

Notes

Aspirations for Career and Marriage among Young Japanese Women: The Case of Okayama University

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Abstract

The current study examines young Japanese women's attitudes toward work and marriage, and the degrees to which they see their career goals as complementing or conflicting with other aspects of their lives. The data were collected using a questionnaire-based survey: providing unique information on awareness of gender differences in workplaces among undergraduate women (N = 577) at a large national university in Japan. The results are complex: indicating an increase in the numbers of career-minded women, but also that many women still approach their careers in a very conservative way. This implies that Japan remains far behind many other developed countries in terms of how women are encouraged to approach their careers, and in how companies make use of female human capital as well. The results indicate a need to educate both male and female students on these issues in order to support female students in their decisions on how to participate in the labor force. Implications of the results and directions for future research are also discussed.

Key words: career development, Japanese college women, occupational aspiration, sex roles

Introduction

The increasing trend of remaining single in Japan is due to the postponement of marriage both by those who still believe in the traditional gender norms as well as those who no longer believe in those norms (MATSUDA 2005: 5).

In Japan, historically, men have been expected to develop career plans and to achieve success in their chosen careers, but women have not been encouraged to do so. With the end of high growth in the Japanese economy (and Japan has entered more and more into an aging society), women are now facing a new challenge. Thus, not only men but also women have to develop their career plans in order to make optimum use of work life and home life combined.

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If one's career is a total of all events and relationships among family members, friends, in education, and at work, then one's college days, and even one's high school days, are very important times for thinking about—and developing a plan for—one's future career. Note that the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology is considering a plan to require career education as a high school course (YOMIURI SHINBUN 2013).

Appearing in a book, titled *Advice on Living, for Women*, published 40 years ago, the following message was written for women who were close to graduating from universities: “soon you are going to become housewives, mothers, and homemakers, and will have to establish the way in which your household will be managed” (TATEWAKI 1973: 35). As this quote illustrates, at one time in Japan, women went to universities mainly to enhance their marriage prospects: to get married to high ranking officials, for example, and only a limited number of women could obtain higher education. Furthermore, at that time, women were highly expected to learn the basics of becoming ‘good mothers’ and ‘wise wives’ through higher education.

Many women in Japan currently can pursue higher education and can select from a variety of lifestyles, including working outside the home to earn their own incomes. Yet the traditional way of thinking (“men are breadwinners and women are homemakers”) rooted in Japanese conceptions of family life has not much changed. Even today, many Japanese continue to expect men to be the sole breadwinners, and for these people, especially, it becomes difficult to find suitable partners in a situation where males' employment environment has deteriorated (MATSUDA 2005). In a period supposedly marked by equal opportunities in employment, many Japanese women, even those with a college degree, still want to depend totally on their husbands financially. It worked well during a time when the Japanese economy was growing.

This study therefore seeks to contribute to the quality of life experienced by women: by examining Japanese undergraduate women's attitudes toward work and marriage, with a focus on women's reemployment after raising children. The study was designed especially to examine women's career consciousness: in the hopes of identifying ways of guiding these women to consonant career plans, and thus, to success in careers over the course of their lives.

Literature Review

Aging population

Japan's elderly people now account for a proportion of the nation's population that is larger than any other country's case, and this shows no sign of changing. “The national birthrate in 2008 was 1.37 children per woman—up from a record low of 1.26 in 2005, but still nowhere near what the country needs to replenish its population. If current trends continue, Japan's population will fall to 95 million by 2050, from about 127 million now” (TWARONITE 2010). (Data on population trends specific to Okayama Prefecture are not available.) As of December 2012, the projected population of Japan by 2020 is as follows:

0-14 years old (145,780,000 or 11.7%); 15-64 (734,080,000 or 59.2%); 65 and over (361,240,000 or 29.1%); and the mandatory retirement age for most companies in Japan is 60 years old now, and even if the retirement age is extended to 65, 3% of the population will not be working and will require all kinds of support from family, society, and the government (NATIONAL WOMEN'S EDUCATION CENTER OF JAPAN 2012).

Japan is also far behind other developed countries in terms of the use of female human capital in companies and businesses, and Japanese women's opportunities to contribute to leadership in workplaces are relatively few. For this reason, the roles of women in Japanese companies and businesses should be very much improved. However, in the following opinion by MIYAKE (cited in NATIONAL WOMEN'S EDUCATION CENTER OF JAPAN 2012): "the formation of market societies, and the incidence of associated work-life balance challenges as issues inextricably linked to realization of a gender-equal society before raising issues pertaining to individual lifestyles and society."

