choose" as a positive trait, some considered it a weakness or character flaw of sorts. "As you get older, you can't just think of yourself, you need to think about other people. Women who don't want to marry or postpone getting married seem selfish."

Social Trends as Social Categories

Hiraga's article, "Metaphors Japanese Women Live By" (Hiraga 1991) examines cultural assumptions about women in Japanese metaphors. In particular, metaphorical expressions which view women as a commodity, in the form of a sales product or food item are derogatory and dehumanizing but are part of everyday language. Hiraga shows that when sentences are constructed using words for man or woman, the meaning changes such that either the woman becomes a sexualized object or is seen as degraded. In some cases, when there is a bad connotation for the woman, the use of man in place of woman has no meaning at all and is considered nonsense.

Others have written similar analyses (Nakamura 1990) and while both point out that such gender discrimination is not isolated to Japanese but occurs in other languages as well, including English, what is striking is the interaction between such expressions and the changing reality of women's lives. For example, Mary Brinton wrote of how Japanese woman's lifecourse patterns show little difference with respect to timing. According to her data from the 1980's most women married within a short age span, with little variability. Under such circumstances it is understandable how metaphors related to women's unmarried state could cause unease as people had few examples of exceptions to the pattern. As more women get married later and later, or not at all, one might expect that such derogatory labels would carry less meaning, at least among younger generations. While this does appear to be the case, new derogatory words emerged as a commentary on other aspects of unmarried women's lives. It is clear that the anonymity afforded by living in larger cities such as Tokyo, may lessen the perceived negative affects of such expressions, they linger in people's minds, among older generations, and in the media representations of past social trends.

One Japanese local government official asked me what my research topic was and I told him it was about unmarried Japanese women, he said that he would tell me everything I needed to know about the topic and suggested we start right away. I appreciated his willingness to speak with me, but I wondered what information he could provide given that he was a middle-aged man who managed an office with only one female worker, and had no daughters of his own, only one son. Moreover, this was not an isolated incident. In fact it happened quite frequently, which made me question why such men felt they had the right to speak for unmarried women. Indeed, such government officials are the same ones who lament the falling birth rate and recommend social policies to change the trend, were labeling unmarried women as the culprit "parasite singles."

Another interesting juxtaposition is the tendency for women who I spoke with to claim that they were somehow different from the norm. Almost all of the women thought they needed to preface their answers to my questions with, "my story is different from most people," or that "I made a mistake in choosing my life path." These statements indicate two conditions which appear to be operating. Who are such "normal" unmarried women to whom others look to as the role model? Are they figments of the imagination of the media and government officials? In this chapter my intent was not to perpetuate stereotypes but to unpack the terms and concepts used to describe or characterize them and show how unmarried Japanese women defined, reacted to, and resisted such characterizations.

Conclusion

Social theories which focus on the local experiences of situated acts are useful for understanding how labels and words describing unmarried Japanese women both maintain and subvert the social order. The meanings associated with being an unmarried woman have

responded to changing demographic conditions and socio-economic change. They shift and vary in relation to time and place and are constituted by specific historical and cultural practices. The rhetoric behind such expressions for unmarried Japanese women originates from the cultural assumption that all people eventually must marry, and to go against such a proscription raises concerns and creates anxiety in the social realm.

Unmarried women's subjective experience in Morioka show that despite the degrading connotations of some words, for example "christmas cake," women sometimes make use of such words to mock the social order and to challenge any negative consequences which the purveyors of such terms intend. In verbalizing the oppressive words among friends as a form of solidarity, unmarried women create identities which are meaningful to themselves and each other. The also borrow words from English, such as *shinguru*, which convey a sense of being current and up-to-date, and while retaining fewer cultural connotations that are associated with the other Japanese words by virtue of their kanji characters.

Terms such as "parasite singles" and "living by oneself" are particularly interesting because they elaborate cultural ideas about place. Drawing on work by Bourdieu and De Certeau, who refers to such terms in relation "an economy of proper place," I argue that admonitions against a woman "living by oneself" incorporate ideologies of the individual body, the family, and the "dwelling" (DeCerteau 1984:55). The power of such terms lies in their subtlety. Women's roles as creators and nurturers of life and home are challenged by an unmarried woman living alone. On the other hand, the discourse surrounding parasite singles takes a different and contradictory stance against unmarried Japanese women. Viewed as leeches upon their parents and society, unmarried women are portrayed as a problem precisely because they do not set up households of their own through the process of marriage. Official

government categories which characterize never-married women as “not yet married,” add to the complexity of this web of meanings, actions, and intentionalities.

By analyzing the cultural dialogue associated with “being unmarried” I confront the discourse surrounding parasite singles by exposing how labels and metaphors naturalize and rationalize universal marriage. “Being unmarried” for Japanese women also carries latent cultural logics regarding work and leisure. Japanese women’s life course activities are tightly linked to ideas productivity and reproductivity, as Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate.

4. PRODUCING PRODUCTIVITY: WORK AND LEISURE

One evening after a meeting of the English conversation club, Tanaka-san mentioned that she wanted to get together for coffee. I remembered that she said that she worked "part-time" and although I didn't know her exact schedule, I knew that she worked on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. I suggested that we meet on Thursday afternoon. "I can't make it at that time. I'll be working then," she replied. "How about Friday morning?" I asked. "I'm at work then, too," she said. I was puzzled. Maybe I had misunderstood what she told me. "I thought you told me that you worked part time," I replied. Tanaka-san agreed and said she did indeed work part time. Then I thought that maybe this was a just busy week at work for her. "Are you working on a special project that requires extra hours?" I inquired. "No, I always work Monday through Friday." At this point I was truly perplexed. "How many hours do you work each day?" I asked. "I work from around nine o'clock in the morning until around five o'clock," she replied. I thought about his and commented that in the United States, this was considered "full-time" work. Tanaka-san said that in Japan it was considered "part time" because she was on a two-year contract and not considered a regular employee.

This example illustrates some of the problems associated with defining categories of work. It also points to limitations that unmarried women face in the labor market. Tanaka-san graduated from a four-year university located in another prefecture. She was unable to find any employment in that city and subsequently relocated back to Morioka to live with her parents. When she is not working, she participates in classes the Working Youths Center and volunteers

for the municipal government. Tanaka-san assists with the care of her household, in particular the care of her grandmother, who lives with them. Her experiences show that unmarried women are productive in ways that do not conform to existing cultural models. Their work and leisure activities are carried out as part of a larger set of coping strategies in response to the marriage pressures experienced both at work and at home.

In attempting to understand single women's work and leisure pursuits, I draw upon some of the recent work on the subject of resistance. More specifically, Ortner's call for studies which "reveal the ambivalences and ambiguities of resistance itself" (Ortner 1995:190), as such studies prove useful in examining the social and historical context which underpins single women's attitudes and behavior in Japan. If we view single Japanese women as a subordinated group, we can learn about the ways in which they create meaning for themselves, both as individual women and collectively. According to Ortner,

> subordinated selves may retain oppositional authenticity and agency by drawing on the aspects of the dominant culture to criticize their own world as well as the situation of domination. In short, one can only appreciate the ways in which resistance can be more than opposition, can be truly creative and transformative, if one appreciates the multiplicity of ways in which those projects feed on as well as collide with one another. [Ortner 1995:190-191]

For unmarried Japanese women mixed messages about work and careers create tension and ambiguity regarding how productivity is defined by others and how Japanese women negotiate the labor market, and in doing so, define productivity for themselves.

Background

The category "*parasaito shinguru,*" or parasite singles, as coined by sociologist Yamada, exists in opposition to a perceived normative model person who is a productive, married member of society. Parasite singles have been defined as "unmarried men and women who continue

living with their parents even after they become adults, enjoying a carefree and well-to-do life as singles" (Yamada 1997, 2000). The negativity displayed by Yamada in such a label underscores core values which permeate Japanese society regarding the expected behavior of its adult citizens.

For Japanese women, the combination of the concepts of "productivity" and "marriage" is powerful and has deep roots in the Japanese public domain. The ideology of hard work or effort (*gambaru*) and endurance (*gaman suru*) as integral parts of Japanese corporate and social life have been examined extensively by ethnographers (Rohlen 1974, Lebra 1984, Kondo 1990). Though unmarried Japanese women's lives were included in such analyses, the criteria for what constitutes productivity vary according to gender as well as age. The conceptualization of productivity derives in part from *ikigai*, roughly translated as "life purpose".

While *ikigai* may provide a critical goal for older generations of women, the women I interviewed were on the whole less enthusiastic, though there was some variation in attitudes. Some said that they didn't really think of *ikigai,* or that they decidedly did not have an *ikigai* and were they comfortable with that. Others claimed not to have an *ikigai* and were clearly troubled by it. Of course, the nature of their responses is also related to their desire to put forth the appropriate face in front of an outsider. Having internalized the norms which dictate the appropriateness of cultivating an *ikigai*, unmarried women who either do not have an *ikigai* or even see it is important are at conflict with both internal and external voices. They do not fit into the traditional mold in which men's *ikigai* is work and women's is family. Some women said that *ikigai* was perhaps a good concept for older women, but for them, *yarigai* had more meaning. *Yarigai* roughly translated as "purposeful, a task worth doing," is more associated with

specific jobs and smaller goals compared with *ikigai*. Most women I spoke with talked more about specific goals they wanted to accomplish, or wished that they had goals.

Keiko Takeshita, a 25 year old medical technician commented,

> Of course I think it's a good thing to have long term goals, but I just can't think about goals because I don't know what the future holds. Kazuko-san, you always think about the future even if you don't have specific goals, right? That's just the way you are. For example, at our age we should be able to do whatever we want to, like travel abroad or study abroad, or whatever.

Kelsky wrote that unmarried Japanese women often resort to studying abroad as a means of circumventing the male dominated corporate structure in Japan (Kelsky 2001). This may be the case for women in Tokyo, but for the most part the women in Morioka didn't view studying abroad as a step towards a better career. They seemed to view it as more of an extended vacation with the added bonus of studying a language.

Kazuko Tanaka, a 25 year old university graduate who is working part-time explained how she thought about the future and setting goals,

> Well, even though I know I can do these things, I can't help but wonder about the next thing. If I study abroad, then what? But even so, I feel like I don't plan things enough. I have a hard time thinking about what I should be doing in the future. I always think, well first I'll try this and then if it doesn't work out I'll try something else. I went away to a university in a larger city so that I could experience living on my own and I hoped to get a job there after I graduated. I searched for a job for a while but, that didn't work out, so the next thing to do was move back with my parents in Morioka. But I couldn't find a full time position here either so now I'm doing *arubaito* (part time work).

Despite the fact that Tanaka-san characterizes her work as "part-time" she works at least forty hours a week in her position as an office worker for a government agency in Morioka (cf. Broadbent 2003 for a discussion of part-time workers in Japan.) I will return to the problematic category of part-time workers later in this chapter.

Gender differences in Defining Work and Play

The categories of work and play are also called into question as they carry different meanings for men and women. Allison (1994) wrote, "work in Japan is considered a male realm. That is, although a larger proportion of women than ever before are now working in salaried jobs outside the home, work is still considered, ideologically and culturally, an activity that is more important for men and that identifies the male more than it does the female. A woman may work, but her social status and place in society is not defined primarily as worker. When a man works, by contrast, it is to his work that he commits most of his energy, time, and loyalties, and it is as a worker that his place in society is assigned" (1994: 91). Women are assigned status by virtue of their husband's job (Shirahase 2001). Unmarried Japanese women, on the other hand are seen by some not as workers, but as consumers of goods and services. Despite the economic boost such consumption provides, their spending habits are viewed as trivial pursuits. One exception to this characterization is the case of unmarried mothers who, in the eyes of government policy makers, are viewed as workers rather than mothers (cf. Ezawa and Fujiwara 2003).

In addition to the gender segregation associated with perceptions of "work" and "play", there exists a type of age grading which informs such perceptions. This is evident in claims that the low levels of employment for people in their 20's is considered "voluntary unemployment" and not a serious social problem compared with the unemployment problems of middle aged workers (Genda 2000). The characterization of unemployment of younger Japanese as not a particularly important "social problem" is related to the belief that in Japan, unlike in Western countries, there is no correlation of increased crime rates and high unemployment among young people (Genda 2000). Still, the emergence of the stereotypical "parasite single" has created a

new commentary on appropriate work and leisure behavior in relation to age and gender in the Japanese lifecourse. Here is an example which blames young Japanese for their unemployed status:

> Since parasite singles do not face financial difficulties, they do not look for jobs with high wages, treating work as something akin to a "hobby." Because of this attitude, if they find their job uncongenial, they immediately give it up. The resulting unemployment of young people is a 'luxury unemployment' that does not involve real financial necessity. To them, work is a discretionary pastime or a means of earning pocket money. [Genda 2000:2]

If we first ignore the problem of data collection and analysis in Genda's work, and take his logic one step further, we can see that the employment system is designed to provide maximum benefits to the primary wage earner in a nuclear family, usually the father. The status of employment for other family members is viewed as not financially necessary. Married women and unmarried children, especially women, are lumped into this category, there are few government protections for their welfare. Therefore, Genda's argument which blames young workers themselves for their unemployment or underemployment both reinforces the existing employment structure and absolves the government from devoting resources to the problem. By positioning the tropes of hard work (*gaman*) and endurance (*gaman suru*) as ideals, the behavior of young workers, especially unmarried women, is viewed as self-indulgent.

Core versus Peripheral Workers

In order to understand the labor conditions in which unmarried women in Japan find themselves, it is necessary to briefly comment on the structure of the labor market in Japan. Hanami (2000) provides a concise view of Japan's labor market:

> The traditional employment structure has two aspects. First there is a core labor force (regular employees) under long-term employment arrangements, with strong job security, better working conditions, and other privileges such as company welfare benefits

> and facilities (so-called life-time employment). The core labor force is occupied exclusively by men with good educational backgrounds. Particularly in larger companies, the core labor force is also dominated by male-monopolized decision-making positions. Second, there is a peripheral labor force (non-regular employees) mostly composed of women, minorities, men with inferior education backgrounds, the handicapped, employees who failed in their first job, and more recently, illegal foreign workers. [Hanami 2000:5]

If we look at the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, one effect has been the creation of different tracks for women to choose from, *ippan shoku* (standard track) with the expectation to quit upon marriage and the *sogo shoku*, formerly for men only, which entails frequent company transfers and long hours. This creates a dilemma in which women are forced to choose between two extremes (Brinton 1994). Moreover, the government's equal employment opportunity measures were initially not accompanied by any concrete social support systems that would enable women to make realistic choices regarding career tracks. Without increased daycare facilities or eldercare facilities, many married women cannot logistically manage a fulltime career.

In addition to this characterization of the labor market, the locality of labor plays a major role. Tokyo, as well as the other larger urban centers in Japan such as Osaka and Yokohama, remains a magnet for job seekers as there are many jobs for white-collar workers there compared to other areas. However, it is not simply a matter of labeling localities as rural or urban. As my informants often told me, Morioka is a local city. This means that it shares some urban characteristics with Tokyo and some characteristics with other rural communities in the prefecture. In this case the core is used to describe people working in the Tokyo-Osaka metropolitan corridor and the periphery is used for those localities outside the corridor.

It is difficult to tease out which components of unemployment are related to individual behaviors associated with the "parasite singles" model and which are more a result of economic forces outside individuals' control, such as a drop in labor demand. The decline in willingness to hire new workers by large companies is not merely due to lack of work ethic among young workers, in particular women, but rather a long-term structural problem attributed to the aging labor force. Large companies curtail their hiring of new graduates because they are constrained by the excess of older employees still on the payroll. This creates a "displacement effect" in which young workers are shut out of the employment market (Genda 2000).

As a result of such cost-cutting efforts on the part of large companies, a new employment trend has taken place over the past decade. The number of people working as "non-regular employees" has increased and a new term has been coined to describe this trend of "atypical employment". Non-regular employees have been labeled as "freeters" or *furēta* derived by combining the word "free" in English and the German word *arbeiter* for worker (Japan Institute of Labor Bulletin, 2000: 1). Previously, the word *arubaito* was used to refer to part-time jobs or second jobs, but as more people have begun to work *pāto timu* in lieu of a regular full time job, the new word, *freeters*, came about. Those informants who were not regular employees usually referred to their employment situation as *pāto timu* even if they worked five full days a week. Some worked "full time" on a one or two year contract basis, while others worked only a few days a week. This leads to some confusion as to what exactly is their employment status is. Moreover, labor statistics have categorized part-time employees as those who work fewer than 35 hours a week, and many part-timers work more hours than that, making it hard to determine just how many people are employed under such conditions (Omori 1993).

According to the Japan Institute of Labor from 1985 to 2000 the total number of non-regular employees grew from 6.45 million to 12.57 million, and female workers accounted for 75 percent of that growth (JIL 2001 40:6). While wage differentials between male and female regular workers have been decreasing over time, in part due to the EEOL, the wage and benefit disparities between non-regular and regular workers have created a new problem that needs to be addressed. The Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare has recognized this as a potential area for exploitation of women and announced that:

> The government needs to improve an environment which allows female workers to choose, on their own, a non-regular employment form in tandem with their individual lifestyles and to go ahead with consolidation of working conditions so that this type of work may not prompt an increase in the number of women forced to work under lower working conditions. [JIL 1997:36(3)]

Since the growth in the white collar industry in the 1970's and 1980's, part time work has been a staple for housewives who wish to supplement their household income. Now the trend appears that given the bleak economic picture in Japan, such jobs are often the only ones that others, including recent college graduates, can find.

Sato (2001) examines both positive and negative aspects of atypical employment patterns. Those viewing it as positive see it as a way to widen job opportunities and provide a more flexible work environment, whereas opponents to such practices claim that it offers poor wages and working conditions and no job stability (2001:1). He analyzes the results of a survey of atypical employees conducted by the Policy Planning and Research Department of the Ministry of Labour[15] in which people's work preferences were discussed. It is interesting to note that his

[15] As of January 6, 2001 the Ministry of Health and Welfare merged with the Ministry of Labor as part of an overall reform of the Japanese central government. The resulting cabinet is now called the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (Koseirodosho). See the following Japanese government sponsored website

analysis focuses on three main groups of respondents, married women aged 25 to 60, young unmarried people below age 24, and elderly people aged 61 or older. The underlying assumption here is that most women over age 25 are either married, or pursuing a career as a regular employee. The normalizing effects of such categorizations cannot be discounted as they reflect the Japanese government's categorizations of appropriate life stages particularly for women.

The majority of part-time employees in the Japanese workforce are women. Although married women are not exempt from sexual harassment, unmarried women are more likely targets, and because of the nature of their employment situation they often have no recourse but to put up with such treatment. Omori has discussed several problems in the oversight of labor laws.

> Because the Labor Standard Act presupposes that employees are full-time, it cannot regulate the working conditions of part-time employees. The government published guidelines on the treatment and working conditions of part-time employees in 1984 and again in 1989. The Ministry of Labor also tried again in 1988 to enact legislation specific to part-time employees, but its efforts failed due to employers' opposition and an obscure definition of part-time employees. [Omori 1993:87]

Gendered Division of Labor

Brinton (1994) asserted, "changes in Japanese gender stratification will not come about mainly as a result of Japanese women protesting discriminatory labor practices.…Change in Japan will mainly be produced by the economic necessity for employers to hire and keep workers. In the decades ahead, more and more of these workers will be women" (1994: 237-238). This sentiment echoes the discussion by Coleman about predictions on how the approval of the birth control pill will eventually come about. One insight gleaned from such discussions is

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for the details:
http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/constitution_and_government/list_0106/list_as_0106.html.

that social changes happen in many different ways; both from intentionally created policies, as well as market forces (cf. Norgren 2001 about policy change and the politics regarding birth control in Japan).

