The Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility

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CHAPTER 2

Women's Economic Status and Fertility: Japan in Cross-National Perspective

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Introduction

Drastic changes in Japan's demographic structure—that is, the decline in the fertility rate and the resulting growth in the aged population, and their possible consequences for Japan's fiscal health—have raised alarm in Japan's policy-making circles. The drop in the total fertility rate from 1.66 in 1988 to 1.57 in 1989 attracted public attention and became widely known as the "1.57 shock." Nothing the government has done so far has resulted in higher fertility, and the numbers seem to be edging ever downward. However we feel about fertility itself, the public spotlight on the fertility issue gives us an unprecedented opportunity to examine how women's lot might be improved.

Japan has been characterized by the least favorable work setting for women, as exemplified by the discontinuous pattern of work among mothers, the large wage gap between men and women, and the very low proportion of women holding managerial positions. In this chapter, I will examine the downward trend in the fertility rate, and provide an overview of recent studies on married women's labor force participation. Second, I will examine mothers' working patterns, especially on the continuation of work before and after the first childbirth in Japan. Third, I will compare mothers' work in Japan with that in other industrial nations, focusing on the extent of their contribution to the household economy. I will show how the wife's income affects the number of children in Japan and elsewhere.

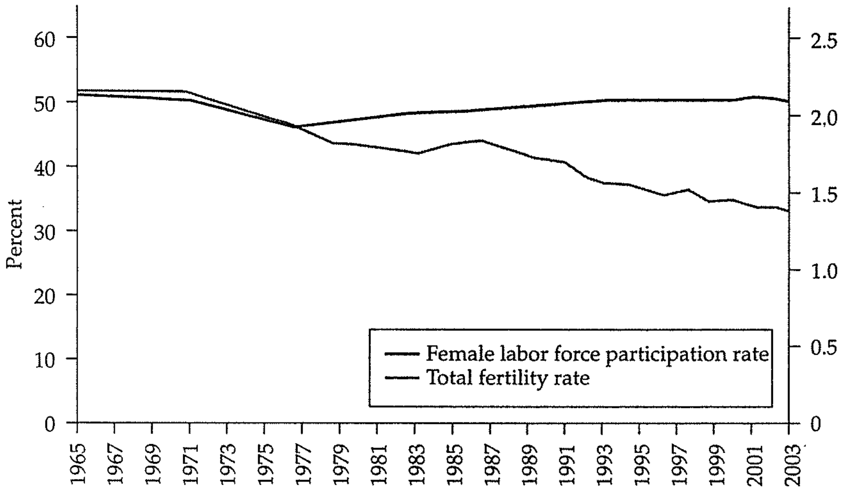

FIGURE 2.1 Female Labor Force Participation Rates and Total Fertility Rates since 1965

Trends in the Fertility Rate and Female Labor Force Participation in Japan

Figure 2.1 shows the female labor force participation rate and the total fertility rate since 1965. The rate of female participation in the labor force has not constantly increased in Japan since the end of World War II, unlike American and European societies. The rate decline until 1975 derived mainly from the fact that fewer and fewer married women worked as unpaid family workers in the farming sector, whereas the increase after 1975 is due to the fact that the influx of women as employees in the secondary and tertiary sectors surpassed the decline in the farming sector. The female labor force participation rate (measured as the percentage of working age population in the labor force) in Japan declined after World War II, hitting bottom in 1975, before reaching 48.5 percent in 2002.

Although the overall rate of female labor force participation has not strikingly increased, some significant changes are revealed by examining the economic activity of women in more detail. One is the growth of women's entry into the labor force as employees. As seen in Figure 2.2, the composition of employment status among the female labor force has changed substantially since 1960. About 60 percent of women in 1960