NEET and late marriage

Getting employed in well known companies has long been viewed in Japan as a symbol of future success especially for male college graduates. But after the economic bubble burst, the situation of finding employment for college graduates (even those who graduated from famous universities) are getting so difficult, and thus, the number of a job-hopping part-time worker is increasing, in addition to those who called 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

As evidenced by the NEET phenomenon, recent years have seen an increase in what the Japanese refer to as 'moratorium syndrome,' such that significant numbers of undergraduate men do not want to get employed after graduation and do not want to get married, either (YACHI 2005). These men consider working full time and supporting a wife and children to be huge responsibilities, and such men target freelance or part time work, choose to get married later, and may choose not have any children (MOROTOMI 2007). As of the year 2000, for instance, "69.3% of Japanese men and 54.0% of Japanese women aged 25-29 were unmarried; for the aged 30-34, 42.0% of Japanese men and 26.6% of Japanese women were unmarried, causing the drop in fertility rate, has become a target of social concern in Japan" (MATSUDA 2005: 3).

One contributor to the tendency of women marrying later in Japan is that there are many men who cannot easily get married, given their limitations of income. That is, it is so difficult for many young men to propose marriage on the base of their incomes alone, given the cost of living for a family, and such men prefer to marry a woman who is willing to continue with work even after marriage. Yet such men are unattractive to many young Japanese women, who want to stop working after marriage and be supported financially. In the absence of a proposal from a man who will agree to this arrangement, these women tend to stay single and keep working. As indicated by KANEKO and UEDA'S (2012) study, Japanese women tend to believe that getting married leads to a loss freedom over one's lifestyle, reduced ability to manage one's time.

The following research supports the argument outlined above. Okayama University's

GENDER EDUCATION GROUP (2008) previously conducted an independent survey with 225 male and female students enrolled in the liberal arts programs: although most male students (93.8%) answered that they would like to continue to work until retirement, the majority of the female students (51.1%) answered that they would like to quit their jobs after marrying.

Even women who complete higher education think about marriage and work in a fairly conservative way, and they still desire a way of life which involves the traditional gender norm: “Men at work, Women at home.” Based on the results, the Group recommends that the University educate both male and female students on these issues in order to support female students in their decisions to participate in the workforce.

Exchange of *kane* and *kao*

Japanese women today resemble American women in terms of their perspectives on marriage and life in general. They desire a rewarding work, a successful marriage, and child. According to YONEZAWA’s (2010) examples of women in the occupational categories of show businesses, newscasters, and comic writers, once women have everything (work, marriage, child), they tend to divorce. In that way, they can live on their own terms and explore opportunities for finding a better partner. Of course, the latter is more feasible for successful women who also have talent and beauty. But the notion that divorce is a sin does not exist any longer in Japan.

Women want to get married to men who have high incomes, and so bide their time in the hopes of such opportunities. Contemporary young Japanese women are realistic; and if they cannot find such ideal partners, they prefer not to marry, as discussed earlier, and even not to have children: instead they choose to become ‘parasite singles,’ which means that they earn enough to live alone but prefer to live rent-free with their parents. As OGURA (2003) notes, the large numbers of childless women have less to do with lack of nurseries or day care centers, and more to do with women not finding ideal marriages, defined as husbands with high incomes.

OGURA asked her college students the following question: “What is most important in evaluating a potential marriage partner?” The majority of women said that “the man’s earning power” is most important. The majority of men said: “the woman’s beauty.” These findings emphasize that even in the more gender-equal society of contemporary Japan, women desire men’s money and men desire women’s beauty. Marriage is an exchange of *kane* (money) and *kao* (face)—an exchange of different resources between a man and a woman. But, these days, many young Japanese men and women are not even testing their ‘market appeal,’ instead men and women increasingly do not want to get married (and do not want to have children).

Junior colleges vs. universities

Just as Japanese women often wish to marry men who have high educational attainments and high incomes, so Japanese men tend to desire marriage with women who have some postsecondary education (e.g., having graduated at least from junior colleges). Therefore, women with only high school diplomas may have difficulty finding their future

husbands. In this regard, as indicated by OGURA, a woman who has obtained a junior college degree is more likely to fulfill her ambition over the course of life. Compared with a woman who graduated from a four-year university or a graduate school, a junior college graduate may not have much ambition for a career, but may be ambitious enough to seek employment in a famous company, in support of her search for an ideal partner: one who has attained higher educational status and has the potential for high earnings. If she is successful in finding such a partner, she can quit her job only a few years after graduation, to become a full time housewife and have children.

Method

Data and sample

The current study was conducted at Okayama University located in western Japan. The University, one of the largest comprehensive universities in Japan, consists of eleven colleges, ranging from medicine to the physical sciences and humanities, and seven graduate schools. It was established in 1949, and currently has approximately 2,000 faculty and staff members with approximately 14,000 students, of whom approximately 3,400 are graduate students.

The author of the current paper developed a questionnaire, which was approved by the University for using with a sample of undergraduate students who had taken career education seminars and workshops offered by the University's Career Development Center in the fall semester of 2012. Outcomes from the current study are to be used as part of the Center's career education program and at the same time to enhance the Center's career advising and career coaching. Currently participation in the Center's career education program is optional, but eventually it will become a requirement for all the students enrolled at the University.