Some researchers have argued that institutionalized sex segregation in Japan actually empowers women, particularly those in white collar companies. This line of logic is based upon the premise that structural restrictions in the Japanese labor market women give women little chance for having a long term career, thereby enabling them to have the freedom to follow their desires and interests. As office workers women are able to wield power over men in informal ways precisely because they lack formal authority and do not compete for status on the management track alongside men. The naturalization effects of such sex segregated work environments absolves women from responsibility and evaluation based on individual performance. In this way, the differentiation between men and women's roles in the workforce is turned upside down, with differing patterns of employment seen as a result of gender roles. Ogasawara's work on white collar female employees (OLs) is a prime example of how accommodation to company policies has enabled women to commit subversive acts (Ogasawara 1998:166).

Western Feminists have carried out debates about "difference," and "protection versus equality" with regard to government policies. Such discussions evolved under different social, economic, and political circumstances and in response to a specific set of perceived weaknesses in Western social theory in relation to women's lived experiences. Even so, the some of the issues confronted in those debates are relevant to the Japanese case because unmarried Japanese women are active consumers of such information. Moreover, the Japanese government creates

and maintains social welfare and labor policies which set examples for how lives should be lived and division of labor in the household.

After speaking with informants it became clear that Japanese women are assumed to be responsible for matters regarding the home and children, whether they work or not, and whether they are married or not. Ehara-san, who is 26 years old unmarried and works in a hotel, told me that her co-worker, a male was often mentored by their supervisor, a woman, and they talked after work about his career. She said that she and her co-worker started working at their positions at the front reception desk at around the same time, but their supervisor never talks to her about such things.

> She only asks me about leisure activities. In fact, she asked if I take classes like sewing and cooking in my spare time. Can you believe that? And she is a woman! It seems like she takes on the mother role when it comes to male employees, and tries to further their careers. It makes me very irritated. (Ehara-san, age 26)

Ehara-san's emotional response to her supervisor's behavior brings up several important issues. First, is the assumption that because the supervisor is a woman she should be interested in mentoring women as well as men. Mentoring only men places her in the category of being motherly, as this is one of the only available roles for a Japanese woman of her age. It is highly possible that the supervisor had no gender appropriate role models of her own to draw upon. In Japan supervisory positions are often seen as male which begs the question of whether women who are in positions of power are seen as taking on the mother role regardless of who they are supervising, whether a man or a woman.

I asked Ehara-san how old this supervisor was and if she was married, and she replied that she was not married and although she didn't know her exact age for sure, she thought that she was in her late forties or early fifties. I asked if Ehara-san's coworkers or other supervisors ever

commented about this supervisor's marital status or labeled her "christmas cake" or any of the terms she had mentioned to me earlier. Ehara-san said, "I call her '*selokansu'*." I was unfamiliar with this word and when I looked it up in my electronic dictionary, I was both surprised and intrigued. It was the word for an old, extinct fish, a romanized version of "celocanth." When I asked why she chose that particular term Ehara-san paused and thought about it for a minute, lit yet another cigarette and said,

> It's just the way she acts. She seems out of place in her job. She dotes on men, and yet she doesn't have a husband or children. She probably never will. She doesn't really have a future with the company either, I don't think. So I guess she'll be extinct, like the fish. Well, to be honest, when I get really upset when she criticizes me I think that she looks like an old fish (Ehara-san, age 26 unmarried hotel worker).

Ehara-san's labeling of her unmarried supervisor shows how unmarried Japanese women participate in stereotyping which degrades all women, especially themselves. Giving voice to such labels demonstrates the invisiblility and pervasiveness of such discourses. The ease with which the expressions are employed, particularly if women choose not identify themselves with the labeled group, gives even more credence to the dominant nature of such dialogues.

Incompatibility of Work and Marriage

Ogasawara's work also reiterated cultural ideas about the incompatibility of work and marriage for women. As OL's age and stay on at the company, they are looked down on by men and younger OL's who view them as somehow unmarriageable. They are held up as "anti-role models" and warned about acting in such a way as to end up as an older, unmarried OL. One example she cited shows how quitting work upon marriage is publicly valorized. In this case the OL dresses up and visits her past associates at the company and gives them small gifts as a token of her appreciation of working together in the past. "Parading through the building in festive

attire, she was instantly identifiable as 'a girl who is leaving to get married.' At the end of the day she was given bouquets of flowers by her colleagues and went home in a taxi that the company ordered specially for the occasion" (Ogasawara1998:59-60). *Enman taisha*, roughly translated as "harmonious separation from the workplace" as in the case of marriage retirement[16], is a ritual that reinforces ideas about the timing of marriage for women in relation to their work trajectories. The effects of such displays are twofold. First, marriage is show as a natural progression along the same course as work. Consequently marriage and work are made to appear as mutually exclusive domains in the eyes of the company management.

As women experience such company sponsored congratulatory rituals honoring their peers over and over again, unmarried women feel enormous pressure to, to the extent that some women seem willing to marry anyone (60). Even without such explicit ceremonies the work place can be filled with stressful reminders. This was the case for one of my informants who worked as a receptionist at an English language school. According to her own account as well as her coworkers, she was very desperate to marry as soon as possible because she really liked the idea of "being married" and was feeling like she was missing out. Around the time that I spoke to her there had been two weddings of coworkers and one engagement recently in her office. Her coworkers told me that she was asking people if they knew of anyone suitable for her and even went so far as to start up conversations with delivery men in the hopes of finding a partner. Such acts may seem extreme, but when put in the context of Foucault's theories about the surveillance and control of bodies, the categorizations of married versus unmarried are powerful, and have real effects on women's decision making processes. Panopticism subjects women to

[16] See Ogasawara 1998 (127-128).

the gaze of power, not through actual intervention of superiors but through the evaluations women perform on themselves (Foucault 1979, 1980).

The appropriate timing of marriage and retirement in this context is also financially rewarded at some companies, in the form of a monetary incentive for those who retire during the period which allows for an easier transition for their replacement (Ogasawara 1998). Such workplace policies encourage the idea that unmarried women must be attuned to maintaining the "natural order" and the rhythm of the workplace. The association of work and personal life in the particular context of being an unmarried woman reiterates the patriarchal policies of companies which discipline and help create both docile and rebellious bodies. The economic component of *enman taisha*, along with the routinization of the public rituals legitimizes and rationalizes company discourse surrounding the appropriate lifecourse expectations for unmarried Japanese women. It is clear that the beneficiary of such policies are the company, who can then hire cheaper replacement labor, white collar working men, who can devote all their energy towards work knowing that their wives with take care of all domestic responsibilities. The Japanese government is the ultimate beneficiary in this scheme as women, both unmarried and married, perform domestic tasks such as caring for children, the sick, or elderly parents, that would otherwise necessitate of social welfare polices paid by the government. For this reason, the Japanese government has promoted of the idea of the incompatibility of marriage and full-time work for women, and challenges efforts of unmarried women who either through extended employment or involvement in certain leisure activities defy the State.

Issues of social class tie into the rhetoric behind the belief of the incompatibility of fulltime work and marriage. In this case, "respectability" is a proxy for social class, despite the sentiment held by some that Japan is a classless society. Respectable unmarried women retire from their

positions when they do marry and so that they may put their domestic responsibilities first, especially if they plan to have children. Continuing to work after being married was a sure sign that either a woman had to work for economic reasons and therefore considered lower class, or that she truly enjoyed her job and prioritized work over marriage (Ogasawara 1998:61). In the public view, either situation was seen as undesirable. As one of my informants commented, "I'm an OL for now, but the work is boring. I find it unbelievable that anyone would want to do this as their life work. I think you would have to be crazy to want that." On the other hand a married woman who works full time said that her employment status probably, "makes her husband look like he either can't control his wife or is not a good provider. It's an old-fashioned way of thinking, but there are still people around here who might think that way." In either case, the beliefs about social class are tied to women's employment practices.

Shirahase (2001) wrote that after marriage Japanese women derive social class from their husband's position when they marry, which is related to his employment. However, Japanese men's perception is based solely on their own education and employment. The missing part of the analysis here is whether men's position can only be negatively impacted by a wife's employment. She goes on to say that gender inequality in both the labor market and within the household lead to asymmetry in the process of a family's perceived social class. Also missing from this analysis is how women perceive themselves versus how they think others perceive them. I argue that it also that unmarried Japanese women are subjected to a similar process of perceived class determination based on their father's employment and education and that how other people evaluate such women's social situations are key components underpinning the social pressures to marry and how to negotiate marriage and work.

One informant, Sasaki-san, a married 36 year old woman spoke about how the concepts of *sekentei*, (decency, respectability, appearances) and *sekennami* (average, ordinary common)[17] were important features of how Japanese women think about their own behavior, especially with respect to marriage. In an interesting commentary on these concepts, Sasaki-san said that the word *sekenbanare* (strange, uncommon, unworldly) could also be seen in a good way. She said that she had two unmarried female friends who live in Osaka and are academic researchers. The are both 38 years old, and seem to always be working and not really thinking of anything that isn't related to their work. She said that they don't make much money as researchers and must depend on their parents for financial support. Sasaki-san said that some of her other friends referred to them as *sekenbanare*, which could be seen as a negative characteristic based on the assumption that at their age, those women are seen as an anomaly, both because they have such specialized careers, and because they should be married and not dependent upon their parents financially. But it also refers to the idea that they are so intensely focused on their careers that they don't have time to think about ordinary everyday concerns, including money. The concept of *sekennami* and the related terms discussed indicate that despite the marriage pressures women experience from both inside and outside of the workplace, the same forces which create docile bodies also create unruly bodies.

Despite changes in the labor market and the EEOL, there seems to be little difference in the employment situation that my informants speak of and the OL's in Ogasawara's study or the women McLendon (1983) described decades ago. Though *katataki*, the tap on the shoulder to suggest retirement is no longer legal, companies still prefer to use young women as "cheap and docile labor." What effect has the EEOL on women's experiences? The 1996 PPRC survey

[17] The glosses for these words were derived from Spahn and Hadamitsky (1989). It is important to note that according to this dictionary the term *seken* means "the world, people, the public, society, life" as well as "rumor, gossip" (Spahn and Hadamitsky 1989:87).

showed that ten years since the passing of the EEOL, 60 percent indicated that there was no change or that it was worse. Forty percent thought there was an improvement, though this is made of mostly women who answered "somewhat better" and four percent "better." Also notable from the survey was that employed women were more likely to perceive of the law negatively, compared with unemployed women. Tsuya (1996) commented, "These women who are employed outside the home for pay are thought to have more opportunities to think about and experience gender equality (or lack thereof) in their workplaces and in their daily lives than do their non-employed counterparts. Given the symbolic nature of the law (no penalty regulation against employers who do not comply with the law) it is not surprising that that many working women in Japan today think that the law has failed (at least no yet succeeded) to [promote gender equality in the workplace]" (1996:131).

The 1996 PPRC survey indicated that roughly 25% of the unmarried women surveyed intended to work all of their life, 27% intended to quit after marriage/childbirth and resume work after children grow up and 37% intend to leave the labor market for good after marriage/childbirth. Professional women showed a strong indication to work their entire life (31.9%). The Policy Planning and Research Department which conducted the survey followed this inquiry with a question whether female non-regular employees chose this type of position because it allowed them to focus on their private lives or for other reasons. Perhaps they truly wanted to become a regular employee at a company but were unable to find such a position. They found that 25% of female dispatched workers and female unmarried part-timers chose the answer, "could not find a post as a regular employee." Conversely, fewer than 10% of female married part-timers, elderly part-timers, and male unmarried part-timers chose this response. The analysts believe that one reason for the difference in attitude between male and female part-

timers is that most of the male part-timers were students who expected to find a regular job after graduation. High proportions of register based men and women dispatch workers chose the response, "because I can work when it is convenient," indicating that both men and women equally value setting their own schedule despite the findings that women tend to value their private lives more than their work lives (JIL 2001:40(4): 4).

Aside from the problems associated with interpreting survey data previously mentioned, it appears that both unmarried men and women are choosing employment opportunities which complement their lifestyle choices, but unmarried women in particular are in work situations that they find less than desirable. Several of my informants, such as Tanaka-san, mentioned that they were only in their current position because they were unable to find anything else upon returning to Morioka after graduating from a university. Brinton's research suggests that there is actually discrimination against women with four-year degrees and that the marginal utility of a college education for women is quite low (Brinton 1993:147-148).

Hayashi-san, a 26 year old university graduate explained her dilemma to me.

> I went to a four-year university and majored in English and American literature. I wanted to get a job using English, but I couldn't speak in conversations. So I spent a year trying to find a permanent job, working jobs out of a temporary agency and taking English conversation classes. No one wanted to hire me. Then I went to Canada for a year and came back to Morioka and still no luck with a full time job, only temporary work. That was when you met me last year, when I was working in the prefectural offices. Now my job is at a construction consulting company. It's full time and has good benefits, but when I compare myself to my friends who only have a high school degree, they have been working for a long time now and saved up a lot of money, whereas I'm poor.

Work as Family, Dutiful Daughters

Company policies toward unmarried women also serve to reinforce social beliefs about proper employment and after work activities. An electronics company personnel manager told Brinton,

> As a major company it is our responsibility to go along with the dominant ideology in society (*shakai tsuunen*). Parents give us their daughters to take care of for a period before marriage, and we are responsible for them. Business trips, transfers, and so on are difficult for women—who will take care of them if something goes wrong? Rather than risk the possibility of an auto accident or whatever, we feel it is better to create a hands-off policy to begin with and go along with society's responsibility to protect women. [Brinton 1993:157]

Despite the fact that Brinton tempered this quote by saying that such beliefs are not present in all work environments, they are not uncommon.

The company as family trope is not new in anthropological studies of Japan (cf. Kondo 1990, Noguchi 1990, Plath 1983). Male office workers create an atmosphere in which young unmarried women are require to act "feminine" (McLendon 1983, Takahashi 1994). The job of the OL as dutiful daughter can be seen as an extension of work as family motif. Takahashi argues that while junior colleges used to be seen as preparatory schools for homemakers, they now focus on more professional oriented subjects only to have their graduates end up working as surrogate wives in corporations. McLendon's work, though conducted prior to the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1986, still rings true to some extent.

> When a young woman gets a job she is encouraged to think of the workplace not as the first state of a working career but rather as a way station on the route to marriage. For women who do not find a marriage partner but go on working, the office becomes a blind alley. Their continued presence there serves only to remind them that they have failed to achieve their goal in life–marriage. [McLendon 1984:156]

Even in the United States, Japanese firms continue to adopt this type of treatment towards unmarried women. Prior to graduate school I worked at the New York offices of two different Japanese financial services companies and witnessed firsthand the treatment of unmarried women. In the sales division of one company, a stock brokerage firm, unmarried women, regardless of education, were required to make copies, serve tea, and assist the male brokers with their work. However, there was a distinction between the treatment of Asian women versus Caucasian women, unmarried women versus married women, and young versus old women. When I started in the department as a sales assistant, I was told that eventually I could become a broker after I started with the basics (copying, etc.) and received my license. Another woman who was hired after me, who was older, Asian, and married, did not have to do the basics, despite the fact that we sat together in training classes to learn about the brokerage industry. I was told it was because she was older and married and I didn't think much of it until another new person was hired. She was a younger, unmarried woman, who was viewed as being "more Asian" than we were. She was given even more busy work to do than the rest of us, we assumed because she seemed more "feminine." If we take away the racial component of this scale of power, we see that age and marital status were key components in power relations in the company.

Japanese language ability was a plus, as many of the sales meetings were held in Japanese, but that did not guarantee equal treatment with the male brokers who were all married men transferred from the Osaka office. One of the older, unmarried Japanese women who worked as a broker endured terrible treatment by the other brokers and even the department manager. She was often excluded from meetings and business luncheons and therefore did not have the same access to information as the other brokers, which in turn affected her performance. She once

took me aside and told me that I should not stay with the company because they did not treat women well. I asked here why she stayed and she said that she was lucky to get a job there at all given her age and the fact that she was not married. Also, she said because she was hired in the United States and not Japan made her an outsider in the company's despite being Japanese. She said that this was her career and that no other Japanese firm would hire her because they do not like to "steal" employees from their competitors.

While such practices took place in the United States, it is still relevant to the discussion of the Japanese work environments in general. The fact that in the case of both of the companies management and senior workers were Japanese and were rotated in from Japan every few years, highlights how constructions of Japanese cultural ideas of appropriate treatment of unmarried women in the workplace were continually being reinforced. In this instance regardless of the geographic location and ethnicity of workers, the transnational flow of management served as the embodied attitudes of the company and culture

Large Japanese companies view unmarried women as potential mates for their unmarried male employees (McLendon 1983). Brinton (1993) argued that this is also one of the reasons that companies protect women, so that they will become suitable wives for the male employees. Such beliefs affect how and who gets recruited for positions, which seemingly focus more on being able to "fit in" (attractive, well-mannered) rather than intelligence or job skills. One of my informants who once was secretary at a large bank commented, "I could have probably just sat at my desk and read a book as long as I dressed nicely and didn't bother anyone."

Brinton's informants had similar experiences referring to corporate policies toward unmarried women, as the following two women's comment show:

> [one company] never hires women who lived alone during their college days. Because such women are under less parental

> supervision than those who live in their parents' home, they may possible have less than "reputable" social (and sexual) lives prior to recruitment, which may not be suitable for their male workers. So they engage in an act of statistical discrimination and altogether avoid hiring women who are from other parts of the country and thus lived away from their parents during their college days in Tokyo. [Brinton 1993:159]
>
> In our company men and women aren't treated equally—from hiring to retirement. When a single man enters the company, the company provides him with housing in a dormitory at very low cost, and when he marries, he and his family can move into company housing. But you know what happens in the case of a woman? There is no women's housing and the company does not subsidize her housing in any way. And when she marries, well. she must quit…. Of course, it isn't written in her employment contract; that would be illegal. But the manager tells her that that's the way it is. [Brinton 1993:159]

A few other incidents indicate the pervasive discourses which connect ideas of marriageability to appropriate workplace behavior. When I worked for the Japanese brokerage firm in New York, one of the stockbrokers in my department who was expected to entertain clients suggested that maybe I would like to marry one of them. He said that it was a common Japanese work practice to ensure good relations between companies. I laughed and said I would think about it, not truly believing that he was serious. Later that same day when the clients came in to the department he made a special effort to introduce me to the unmarried male clients, and invited me to have dinner with them.

At one other point I was singled out for extra, more diversified training by my department manager. The Japanese man in charge of this training was the head of the bond department and he said that he would try to get me transferred to his department because he thought it would make better use of my skills than copying, serving tea, etc. He said not to mention anything to my department head because there might be some tension, so I agreed. I was excited about this possibility and continued in the training in the bond department in the mornings and going back to the institutional sales department in the afternoon. After a few weeks had passed the bond

manager called me to his office, and I was hopeful that he would give me the details of my new position, but instead he asked if I was available to go out to dinner with some clients, a routine business dinner. I declined because I had other plans, but he was clearly displeased. I still did not realize what was going on until the following week, when he asked if I would like to go to see a football game with him. He said that he went to a lot of effort to get the football tickets and that he really wanted me to join him. I said 'no', and returned to my department, where my manager told me that I would no longer be receiving training in the bonds department. I don't know the details of what transpired, but it was clear that my work trajectory was somehow related to my availability to serve as a hostess for male clients and visitors. Situations which might be considered evidence of sexual harassment in the United States were made to seem that it was part of company policy, and therefore legitimized from the viewpoint of the perpetrator.