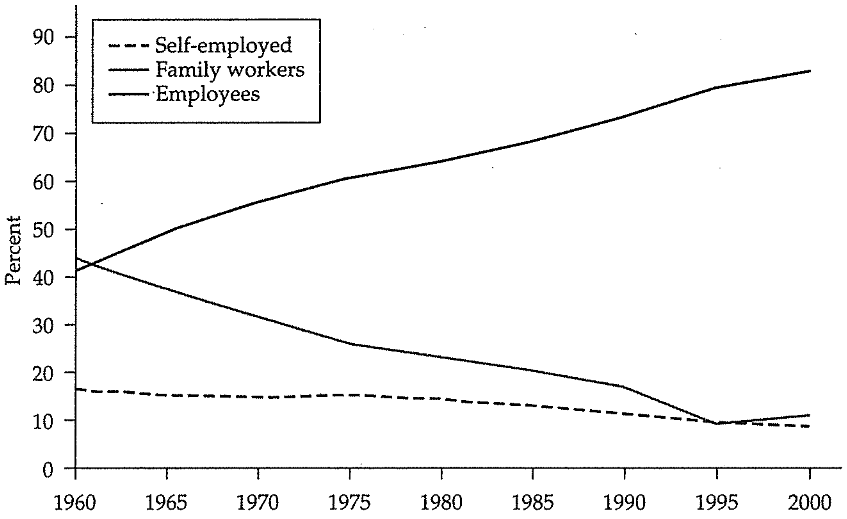

FIGURE 2.2 Distribution of Employment Status among Female Labor Force since 1960

were self-employed or family workers, but 40 years later, the percentage of family workers who were mostly unpaid declined dramatically. In 2000, more than 80 percent of working women were employees. Thus, the way women work, represented by the increase in the number of employees, has changed in Japan, while their overall level of economic activity has not changed much in that time. Women used to work on the family farms while taking care of the domestic duties, but the separation of the workplace from the family made it difficult for women to reconcile work with family responsibilities. The double-peaked pattern of Japanese women's economic activity by age group, known as the M-shaped curve, emerged in the 1960s and remained basically the same in the 1990s, as shown in Figure 2.3. The extent of the drop in the participation rate among the twenty-five to twenty-nine age group, however, has become less dramatic from 1975 to 1995.

The total fertility rate has continuously declined since 1965, as shown in Figure 2.1, as women have entered the labor force as employees. The labor force participation of mothers with small children is still limited in Japan. Among mothers who have children aged three years or younger, only 28 percent are engaged in employment, including part-time work. Among mothers who have children ages four to six, the percentage of

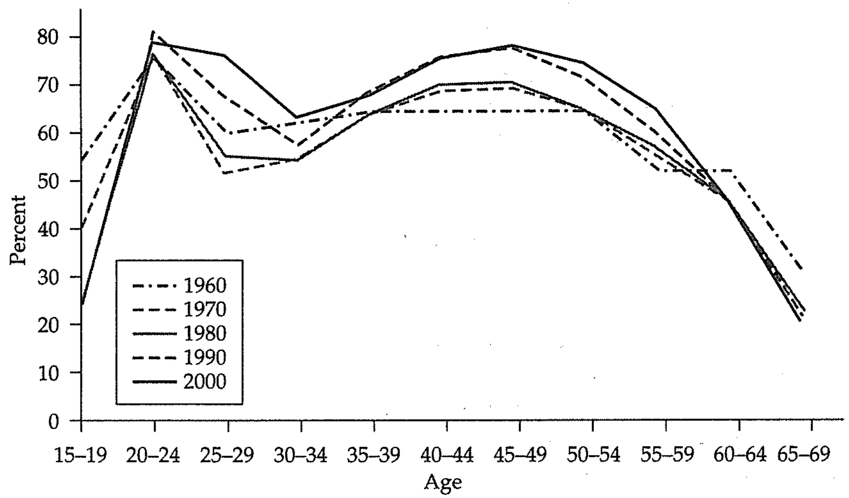

FIGURE 2.3 Female Labor Force Participation by Age Group
SOURCE: Ministry of Labor (Japan), *Labor Force Survey*, various years

those who work jumps to 50 percent, but 45 percent of them work part-time (Statistics Bureau 1997). For mothers who work on a full-time basis, 42 percent of those with children younger than four years relied on kinship ties for childcare in 1993, and 49 percent enrolled their children in daycare facilities (Fujin Shonen Kyokai 1994).