The questionnaire had three sections (see Appendix A). The first section asked about participants' plans after graduation, focusing on their vocational consciousness. The second section asked participants' life course perspectives and aspirations for marriage, focusing on their opinions about gender issues in employment and women's reemployment after the period of their child rearing. The third section collected participants' background information, including reasons for pursuing higher education. Since most of the undergraduate women in Japan are of traditional age (late teens and early twenties), the participants were not asked to record their ages.

Among the 577 participants, 554 (96%) had attended coeducational high schools, with only 4% of them coming from all-female high schools. This reflects a trend in Japanese education: for formerly all-female high schools to merge with or be converted to coeducational high schools. All-female institutions (including colleges) are no longer popular in Japan.

Most of the participants, as seen in Table 1, were freshmen and sophomores: 148 (25.6%) self-identified as enrolled in the college of liberal arts, and were taking general education courses. Although 88 were majoring in literature (which is considered a typical

Table 1. Participants' background information.

Grade	
▪ Freshman	287 (49.7%)
▪ Sophomore	219 (38.0%)
▪ Junior	39 (6.8%)
▪ Senior	32 (5.5%)
Major	
▪ General education	148 (25.6%)
▪ Literature	88 (15.3%)
▪ Law	87 (15.1%)
▪ Engineering	72 (12.5%)
▪ Economics	53 (9.2%)
▪ Medicine	27 (4.7%)
▪ Other (specify)	102 (17.7%)
What is the most important purpose for which you entered the university?	
• To obtain general knowledge and wisdom as a person	111 (19.2%)
• To be employed at a well known company	172 (29.8%)
• To obtain specialized knowledge and skills to get a high income job	252 (43.7%)
• I had nothing in particular to do, so I became a college student	31 (5.4%)
• Concentrating on club activities	9 (1.6%)
• Gaining an advantage for marriage	2 (0.3%)
• Other (specify)	0 (0.0%)

major for women), 72 were in engineering (which is considered a typical major for men); 53 were in economics, and 87 were in law. These results suggest that contemporary Japanese women would like to have professional degrees that afford access to high paying jobs. Although such careers may have increasing intrinsic appeal for women, another possible contributor is that such careers may provide a fallback plan in the event that the woman cannot find a partner who is able entirely to support her financially.

Results and Discussion

Plans after graduation

When participants were asked about their plans after graduation, their most frequent answers were as follows: "to find employment" (467 women or 80.9%); "to continue their education" (67 women or 11.6%); and "have not decided yet" (40 women or 6.9%). Although the majority of the women in this sample are freshmen and sophomores, it seems that they are making serious plans for their lives after graduation: including their future employment.

In comparison with the United States, where graduate programs (especially master's degree programs) have high enrollments, graduate programs in Japan until recently enrolled

fewer women. One explanation is that most companies were reluctant to hire women with graduate degrees: women who expected higher salaries than those with baccalaureate degrees, but might still resign after marrying. Women with graduate degrees therefore might have had as much trouble finding ideal jobs as ideal husbands. This situation is changing, however.

Japanese women now realize that there are many options for them, in addition to getting married and ending their careers. They are motivated to pursue professional careers as physicians, lawyers, or certified public accountants, and they have begun to seek the increased wealth, power, and prestige, attaining a set of status dimensions, that come with such careers. Such choices are now considered just as legitimate as becoming a housewife soon after finding a husband.

Gender issues in employment

When participants were asked, “Do you think there is sex discrimination in employment?”, 222 (38.5%) marked “substantially,” while 218 (37.8%) marked “not so much.” These two modal answers conflict with one another. An additional 115 (19.9%) said: they “do not know”; which is not surprising, given the fact that most of the participants were freshmen and sophomores and perhaps they had never been employed. Participants were then asked, “If sex discrimination exists, which area(s) of employment is/are the most likely source of differences?”, and allowed the participants to mark as many areas as they deemed likely. Their answers regarding the given areas were as follows: “job content” (31.2%); “promotion” (29.3%); “placement” (25.7%); “recruitment and selection” (20.6%); “wages” (18.4%); “retirement” (2.6%); “training and education” (1.6%); and “other” (no example listed) (0.5%).

“Invisible barriers prevent women from fully demonstrating their talents and inhibit the promotion of women to upper management. . . . Japanese society is still overwhelmingly male dominated as far as the workplace is concerned” (MARIKKAR 2007: 92). Japanese companies still do not consider women a major human resource, and the participants’ answers suggest that they are aware of this. The answers summarized above reflect the reality that Japanese women will not be promoted easily or often. As discussed earlier, women are more likely to experience career interruptions, so employers are disinclined to pay for training them. This results in a labor market in Japan that is based on a conception of women as dispensable and temporary.

Japanese women are not assigned to responsible jobs that afford promotions, as there are marked differences between male and female workers in terms of “job content” and “placement.” The results also reflect the reality that “the share of women promoted to the management class in Japan is the lowest in the world. . . managers are expected to continue with work after marriage or the birth of children and are required to have a high level of job training and experience” (NAKANO 2010: 23-24). Many Japanese women find it very challenging to balance their careers with taking primary responsibility for housework and raising children: a dilemma that fewer Japanese men experience to this degree, given their more limited responsibilities at home.