The socialization of life and career goals for Japanese women starts very early, within the educational system initially and later through employers (Brinton 1993:222-223). In Japan, women's roles as mothers have always been important. After World War II higher education, primarily junior college, was viewed as critical for competitiveness in the marriage market and for being able to raise children properly. As a result, the junior college system in Japan eventually became almost exclusively female. (Ironically, a few of the teachers at a junior college in Morioka were women in their fifties who had never married or raised children.) One teacher at a local junior college commented that recently, there have been changes to the junior college curriculum to make them more akin to specialized training for specific types of jobs.

Moreover, parents are more likely to want their sons to have a university education as opposed to their daughters. A 1982 study showed that 73% of mothers wanted a university education for their sons as opposed to 27.7% for their daughters, a figure that sets Japan apart

from other industrialized nations (Brinton 1993:41-42). The idea that a university education has marginal utility in the labor market was echoed by my informants.

The problems that university educated Japanese women have in obtaining employment ahs been documented by several researchers (cf. Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda 1995, Kelsky 2001, Rosenberger 2001). The following summary highlights the restrictive employment scenario for Japanese.

> "Women have been excluded from the traditional systems of lifetime employment and of promotion and wages based on length of consecutive service within a particular company. High school or junior college graduates have been hired as "OLs" or "office ladies," to perform routine clerical work, but graduates from four-year universities have not been taken on for such positions because they are more expensive and presumably have fewer years remaining until they leave their jobs. At the same time, most employers have been reluctant to hire these women to perform tasks comparable to those assigned to male university graduates. Many companies have had a policy of not recruiting female university graduates, and for this reason, until very recently, employment rates among female university graduates have been lower than those among junior college graduates. Until just a few years ago the differential in starting pay for women and men was greater among university graduates than among high school and junior college graduates. [Fujimura-Fanselow 1995:133].

Many women I spoke with who had gone to a four year university did not have any particular career in mind when they initially enrolled in college. Now several years after graduation they have a hard time imagining what their life will be like when they are, for example forty years old. One informant, Tanaka-san, who had a degree in English stated,

> I just wanted to go to a university and my parents went along with it. I didn't really think about a career per se. It's not that I particularly want to get married, but I know that somehow, I will end up getting married and being a housewife.

For those who view college as a place to prepare for a particular career, Tanaka-san's response may seem frivolous or irresponsible. Japanese companies, on the other hand, have traditionally hired new graduates with the intention of training them to work for the company and do not look for specialized skill. Instead they recruit people with suitable characters or personal qualities (cf. Brinton, Kondo, Ogasawara, Rohlen). In large companies promotion is usually from within the ranks of existing employees, and there are few, if any, outsiders hired for management positions, especially at the more senior levels.

Even women who had acquired more specialized training felt somehow unsure about their future. As Takeshita-san, an unmarried medical technician related,

> I've never really thought about my future long term. I just like to do what I want to do for now. I ride my motorcycle and go out with my friends in my spare time. Sometimes I don't like my job and I have some health problems. But I don't feel like I have the right skills for a typical office job. My younger sister is very different from me and it makes my parents wonder if they treated us differently. (ha, ha). She is in graduate school in Tokyo and plans to be a "*kyaria uman*" (career woman) involved in international relations or development types of things. My parents didn't really push us or discourage us, so I guess it's just our different personalities. I'm not so serious.

When I asked Takeshita-san if her parents talked about who would care for them when they got older she replied,

> No. they don't have any expectations for us. I have a friend who, like me, has no brothers but her parents expect her to find a husband who will take over their family store. I guess I'm lucky that my father works for a large company and doesn't think in that way. I don't think about marriage really. I can't cook and I'm not very organized, so I don't think I'll make a very good wife.

It is interesting to note that while Takeshita-san didn't think about marriage in the positive way, meaning getting married, she still spoke in terms of her negative qualifications for marriage.

Another interesting point is that when asked about their career goals or jobs, many of them somehow linked their answer to marriage by saying things like, "I'll do this kind of work until I get married," or "I'm able to do this because I'm not married." Their locus of reference pertaining to their career goals is "being married".

One of the difficulties unmarried women face is how to reconcile media images of "*kyaria uman*" (career woman) with real life experiences of the women they see around them, friends, family, and most importantly, their mothers. This is not unlike the phenomenon in the United States of women trying to combine careers with having children, or in other words trying to "have it all." There seems to be a severe lack of real role models, not media created superwomen, for whom they can turn to for guidance. As Fujimura-Fanselow noted,

> Japanese women who attend four-year universities today tend to come from rather well-to-do homes in which the father earns sufficient income to support the family so that the mother does not have to work for financial reasons. Moreover, while many of the mothers of today's students attended either a junior college or university, in those days— that is, the 1960's—not only was it considered much less socially acceptable for women to work, especially after marriage, but also job opportunities for female graduates were extremely limited, so that relatively few women of their generation pursued careers Fujimura-Fanselow 1995:139-140]

Another college graduate who worked part-time through a temporary agency said to me,

> I haven't made plans for a particular career because I know that someday I will get married and I didn't know if I would be able to combine marriage and a career. My mother tried and said it was too hard to do. I would feel bad, I think, if I had to give up my career for marriage, so this way I don't have to make such a sacrifice.

Other researchers have indicated similar responses from women (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995: 141-142). In this case, the woman was thinking pragmatically about her choices, and her career was seen as being sacrificed, but not the education. Indeed, higher education for women in

Japan has been conceptualized as preparation to be a "good wife, wise mother," with a university degree replacing the previously necessary "*hanayome shuugyou*" (bridal training classes).

Yet others who seem determined to have full-time careers, and who may eventually get married do not appear to think about the obstacles they may face. As Miyazawa-san, a 28 year old secretary told me when I asked of her plans for the future,

> Miyazawa-san: In my spare time I go to Tokyo where I'm studying to become a Japanese teacher for foreigners. I think I'll probably get married someday and have children.
>
> Author: How do you plan to manage combining a career with taking care of children?
>
> Miyazawa-san: If necessary, I will hire a baby sitter or take my children to a daycare facility, at least, until they are old enough to go to school. I've heard that there are more places like that (day care centers) in Tokyo than here.
>
> Author: After you finish your studies what do you plan to do?
>
> Miyazawa-san: I will probably move to the U.S. and work at a language school there. So many foreigners come here to teach English, so I thought I'd do the same in the U.S.

When I mentioned that I didn't mean to discourage her but there weren't that many independent schools that teach Japanese, unlike the ubiquity of English language schools in Japan, she seemed quite shocked and somewhat disbelieving. Miyazawa-san's response sheds light on the degree to which some unmarried women think about their futures beyond the long-term, over-arching goal to plan out the logistics of everyday life. It also reveals the desire to leave Japan to go to the United States for an imagined work situation. In her case, the goal of moving to the United States did not seem to be an effort to escape the social pressures associated with being an unmarried woman in Japan[18], but rather to pursue a specific career path.

[18] See Kelsky 2001 for discussions regarding unmarried Japanese women who have "occidental longings" to escape the Japanese corporate or family structures.

The "anti"-socialization of women for particular vocations is also perpetuated by the media who often portray unmarried women as concerned about fashion, eating at fancy restaurants, and enjoying themselves while waiting for the right man to marry. Even some university professors have indicated similar views. "Let's face it, most of these young women are here for cultural enrichment and most of them will simply get married and raise families, so let's give them that kind of education rather than trying to provided specialized training" (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995:151). This kind of comment sounds reminiscent of the "*ryosai kenbo kyoiku*" (good wife, wise mother education) mandates of the Meiji era. It is interesting to note that unlike the image that most Americans have of industrious Japanese students, many people said to me that the stereotypical Japanese college student, male or female, did not take their studies very seriously. High school was the time for serious study and once accepted at a good university, it was seen as a given that with the bubble economy of the 1980's, a good job would be waiting upon graduation, as the tendency had been for large companies to recruit from certain schools only (Brinton 1995). Ironically Japanese women were often observed to be more diligent students than men, with better attendance records and better understanding of the course material (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995:151). The government and media portrays unmarried Japanese women as less serious about their studies and work in order to reinforce state policies which discriminate against women in the workforce. In effect this creates a situation in which the image of proper unmarried women is held up for scrutiny against the image of the so-called parasite single and neither truly reflect the diversity of experiences and conditions of such women.

Tsuya's examination of the data from the 1996 PPRC (Tsuya 1996:123) shows that roughly 65% of the never married women in the survey are employed, a figure comparable to the married

women. The difference lies in the type of employment. The never married women in the survey have a larger proportion of full time employees (professionals, clerical and blue collar workers) and a lower proportion of part-timers and family workers compared with married women. A large majority of the married women who are unemployed are full-time housewives as opposed to being students as the unmarried women are (Tsuya 1996:123-124).

Table 6 Proportion Employed and the Employment-Status /Occupational Composition of the Employed by Age: Never Married Japanese Women Aged 16-49, 1996

	Total	16-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+
Employed:						
Professional (1)	12.5	1.0	16.2	21.8	18.1	6.6
Clerical/blue-collar	38.9	7.3	49.3	54.5	49.4	53.9
Part-timer	7.5	2.3	8.8	9.5	9.6	13.2
Business-proprietor/Self-employed/other (2)	5.6	1.0	3.9	7.6	14.5	17.1
(Total)	64.5	11.6	78.2	93.4	91.6	90.8
Not Employed:						
Student	31.0	85.4	17.9	1.9	0.0	0.0
Unemployed	4.0	2.0	3.7	4.7	7.2	7.9
(Total)	34.9	87.4	21.6	6.6	7.2	7.9
No Answer	0.6	1.0	0.2	0.0	1.2	1.3
(Number of Cases)	(1,079)	(301)	(408)	(211)	(83)	(76)

Notes: 1) Professionals, clerical workers and blue-collar workers here are all full-time employees. 2) Including family workers

The KAP survey gave women eleven possible responses to a question asking unmarried women why they work, from which they could chose two answers. The possible responses were: 1) to earn spending money; 2) to help household finance; 3) to pay for my own education; 4) to utilize my own talent; 5) to gain economic independence; 6) my job makes my life worth living; 7) to broaden my outlook on life; 8) to save money for marriage; 9) to look for a future husband;

10) to help the family business; and 11) other. Few women chose answer 9, "to look for a future husband." This shows the incongruity between companies' attitudes toward unmarried women and unmarried women's reasons for seeking employment. The most frequent response was to earn spending money, at 38%. This response was particularly high among clerical, blue-collar and part-timers. Other responses which garnered a high proportion of responses were to "gain economic independence" and to broaden their outlook on life," at roughly 33% each (1996).

One notable finding was that women who are professionals chose their "job makes life worth living" and to "utilize their own talent" at 45% and 27%, respectively. Tsuya argues that the data show that "never married women in Japan today hold employment, at least in part, because of immediate and future financial concerns. Women who are professionals, self employed and business proprietors also have the tendency to choose autonomy and emotional fulfillment as their reasons of holding a job, and the strong career orientations of professional women are especially notable" (1996:127). Given such findings, it is easy to see that the label "parasite singles" is misleading, at best, and if relevant at all, perhaps only to a small proportion of the population. That few women chose to work to supplement household finances is more a reflection of the financial health of their families, an after effect of the bubble economy. This is probably also the reason why few women chose to pay for their own education.

Japanese employers have been reluctant to hire women to be groomed for management positions because according to labor statistics, they tend to quit after marriage or the birth of their first child. The figures below indicate that not all unmarried women desire for lifetime career. However, it is import to consider that women base their opinions on the existing employment climate that they and their friends experience. It's a vicious cycle: without better

working conditions and responsibilities, women tend to quit upon marriage and childbirth, causing companies to be wary of investing in their career potential.

For never married women, how long would you like to continue working?	
All my life	25.4
Until marriage	23.3
Until childbirth	13.4
Will stop working with marriage or childbirth, but will resume working after childrearing is over	27.0
Other answers	5.0
No answer	5.9

(PPRC 1996:57)

Corporate attitudes toward employment of women (PPRC 1996, Tsuya 1996:132)

"One of the reasons female university students are having trouble finding jobs after graduation is because companies are reluctant to hire them. What do you think of this?"

	Total	Married	Never Married
It's good	2.1	2.5	1.0
If anything, it's good	17.1	19.6	11.0
If anything, it's bad	53.8	54.9	53.4
It's bad	20.5	16.2	29.7
No Answer	6.5	6.8	4.8

(PPRC 1996, p. 28)

Women who responded "it's good " or "if anything, it's good" were asked to chose up to two reasons from a list. Their responses were as follows:

Why do you think it's good?	Total	Married	Never Married
Men are more capable than women	25.6	26.6	25.4
Women quit when they get married or give birth	60.8	59.6	60.8
Women often take leave during pregnancy, when they give birth, for childcare and to care for the elderly	58.7	61.1	47.7
Work is best left to men	21.8	22.1	22.3
Other answers	4.9	4.9	6.2
No answer	1.2	1.2	0.8

(PPRC 1996:28-29)

Women who responded "it's bad" or "if anything, it's bad" were asked to chose up to two reasons from a list. Their responses were as follows:

Why do you think it's bad?	Total	Married	Never Married
Women are just as capable as men	48.5	46.7	52.0
Women are better workers	11.4	12.2	9.0
Women improve the environment at work	32.8	33.3	32.7
Jobs geared for women are increasing	61.1	63.5	57.1
Other answers	4.7	4.0	5.7
No answer	1.1	1.2	0.9

(PPRC 1996:29)

The data show that nearly 75% of the respondents felt that it was a bad that corporations were reluctant to hire female college graduates. To Westerners, it may not be so surprising that a majority of women feel this way, but what is surprising is that there are Japanese women who do not feel this way. By examining the types of women who gave such a response and their reasons for doing so, we can learn about how such attitudes are both reflected and rejected in women's

actual behavior. Never married women were more likely than married women to hold negative opinions, as well as women who are employed outside the home as compared with family workers (Tsuya 1996:132-134). Those women who indicated that it was a good practice to discriminate against female university graduates believed that the tendency for women to quit or take leave of work upon marriage or childbirth justified such actions by corporations. Tsuya argued that it is the "perception of the prominence of traditional gender roles (marriage and motherhood), rather than that of male superiority in employment-related arenas" that informs women's opinions (Tsuya 1996:135). However, such perceptions are, in part, created by corporations, and are not just inert ideas that women happen to adopt. Corporate policies which encourage women to retire upon marriage create the statistics that indicate a tendency for women to quit employment upon marriage. It is circular logic, then, to use such statistics as justification for discriminatory policies.

Some researchers have claimed that the fluctuation in the job market for women would encourage or discourage marriage, and that recent increases in women's ability for more widespread participation in the paid labor force are a primary reason that unmarried women postpone marriage. When their employment prospects are not as good, women tend to see marriage more favorably, according to these researchers (Tsuya 2001). However, according to the data collected by the PPRC, unmarried women's views on marriage remain unaffected by the tightening job market (PPRC 1996:51).

Perhaps one reason there is so much unease at unmarried women's work as well as leisure activities is that, if we look at the dual roles women have played in the postwar economy, we are again confronted with the idea of "purpose." Brinton examined these dual roles, first as "direct participants in the economy, they have supplied inexpensive labor to employers and second as

"indirect participants: they have nurtured the higher priced male labor, the labor of their husbands and sons" (1995:12). As the economy worsened women's first role was diminished but the second role remained.

It is the second role as "investors in the human capital of the males to whom they are attached" (1995:13) that has been seemingly rejected by contemporary unmarried women in Japan. As they postpone or even forgo marriage, women create problems for the human capital system that Brinton describes. In fact, Brinton quotes Glenda Roberts' research at a Japanese lingerie factory, saying that by examining the president's speech on the company's founding anniversary, it exemplifies the virtue of investing in the capital of others in the household, rather than directly in their own human capital and wage-earning power (1995:233). We are confronted with the idea that Japanese women, especially unmarried women, are encouraged to be consumers of the capital market, not producers.

Yet at the same time unmarried women are labeled as parasites upon society for not setting up their own households. These two discourses contradict one another on several levels. First, historically unmarried Japanese women have never been encouraged by families, employers, or the government to set up their own households. Despite the coming of age ceremonies held in municipalities each January for people who turn twenty years old, women are not "removed" from their father's family registry until they are married, at which point they are entered into their husband's family registry. Second, companies are reluctant to hire unmarried women who do not live at home with their parents because they are viewed as unchaste and not of suitable character. This second characterization, particularly pertinent in rural prefectures, is constructed with the expectation that some of the newly recruited women will eventually marry male employees. Given such contradictory expectations, any behavior of unmarried women would

appear to have some sort of drawback, either in terms of how they are perceived by others, their "habitus", so to speak, or in the types of employment opportunities available to them. It is in this particular local arena in which unmarried women in Morioka use their individual resources to manage the various assaults to their identities, in pragmatic ways.

Leisure

Japanese unmarried women's leisure time has been the focus of much attention and is reflected in the "parasite single" label. The idea of being a parasite carries with it cultural assumptions about productivity and appropriate occupations and leisure activities in relation to one's age and place in society. By examining how unmarried women in Morioka spend their time we can begin to understand how women react to and recreate such social ideals.

In order to understand what leisure and play means for unmarried women, it is necessary to discuss leisure itself. Allison (1994) argued that in Japan, "the tendency is to define and conceptualize play in relationship to work, and work, as an occupation and not just a job, is treated as male specific" (1994:124). Women she spoke with, housewives and mothers, pursued leisure activities such as tennis, going out to lunch, studying English, or meeting with other mothers and their children, but tended to rationalize such activities by relating them to a positive feature which complements their social roles, such as social interaction with other children or self improvement in the case of English classes. Allison also notes that the women showed feelings of embarrassment for their supposed acts of self-indulgence, and links the necessity of creating a reason for leisure, as opposed to enjoyment for enjoyment's sake only, as a characteristically Japanese trait (1994:124). However, unmarried women depicted in the Japanese media appear to have no such qualms about how to spend their leisure time.

A great deal of the writing on the so-called parasite singles focuses on the very fact that unmarried women put more effort into their leisure activities than their work activities. In a culture which often takes leisure very seriously, it seems that it is not the leisure per se that is the problem, but the perceived lack of dedication to work that attracts the media's attention. The Ministry of Labor's survey on Diversified Types of Employment found that male regular employees and those who work for an agency which dispatches them to companies (called "register base" dispatched employees) attached greater importance to work life rather than to private life compared with female employees. In particular, married female part-timers, young, unmarried female part-timers, and female dispatched workers and showed a tendency to attach a greater importance to private life over work life (JIL 2001, 40:4:3). Is it "natural" to not take employment seriously if it is not a permanent situation? This calls into question the motivations behind why people choose to work in particular employment situations. The fact that male dispatched employees privilege work over private life compared to female dispatched employees suggests that there is nothing "natural" about such tendencies. Gender socialization starts early in childhood in Japan (cf. Brinton, Allison) and pervades all aspects of achievement related endeavors.

With regard to housewives, Allison argued that in Japan, women's domestic labor inside the home is seen as undeserving of the kind of break that male labor outside of the home, and as a result women's play is conceptualized and limited to those activities which are in some form incorporated into their work role, rather than seen in opposition to their work, as is the case for men (1994:125). According to my informants, there were many leisure activities that were associated with work for both men and women, married or not. Participating in drinking parties, going to hot springs, and traveling abroad with the company were routine leisure activities for

many of the unmarried women I spoke with. Moreover, men may feel even more of a responsibility to attend such gatherings for the sake of furthering their careers, indicating that such leisure activities are an integral component of their work activities and not the rigid contrast that Allison purports there to be.

Allison also argues that money as key in determining how work and play are conceptualized in terms of gender. "Money…is the medium that both measures male labor and that male labor represents. It is also the medium that in capitalist economies acquires goods, determines the standard of living, and in the case of Japanese capitalism, purchases and mediates most forms of male play" (1994:125). This helps explain the perception that unmarried Japanese women are not working hard enough to deserve leisure activities. Unmarried women using their wages to purchase brand name goods and participate in leisure activities is a transgression against the idea that male labor represents money. Yet at the same time, they are encouraged to be consumers rather than producers, and the employment system is structured to support this. This is another contradiction in how the discourses circumscribe unmarried women's lives, and shows how the limited choices unmarried women have with regard to employment allows them to take advantage of leisure, only to be branded as frivolous for doing so.

Ogasawara (1998) recounted the leisure activities of the OL's she interviewed, in particular travel abroad. "People like my parents get half disgusted and say, 'You're going again?!' But I feel I should take this chance and travel while I can" (1998: 57). "There was a feeling, especially among the unmarried women, that being OLs was only a temporary arrangement and that they were not yet their real selves" (1998: 57). Employment policies which force women to retire from their jobs after marriage help shape unmarried women's ideas of what their 'true selves' are. Several informants also said to me that they were drifting from one temporary clerical job to

another, waiting for their life to begin or to find their "life work". They also spoke of their envy of me with my work. One unmarried woman, a school teacher said to me that she thought it was great that I had my research was my purpose in my life. She found it unbelievable that I would leave a husband back in the United States in order to pursue my work. She also commented that it was ok as long as I didn't have children. That would be inappropriate and neglectful on my part. Indeed, the idea of "life work" took on new meaning as some of my female relatives were more concerned about who would take care of my husband while I was residing in Japan rather than showing interest in my research.

Conclusion

Given the structural constraints of the Japanese labor market, unmarried women in Morioka have adjusted to the lack of regular employment opportunities and discriminatory government policies by making pragmatic choices about how they spend their time. Such activities, whether working for pay, caring for family members, volunteering in the community, or going out with friends, give unmarried women the opportunity to seek self advancement in their own terms. By participating in a wide range of activities, they are able to view themselves as strong , powerful, productive women. For Japanese women, ideas about women's productivity also have been linked historically to powerful ideas about the procreative potential of all women. In the next chapter, I examine how such discourses influence unmarried women's lives and how they force a reevaluation of this linkage.

5. SEXUAL BODIES, CONTRACEPTION AND GENDER IDEOLOGIES

This chapter examines the case of unmarried women in Japan as a particularly relevant example of how dichotomies such as married women versus unmarried women, used in the context of reproductive health, highlight dominant ideologies and hegemonic forces. National rhetoric on family planning and contraception directed at all women, but especially married women, is both internalized as well as resisted by unmarried Japanese women. The primary aims of this chapter are to illustrate how unmarried Japanese women's ideas about contraceptive technology shape and are shaped by beliefs and practices surrounding gender relations, sexuality, marriage, motherhood, and the family in Japan. This analysis will, in turn, lay the groundwork for solutions to the problems of unmet need for reproductive services for unmarried women in Japan and aid efforts to put an end to practices which jeopardize both women's and children's health.

Global Context and Background

An examination of how unmarried Japanese women interpret and reconstruct Japanese ideologies of contraception and family planning must take into consideration the dynamics of the local and the global, as global conventions encourage the transfer of knowledge among participant countries. It is important to briefly look at the trajectory of such population policy movements because they reveal the true intentions of governments in the funding of such programs. Japan, in particular, is one of the largest financial donors to the UN Population Fund and as such, is a key player in international population issues. According to some scholars, it

was the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo which introduced the concept of "reproductive rights" to Japan (Ogino 1999). This conference, along with the 1995 conference in Beijing, indicated a shift in critical areas for global investigation from a concentration on worldwide fertility and demographically-oriented family planning programs to a focus on quality of life issues such as the health needs of individuals and families, and especially women's health. The important focus in this new approach was "a greater emphasis on women's health for its own sake rather than as an instrument to achieve demographic goals or improve child survival, on the exercise of free choice in matters of reproduction, on sexuality, and on the social condition which influence reproductive decisions, their health correlates, and their consequences" (Obermeyer 2001:1).

The Cairo conference brought attention to the women's health movement, which has roots in the family planning movement started by Margaret Sanger, who opened the first U.S. birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916, and Marie Stopes, who opened the first birth control clinic in England in 1921 (Donaldson and Tsui 1990). Such pioneers in family planning focused on married women's need for access to information on birth control to eliminate unwanted pregnancy, and thereby reduce maternal mortality. Thus, the beginnings of the international family planning movement showed concern related to enabling an individual's control over marital fertility. It was only in later decades that family planning was incorporated into population control programs based on national interests of reducing fertility. Governments' concerns over population growth pre-empted the needs and desires of individuals. The Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 reaffirmed the goals and specific aims of the Cairo conference (UNFPA 1998).

While the decrees of the United Nations Population Fund were intended to be valid for all nations, the impetus for such statements derived in part from increased awareness of deplorable human rights conditions in developing countries. It is sometimes assumed that the situation is radically different in developed countries, in particular, with regard to access to reproductive healthcare for women. While at a material level this may appear to be so, analysis of ethnographic and statistical data in Japan suggests a need to search beyond a focus on the category "women." In Japan, despite evidence of increasing sexual behavior among unmarried women, key cultural ideas about sexuality and contraception continue to be elaborated for married women only. At a practical level such discrimination and neglect of unmarried women's reproductive health needs creates serious problems for women's well-being.

The term "family planning" itself is a Western import. Although it is not uncommon for scientific or medical terms to be imported into Japanese, or written in *katakana*, the syllabary for foreign words, or simply left in English, one researcher commented that "'family planning' was not a Japanese term—it was foreign to her patients, or to many Japanese women" (Jitsukawa 1997:185). This is an important point to understand not only for the obvious reasons related to the specific cultural context, but for others as well. Historically, the term has certain connotations in the United States which are not completely benign or isolated, as researchers of the history of birth control in Japan deftly reveal (Norgren 2001). The distinction made between family planning and birth control, including how abortion fits into this cultural categorization, is evidenced in contraceptive education efforts. Jitsukawa wrote, "If we include abortion as a means of family planning, which many researchers on Japanese birth control practices do, then the Japanese can be said to practise family planning through abortion. However, this definition fits awkwardly in the efforts of Japanese family planning workers who emphasize planning

'prior' to procreative behaviors. They prefer not to include abortion as a means of planning" (Jitsukawa 1997:198). Women's own narratives best articulate their experiences. "Someday I do want to have children. When I got pregnant a few years ago, it didn't seem like the right time for me. I was getting ready to go to Canada for a few months. My boyfriend at the time ended up not being so faithful to me, so I decided to have an abortion," said Shimada-san, an unmarried 28 year old sales person who spoke of her abortion at age 25. There is a distinction between an "ill-timed" versus "unplanned" pregnancy.

Very little research has focused on single Japanese women's perceptions and behaviors regarding sexuality and contraception. Coleman's research on family planning among Japanese married couples provides a glimpse into how the rhetoric of family planning is created by government agencies and groups such as the Japan Medical Association (Coleman 1983). Hardacre's work on abortion provided a historical understanding of the cultural context of abortion, and though she discussed the plight of pregnant, unmarried women and abortion, she focused on the rituals associated with appeasing fetal spirits of the unborn (Hardacre 1997). Norgren's work (2001) explored the political processes behind the often contradictory policies surrounding contraception in Japan, especially with regard to the recently legalized birth control pill. Clearly, there is a definite need for studies which center on the beliefs, experiences, and contraceptive practices of single Japanese women (Steinhoff 1992, 1991). Through analyses of family planning ideologies and practices, this research examines how culturally appropriate gender roles are constructed (cf. Greenhalgh 1994; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991; Tamanoi 1990).

It is especially important to stress cultural context when looking at demographic statistics, which can be interpreted in a variety of ways, some of which may have no bearing or relationship to the forces at work to create such statistics. By looking only at the numbers, we

see only the aggregate, macro-level responses and are blind to lived experience of those the statistics seek to represent. For example, one cannot look at data indicating prevalence of a contraceptive method and conclude that this provides conclusive evidence of a preference for that method for the given sample population. Furthermore, even the idea of "contraceptive choice" is bound up with Western ideals relating to the terms "contraception" and "choice," which may not be very applicable to Japan. One must analyze the complex web of power relations within which Japanese women find themselves enmeshed, and then attempt to tease out those salient features which might indicate a preference for certain health promoting behaviors.

The flow of information from West to East, global to local, is at times dynamic, uneven, and incomplete. Cultural practices in the West do not go unnoticed in Japan. In fact, unmarried Japanese women in particular are very cognizant of foreign ways of living by reading magazines, books, and learning foreign languages and traveling to foreign countries (Kelsky 2001). Yet, it is not always possible to predict the affect of such cultural interactions. Lock believed in the necessity to investigate various cultural domains in relation to reproduction, including local interpretations of the "West," which she referred to as "struggles with cultural identity, particularly as it is debated with respect to the alterity of "the West." Such interpretations are salient to this discussion because this is the social environment in which women, men, medical professionals and the government create, exchange, and confer knowledge. In Japan interactions with the West, either through intermediaries such as the media or personal relationships, serve as an important resource for self reflection with regard to issues surrounding reproduction (Lock 2001:257, Kelsky 2001).

Women's bodies have been regarded sites where power is both enacted and negotiated. As Lock, drawing on theories by Foucault, discussed how the medicalization of reproduction serves as a critical nexus of "biopower,"

> At one pole, the human body, usually the female body is made into an object for the enactment of technologies of control—a site to be manipulated. Women (and their partners) who subject themselves to such manipulation do so, it is assumed, because they have been "disciplined" into an ideology which individual reproduction is considered both a "natural" outcome of a committed relationship and essential to a fulfilled life. At the other pole, where the control of populations is located, political concern about reproductive outcomes ensures that medicalization is neither simply a personal nor a medical matter (although it is almost always billed this way in clinical settings). [Lock 2001:255-256]

Family Planning Ideologies

A key venue in which the intersection of official ideas about family, marriage, and sexuality are particularly highlighted is the National Survey on Family Planning, conducted by the Populations Problems Research Council. The results of the survey, administered bi-annually since 1950, are published nationwide in the Mainichi Shimbun, a prominent Japanese newspaper. This survey is not merely a poll of married women's and men's attitudes, but a form of normalizing rhetoric which projects culturally appropriate answers into a seemingly innocent questionnaire format. The researchers boast of the long record of data gathering beginning in 1950 surveys have been conducted once every two years. "Nearly half a century long undertaking performed by a private organization like the Mainichi Newspapers, never taken before in the world, should be worthy of attention" (PPRC 1992:43). Despite this long history, the 1990 survey is the first one in which unmarried women's responses to questions were also recorded. Even with this data it is difficult compare historical trends occurring at the same time because much of the body of research only includes ideas of marriage and family planning which

pertain to married women. The implications which follow from this may shed some light on the nature of "traditional" ideas about premarital sexuality in Japan. Thus, this survey is an appropriate starting point for investigation of how key cultural values which pertain to married women may be internalized by single women. Recent family planning survey topics include: possible government intervention to help boost the birthrate; who should be responsible for care for the elderly; opinions on the birth control pill; and the increase in sexual activity among teenagers and unmarried Japanese.

Government stances on contraception are instrumental in the constructions of Japanese women's beliefs. At the time I conducted fieldwork, the oral contraceptive pill was not legally approved for use as a contraceptive in Japan. However, doctors could legally prescribe the pill for other reasons, such as hormone-related problems. The initial government rhetoric on the ban on birth control pills claimed fears of side effects from a "foreign" drug, but later allowed Japanese pharmaceutical companies to begin testing a Japanese version of the pill suitable for Japanese women (Ogawa and Retherford 1991; Coleman 1983). Critics of the Japanese government believed that there were several agendas behind the ban on the pill: 1) the government's fear of a further decline in the birth rate if the pill were legalized; 2) powerful lobby groups for gynecologists who feared their incomes from performing abortions would decrease; 3) Fear of a loss of morality in the population; and 4) Fear of further spread of HIV/AIDS. 5) environmental concerns of synthetic hormones (Coleman 1983, Harnischfeger 1992). This debate highlighted how family planning ideologies perpetuated by the government influence not only the physical availability of birth control but the social, emotional, and psychological reasons for deciding which whether or which type to use. Single Japanese women

have internalized debates about sexuality, family planning, and contraception and enact their identities in relation to existing gender ideologies, government policies, and historical constructs.

Articulation of Global and Local Forces

Ginsburg and Rapp argued for the need to examine the dialectic between the local and the global because questions of culture, politics, and biology are impossible to disentangle from the topic of reproduction as it involves transnational processes that link local and global interests. They define local not by geographical boundaries, "but as any small scale arena in which social meanings are informed and adjusted through negotiated, face-to-face interaction" (1994:8). "Transnational or global policies are those through which specific areas of knowledge escape the communities of their creation to be embraced by or imposed on people beyond those communities" (1994:8-9).

Ginsburg and Rapp were responding to a set of obvious weaknesses in linking the local and global. Their approach is part of a general trend within the social sciences calling for a focus on these broad issues. They not only called for attention to the linkage between the local and global in a specific topical area that is reproduction. They argued that the domain of reproduction is of necessity at the center of social theory.

Contraceptive practices conventionally thought of as shaped by rational individuals acting exclusively within a local context, are, in fact, part of a much wider set of constraints and relations. One particularly illuminating example is the case of the long-time ban on the low-dose oral contraceptive pill in Japan, which was lifted in 1999. In this case we can clearly see the expression of nationalist ideology at the level of both body and society. Some government officials considered the pill unsuitable for Japanese women's bodies because it is seen as a "foreign" drug not initially developed in Japan. This is an incredibly weak argument given all

the other pharmacological imports from outside of Japan. Another often cited reason for the ban on the birth control pill is the fear of an increase in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS. Officials who take this stance view AIDS as a consequence of loose morals in countries in which the pill is readily available, for example, the United States.

The irony lies in the fact that Japan is one of the largest (if not the largest) foreign aid donor in the population field, which results in the exportation and adoption of a variety of contraceptive methods in, primarily, Third World countries. In bilateral aid programs, experience and expertise are a basic foundation for providing assistance to recipient countries. How can Japan effectively address the demands of developing countries for oral contraceptives and other steroids such as Norplant and Depo Provera if these contraceptive methods are illegal in Japan? The practical solution lies in the use of multilateral channels to provide aid for contraception which do not have the same kinds of restrictions. However, as some researchers have stated, "The choice between funding in the form of bilateral or multilateral aid, however, does not solve a more fundamental issue that every donor country faces and that Japan cannot escape: the moral dilemma of promoting population control in developing countries by means that are illegal at home" (Jitsukawa and Djerassi 1994:1048-1050). Once can see in this case that Japanese ideas about what is appropriate for the Third World is not appropriate for Japan. When one makes linkages between Japanese reproductive policy and nationalist ideology, underlying racist motivations are revealed.

Field Setting, Ethnoscapes

In Japan, Prefectural and Municipal Public Health Centers provide information on family planning in the form of pamphlets, and counseling for women by public health nurses who make home visits after women give birth. Nurses also present talks to local community groups on

reproductive issues surrounding pregnancy and parenting. The target population for family planning information is married women who are presumed to have time during the day to attend such meetings or seek out such information. Men, who have the dominant roles in the family, economy, and sexual relationships, seem to warrant no treatment at all. Also left out of the picture are unmarried women, as the following example illustrates.

A few months into my fieldwork I asked my Japanese tutor, a 45-year old housewife with three children, where people get information on birth control and family planning. She said that there was probably information at public health centers, but she had never gone there to receive any, claiming that when she was younger she had relied on friends and women's magazines for information since the public schools didn't teach it. I decided to visit the local public health centers to see for myself what types of information were available and how it was presented.

In Morioka, there was a Prefectural Public Health Center and a Municipal Public Health Center. I went to the Prefectural Public Health Center first, assuming that if there was any kind of standardized information from the government, it would be available here. All prefectural offices are located on or near one of the main streets in the city, a large boulevard aptly named "Central Main Street." The building itself was a large eight-story ferro-concrete structure, the typical architectural style of postwar buildings. The public health offices, on the second floor, consisted of a large bullpen office with several of gunmetal gray desks flanked by similarly colored file cabinets. A few men and women were either working diligently at their desks in the open office or scurrying about with documents in their hands, but for the most part the desks remained empty. As I stood near the elevator doors for a few minutes, a woman approached me and asked if I needed help. I explained to her that I was a researcher from the United States and I had called earlier to find out what kinds of services and information on family planning they had.

She said that while they do employ public health nurses who sometimes conduct classes on such topics, she said that they really didn't have any system of distributing family planning information and she recommended that I go to the Municipal Public Health Center.

The Municipal Public Health Center was across town in a small building next to one of the city hospitals. As I exited the elevator, a woman greeted me and ushered me past the rows of desks and into a private conference room, which was the only private office on the floor. She was a woman who looked to be in her late fifties, had short hair, glasses, and wore a dark dress and low heeled pumps. She began by asking me questions about my sexual history. At that point I realized that she thought I was client coming for pregnancy counseling. I explained to her that I was a researcher from the United States and was interested in learning about the family planning services they provided, in particular those for unmarried women. She said that she would find one of the persons responsible for such information and she briefly left the room. A few minutes later a different woman, though similarly dressed, came back into the conference room and escorted me to back into the main office to her desk. I told her that I came to the health center to learn about the types of information they have on contraception for unmarried women. She pulled a pamphlet out of her desk drawer and explained that the pamphlet, published by the Japan Family Planning Association (JFPA), was written for married couples, adding that the appropriate way for women to learn about contraception was after marriage, and therefore they did not have information specifically for unmarried women. Her response indicates that rather than trying to provide contraceptive services and information to those women who may be most at risk or in need, the Municipal Public Health Center was more a source of moral rhetoric than of practical information. In this way, unmarried Japanese women in Morioka are subjected to government health policies which reinforce social rules and limit the

health resources available to them. This may be due to the fact that Morioka was considered by some of my informants to be somewhat "provincial." It is possible that in larger cities in more densely populated prefectures, the response could indeed be very different.

The pamphlet she gave me, *Me De Miru Kazoku Keikaku*, roughly translated as "A look at Family Planning," is a 32-page glossy brochure which targets married women. It provides a brief discussion of reproductive physiology and shows a range of contraceptive methods, and advises appropriate contraceptive methods, depending on a woman's age, reproductive history, and fertility goals. The focus on family planning for married women is quite clear, as evidenced in the introduction which argues that motherhood is an important milestone in a women's life once she's married; therefore, contraception is viewed as the way to properly space births. Furthermore, not only does the discussion deal with women's health, but also on the responsibility of women to make the right contraceptive decision for the sake of the future children's health as well. Such a declaration also assumes all women are potential mothers, and puts the burden of their future children's health on all women. It also links powerful Japanese ideologies of marriage and motherhood together in a mutually exclusive alliance, revealing the nationalist discourse in relation to gender.

The pamphlet states that the JFPA recommends the following methods: condom, diaphragm, intrauterine device (IUD), basal body temperature methods, rhythm method, and spermicidal tablets, jelly, or foam. Other methods which are mentioned in the pamphlet include: withdrawal (a method not particularly recommended by JFPA, but they comment that its use is widespread); the birth control pill (designated as not yet approved for contraception); douche; and male and female sterilization. There is also a discussion of abortion procedures. The conclusion of the pamphlet recommends receiving further information and counseling at a

government public health center, workplace health center, or gynecologist's office. Such informational pieces may have served a purpose for past generations of married women who were visited by a public health nurse after their first pregnancy and instructed by the nurse on birth control methods. However, nowadays, this information seems misguided given that women are becoming sexually active at a younger age and getting married later.