According to DELAAT (1999), although many undergraduates in the United States, both male and female, seem to believe that sex discrimination in the workplace and its causes are the things of the past and that gender inequality has been ‘solved,’ there is substantial evidence that women continue to lag behind their male counterparts in the contemporary American workplace. In cross-sectional studies, on the other hand, KNOKE and ISHIO (1998) found that women’s disadvantages in job training widened after controlling for theoretically important human capital, occupational, industrial, organizational, and family-stage variables; and they concluded that the gender gap in company-provided job training programs remains robust and tenacious.

Continuations of women’s careers

Participants were asked, “What are most important measures that can be taken so that women can continue to work outside the home? (Mark two.)” Their answers were: “availability of public facilities such as day care centers or nursing homes” (29.3%); “eliminating the idea: Men at work, Women at home” (28.6%); “availability of maternity leave and reemployment systems” (56.3%); “improving women’s vocational motivation” (9.7%); “increasing men’s understanding of women and men’s support in housekeeping” (35.4%); “correcting instances of sex-based discrimination in employment” (17.2%); and “other” (e.g., “the difference between men and women’s roles at home especially”) (0.9%). Although the majority of the women selected the measure (i.e., “availability of maternity”), two other measures (that is, “increasing men’s understanding” and “eliminating the idea”) are relatively high also.

These results may parallel trends described by BIANCHI and SPAIN (1996), such that American women of the late 1990s continued to perform more household tasks than men, and had to find a balance between their care giving roles and their careers. Time has changed the situation in Japan, in particular, and the view that a woman’s place is in the kitchen is an historical relic. Another practice maintained throughout earlier periods in Japan, such that “female workers are expected to quit and marry after working a few years” (AMANO 1997: 227), is also becoming a relic. Moreover, one income is oftentimes not enough to maintain a household under the current conditions imposed by Japan’s diminished economy. This is simply a reality of life in twenty-first century Japan, and the research participants seem aware of that.

The future of women and work

Participants were asked, “What would you predict concerning women and work in the future?” Table 2 shows their answers. The majority of the women agreed with four predictions: the proportion of women “who stay in their jobs after marriage will increase” (87.3%); “who work in areas ‘suitable’ to women will increase” (80.8%); “who start their own businesses will increase” (76.8%); and “will increasingly hold professional jobs requiring advanced skills” (55.3%). The majority of the participants disagreed with two predictions: women “will continue to take jobs that support the jobs of men” (65.2%); and “will increasingly decide that being a homemaker is most important and will forego work

Table 2. Predictions' predictions on the future of women and work.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
— the proportion of women who stay in their jobs after marriage will increase	504 (87.3%)	24 (4.2%)	49 (8.5%)
— the proportion of women who start their own businesses will increase	443 (76.8%)	53 (9.2%)	81 (14.0%)
— the proportion of women who work in areas 'suitable' to women will increase	466 (80.8%)	33 (5.7%)	78 (13.5%)
— the proportion of women in professional jobs requiring advanced skills will increase	319 (55.3%)	91 (15.8%)	167 (28.9%)
— women will continue to take jobs that support the jobs of men	59 (10.2%)	376 (65.2%)	142 (24.6%)
— women will work more and more as part timers or temporary workers	99 (17.2%)	287 (49.7%)	191 (33.1%)
— women will increasingly decide that being a homemaker is most important and will forego work outside house	49 (8.5%)	350 (60.7%)	178 (30.8%)
— equal employment between men and women will drastically increase	284 (49.2%)	121 (21.0%)	172 (29.8%)

outside house" (60.7%).

"Japanese corporations and established businesses have traditionally not welcomed women into their upper echelons. . . although some companies are making great efforts to change this. . . and the dominance of the old-boy government-industry network stand as de facto barriers to female advancement" (PULVERS 2012). The participants, contemporary young women, realize that they may be able to establish their own businesses (though perhaps typically, on a small scale), taking the future into their own hands, as described (below) by PULVERS:

Many [Japanese] women today are opting to start their own enterprises, creating businesses whose direction they can control. The potential for women to latch on to ideas and turn them into profitable ventures is enormous—so much so that last month this model was called "an engine for the expansion of domestic demand and economic growth" on the popular NHK [*Nihon Hoso Kyokai* (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)] news program, "Closeup Gendai" (7; material in brackets added).

Additionally, the result, showing about 87% of the participants predict a large increase of women who stay in their jobs after marriage, does conflict the same sample's answers, in a different section, that nearly 60.0% of them would like to 'quit' their jobs after marriage.

Women's contributions to society

Participants were asked the following questions: "Do you agree with the idea that the biggest contribution of women to society is to raise children and manage households?" Only a minority agreed. Their answers were: "strongly agree" (4.9%); "agree" (23.6%); "neutral" (36.4%); "disagree" (23.2%); and "strongly disagree" (12.0%). The results parallel MAINES and HARDESTY'S (1987) observation that many people continue to believe that childcare is best performed by the mother. Accordingly, the participant women's anticipations of work and family roles reflect a complex combination of continuing traditional gender roles and new expectations of and by women: as breadwinners and as people equally deserving of career opportunities.