Sexual Education

A Japanese professor of health sciences confided to me that when he and his wife were married, he used his medical textbooks to instruct her about sexuality and how to prevent pregnancy because she had never obtained such information. Although he thought this situation was perhaps common among his age group, he claimed that even today instruction in such subjects is virtually nonexistent in schools. He commented,

> One of the reasons that there is basically very little or no sex education in Japanese public schools is that the government agencies deny responsibility for it. The Ministry of Health and Welfare believes that it is the Ministry of Education's responsibility and the Ministry of Education thinks that it is the Ministry of Health and Welfare's responsibility. In the end the responsibility falls on families who do little to educate their children on such matters. Young adults must turn to their friends, who may be equally in the dark about sexuality and contraception. Or they learn from magazines and comic books.

By default, Japanese teenagers and young adults are instructed in contraception and family planning by the mass media.

While Western family planning advocates laud Japan for its low teenage pregnancy rates, such accolades may be misplaced. There is little doubt that such pregnancies occur, but are aborted. One informant who taught at a high school said that at a school where she once taught, the school nurse secretly took young women to have abortions, with funds that other students collected to help each other pay the costs of the abortions. She commented that she thought that

maybe in the cities this would be the case, but she was shocked to find it in the small rural town where she was employed.

Sex education is currently taught as a special elective or as part of a health education class, depending on the school. The Ministry of Education does not provide a standardized curriculum and allows each school to decide how to teach the topic within the framework of the ministry's Course of Study Guidelines. All textbooks that are used in the Japanese public school system must be screened and approved by the Ministry, and this appears to make the integration of new topics, especially those seen by the Ministry and parents as controversial, such as sex education, especially difficult. One of my informants commented that even though sex education was a topic in the textbook, the teachers may skip it if it makes them uncomfortable, despite an obvious interest in the topic by the students.

A review of health education programs in high schools reveals that most of the lesson plans focus on the physiological processes of reproduction, although some do discuss contraceptive methods, albeit briefly. In the summary section of one of the lessons it read, "students should acquire an appropriate knowledge of contraceptive methods" (Terada and Matsūra 1997:133), but it is not clear whether the lesson was intended to provide this, or whether it is a recommendation to students to seek out such information on their own. In the majority of the lesson plans, birth control is spoken of in relation to marriage, and most of the plans do not appear to adequately address the social pressures associated with becoming a sexually mature adult. Some statements may be interpreted as a recommendation from a medical point of view, for example, "the ideal childbearing years for women are ages 25-29." Such statements can also serve as a form of normalizing, moralizing rhetoric when viewed in conjunction with discourses

on the "ideal age for marriage" versus "late marriage," and worries over the "excessive low birth rate" in contemporary Japan (Terada and Matsūra 1997:139-141).

Nevertheless, the sex education components of the health education lessons do form a foundation of knowledge which eventually can be expanded upon and revised. In 1997 the Ministry of Education decided to update its guidelines on sex education for the first time in twelve years. The proposed revisions are expected to take into account the rise in sexually transmitted diseases among youth and the practice of "*enjo kosai*" in which male adults pay for "dates" with female junior or senior high school students (Japan Times, June 9, 1997:2).

Asahi Shimbun, a prominent Japanese newspaper, published a report on a special sex education course offered to female students at a Tokyo high school. The teachers noticed that very few of the students even knew the purpose or function of their menstrual cycle (Brasor 1997c). My informants claimed that women's magazines are virtually the only source of sex education for Japanese women. The magazines often focus on titillating topics, for example, how to have a satisfying sexual life or how to please a man, but they usually balance those discussions with coverage on birth control methods and offer question and advice columns. However, the reliability of such information is questionable since, after all, selling magazines is the publisher's goal, and it is not necessarily the magazine's responsibility to educate women about birth control. Some commentators believe that perhaps publishers' should be responsible for sex education, stating, "considering the magazine's circulation (referring to An An, a magazine for young teenage girls), it is as good a place as any to start. As it stands, decisions regarding women's reproductive health are still being made by male bureaucrats" (Brasor 1997c).

Sexual Beings, Being Sexual

When beginning preliminary research on unmarried women, a few colleagues who were unfamiliar with Japan commented that it might be difficult to ask about their sexual lives because it seemed like Japan was prudish about such matters. Indeed, many Westerners share this stereotype of Japan, until they visit Japan or peruse Japanese magazines and comic books or view television programs. In Japan, it is difficult not to run across some aspect of sexuality in an everyday setting. I often found advertisement flyers for sex clubs in my mailbox. Such flyers were complete with phone extensions and pictures of naked women, some of them quite young looking. At first I thought that maybe someone was trying to harass me because I was a foreigner or perhaps because I was a woman living alone. Later, however, I observed that neighbors were also subjected to pornographic junk mail. In phone booths in a residential neighborhood where I lived, there were advertisements of women in various poses and types of clothing, or nude, with phone numbers to call for sexual favors. Vending machines sell condoms to passersby. There are hostess bars where men pay to be waited on by women and several "love hotels" where couples pay for rooms by the hour are interspersed with vegetable stands, coffee shops, and drug stores. It appears that sexuality, especially heterosexuality (cf. Hattori 1999), or at least the pursuit of it, is a natural and visible part of everyday life in Morioka. Indeed, there seems to be an absence of sequestering of sexuality that one often finds in the United States.

Merry White argued that unlike in the United States where mixed messages are given by the media with respect to premarital sex, "in Japan, the message about sex is not mixed but compartmentalized. Children are never taught that sex is intrinsically immoral or dirty, only that it needs to be in its proper place, not in conflict with social and occupational obligations" (White 1993:175). One informant did tell me that a local school had protested the establishment of

phone sex clubs near the school property because they would be a bad influence on the students, and might even try to lure students into the club for part-time work. I can understand the parents concerns for their children; however, in general, I don't believe that White's characterization of how sex is compartmentalized takes into consideration the aspects of everyday life that I witnessed while in Morioka. For example, there is overt sexuality depicted in advertisements and flyers for sex clubs which are handed out by men and women standing on city street corners. Japanese men read pornographic comic books while dining alone or commuting to work on the train. Such activities are not sequestered or hidden from public view.

For older adults, and for some parents the worry is not so much the existence of premarital sexual activity, but the public discussion of it. As White writes, "They wonder…if young people might not be able to maintain the culturally valued distinction between the approved ideal, or appearance, and the reality, the *tatemae* and the *honne*" (1993:188-189). White echoed Japanese psychoanalyst, Takeo Doi, who argued that such concepts are necessary for the maintenance of harmonious relationships. The face we present to the public (*tatemae*) and the "true reality" (*honne*) are essential balancing elements of the social order (White 1993:39, 189). While the concepts of *tatemae* and *honne* do have meaning and relevance in Japanese people's lives, I do not think this dichotomy is valid as a general explanation for how sex is perceived in Japan, but perhaps has more relevance for women.

Takeshita-san once remarked to me,

> To talk openly about sexual relations before marriage is a bad thing. It will make it harder for a woman to find a good husband. For example, I know that Kazuko, my best friend, has probably had sexual relationships while she was an undergraduate, but she never has talked to me about it. It's like a separate life. Actually, I don't talk to her about my relationships either. I don't think she would approve of them. I sometimes "date" older, married men. Another friend of mine, Akemi, occasionally goes with me and the

> men buy us drinks and food and gifts. This scarf, (she points to a gold and black patterned Hermes scarf) is from one of the men I've dated.

The reason Japanese people do not want to talk about unmarried women's sexuality does not merely come from a general desire to keep social order by keeping certain parts of one's life private. If this were the case, then unmarried Japanese men would have similar restrictions, but they do not. I argue that while unmarried women's sexuality does create disharmony on the social level, the real reason this is perceived as being taboo is because control over women's sexuality is essential for ensuring the future of Japan's population. Foucault wrote, "Between the state and the individual, sex became an issue, and a public issue no less; a whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses, and injunctions settled upon it" (Foucault 1990: 26). This is particularly so for unmarried women.

Another informant (age 36) told me:

> a good friend of mine, Kuniko, has had a boyfriend for a while, maybe at least one year, but I've never met him. I don't even know his name. Kuniko lives in an apartment by herself and works as an interior design consultant. I think her boyfriend is married. Maybe that is why she doesn't talk much about him. Maybe he was one of her clients. I don't know. I just have this feeling.

Kuniko is forty years old, so I ask if maybe because she is beyond the age when people are expected to get married that she is reluctant to talk about her relationships.

> it could be that. I think in general, the older you get, if you're not yet married you tend not to mention your dates or relationships to other people. It might seem too childish, or like a high school girl to act that way. Japanese women are very concerned about acting in a way that is appropriate for their age. I'm a bit different. I like to talk. So I talk about a lot of things with people. It's just my nature. But, actually I don't talk about boyfriends with my mother because she is constantly asking when I will get married.

School Girl Prostitutes

In the late 1990's, the phenomenon of teenage prostitution in Japan, euphemistically called *enjo kosai*, or "compensated dating," has become a growing concern, as reflected in the increasing media attention to the problem. Television documentaries, news reports, and magazine articles have portrayed young, middle school and high school girls from average, middle class families as prostitutes, willingly selling their bodies to middle-aged men so that they can earn enough money to buy brand name designer goods (cf. Kawai 1997; Brasor 1997; Stroh 1996). The girls themselves claim that they do not see their acts as prostitution at all; in fact, some of them just refer to it as "work," and they focus on the supposed status that the designer goods will bring to them, completely neglecting the degradation in status that their sexual acts confer (Ashby 1997; Kawai 1997). It is difficult to adequately determine how widespread this phenomenon is because teenagers do not always admit to it. One study showed that about 4% of Tokyo high school girls had engaged in *enjo kosai*, but other statistics claim that it may be a lot higher (Stroh 1996; Yoshida 1997).

The existing Anti-prostitution Law does not punish those who have sex with prostitutes, but rather the prostitutes and their agents (Yoshida 1997). Although the legal age of consent in Japan is 13, Tokyo police recently began cracking down on the adults who engage in *enjo kosai*. Whether this will actually curb prostitution is debatable, as a Japanese sociologist remarked, "the introduction of an ordinance may ease the minds of Tokyo residents, but what is really needed is sex education and proper counseling for minors" (Yoshida 1997). A journalist echoed these sentiments, "authorities should make teenagers understand that women are the ones who must take the risk of becoming pregnant and contacting venereal disease" (Japan Times, May 26, 1997). Thus an initial focus on young women as the criminals rather than victims jeopardizes

their current and future reproductive health. Given that the existence of such acts, it seems criminal that young women are not properly educated about birth control methods.

Aging women, aging bodies

The JFPA has issued a warning that it is best to have child when "one is neither to young nor too old, preferably between the ages of 25 and 30" (JFPA 1995:3). From a epidemiological standpoint, this makes sense but this, in fact, is the intent of the rhetoric: to make the JFPA's suggestions seem "natural" and "desirable," couched in the phraseology of biomedicine and science. As the average age at marriage has increased considerably in the past decade, this critical period for bearing children has been somewhat challenged. One physician told me, "People say that with regard to marriage there really isn't anything such as *tekireiki* anymore, but the truth is that from a medical standpoint, there is an appropriate age to have children. If you wait too long, it can cause problems for both the mother and child." When I asked what kind of problems he said that risk of having a child with Down Syndrome increased as the mother's age increased and the labor may be more difficult for older women.

Researchers have documented that the incidence of Down Syndrome (DS) in Japan is about 8.3 to 9.7 Down Syndrome children per 10,000 live births, a ratio similar to those found in data from Western countries (Hoshi et al.,1999). According to medical researchers, "it is undoubted that advanced maternal age plays the primary role in the occurrence of DS" (Hoshi et al. 1999: 342) and is "found in all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups (Hoshi et al. 1999, 340). It is interesting to note that in Japan only hospital based data was used to estimate the DS incidence rates as no national, population-based data is available. "Down syndrome is one of the most frequent chromosomal abnormalities compatible with life. However, with few exceptions, birth defects surveillance systems in Japan are not sufficiently developed to provide a large body of

highly accurate and reliable data" (Hoshi et al.: 340). The study published in 1998 declares that it records the first data on chromosomal abnormalities in Japan and will be useful for counseling Japanese women. (Yaegashi, et.al. 1998: 89). The study states that now more than 10% of all pregnant women fall into the category, "pregnant women of advanced age" (age 35 or over) (Yaegashi, et.al. 1998: 89). "These women will receive information about the high risk of chromosomal abnormalities due to advanced age from the media or medical sources, and will visit obstetrical clinics to receive genetic counseling or ask for prenatal testing. If pregnant women of advanced age have no information about the risks, obstetricians must explain them" (Yaegashi et. al.1998:89). However, it is unclear how women could possibly know what the risks associated with waiting too long to become pregnant are if no epidemiological tracking systems exist. Moreover, this kind of preventative health education would better serve women and their future children if they were educated about such risk factors while they were younger.

One informant whose mother tells her everyday she must get married says that she thinks it is okay from a health standpoint to get married after age 35 and then have children. "What do you think?" she asks me. "Do you plan to have children someday?" I said that I probably would but I was busy with my academic career and I didn't know when I'd be able to manage it. She replied, "My mother worries that if I wait too long, it will be hard to get pregnant or if I do, I'll have problems. All she cares about is having grandchildren. I don't even have a boyfriend right now!"

One 25-year old woman said that she always asks her boyfriend to use a condom, and so far he has complied. "I don't know what I would do if I got pregnant. It's not that I don't believe in abortion, but it seems like it would be a heartbreaking experience. A friend of mine had an abortion when she was 17. She didn't seem to think much of it, only focusing on how the

pregnancy was a mistake, as she called it. Although I would agree that in my situation if I were to get pregnant, it also would probably be a mistake because my boyfriend is married; he and his wife don't have any children."

Another woman commented that she could not understand women who do not ask their partners to use a condom. She said, "It's that they don't respect themselves or something. It's really backward thinking, in my opinion." She recounted the story of a 28 year old friend of hers who got pregnant because she and her partner didn't use any contraception. She said that she yelled at her friend for being so stupid. Her friend said that she never really learned about birth control at home and had just been "very careful" when she had sex, referring to the use of the rhythm method and coitus-interruptus.

Single mothers

Despite the lack of more effective contraceptive methods, Japanese teenage pregnancy rates are among the lowest in the world, as are the percentages of children born out of wedlock, compared to other industrialized nations, though this number appears to be slowly increasing (See Table 21 for statistics). The two main reasons why there are so few single mothers in Japan are: 1) abortions are fairly easily obtained; and most importantly, 2) social pressure against single motherhood (WuDunn 1996). Unmarried Japanese women who become mothers face severe economic and social discrimination in the form of welfare laws, tax laws, and, in the case of the child, weaker inheritance rights (cf. Ezawa and Fujiwara 2003). Tables 22 and 23 indicate that married women have far more negative attitudes toward single mothers than do unmarried women. About half of the married women surveyed reported either a negative image or a strong negative image of single mothers compared with about one-third of unmarried women.

Recently, demographic trends show an increase in children born to unmarried couples. According to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor, in 2000, 26% of first-born babies were conceived before marriage, compared with 13% in 1980 (Table 25). The numbers are even more striking for younger women, as Figure 4 shows. Eighty percent of first births to women aged 15 to 19 were to unmarried women (Kashiwase 2002).

Demographic Trends and Survey Data

After over a decade of hovering around replacement levels, in 1989 Japan's fertility rate dropped to an unprecedented level of 1.57, known in the media circles as the "1.57 shock." The Japanese public began worrying over the fate of their country and economy as doomsday predictions escalated to depictions of the eventual extinction of the Japanese population. Japan's current total fertility rate (TFR) is less than 1.32, encouraging even more fear among some government officials that it will decline ever further. Demographers have concluded that two factors account for the decline Japan's TFR: 1) changes in proportions married, and 2) changes in the age specific fertility rates (PPRC 1996).

Demographic trends show that both Japanese women and men are getting married at a later age (Table 1), and some may not ever marry at all. In the past, Japan was often referred to as the "universal marriage society" (Ogawa 1998; Ermisch and Ogawa 1994; Dixon 1978). These new trends highlight a new social phenomenon for Japan, as Ogawa states, "the percentage for those who never married in the age groups 45-59 and 50-54 were 1.46% for men and 1.35% for women in 1950. However, in 1995 the figures rose to 9.10% and 5.20% respectively, with the increase for single men accelerating after 1980. After increasing from 1950 to 1975, the percentage of single women leveled off for about 15 years until it started to show a conspicuous rise again from the beginning of the 1990's" (Ogawa 1998, 160). According to a Japan Times

editorial, "in a 1947 survey, only 55.5% of women in their early 20's were still unmarried. By 1990, the figure had soared to 85%" (Mataebara 1996). Demographers attribute the rise in age at marriage to higher levels of educational attainment for Japanese women, but as this research illustrates, there is a complex set of factors which contribute to this new social phenomenon.

Figure 1, Sexual Experience of Unmarried Women, shows that unmarried women are beginning to have sexual intercourse at an increasingly younger age and Table 19, Start of Contraception Among Married Women, indicates that contraceptive practice before marriage is becoming more widespread (Wagatsuma 1998). Another interesting ethnographic point is that 1992 was the first year that "Before Marriage" was even given as an option for the question regarding timing of contraceptive practices. This recent addition is another example of how the survey itself reinforces certain ideas about the proper timing of sexual experience in relation to marriage.

Choosing contraception

This chapter does not an attempt to explain or elaborate on all factors regarding contraceptive choice and fertility in Japan. Samuel Coleman's work is one of the few sources written in English on this topic which give some insight to Japanese attitudes and beliefs regarding these issues. Coleman's data, from the late 1970's, is noticeably dated; however, the questions he raised illustrate the need for a reinvestigation of the concepts of family planning and birth control. One aspect that necessitates a reinvestigation along the lines of Coleman's work is that his research was conducted prior to the discovery of HIV/AIDS. The implication is that individuals may have altered their contraceptive practices. Moreover, Coleman's research focuses primarily on married couples, though he does discuss the various institutions which participate in constructing family planning discourse in Japan.

Researchers who focus on family planning patterns in Japan often start by looking at the average number of children per woman aged 15-44, or the total fertility rate (TFR), which in 1997 was 1.39 (Ogawa 1998) and is projected to be 1.32 in 2003. They go on to look at the patterns of contraceptive usage in an effort to account for this low level of total fertility. Two characteristics stand out from Japan's data: first, only a small percentage of contraceptive users employ "modern methods" such as the pill, intrauterine device (IUD), and sterilization and second, there is a heavy reliance upon induced abortion among married women (PPRC 1998, Coleman 1983). When contraceptive method rates in Japan are compared with those of other industrialized countries, for example, the United States, the difference is rather striking. (See Table 11, Contraceptive Methods in the U.S. and Japan) "Modern methods" such as the oral contraceptive pill, IUD, and sterilization are a small percentage of methods used and "traditional methods," especially the condom, are a large percentage of methods used, compared to other industrialized countries.

Wagatsuma's analysis of trends in contraceptive practices showed that there has been a steady increase in the rate of contraceptive practice among Japanese married couples until the 1980's and then a decline, although he notes that this rate is still among one of the highest among industrialized countries (Wagatsuma 1998). One reason for the decline in practice may be the increase in the phenomenon of "sexless marriages," which refers to less sex within marriage and perhaps more sex outside of marriage, especially in the case of Japanese married men and unmarried women (Brasor 1997b). This particular survey does not ask questions concerning marital fidelity and the differing contraceptive practices between spouses as opposed to lovers.

The Condom

Researchers have looked at data on contraceptive usage patterns and wondered why, in such a modern country as Japan, do couples prefer the condom (Ogawa and Retherford 1991). I argue that these statistics which show a prevalence of a contraceptive method among married couples in Japan do not necessarily indicate preference. There are many complex factors involved in contraceptive choice, and in the case of Japan, personal preference may play only a small role. Looking at the statistics from the viewpoint of the couple distorts the data yet again and exposes our biases towards the marital union which is couple oriented.

Tables 9 and 10 indicate that in 1998, 77% of currently married Japanese women who practice contraception use the condom (PPRC 1998) compared to 95% of unmarried women. Many explanations have been proposed to account for the high rate of condom usage in Japan even before the increase in public awareness of HIV/AIDS. However, most of the theories are not very insightful. The undeniably positive features of the condom are the easily understood mode of use and the relatively low cost compared to some of the other methods. One researcher commented that the reason for high condom user rates among the Japanese is because the Japanese condom is simply a better product, with better marketing and packaging than what is available in the United States (Matsumoto, Koizumi, Nohara 1972). According to these researchers, there are no cultural differences which can be attributed to contraceptive choice. This maybe too simplistic an explanation given the evidence Coleman and others have presented. It also assumes that "culture" is a constant, unchanging, and static phenomenon separated from everyday life.

In Japan condoms are very accessible; they can be purchased at drugstores, vending machines, supermarkets, through family planning workers, specialty stores, such as Condomania,

and door-to-door sales people (Saito 1993, Coleman 1983). According to Coleman's research, the Japan Family Planning Association (JFPA) is the most active group promoting family planning in Japan, founded in 1954 to help cope with Japan's growing post-war population concerns. Its target audience is married women, as evidenced in the JFPA's slogan, "Give birth to strong children, protect the woman's health, and build happy homes" (Coleman 1983). Moreover, according to past research the JFPA has focused its family planning instruction on traditional methods, such as periodic abstinence and the condom. One point of interest is that the JFPA is almost completely self-reliant with 95% of its income coming from sales of educational materials and contraceptives (Muramatsu, Katagiri 1981). The majority of those contraceptives sold are condoms, at 90% (Coleman 1983). The JFPA has an arrangement with a condom manufacturer to receive condoms at a fraction of the retail price. Therefore, there exists a conflict of interest, as the JFPA needs to sell condom to support its activities, thus compromising its position as a disseminator of family planning services. This results in biased counseling for women who choose this route for contraceptive information.

According to Coleman, door-to-door condom sales in the late 1970's accounted for 40% of market share (1983). Condom saleswomen are usually older women and their target market is young housewives. Age is a factor in social hierarchy in Japan, and thus condom saleswomen represent an influential authority figure in the eyes of housewives. Moreover, the saleswomen are quite aggressive since they are paid 30–50% commission rates and receive incentives such as vacation trips for high sales volume. It is quite easy to see why housewives feel pressured to buy condoms from these saleswomen; however, there are severe abuses of this power relationship as Coleman cites an instance where a saleswoman convinced a housewife to buy 15 gross (2,160) of condoms.

An example of information Coleman gathered which was passed on to a prospective client by a condom saleswoman suggests that perhaps this is not the best way to receive reliable contraceptive information. He quoted a salesperson's discussion of contraceptive risks, "intravaginal chemicals cause frigidity, the pill causes severe eyesight problems after one year's use and the IUD causes radical weight changes, can perforate the uterus and is not very effective anyway. Babies born as a result of IUD failures have a permanent ring-shaped deformity on their forehead" (Coleman 1983, 52). There is evidence, then, of a coercive element in the women's decision to buy condoms from JFPA's family planning workers.

Actual preference for condoms is difficult to substantiate through statistical data. Despite the widespread use of condoms by participants in Coleman's study, few individuals stated a real preference for condoms, and more often, men registered complaints. A Japanese pharmaceutical company did a survey which found that 35% of wives and 60% of husbands were dissatisfied with condom use (Coleman 1983). But again the motives behind such a study show the inherent biases in research done by pharmaceutical companies to encourage the usage of other contraceptive methods.

Condoms are also sold in pharmacies, convenience stores, and in vending machines located near bars and night clubs, and in or around "love hotels." Some companies that sell condoms via vending machines use shrewd marketing tactics and target people who are interested in blood type analysis as a predictor of personality. According to my informants, such information is similar to the use of horoscopes in predicting personality characteristics and is considered important to some women in choosing a partner. In Kyoto in western Japan, I noticed that in one of the areas where many shrines and temples are located there was a condom vending machine at the taxi stand. This particular machine dispensed condoms according to blood type. It is not

clear whether one should chose a condom based on the man's blood type or the woman's, or what the benefits of choosing the blood-type compatible condom would be.

One logical reason for buying condoms through vending machines is convenience. You can buy them as you need them or even when pharmacies are closed. There are, however, restrictions on the installment of condom vending machines, which numbered roughly 30,000 across Japan in 1992. The restrictions included a limit on the number of hours that machines would be available for use and limits on where such machines could be installed (Saito 1993). This number has supposedly increased in recent years due to the Health and Welfare agency's request that prefectural governments ease their restrictions in order to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

It seems contradictory that women who are too embarrassed to buy condoms in public, (and instead buy them through a saleslady), would also be willing to use a vending machine, in plain public view, for example, in front of a pharmacy. I asked one of my informants about whether this was contradictory to her and she said that even though you can buy condoms at 24-hour convenience stores, you still have to face the clerk, who, usually, is a young man or woman from the neighborhood. It is embarrassing because they may talk to their friends (or maybe even your relatives or family) about you and your purchase. On the other hand, vending machines are impersonal.

Condom vending machines are also available at so-called "love hotels." As the name suggests, these hotels rent rooms by the hour or even overnight for couples young or old, married or unmarried. Often seen as a place for young unmarried men and women who still live with their parents to go for privacy, they also serve older, married couples who have no privacy in their own cramped homes, either due to living in an extended-family household with in-laws, or

having young children always underfoot. Love hotels can be found virtually everywhere in Japan, in large cities and resort areas, as well as small towns, and tucked amongst office buildings. The ubiquitousness of such facilities in recent years and the general public indifference to them suggests that sex outside of marriage, either premarital or extramarital relations is increasingly common (Bornoff 1991). This implies a gap between acknowledging the existence of sexually active unmarried Japanese couples and the need for contraceptive education and access to reproductive health services.

The Birth Control Pill

The oral contraceptive pill is not widely used in Japan, as Tables 9 and 10 show, and was not approved for use as a contraceptive until 1999. Prior to 1999, doctors could legally prescribe the high- and medium-dose pill for hormonal problems, knowing that their patients might use it for contraception. Initially, as mentioned above, the concern over legalization of the pill had to do with fears of supposed side effects (Ogawa and Retherford 1991). Ironically, the low-dose pill has fewer side effects than the high- and medium-dose; therefore, the "500,00 to 800,000 Japanese women who take the high-dose therapeutic pills for contraceptive purposes face more serious health risks than women in other countries, where the high-dose pill generally is not used anymore" (Norgren 1998, 63).

In 1987 the Ministry of Health and Welfare allowed pharmaceutical companies to develop a low-dose contraceptive pill specifically for Japanese women. In March of 1992, the Ministry postponed legalization for the sake of public health in order to prevent the spread of AIDS (Arima 1992). Some women do manage to use the pill either through their doctors or through other channels. Some of my informants commented that they knew 'a friend' who had gone to either Hong Kong or Hawaii on vacation and managed to get the pill there. One woman claimed

that she went to her doctor and said that she wanted the pill to help regulate her irregular menstrual cycles better, but confessed to me that actually she just wanted to take the pill so that she could plan a vacation with her boyfriend and not have to worry about having her period. The contraceptive benefits for her were secondary.

Some scholars argue that the Japan Medical Association (and other professional medical organizations) had been opposed to the legalization of the pill because it would threaten their interests by reducing their income from pregnancies and abortions. On the other hand, pharmaceutical companies have pushed for approval of the pill (Coleman 1983, Norgren 1998). In the mid-1990's obstetricians and gynecologists, faced with a drop in income from lower abortion rates and birth rates, began to lobby for approval of the low-dose pill and fought with pharmacists over the right to distribute the pill. As Norgren explained, "These two groups were in competition because unlike most other countries, Japanese doctors are allowed to sell prescription drugs. This means that doctors have a financial incentive to fill their own prescriptions, which in turn forces pharmacists to derive the bulk of their income from selling non-prescription drugs" (Norgren 1998:87).

The effect of the government ban on the pill was essentially to limit the safe options available for women to exercise effective control over unwanted pregnancy. However, if pharmacists gained control over distribution of the pill, this would also put women's health at risk because physicians should be the ones to determine whether a women is a suitable candidate, from a medical perspective, to use the pill, and should monitor a woman's health periodically while she taking the pill (Hatch et. al. 1992). This poses even more possible problems given that Japanese women do not visit their gynecologists regularly. One Japanese gynecologist commented that unmarried women in particular do not come in for contraceptive advice, adding,

"women here start to consult the gynecologist after giving birth. Even if they are sexually active they almost never consult me before getting married, unless something goes wrong" (Harnischfeger 1992).

If unmarried women are embarrassed about the need for the birth control pill, going to the physician in Japan certainly does not instill confidence with regard to patients' privacy. First of all, most doctors in Japan do not take appointments, but instead operate on a first come, first serve basis. Patients may have to wait for several hours in a room full of people, many of whom may be co-workers, neighbors, or even relatives. Second, the examination room is often only separated with a curtain from other areas of the doctor's office and any conversation can be overheard by others. Even going to a small, private gynecologist does not increase one's privacy. I asked a married informant, whose husband is a physician if she believed that unmarried women went to the gynecologist for routine checkups and she replied that although doctors would treat them and may give contraceptive advice, unmarried women would not be likely to choose this option because someone might see them enter the doctor's office from the street, and then gossip about why they needed to go there. This is rather ironic, given that unmarried women may also be seen entering a love hotel with their boyfriends, but this is not mentioned as problematic.

Some feminists have shown their disapproval of the pill arguing that it would put an even greater burden on women, which is already a difficult situation (Amemiya 1998). A healthcare worker echoed this sentiment stating, "Some fear that if the pill were approved for use, men who now take responsibility for birth control by using condoms will start taking the attitude of, 'it's up to you'" (Landers 1996). Furthermore, among Japanese feminist groups there is no consensus on the debate over the birth control pill. One group equates the birth control pill with women's

liberation through control over their bodies and their lives, while another group sees the pill as unnatural and suppressing women's control of their bodies, and warning that the birth control pill will cause a break down in communication between men and women. Such statements are often directed at unmarried women, who are seen as neglecting and perhaps even jeopardizing their primary duty in life as mothers if they don't take proper care of themselves.

Another viewpoint on Coleman's analysis was presented by Tamanoi (1990). She wrote,

> Coleman implied that modern methods (the IUD or the pill) are ignored that would enable the women to gain the more control over procreation, concluding that their current lack of control results from women's 'overall low status in present-day Japanese society.'… Certainly the pill makes a woman's right to self determination of her own sexuality possible. But does the use of the pill actually improve the 'overall low status' of Japanese women? An interesting phenomenon seen in Japan today is that an increasing number of women perceive the pill, a product of modern technology, as a source of repression of their bodies. In this respect, Japanese women's refusal of the pill cannot be interpreted as a vestige of their traditional attitudes towards marital sex. [Tamanoi 1990]

Lock noted the inconsistency in logic among women who reject the pill as being too unnatural, yet approve of new reproductive technologies if a woman is having problems conceiving (Lock 1998). It is also interesting to consider that women who fear side effects of the pill seem to assume that getting pregnant or having an abortion does not compromise women's health or carry any other harmful effects.

Japanese women's attitudes toward the pill are interesting to examine because important differences exist between unmarried and married women, which, again, reinforces the need for all women of reproductive age, not just married women, to be taken into consideration when the government makes decisions regarding women's bodies. Table 16 shows that a larger proportion of unmarried women were undecided about whether or not they would choose the low-dose birth control pill if the government approves it. This implies that unmarried women do not have

access to adequate and reliable information about the advantages and disadvantages of this contraceptive. Table 17 indicates that the main reasons women would opt for the pill are: 1) high contraceptive effectiveness; 2) not having to worry about contraception during sex; and 3) women's control over use. Among married women, high contraceptive effectiveness is the leading motivation for approving of the pill, while among unmarried women, female control over use is the leading reason. Among reasons why Japanese women would not want to use the pill, is the concern over side effects, the main reason for both married and unmarried women. Married women are more satisfied with existing contraception and, therefore, reluctant to change, whereas unmarried women are more anxious over the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS.

In a 1999 survey conducted several months before the birth control pill was approved for contraceptive use, Kihara and colleagues found that only 12% of respondents (both male and female) intended to use the pill if legalized. Seventy-two percent of the women said they did not want to use it and 53% of the men said they did not want their partners to use it (Kihara et al. 2001). It is no surprise that women knew more about the pill's potential side effects than men and were correspondingly more concerned about such potential problems, given that it is the women whose bodies would bear the burden of any ill effects. Another interesting set of findings from this study is that about one-third of the respondents who had a negative perception of the pill believed that it would undermine sexuality morality. Moreover, more men than women found this to be a concern, at 40% vs. 31%. This is an interesting statistic, but there was no explanation of what was specifically meant by sexual morality. It seems to underscore the double standard that appropriate sexual behavior for men is not the same as appropriate sexual behavior for women.

As mentioned previously, the birth control pill was only recently approved for use as a contraceptive. On July 1, 1999, the Central Pharmaceuticals affairs council, an advisory board to the government approved the manufacture of the pill in Japan. This occurred after thirty years wavering by the government on its safety. Viagra, on the other hand, was approved by the government in an unprecedented six months. One reason given for the difference in length of approval time was that Viagra, a drug for male impotency, is considered by some men to be a serious medical problem, whereas the birth control pill was prescribed for healthy women (Norgren 2001).

Accessibility to the pill is also at issue. Women are also forced to undergo periodic pelvic exams and STD testing in order to be able to obtain a prescription for the pill, whereas men who seek Viagra typically do not (Rowling 1991). This could partially account for why the usage rates for the pill after government approval are so low, with 1.9% of married women and 0.7% of unmarried women (Matsumoto et. al. 2003). A survey of pharmacies indicated that many pharmacies did not stock the lower dose oral contraceptive pill, and of those that did carry them even fewer were equipped to provide immediate dispensation. These factors, plus the lack of adequate private consultation facilities in most pharmacies, indicate that despite thirty years of debate over legalization, no efforts were made to provide suitable access once it occurred (Matsumoto et. al. 2003).

Other Contraceptive Methods

The high usage of periodic abstinence is partially due to the fact that this method is often combined with, and used as an alternative to, condoms. In one study, out of 305 condom users in the questionnaire, 46% reported using two or more methods (Coleman 1983).

Table 11 indicates that spermicide and diaphragm usage rates are very low. Family planning workers do not promote these methods for a variety of reasons. As stated before, due to the cost structure within the JFPA and exclusive arrangements with condom manufacturers, it can benefit the most through the sale of condoms. As far as the diaphragm is concerned, the JFPA feels that there is too much of a responsibility put on counselors to fit and correctly explain the use of the diaphragm and so they tend not to recommend it (Coleman 1983). Both physicians and family planning workers believe that Japanese women express reservations about touching their genitals and that is a reason why they would not opt for this method. However, it is not clear whether or not these views have any bearing on the actual behavior of women who might consider using this method, or the behavior of the healthcare providers. By law, intravaginal chemicals can only be dispensed by pharmacists and certified family planning counselors. This, in effect, creates limited access for this method.

As far as attitudes towards the IUD, women in Coleman's study were less negative about the IUD than the pill, probably because they knew more women who used the IUD. However, they still found it unattractive because of the cost, discomfort of yearly replacements, and stories of bleeding injuries associated with its use. The copper-impregnated IUD, which is unavailable in Japan, has one of the lowest failure rates of any contraceptive method (Hatch et. al. 1992). Again, lack of access to reliable contraceptive methods compromises Japanese women's health.

Abortion

Certain Western attitudes such as "a woman's right to choose" are not useful in analyzing Japanese attitudes towards abortion. The choice of an abortion in Japan is not necessarily an indicator of a woman's control over her reproductive capabilities. It is more likely the result of contraceptive failure, which could stem from an unacceptable choice of contraception. Table 13

shows past differences between age patterns of abortions in the United States and Japan, with higher abortion rates for the married age range in Japan, and with seven out of ten abortions taking place among married women (Coleman 1983). Some researchers such as Werblowsky have argued that Japanese women use abortion as a method of birth control (1991). However, the data in Table 15 suggests that those women who were already using contraception were the most likely to have an abortion (Hodge and Ogawa 1991). Therefore these abortion rates primarily reflect responses to contraception failure, not failure to practice contraception.

In general, among both married women and unmarried women surveyed, abortion rates increased as a woman's age increased, with women in the 40-49 year old age bracket showing the highest abortion rates (See Figure 3, Experience of Induced Abortion Among Unmarried Women). One researcher commented that "It is understandable that older age groups prefer to resort to abortion in case of contraceptive failure" (Wagatsuma 1998: 202). Unfortunately there was no further explanation of why this should be so. One of my informants mentioned to me that, lately, the media has focused on Japanese older couples who endure sexless marriages. She said that if a woman in her late thirties or forties were to get pregnant and have a child, those people around her would consider it strange. People would look at the couple and comment on how they were still having sex, as if at that age it was somehow viewed as an "unnatural" act. The idea of age-grading associated with the "appropriate age" for child-bearing in Japan dictates attitudes towards sexual relations by continuing to link sexuality and reproduction in a naturalized, normalized manner.

Overall, the rate of abortions among those women surveyed by the PPRC has been decreasing in recent years. However, the rate of abortions among teenagers appears to be increasing though the small sample size prevents any absolute conclusions on the matter by

demographers (PPRC 1998). Moreover, the reliability of national abortion statistics from the Ministry of Health and Welfare are also under suspicion because it is assumed that many doctors who perform abortions do not report the actual number of abortions they perform, in order to evade taxes (Norgren 1998).

According to the data from the 21st survey on Family Planning , in 1992 the largest proportion of respondents are couples who started using contraception after having two children, at 36.3% (PPRC 1992, 79). But when wives were asked for reasons in favor of licensing the pill, the most popular response was, "can reduce number of abortions" (PPRC 1992, 85). It would seem then that there is a gap here in the data. If people believe that the high abortion rate is due to contraceptive failure, we need better data which show that this is indeed the reason in the majority of the cases. The data here suggest that the high abortion rate could also be due to the fact that couples wait until after their second child to begin practicing contraception. This survey does not show whether these same couples had previous abortions or not. It is also not clear if in the course of the statistical tests there was some effort to control for increases in abortion as a result of increases in conception rates in general. Additionally, breast-feeding, which is common in Japan, is known to suppress ovulation, and in some cultures is used as a form of birth control. This practice has not been given consideration in past research.

Conclusion

Some anthropologists have argued that one cannot study reproduction without acknowledging the "politics of reproduction" (Ginsburg and Rapp 1991). This certainly applies to the case of beliefs and practices related to reproduction in Japan. Reproduction occurs not only within a human body which is enmeshed in a cultural and historical locus, but also between bodies, thereby socially sanctioning certain biologically constructed relationships. Therefore, it

is necessary to uncover the macro- and micro-level forces which influence unmarried Japanese women's contraceptive choices and experiences. There are several matrices of power relations which require further investigation. On the macro level there are: the medical establishment, pharmaceutical industries, the government, and the media. On the micro level there are marital relations, post-marital residence patterns, and care for elderly family members. This is but a small preliminary review of the institutions which have some kind of relationship to the family planning decision-making process in Japan. Though some anthropologists have written extensively about such factors, there is little research which ties these into contraceptive method selection.