In recent years more and more Japanese women have begun working in business, yet most are secretaries, clerical workers, and sales representatives: the fact that many of the married women of all age groups work on a part-time basis is a reality, and the concept of women having their own occupations has not yet entered the national consciousness (INOUE 1999a). Specially, persistent vestiges of a Confucian norm requiring that a woman obey her father, husband, and son have created difficulties for women in East Asia, especially in Japan (HAYHOE 1995). Such norms may continue to influence the long-established gender roles in Japan which are still profoundly traditional: such that women are expected to be 'home-oriented.'

In a 2012 public opinion survey by the Japanese government, although it is not surprising, 51.0% of the total respondents (men and women combined) agreed with the idea that "husbands should do work outside the home and wives should stay at home managing the household": a 10.3% increase from the previous year (KYODO NEWS 2012). It is possible that people renewed their values of family ties after the horrible experience of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, which claimed about 16,000 lives; with 3,000 classified as missing. With so many aspects of material life damaged, and enhanced sensitivity to the fragility of life, only moral goods such as affection and dedication to family retained high value, for many.

Life course perspectives

Generally American women who desire both to marry and have a family and also to pursue a career will try not to give up either goal. In contrast, Japanese women who desire both a family and a career will often give up one of these goals. Japanese women's such attitudes do not greatly change even after obtaining higher education. As an example, of 735 college women who were surveyed, 529 (72.0%) said that they would prefer to quit their full time jobs when they get married (INOUE 2004). Women in the current study were also asked a similar question: "If you were given five alternatives, which one would you choose? And which option was the one your mother chose?" Patterns in the selections of these women and their mothers were very similar (see Table 3). These patterns parallel KERPELMAN'S (2007) discussion of career goals: in which the mother has more influence than the father on the daughter's career aspirations.

The majority of the women (58.2%, alternatives 2 and 3 combined) would like to quit

Table 3. Participants' life course choices: daughters vs. mothers.

Alternatives	Her choice	Mother's choice
<i>Alternative 1</i> — finish university, then get married, and then have a first child and concentrate on the household	3 (0.5%)	11 (1.9%)
<i>Alternative 2</i> — finish university, then get a job, then get married, then quit the job for the first child and concentrate on the household	84 (14.6%)	134 (23.2%)
<i>Alternative 3</i> — finish university, then get a job, then get married, then quit the job for the first child, and be reemployed later on	241 (41.8%)	264 (45.8%)
<i>Alternative 4</i> — finish university, then get a job, then get married, and then have the first child but do not quit the job	159 (27.6%)	165 (28.6%)
<i>Alternative 5</i> — finish university, then get a job but ignore the possibility of marriage and concentrate on pursuing a career	90 (15.6%)	3 (0.5%)

their full time jobs when they get married or have a child, but about 28.0% would like both to be parents and continue their full time jobs. Similarly, the majority of the participants' mothers (69.0%, alternatives 2 and 3 combined) had "quit their full time jobs," but about 29.0% had continued in both roles. Unlike their mothers, however, almost 16.0% of the women in this sample answered that they would like to focus on pursuing their careers (and not pursuing marriage, in particular): providing evidence of a slow but definite increase in the desirability of being a career-oriented woman, rather than a home-oriented woman.

Careers for women are strongly influenced by life events, such as marriage, childbirth, and child rearing (IMADA and HIRATA 1989). Such events also greatly affect the careers for men, but women are more likely than men to lose promotions and opportunities because of having children: to a greater extent than men, then, the obstacles faced by working women are centered on entrance to and retirement from the labor market, and those transfers and other occupational changes are also strongly influenced by life events (KATO 2009).

Opinions about women's reemployment

Participants were asked, "Women may intend to quit their jobs after getting married or having their first child, but start working again after a certain interval. What is your opinion of this practice?" Their answers were: "this is a realistic approach" (59.8%); "it is better to continue to work instead of quitting one's job" (8.1%); "it is a natural response to today's working environment for women" (26.5%); "housekeeping is most important, so it is not a good idea to work outside the home again" (4.0%); and "other" (e.g., "each one's freedom of choice") (1.6%).

The majority of the women thought quitting one's job but resuming work later was reasonable, reflecting the reality of the society in which they grew up: the society where men have traditionally been the breadwinners and women have traditionally been the care givers. These results invite comparison to RYKER'S (cited in DI DIO *et al.* 1996) study, which indicated that female college students placed a higher value on equality and self-respect,

whereas male college students placed a higher value on a comfortable life and social recognition. Such reflects the reality of life for Japanese men, who are expected to attain high social status and at the same time, be responsible for providing most resources for their families.

Participants were then asked, "If women search for reemployment, when do you think is the best time for them to do so?" Their answers were: "soon after giving birth" (8.3%); "before the child enters an elementary school" (17.3%); "after the child enters an elementary school" (40.2%); "after the child enters a middle school" (21.3%); "after the child enters a high school" (9.9%); "when the child has become an adult" (1.7%); and "other" (e.g., "after the child reaches at least 3 years of age"; "after the child enters college") (1.2%). About 40.0% thought returning to work after the child entered an elementary school might be realistic. There is no one best time for all women, simply because each family's situation, including financial details, is different. The results above mirror KATO's (2009) observation that Japanese undergraduate men perceive their careers as the 'centers' of their lives, while Japanese undergraduate women perceive their careers as 'secondary' to their roles as homemakers.

In order to identify predictive relationships between the women's specific beliefs about reemployment (as expressed in responses to survey questions 10-1 through 10-15), Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. Correlations of absolute magnitude of less than 0.4 are considered weak, and those of magnitudes between 0.4 and 0.7 are considered moderate.

As shown in Table 4, results indicated five moderate positive relationships that were reliable at $p < 0.01$: between items 1 and 14 ($r(68) = 0.41$) (participants who view women's reemployment as a good opportunity also tend to believe that working outside the home affords a more stimulating life); between items 6 and 10 ($r(69) = 0.40$) (participants who believe that reemployment will broaden their horizons also tend to believe that they can find reemployment that supports their personal choices among schedules and life styles); between items 7 and 9 ($r(69) = 0.46$) (participants who believe that women seeking reemployment increasingly experience reduced motivation also tend to agree that reemployed women represent a convenient labor force); between items 9 and 10 ($r(69) = 0.48$) (participants who believe that reemployed women represent a convenient labor force also tend to believe that such women can work with their choice of schedules); and between items 9 and 12 ($r(69) = 0.44$) (participants who believe that reemployed women represent a convenient labor force also more often say that earning income can improve their positions at home).

Results of the analysis summarized above indicate that participants are aware of the present state of women's employment in Japan. The first point to discuss here is connect to OKUTSU's (2008) study in which a majority of women who reenter employment after raising children work part-time, and most of these reemployed women engage in clerical work or service work. Participants in the current sample appear to realize that reemployment cannot offer ideal career opportunities, but many of them believe that by working outside the home, they can obtain a more stimulating life and broaden their horizons. Such women may look forward to contributing to society, and to consequent increases in self-esteem.

The second point is also connected to OKUTSU's study in which the most common

Table 4. Correlations, means, and standard deviations for the participants' perceptions of opinion on women's reemployment after raising children.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 good opportunity for women to use skills	1.000														
2 most cannot find a suitable job	-0.147	1.000													
3 housekeeping will be abandoned	-0.095	0.048	1.000												
4 it will help with household expenditure	0.344**	0.223	0.086	1.000											
5 need to be reemployed, but cannot get a good job	0.088	0.307**	-0.090	0.256*	1.000										
6 it will broaden their horizons	0.386**	-0.096	0.141	0.181	-0.039	1.000									
7 women will experience reduced motivation	0.021	-0.017	0.204	0.032	-0.031	0.067	1.000								
8 working outside the home keeps women young	0.217	-0.127	-0.153	0.090	0.045	0.327**	-0.115	1.000							
9 rehiring represent a convenient labor force	0.025	0.008	-0.136	0.095	0.127	0.187	0.456**	0.150	1.000						
10 women can work with their choice of schedules	0.045	-0.074	-0.118	0.075	-0.062	0.403**	0.025	0.376**	0.484**	1.000					
11 should not have quit jobs in the first place	0.179	0.336**	-0.160	0.108	0.380**	-0.171	-0.035	-0.038	0.110	0.033	1.000				
12 earning can improve their positions at home	0.257*	0.232	-0.047	0.184	0.136	0.296*	0.209	0.155	0.440**	0.215	0.211	1.000			
13 increased conflict regarding housekeeping	0.096	0.253*	0.298*	0.274*	0.097	0.019	0.264*	-0.036	-0.019	-0.290*	0.000	0.133	1.000		
14 will experience a more stimulating life	0.413**	0.151	-0.092	0.305**	-0.006	0.313**	-0.370**	0.245*	-0.173	0.084	0.014	0.061	0.058	1.000	
15 children become independent when their mothers are working	0.159	0.123	-0.242*	0.208	0.177	-0.147	0.172	-0.014	0.153	0.244*	0.251*	0.032	-0.032	0.064	1.000
Mean	2.100	2.606	2.775	2.324	2.493	2.183	3.211	2.859	2.944	2.873	3.366	3.493	3.000	2.239	2.694
Standard Deviation	0.870	0.853	0.944	0.907	1.026	0.850	1.078	0.914	0.876	1.027	0.960	0.998	0.862	0.853	1.043

**-. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

reason that women decide to return to work is financial. Increasing numbers of families in Japan are relying on two incomes to finance their chosen lifestyles, and the two-income family structure is becoming more normative than exceptional. And most of the current participants realize that the time when men were the sole income providers is almost over in Japan. Women in the present sample indicated that they could improve their positions in their families by bringing in money, and to some degree, they expect to do so on terms consistent with their personal preferences of schedules and lifestyles. Even though many of the women recognize that employers find it convenient to hire women for some types of work, these women appear to expect some measure of convenience in balancing work with other aspects of their lives.