Analysis of ideas about contraception as they relate to unmarried Japanese women demonstrates the need to incorporate the concept of "ethnoscapes," landscapes where bounded, culturally homogenous, and ideologically limited groups no longer exist, in discussions of reproduction (Apparudai 1991). The focus of scholarly inquiry is no longer ascertaining where one cultural practice ends and the other begins. Rather, the seemingly common sense ways human beings exist in the world and experience everyday life are examined to expose hegemonic forces which transcend culture. Reproduction is particularly interesting in this regard, by virtue of the linkages among biology, culture, and politics at its core. Dichotomies such as married women versus unmarried women, used in the context of reproductive health, highlight dominant ideologies of groups whose interests run counter to women's own. Ethnographic and statistical data presented on Japan suggests a need to move beyond a focus on the category "women." Despite evidence of increasing sexual behavior among unmarried Japanese women, key cultural ideas about sexuality and contraception continue to be elaborated for married women only.

Foucault's notions of two interconnected poles of "biopower" are also particularly relevant here. "'Anatomo-politics' focused on the manipulation of individual bodies and, at the other pole, the manipulation and control of populations" at the other pole (Lock 1998, 7). National rhetoric on marriage and family planning is both internalized as well as resisted by unmarried women. However, the interpretations of such ideologies by women and the creation and manipulation of such discourses by the government have changed over the years, for example, after the Beijing conference in 1995. Unmarried women's ideas about family planning and contraceptive technology shape and are shaped by beliefs and practices surrounding gender relations, marriage, motherhood, the body, and the family. This analysis lays the groundwork for applied solutions to the problems of unmet need for reproductive services for unmarried women in Japan, and will aid efforts to put an end to practices which jeopardize all women's reproductive health.

6. CONCLUSION

Onna wa sangai ni ie nashi

(Women have no home in three worlds) Japanese proverb interpreted as meaning that women always live in homes owned by their fathers, husbands, and sons (Cherry 2002:560)

In contemporary Japan unmarried women have been marginalized and labeled as social deviants, blamed for the declining birthrate. Postponement of marriage by Japanese women, whether intentional or not, has had a large impact on Japan's demographic structure. In so doing, unmarried women have challenged key cultural institutions responsible for Japan's postwar economic growth. Previously scripted identities available to Japanese women, for example "daughter," "wife," "mother," and "worker" denoted a cultural and historically specific milieu. As such, it highlighted the Japanese government's expectations for women to be obedient to their fathers, husbands, and sons, based on a Confucian model of proper family conduct. Such categories provided the basis for a state sanctioned discourse on the treatment on unmarried women that is both "natural" and "rational." However, an examination of the everyday lives of women illustrates that creating identities involves more than mere adherence to certain circumscribed social roles.

I began this journey in an effort to understand the multiple meanings of "being unmarried" for women living in Morioka in the 1990's. Were women attempting to create identities which made a statement against the household division of labor, employment policies of large

corporations, or government reproductive policies? Was "being unmarried" viewed as a viable long term strategy?

Being Unmarried

Being an unmarried woman provides a space in which women can think about whether they will marry, when they feel is an appropriate time to marry, and to whom they hope to marry. Overwhelmingly, the unmarried women I spoke with viewed this point in their lives as a prelude to eventual marriage. Regardless of their ages most were not ready to get married because they did not find anyone they thought would be a suitable life partner who shared their same values, and especially one who would share in household responsibilities. In so much as it relates to the household division of labor, the fact that women were searching for this type of partner is an indication that they were consciously challenging the status quo in order to accommodate their desires for balancing work and family life. However, despite local and national government policies designed to encourage changes in household labor practices, structural conditions of the Japanese economy and corporate employment policies work against the probability of change in this regard.

The cultural dialogue surrounding "being unmarried" exposes how the government naturalizes and rationalizes the process of "being married" in order to support its interests in maintaining productivity of the core (male) workforce, and reproduction of future Japanese workers and citizens by women. Current employment laws are not effective enough to enable unmarried women to earn and sustain an income over a long period of time. Moreover, pension policies which put unmarried women at a disadvantage compared to their married counterparts (Rosenberger 1990) illustrate the types of women's roles that are valued by the state. Most of the women I spoke with in Morioka were not thinking that far ahead with regard to their

financial futures, but rather more in terms of immediate future. In doing so they did not take into consideration how such state policies impact them when evaluating the negative attributes associated with remaining unmarried.

Being Productive

Being an unmarried woman means that employment opportunities may be limited to those which reinforce certain government agendas. Unmarried women in this study believed that their own ideas about productivity and adulthood differed from those of their parents. Given the economic changes that have occurred in postwar Japan, this is not surprising. Employment is often used as a proxy for productivity, yet the reasons behind unmarried women's employment situations and choices varied in ways that run counter to ideas of education as empowering women. Envisioning their work and leisure experiences as part of a larger process of self-advancement enables unmarried women to create fulfilling lives outside of traditional roles and models of life purpose. Productivity for unmarried women in Morioka entailed a combination of employment for pay and leisure activities, including those associated with work. Productivity also included caring for family members and volunteering to help people in the community. In Morioka, unmarried women's ideas about productivity and self advancement reflect involvement in a wide range of family, company, and community activities.

Given the structural constraints of the labor market, unmarried women have adjusted to the lack of regular employment opportunities, by making pragmatic choices for their future, working around confining structures and participating in activities that help them view themselves as capable human beings. Whether such activities were caring for ailing family members, volunteering their time to help others in need, or practicing a new language, the single women I interacted with characterized such activities as equally important as, not in opposition to their

employment activities. Researchers have focused on how Japanese men, both married and unmarried, view their after hours leisure activities as part of their work. Unmarried women also view such activities as work. The difference in how these two realms of productivity are constructed lies in their orientations. For men, these activities are scripted in terms of contributing to their advancement within the company, as an employee. Unmarried women identify such activities as self-advancement.

For unmarried women leisure activities are seen as a way of cultivating their personal skills for their own use, as well as for the sake of others. Such activities were carried out as part of a larger set of coping strategies in response to the marriage pressures experienced both at work and at home. Shopping, dining out, and spending time with friends are all important social outlets to alleviate pressures from both their families and their jobs. While some women pursued activities formerly categorized as bridal training, such as tea ceremony or flower arranging, the meanings of such activities for women were more couched in terms of personal achievement, and women worked very hard to be the best they could individually be at that particular activity. This is in contrast to their experiences in the employment system in Japan. Discriminatory recruitment practices, especially with regard to age, make it difficult for women to realize their individual career potential as they grow older, regardless of the effort they exert.

Global Forces, Local Longings

The postponement of marriage by women in particular is not due to a comprehensive feminist movement. Nor is it merely an effect of increasing numbers of Japanese women pursuing education at the university level. Complex changes in globalization have affected how unmarried women see themselves and the expectations they have for their lives. While international media does play a role in this transformation, it is not uniform, predictable, or by

any means absolute. Unmarried women in Morioka are aware that they do not have the same resources at their disposal, such as jobs or opportunities for internationally oriented activities, as unmarried women in Tokyo. Yet awareness of other possible experiences and opportunities does not necessarily translate into a desire to be more like women in Tokyo or, for that matter, a conscious desire to emulate women in Western countries. Nor does exposure to employment tracks similar to those available to men, encourage a desire for unmarried women to work like men in order to feel productive.

This insight serves as an important caution for researchers who focus on the construction of desires in relation to market economies. Unmarried women in Morioka travel abroad, live among other cultures for extended periods of time, and some commented that the idea of a foreign spouse appealed to them as a way of circumventing the oppressive social structures in Japan (Kelsky 2001). However, such desires were not shared by all of the women I spoke with. Some women even commented that they could not comprehend the actions of women who longed for cosmopolitan cities like Tokyo, or Western lands supposedly beckoning with opportunity. To posit that such internationalist longings are "one of the few options available for women to resist multiple interlocking systems of patriarchal control in Japan" (Kelsky 2001:246) ignores or overlooks the experiences of women who do not espouse such desires.

Public Bodies, Private Bodies

Dichotomies such as married women versus unmarried women, used in the context of reproductive health, highlight dominant ideologies whose interests run counter to women's own needs. Ethnographic and statistical data presented on Japan suggests a need to move beyond a focus on the category "women." Despite evidence of increasing sexual behavior among unmarried Japanese women, key cultural ideas about sexuality and contraception continue to be

elaborated for married women only. National rhetoric on family planning and contraception directed at all women is both internalized as well as resisted by unmarried Japanese women. Unmarried Japanese women's ideas about contraceptive technology, such as the birth control pill, are shaped by media representations as well as government propaganda. Nevertheless, the rejection of the pill by most women, both unmarried and married, indicates that it is more closely associated with feelings related to their own individual bodies rather than the larger goals or expectations of society.

Japanese government policies on citizenship, nationality, and marriage endorse gender inequalities. In the past Japanese men were empowered to produce Japanese citizens even if the mother was not Japanese. Japanese nationality laws have changed recently to enable children who reach adulthood to choose their nationality if one parent is not Japanese.[19] However the specter of marriage as a necessary criteria for a Japanese woman's child to be considered a citizen remains. It is inscribed in family registers as a silent reminder of the state's role in constructing regimes of truth in relation to biology and kinship. The registration document is a necessity for having an identity and living daily life in Japan. Not only is it used to register marriages, births, and deaths, it is typically required for securing housing and employment[20]. This highlights how the negative valuation associated with being an unmarried woman in Japan extends beyond the individual to the lives of relatives, and influences their everyday lives.

Foucault discussed how the emergence of the concept of "population" as an economic and political problem led to discourses on sexuality. The state legitimated its control over sexual practices which were not directly related to maintaining and sustaining population growth, and condemned those practices which deviated from this endeavor (Foucault 1990:25). The question

[19] See the web site of the Ministry of Justice for information about the criteria for Japanese citizenship. http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/CIAB/ciab-04.html

[20] Foreigners must have a Japanese citizen act as a guarantor when renting an apartment in Japan.

remains as to whether unmarried Japanese women would be subject to such negative discourses if postponing marriage had no wider demographic repercussions. Sato's research on the Japanese women's history in the 1920's suggests that in the past, discourses surrounding unmarried women's identities were cast in a negative way if such women were viewed as threatening to the state (Sato 2003).

The cultural dialogue associated with "being unmarried" exposes how women are positioned as key players in the maintenance of cultural logics regarding the family, work, nation, and reproduction. By exploring unmarried women's everyday lives in Morioka we can begin to understand how women struggle to find meaning in their lives and express themselves in ways which at times reinforced existing social structures. Unmarried women's postponement of marriage creates changes in perceptions of alternative lifestyles for women, and in so doing allows the possibility of further changes in the social landscape. The diversity of explanations unmarried women attach to their actions highlights the contradictory nature of the discourses, and how normative rhetoric about "being unmarried" is constantly changing and being changed by women in response to the economic, political, and temporal contexts of their lives in Morioka.

Resisting the Inevitable?

Unmarried women's lives are considerably more complex, purposeful, and diverse compared to images of the parasite single which have circulated in the Japanese media in the 1990's and 2000's. Unmarried women in Japan are divided by age, class, occupation, geographic location, as well as other categories of difference. Being unmarried subjects women to similar structural forces, but their actions and beliefs in response to those forces varies considerably in relation to those differences. Does this mean that the categories of resistance and agency have meaning only if the actors involved proclaim such intentions? Unmarried Japanese

women's lives do entail a certain reactivity to the existing social structures, for example, through their own definitions of productivity or how they enact their sexuality. Women embody larger historical and social contexts. Yet there is also an ambivalence in their actions which suggests an even more complicated strategy than the dominant/subordinate model suggests. The fact that the majority of the unmarried women I interviewed believed that they would eventually marry illustrates to some extent the credibility of the discourse against unmarried women. However, unmarried women's ultimate acceptance of marriage does not necessarily imply a comprehensive acceptance of all that "being married" entails. De Certeau, quoting Bourdieu, accurately describes this process: "it is because subjects do not know, strictly speaking, what they are doing, that what they do has more meaning than they realize" (de Certeau 1984:56).

Postponement of marriage has enabled unmarried Japanese women in Morioka to view themselves as strong and powerful, in opposition to discourses which label them as social deviants. They are also supportive friends, dutiful daughters, productive workers, and involved community members. Whether marriage postponement is the result of the intentional performances of individual actors or not, the effect of such acts on the trajectory of women's lives can nonetheless be transformational. It has set in motion a range of consequences which force the Japanese government, corporations, and individuals to reevaluate the cultural meanings of production, reproduction, family, and citizen.

APPENDIX A

Field Methods

Field methods and ethnographic techniques varied according to the four specific research aims:

(1) understand how single Japanese women construct attitudes toward marriage and why they postpone marriage or plan not to marry at all despite overwhelming social pressure to marry; Participant observation at the Working Youth's House and in leisure activities (taking classes, shopping, going out to bars and restaurants, traveling) between August of 1996 to August of 1997 provided information on what is important in single women's lives and how they construct their identities in a variety of contexts. Narratives, life histories and data from focus group interviews with single women provided information on their self identity, *ikigai*, ideas about relationships (both male and female) and their perceptions of marriage.

(2) Examine how normative rhetoric about "productivity" in relation to life course defines appropriate occupational roles, employment opportunities, and leisure activities for single Japanese women; Interviews with approximately thirty women and participant observation provided information on the cultural conceptions of proper employment and leisure activities. Review of media sources such as help-wanted advertisements, women's magazines, and television programs yielded data on the portrayals of single women and helped to form the basis for initial interviews.

(3) Explore how attitudes and beliefs about being a single Japanese woman are reinforced, reflected, and resisted through the use of linguistic expressions. Participant observation of single women in clubs and classes, and other leisure activities yielded information on how such women construct their identities in a variety of contexts. Discussions with groups of single women and individual interviews yielded information on linguistic expressions and their attitudes and experiences of being an unmarried woman. Review of media sources such as national surveys, women's magazines, and television programs helped to form the basis for initial interviews. Interviews with women provided data on how and in what ways women's attitudes may have changed.

(4) Investigate how ideas about unmarried Japanese women's bodies and reproduction are elaborated through contraceptive ideologies and government policies. Discussions with groups of single women and individual interviews yielded information on contraceptive knowledge and attitudes toward sexuality. Review of media sources such as national surveys, women's magazines, and television programs helped to form the basis for initial interviews. Interviews with local public health educators showed the kinds of information about contraception available to the public.

Data Management and Analysis

Measures were taken to ensure confidentiality of each woman of the thirty women participating in the research, and pseudonyms were assigned. It was also explained to each woman that the results of the data collected will be published in an academic dissertation and academic journals. Names and locations of businesses and observation sites are also disguised.

Fieldnotes for each participant observation session were handwritten in a spiral notebook and labeled with the date, time, location, and names of people present. To the extent possible, at

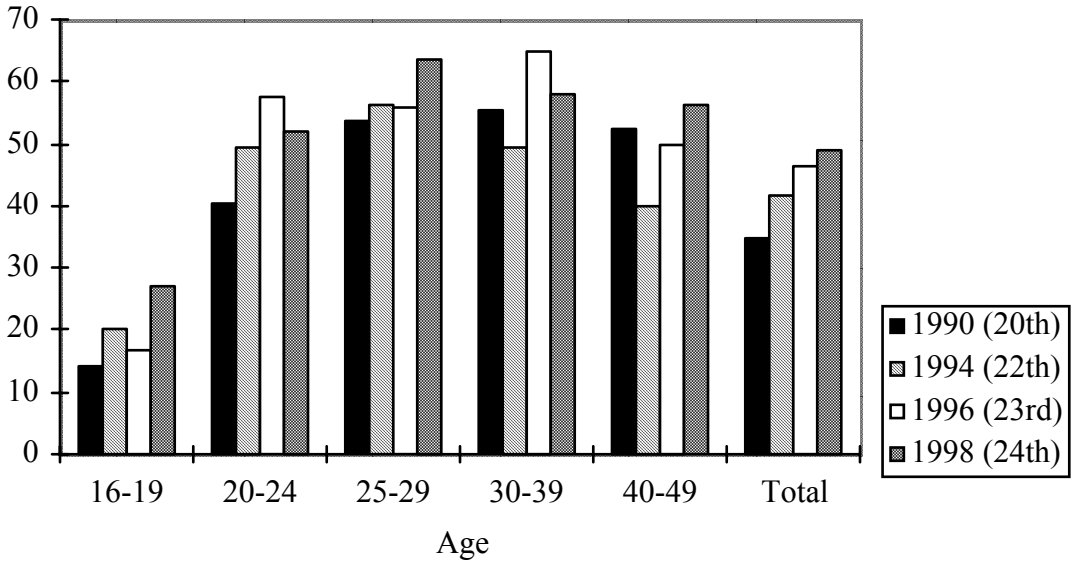
the end of each day of observations the notes were entered into a computer word processing application and coded for keywords and phrases for future analysis. The date and time of data entry was also recorded.

Interviews were tape-recorded, when possible, and later transcribed and translated into English and entered into the computer. Notes were also taken during formal interview sessions. All interview notes and transcripts were labeled with the date and time of the interview, location of interview, names of people present, and the overall feeling or mood before, during, and after the interview. The date, time and location of the transcription/translation session were noted.

Several different logbooks were maintained to track sources of information. A logistics journal was maintained to record how various contacts were made, sites and participants chosen and how the interview guide and survey was created. Documents, surveys, articles, and television were numbered and entered into a logbook to record the source of the document and how, when, and why it was obtained.