The third point is, as noted by UENO (2012), that in comparison with male workers (who usually devote their primary attention to work until retirement), women more typically learn to balance work and life through the following sequence of experiences: entering the workforce after school; eventually leaving their jobs for marriage or childbirth; and finding employment again after the early years of child rearing. In many cases, these phases overlap. In this way, women train themselves since early adulthood to balance responsibilities at work and at home.

And the final point is that most of the participants of the current study appear to recognize that Japanese employers prefer to hire young applicants newly graduated from universities. Items 11 ($M = 3.37$) and 12 ($M = 3.49$) showed the highest mean levels of agreement, indicating participants' awareness of the reality that once a Japanese woman quits her full time job to get married or have a child, it is very difficult to get another full time job.

Summary and Future Directions

Less traveled path

The results of the current study might be unique to the sample of the study. Yet it is also arguable that these participants are representative of the population of Japanese undergraduate women today, and that such women are preparing to stay in their jobs for as many years as possible: combining their work and family responsibilities. At the same time, many such women may hope to quit their jobs and stay at home after getting married or having a child.

In Japan, historically, women have been considered home-oriented, but women increasingly choose not to give up their careers. This reminds one of Robert FROST'S (1992: 163) well known poem, part of which is quoted below.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference.

There are two main roads (paths) that women employed can choose: 1) quitting their

jobs after marriage or 2) retaining their jobs after marriage. From now on, increasing numbers of Japanese women are going to take the historically less traveled road (path), and so, they will experience both difficulties (e.g., balancing time and effort between work and home) and benefits (e.g., financial independence). It is natural for women (as well as men) to want to combine a family with a career. It is natural for women to pursue higher education: because women wish to improve their occupational status as well as social status (INOUE 1999b).

Conducting research that considers self- and environmental exploration, as in ADACHI's (2008) study, will also help to illuminate ways in which women can maximize their vocational opportunities. The results of ADACHI's study showed that Japanese undergraduate women with high self-efficacy in career decision making engaged in both self-exploration and environmental exploration activities with greater frequency. Also, applying sociological and psychological perspectives to women's life trajectories will support understanding of why and how young women aspire to and achieve higher occupational status through higher education.

It is hoped that the current study contributes to an understanding of Japanese young women's aspirations, and to an awareness of issues of gender as these relate to motives for pursuing careers and marriage—two of the most important parts of their lives. Further research with data from participants in other universities across Japan is necessary to corroborate and expand on the findings of the study. The present study did not include interviews, and such would provide additional insights into women's attitudes toward work and marriage.

To conclude, because Japan is not alone in facing the economic challenges that confront women with such choices (thus, whether to continue to work after marriage, and if so, whether to continue after having children), results from the current study will benefit not only educators and counselors advising women in Japan, but also their colleagues in many other parts of the world.

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Appendix A

A Survey Questionnaire for Undergraduate Women

Part I— Work after graduation

Q1. What is your plan after graduation? (Circle one only)

- 1 to get employed
- 2 to engage in housework
- 3 to continue your education
- 4 not to get employed but to prepare for marriage
- 5 have not decided yet
- 6 others (please specify) _____

Q2. What kind of job would you like after graduation? (Circle as many as appropriate)

- 1 job using license
- 2 job using specialized skills
- 3 job using women's knowledge and skills
- 4 job using foreign languages
- 5 job using creativity and imagination
- 6 job using physical strength
- 7 job like secretarial work
- 8 job which is equal to those of men
- 9 others (please specify) _____

Q3. Do you think there are gender differences in employment? (Circle one only)

- 1 extremely
- 2 substantially
- 3 not so much
- 4 not at all
- 5 do not know

If gender differences exist, which area(s) of employment is/are the most likely source of differences? (Circle as many as appropriate)

- 1 recruitment and selection
- 2 placement
- 3 job content
- 4 training and education
- 5 wages
- 6 promotion
- 7 retirement
- 8 others (please specify) _____

Q4. If you experienced gender discrimination at work, what would you do? (Circle one only)

- 1 quit the job immediately
- 2 try to improve the situation
- 3 ignore it and continue to work
- 4 find another job first and quit the company
- 5 reduce your effort at work and concentrate on other things such as hobbies
- 6 others (please specify) _____

Q5. Some say that it is difficult for women to continue to work outside the home throughout adulthood. What do you think about this statement? (Circle one only)

- 1 strongly think so
- 2 somewhat think so

- 3 do not think so
- 4 do not know

If it is difficult for women to continue to work outside the home, what are the major reasons, in your opinion?

(Circle as many as appropriate)

- 1 women's lack of motivation to work
- 2 giving birth and child-rearing
- 3 housekeeping and elderly care
- 4 companies not considering women a major element of their work force
- 5 lack of equal employment systems in general
- 6 getting married and maintain the household
- 7 the husband's lack of support at home
- 8 women's lack of ability and skills at work
- 9 others (please specify) _____

Q6. What are most important measures that can be taken so that women can continue to work outside the home throughout adulthood? (Circle two)

- 1 availability of public facilities such as day-care centers or nursing homes
- 2 eliminating the idea: "men at work, women at home"
- 3 availability of maternity leave and re-employment systems
- 4 improving women's vocational motivation
- 5 increasing men's understanding of women and men's support in housekeeping
- 6 correcting instances of sex-based discrimination in employment
- 7 others (please specify) _____

Q7. In recent years, women have become increasingly engaged with society. What do you predict concerning women and work in the future? (Circle only one each)

2.....1.....0
 agree disagree don't know

- 1 the proportion of women who stay in their jobs after marriage will increase
 2.....1.....0
- 2 the proportion of women who start their own businesses will increase 2.....1.....0
- 3 the proportion of women who work in areas 'suitable' to women will increase
 2.....1.....0
- 4 the proportion of women in professional jobs requiring advanced skills will increase
 2.....1.....0
- 5 women will continue to take jobs that support the jobs of men 2.....1.....0
- 6 women will work more and more as part timers or temporary workers 2..... 1.....0
- 7 increasingly, women will decide that being a homemaker is most important and will forego work outside house 2..... 1.....0
- 8 equal employment between men and women will drastically increase 2.....1.....0

Part II—Women's reemployment

Q8. Women may tend to quit their jobs after getting married or having their first child, but start working again after a certain interval. What is your opinion? (Circle one only)

- 1 this is a realistic way
- 2 it is better to continue to work instead of quitting one's job

- 3 it is a natural response to today's working environment for women
- 4 housekeeping is most important, so it is not a good idea to work outside the home again
- 5 others (please specify) _____

Q9. If women search for reemployment, when do you think is the best time for them to do so? (Circle one only)

- 1 soon after giving birth
- 2 before the child enters an elementary school
- 3 after the child enters an elementary school
- 4 after the child enters a middle school
- 5 after the child enters a high school
- 6 when the child has become an adult
- 7 other (please specify) _____

Q10. The following is a list of opinions regarding women's reemployment or rehire. What do you think about each of the opinions? (Circle only one answer for each)

- 1 strongly agree
 - 2 agree
 - 3 neutral
 - 4 disagree
 - 5 strongly disagree
- 1 Re-employment/rehires offer good opportunities for women to use their knowledge or skills.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 2 Most cannot find a suitable job.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 3 Housekeeping will be abandoned.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 4 It will help with household expenditures.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 5 Many women badly need to be reemployed, but most cannot get a good job.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 6 It will broaden their horizons.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 7 Women trying to get rehired will increasingly experience reduced motivation.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 8 Working outside the home keeps women young.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 9 Rehired women represent a convenient labor force for companies.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 10 Women can find reemployment with their choice of schedules and life styles.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
 - 11 Women should not have quitted their jobs in the first place.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5

- 12 Women earning income can improve their positions at home.
 1.....2.....3.....4.....5
- 13 Women working again outside the house will experience increased conflict regarding housekeeping.
 1.....2.....3.....4.....5
- 14 Women who are reemployed will experience a more exciting, stimulating life.
 1.....2.....3.....4.....5
- 15 Children will become independent when their mothers are working full time.
 1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Q11-1. If you are given the alternatives, below, which one will you choose? ()

Q11-2. Which is the one your mother had chosen? ()

- 1 finish university, then get married, and then have a first child and concentrate on the household
- 2 finish university, then get a job, then get married, then quit the job for the first child and concentrate on the household
- 3 finish university, then get a job, then get married, then quit the job for the first child, and be reemployed later on
- 4 finish university, then get a job, then get married, and then have the first child but do not quit the job
- 5 finish university, then get a job but ignore the possibility of marriage and concentrate on pursuing a career
- 6 others (please specify) _____

Part III—Background Information

Q12. Which types of high school did you complete? (Circle one only)

- 1 female high school
- 2 coeducational high school

Q13. What is the most important purpose for which you entered the university? (Circle one only)

- 1 to obtain general knowledge and skills as a person
- 2 to be employed at a well known company
- 3 to obtain specialized knowledge and skills to get a high income job
- 4 I had nothing in particular to do, so I became a college student
- 5 concentrating on club activities
- 6 gaining an advantage for marriage
- 7 others (please specify) _____

Q14. Do you agree with the idea that the biggest contribution of women to society is to raise children and manage households? (Circle one only)

- 1 strongly agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neutral
- 4 disagree
- 5 strongly disagree

Q15. You are: (Circle one only)

- 1 freshman
- 2 sophomore
- 3 junior
- 4 senior
- 5 other (please specify)

Q16. What is your major? Please specify _____