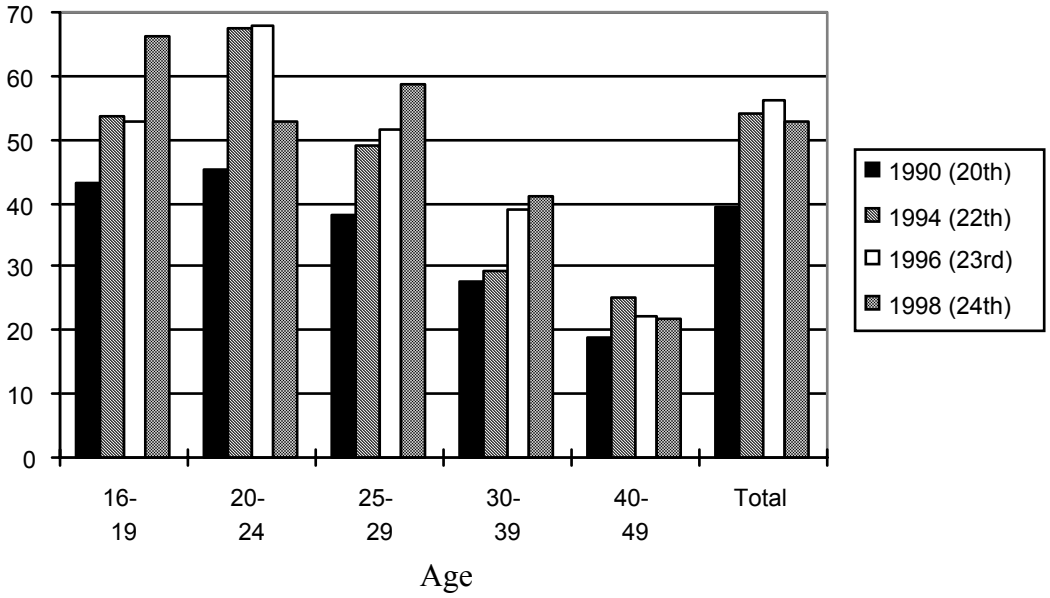
APPENDIX B

Statistics



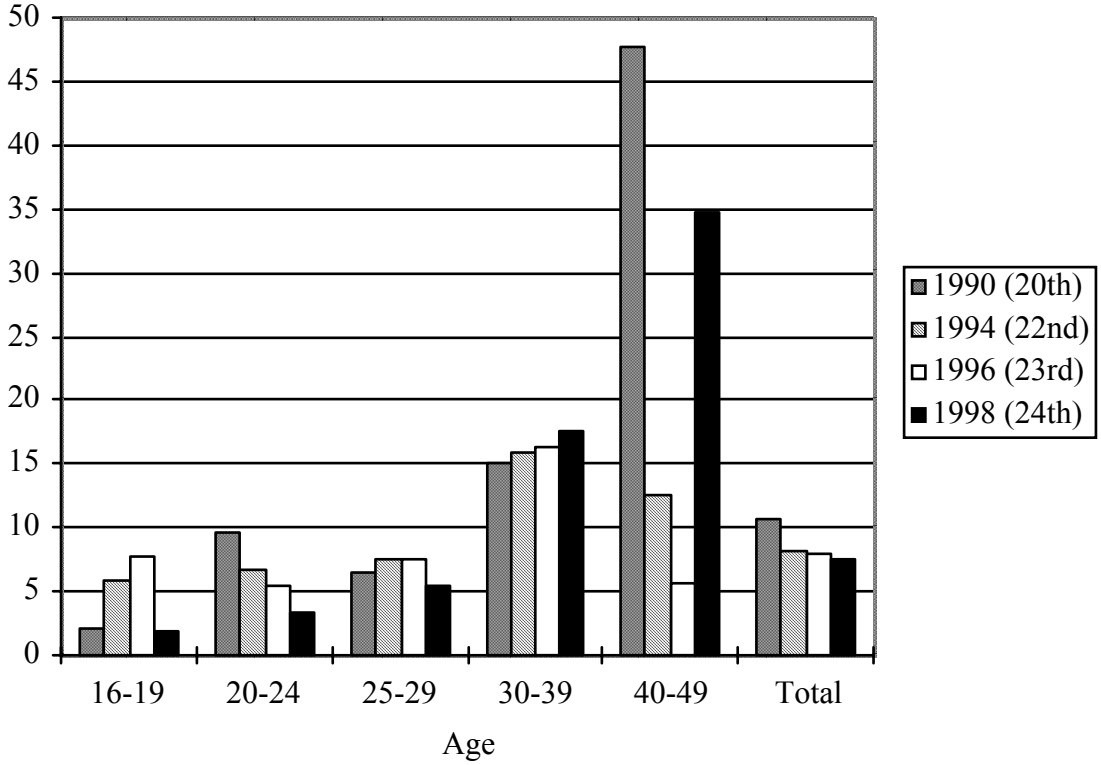
(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 190)

Figure 1 Experience of Sexual Intercourse Among Unmarried Women



(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 200)

Figure 2 Contraceptive Practice Among Unmarried Women



(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 200)

Figure 3 Rate of Experience of Abortion Among Unmarried Women

Table 7 Population by Marital Status, Sex, Whether Living with Parents, Japan (1995)

a) In 10 thousands

Marital Status	Total			Male			Female		
	Total	Living With Parent (s)	Living without Parent (s)	Total	Living With Parents	Living without Parent (s)	Total	Living With Parent (s)	Living without Parent (s)
Total 1)	12,544	5,330	7,209	6,149	2,738	3,409	6,395	2,592	3,800
Never Married	4,948	4,039	904	2,668	2,104	562	2,279	1,936	342
Married	6,409	1,191	5,217	3,205	593	2,612	3,204	598	2,605
Widowed	819	27	791	129	7	122	690	20	670
Divorced	312	59	252	113	26	86	199	33	166

b) By percentage

Marital Status	Total			Male			Female		
	Total	Living With Parent (s)	Living without Parent (s)	Total	Living With Parents	Living without Parent (s)	Total	Living With Parent (s)	Living without Parent (s)
Total 1)	100.0	42.5	57.5	100.0	44.5	55.4	100.0	40.5	59.4
Never Married	100.0	81.6	18.3	100.0	78.8	21.1	100.0	84.9	15.0
Married	100.0	18.6	81.4	100.0	18.5	81.5	100.0	18.7	81.3
Widowed	100.0	3.3	96.7	100.0	5.5	94.5	100.0	2.9	97.1
Divorced	100.0	18.9	81.0	100.0	23.5	76.5	100.0	16.4	83.6

1) Excludes “Age not reported.” Includes “Marital status not reported.”

Source: 1995 Population Census of Japan, Results of Special Tabulation on Living with Parents, September 14, 2000. http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/kokusei/1995/12.htm

Table 8 Labor Force Participation By Age Group and Sex, Japan

Age group	Male						Female					
	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000
Total	85.0	84.4	82.1	78.7	78.8	74.8	50.9	50.9	46.9	48.4	49.1	48.2
15-19	51.6	36.6	20.3	19.9	18.8	17.4	49.7	35.9	18.8	17.4	15.6	15.4
20-24	87.9	83.6	74.7	75.4	75.8	70.2	69.4	70.8	71.1	75.5	74.2	70.5
25-29	96.9	98.2	97.6	96.7	95.9	92.1	50.1	44.9	49.4	61.2	66.3	69.6
30-34	97.8	98.6	98.6	98.1	97.5	94.5	51.3	47.1	46.5	50.7	53.3	57.0
35-39	97.7	98.5	98.7	98.1	97.9	95.5	55.1	56.3	55.5	59.4	59.3	60.0
40-44	97.7	98.3	98.4	98.1	97.8	95.9	56.7	63.6	61.8	66.7	67.4	68.2
45-49	97.1	98.1	98.0	97.9	97.5	95.5	56.8	64.7	62.3	68.3	69.2	70.3
50-54	96.0	97.4	97.3	97.1	97.0	95.0	51.7	60.8	58.7	63.0	65.1	66.2
55-59	90.5	94.2	94.0	94.0	94.8	92.6	46.7	53.8	50.7	51.5	55.8	57.1
60-64	82.5	85.8	81.5	76.1	78.9	71.6	39.1	43.2	38.8	37.4	38.8	38.6
65-69	70.2	72.0	65.2	57.9	58.8	50.9	30.6	31.0	26.7	25.9	27.1	24.7
70-74	52.3	52.5	45.0	40.3	42.5	34.6	21.1	18.9	15.5	15.7	17.4	16.5
75-79	35.2	34.1	29.3	27.0	28.6	24.9	13.0	9.9	8.4	8.7	9.8	10.0
80-84	24.2	20.2	17.9	16.1	18.2	16.0	7.8	4.9	4.3	4.3	5.0	5.3
85+	10.8	12.7	10.1	8.8	9.5	9.0	4.2	2.5	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.3

Source: Population Census of Japan, http://www.ipss.go.jp/English/S_D_I/Indip.html

Table 9 Contraceptive Methods Used by Currently Married Women (%)

Contraceptive Method	1969	1979	1988	1998
Rhythm method	33.9	23.1	6.6	8.4
Basal Body Temperature	NA	NA	9.7	8.2
Withdrawal	6.9	5.2	9.7	7.4
Condoms	68.1	81.1	76.8	77.8
Douche	1.0	1.6	0.6	1.1
Spermicide	NA	NA	0.5	0.8
IUD	7.2	8.3	5.3	3.1
Oral Contraceptives	1.7	3.2	1.7	1.1
Female Sterilization		2.9	5.8	4.6
Vasectomy		1.1	1.6	1.2
No Answer	3.8	2.4	2.7	2.6

Note: total percentages may exceed 100% due to multiple answers given.

(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 200)

Table 10 Contraceptive Methods used by Unmarried Women (%)

Contraceptive Method	1996	1998
Rhythm method	3.5	4.4
Basal Body Temperature	13.8	16.7
Withdrawal	7.1	5.4
Condoms	96.1	95.1
Douche	0.7	1.5
Spermicide	3.9	4.4
IUD	5.3	3.1
Oral Contraceptives	1.1	0.0
Female Sterilization	0.4	0.0
No Answer	0.0	0.5

Note: total percentages may exceed 100% due to multiple answers given.

(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 201)

Table 11 Contraceptive Methods in the U.S. and Japan

Contraceptive Method	U.S.[1] (%)	Japan[2] (%)
Rhythm Methods/Periodic Abstinence	2.3	7.3
Basal Body Temperature	NA	9.8
Withdrawal	9.2	3.0
Condom	80.6	20.4
Spermicide	1.1	0.4
IUD	3.1	0.8
Oral Contraceptives	1.3	26.9
Sterilization (male and female)	4.3	38.6
Implant	1.3	NA
Injectable	3.0	NA
Diaphragm	1.9	NA
Other and No Answer	2.6	1.3

Notes: There were some differences in survey methodology: [1] Percentage of respondents, only one response allowed (responses add to 100%), 1995, [2] Up to two responses allowed per respondent (response add to more than 100%), 1996. NA indicates that a particular contraceptive method was not given as a choice.

(Sources: PPRC 1996; Piccinino and Mosher 1998)

Table 12 Contraceptive Failure Rates

Method	Perfect Use* (%)	Average Use* (%)
No method (chance)	85.0	85.0
Spermicides	3.0	30.0
Sponge	8.0	24.0
Withdrawal	4.0	24.0
Periodic Abstinence	9.0	19.0
Cervical Cap	6.0	18.0
Diaphragm	6.0	18.0
Condom	2.0	16.0
Pill	0.1	6.0
IUD	0.8	4.0
Tubal sterilization	0.2	0.5
Depo-Provera	0.3	0.4
Vasectomy	0.1	0.2
Norplant	0.04	0.05

*Estimated percentage of women experiencing an unintended pregnancy in the first year of use.

(Source: http://www.agi-usa.com)

Table 13 Distribution of Reported Abortions by Age, Japan and the United States, 1976

	Japan		United States	
Age	Rate 1,000 Women	Percent of Yearly Total	Rate 1,000 Women	Percent of Yearly Total
< 20	0.8	2.0	36.2	32.1
20–24	25.3	16.3	40.2	33.3
25–29	33.7	28.8	24.7	18.7
30–34	38.4	25.4	15.3	9.3
35–39	28.3	18.3	9.3	4.8
40–44	13.3	8.4		
45–49	1.4	0.8	3.7	1.8
Totals		100.0		100.0
	(664,106 cases)		(762,427 cases)	

(Source: Coleman 1983, 6)

Table 14 Distribution of Responses to a Question Regarding Priority of Contraceptive Method Features, in Percentages, Tokyo Area Clinic and Hospital Sample, 1975–1976

"If you were to choose a contraceptive method, what would be the most important quality?" (One answer only)	
	Percent
Safety to my health	31.2
Safety to my husband's health	3.0
Complete (failure-free) contraception	62.5
No answer*	3.3
Total (N = 635)	100.0

*Includes women checking more than one response or indicating inability to decide.

(Source: Coleman 1983, 93)

Table 15 Pregnancy Outcome, by Contraceptive Use, for First and Last Pregnancies for Married Japanese Women of Childbearing Age Ever Pregnant, 1981

	Pregnancy Outcome				
Contraceptive Use Pattern	Total	Live Birth	Miscarriage	Abortion	No. of Cases
	First Pregnancy				
Before and at pregnancy	100.0	62.6	9.1	28.3	265
Only before pregnancy	100.0	82.9	11.7	5.5	420
Not at all	100.0	85.5	8.0	7.0	2,011
	Last Pregnancy				
Before and at pregnancy	100.0	59.2	3.0	37.9	737
Only before pregnancy	100.0	92.1	1.9	6.0	431
Not at all	100.0	83.5	5.6	10.9	1,036

(Source: Hodge and Ogawa 1991, 212)

Table 16 Proportion of Japanese Women Who Want to Use Low Dose Oral Contraceptives if Made Legally Available

	Married (%)	Single (%)	Separated (%)	Widowed (%)
Want to use	6.4	8.4	11.1	10.0
Do not want to use	60.5	42.4	47.6	50.0
Do not know	28.9	45.3	34.9	40.0
No response	4.2	3.9	6.3	0.0

(Source: Hayashi 1998, 213)

Table 17 Reasons Given by Japanese Women as to Why They Want to Use Oral Contraceptives

	Married (%)	Single (%)
High Contraceptive Effectiveness	49.0	39.4
Easy to Use	19.4	21.2
Reduced side effects due to low dose	10.2	6.1
Used in many other countries	5.1	6.1
Can avoid the risk of abortion	28.6	22.7
Female controls the use	35.7	47.0
Don't have to worry about contraception during sex	40.8	36.4
Other answers	1.0	3.0
No response	0.0	6.1

Note: Up to two responses allowed, percentages may add to more than 100%.

(Source: Hayashi 1998, 221)

Table 18 Reasons Given by Japanese Women as to Why They Would Not Want to Use Oral Contraceptives

	Married (%)	Single (%)
Must be taken every day	13.4	10.2
Requires consultation with a doctor	12.5`	10.5
Concerned about side effects	70.4	71.9
Women shoulder entire burden of contraception	28.6	28.4
Currently available methods are good enough	37.6	25.7
Doesn't prevent transmission of HIV	11.9	20.4
Other answers	5.3	6.3
No response	1.5	1.2

Note: Up to two responses allowed, percentages may add to more than 100%.

(Source: Hayashi 1998, 222)

Table 19 Start of Contraception Among Married Women, 1990-1998

	1990 (%)	1992 (%)	1994 (%)	1996 (%)	1998 (%)
Before Marriage		12.0	15.7	23.4	23.4
Immed. after Marriage	23.5	14.0	14.7	10.0	12.5
After First Child	23.1	19.0	16.8	17.8	14.3
After Second Child	36.0	36.3	32.4	31.9	31.5
After Three or More Children Were Born	14.8	16.6	18.2	16.1	17.0
No answer	2.7	2.2	2.2	0.8	1.3

(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 196)

Table 20 Experience of Induced Abortion Among Unmarried Women (%)

Age	1990 (20th)	1994 (22nd)	1996 (23rd)	1998 (24th)
16-19	2.0	5.8	7.8	1.8
20-24	9.6	6.6	5.5	3.4
25-29	6.4	7.6	7.6	5.5
30-39	15.0	15.9	16.3	17.6
40-49	47.6	12.5	5.6	34.8
Total	10.6	8.2	8.0	7.5

(Source: Wagatsuma 1998, 203)

Table 21 Comparison of Ratio of Births of Children Out of Wedlock

(%)

Year	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1994
Japan	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.2
USA	10.7	14.2	18.4	22	28	—
UK*	8.3	9.1	11.8	19.2	28	—
Sweden	18.4	32.4	39.7	46.4	47	—

*Figures for UK 1970-1985 include only those for England and Wales.

(Source: http://www.women.city.yokohama.jp/english/tsushin/09/newscont3-6.html)

(Ministry of Health and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of Japan 1994*; United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook*. Vol. 27 (1975), Vol. 33 (1981), Vol. 38 (1986); ECSC-EC-EAEC, *Eurostat Yearbook '95*. US Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the US 1995*.

Table 22 Proportion of Married and Unmarried Women with a Negative Image Towards Out of Wedlock Births

	Total (%)	Married (%)	Never Married (%)
A Strong Negative Image	13.2	14.1	10.7
A Negative Image	31.1	35.7	22.8
Not such a Negative Image	31.2	30.9	32.7
Makes No Difference Either Way	22.7	17.6	31.6
No Answer	1.8	1.7	2.2

(Source: PPRC 1998)

Table 23 Proportion of Married and Unmarried Women Who Would Consider Having an Out of Wedlock Birth

	Total (%)	Married (%)	Never Married (%)
Yes	31.2`	25.6	42.4
No	65.4	70.7	54.7
No Answer	3.4	3.7	2.9

(Source: PPRC 1998)

Table 24 Reasons for Not Having an Out of Wedlock Birth for Married and Unmarried Women

	Total (%)	Married (%)	Never Married (%)
Not Socially Acceptable	15.7	16.0	14.2
Financially Difficult	42.9	43.4	42.2
Civil Law Discriminates Against Children Born Out of Wedlock	11.4	11.0	11.1
Child Would be Disadvantaged	46.3	49.0	39.7
Desire to Have Children in a Marriage	59.9	58.6	65.4
Other Answers	2.6	2.4	3.2
No Answer	1.7	1.7	1.9

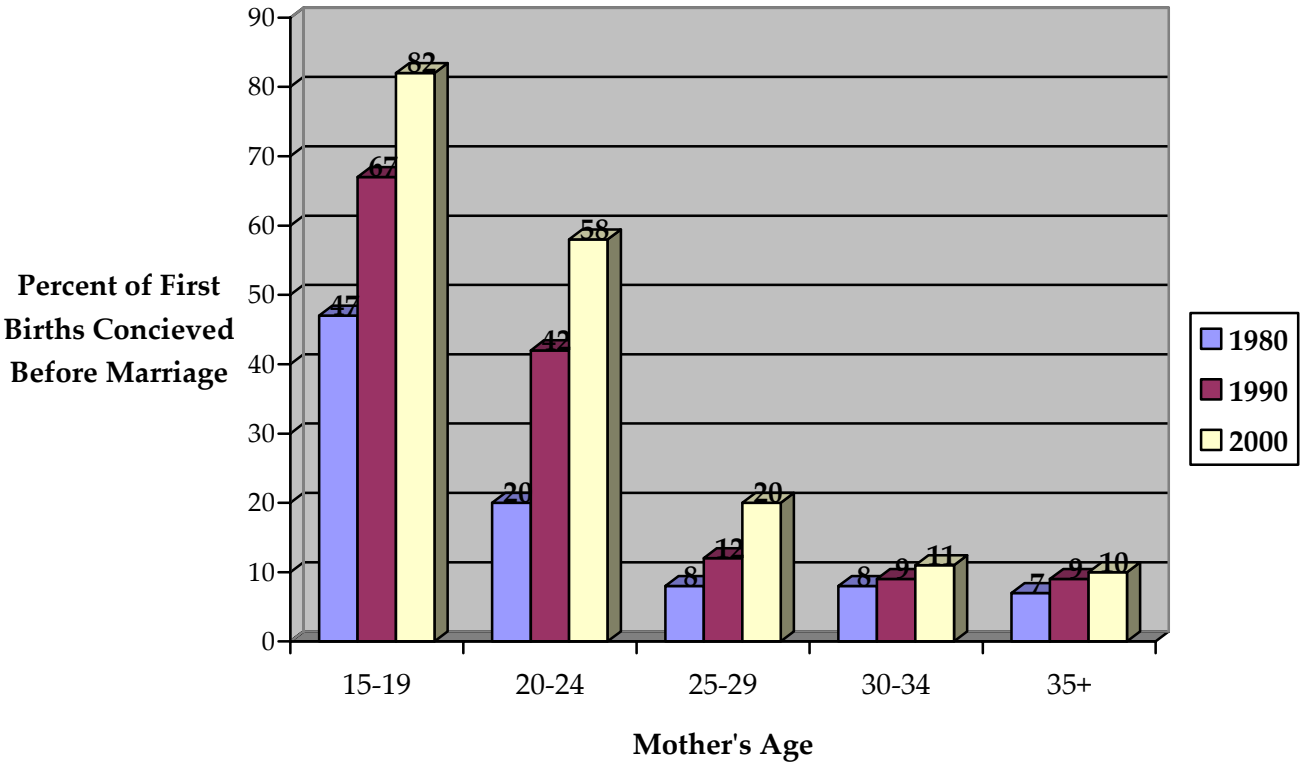
Note: Up to two responses allowed, percentages may add to more than 100%.

(Source: PPRC 1998)

Table 25 First Births Conceived Out of Wedlock, Japan

Year	First-Births Conceived Before Marriage	All First Births	% of First-Births Conceived Before Marriage
1980	83,000	660,000	13
1990	109,000	522,000	21
2000	150,000	569,000	26

(Source: Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, Welfare; Kashiwase 2002)



(Source: Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, Welfare; Kashiwase 2002)

Figure 4 First Births Conceived Before Marriage, By Mother's Age

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