In order to encourage women to pursue their careers despite their family responsibilities, the Japanese government established parental leave policies. With the adoption of the Parental Leave Act in 1995, every employee is entitled to take childcare leave in order to take care of a child younger than one year. Following the amendment to the Employment Insurance Law, insured persons who take childcare leave are paid 40 percent of their wage before leave. In 1996, 44 percent of female workers in firms that had childcare leave policies took childcare leave, whereas less than 1 percent of men did (Ministry of Labor 1996). Clearly, workers who take childcare leave are overwhelmingly women.

Mother's Work at the Time of the First Childbirth

In this section, I analyze micro data to examine the determinants of mothers to work at the first childbirth. The data set I use here is the 1998 National Survey of Family in Japan (hereafter, NSFJ), a nationally

representative survey on family in Japan, conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. I focus on married women with child(ren) for this analysis.

Whereas in most industrial societies, including the United States, women and men show a similar working pattern, they are significantly different in Japan: women are more likely to drop out of the labor force. In fact, more than 70 percent of mothers stopped working at the time of giving birth to their first child. In response to the 1998 NSFJ questionnaire, about half of all married women stated that mothers should leave the labor market when their children are small. Fewer than 20 percent of the respondents said that women should stay in their jobs upon childbirth.

As far as married women are concerned, the belief that mothers should stay at home and take care of small children was still predominant even in the late 1990s. A national attitudes survey conducted in 2000[1] asked respondents what would be the ideal work pattern for mothers whose youngest child has not reached school age. Respondents who were in their twenties answered as follows: full-time work (6.8 percent), part-time work (24.8 percent), no work (43.2 percent), and don't know (25.2 percent). Even among the younger generation, then, conservative attitudes toward mothers' work prevail in contemporary Japan.

More than 80 percent of the women who withdrew from the labor market reported personal reasons for quitting their job (Statistics Bureau 1997). Among the women in their twenties and thirties, 42.8 percent said they stopped working because of marriage, and 37.7 percent said they stopped working because of childbearing. It appears that marriage and childbearing remain the primary reasons for being out of the labor market.

Table 2.1 shows the results of a logistic regression analysis of whether respondents stayed in the labor market or not at the time of birth of the first child, based on the 1998 NSFJ. The analysis is restricted to respondents who were married and had child(ren). The explanatory variables in the analysis are the age of the respondent, her husband's education measured by years of schooling, the urban area dummy, three dummy variables representing the occupation of the respondent before the first childbirth,[2] and a dummy variable indicating a government job before the first childbirth. Statistically significant variables are the age of the respondent, the husband's education, the urban dummy, the self-employed dummy, the white-collar dummy, and the government sector dummy. The older the respondents, the more likely they are to

TABLE 2.1
Logit analysis of the continuation of work after the birth of first child

	Coefficient
Constant	−0.355
Wife's age	0.017**
Husband's education	−0.068**
Urban dummy	−0.692**
Self-employed dummy	1.276**
Professional dummy	0.151
White-collar dummy	−0.394**
Government dummy	1.120**
Occupation missing dummy	−1.260**
Size missing dummy	0.175

SOURCE: Data from National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 1998.
NOTE: Self-employed dummy includes family workers.
$^{**}p < .01$

stay in the labor market at the time of their first childbirth. The net positive effect of age on the chances of continuing work probably derives from the fact that women who were married and had children in their twenties are more likely to hold conservative attitudes toward work and childrearing than young unmarried women in their twenties, who tend to delay their marriage, as well as married women in their thirties and forties. In other words, the positive effect of age on work continuity at the time of the first childbirth is probably due to the greater tendency of withdrawal from the labor market among young mothers in their twenties. The husband's education has a negative effect on whether or not a woman continues working. The higher the husband's educational attainment, the less likely the wife is to stay in the labor market. Since the socioeconomic status of the husband at the time of the first childbirth was not included in the survey, the educational level of the husband can be regarded as a proxy for the husband's socioeconomic status. The wife's decision about whether to stay in the labor force at the time of childbearing is associated more with the husband's socioeconomic status.

In addition to the husband's situation, a woman's own employment is also a critical factor in making the decision about her subsequent work trajectory. Women who work as self-employed or family workers before the first childbirth are more likely to stay in the labor force, compared with those who were blue-collar workers. This is consistent with

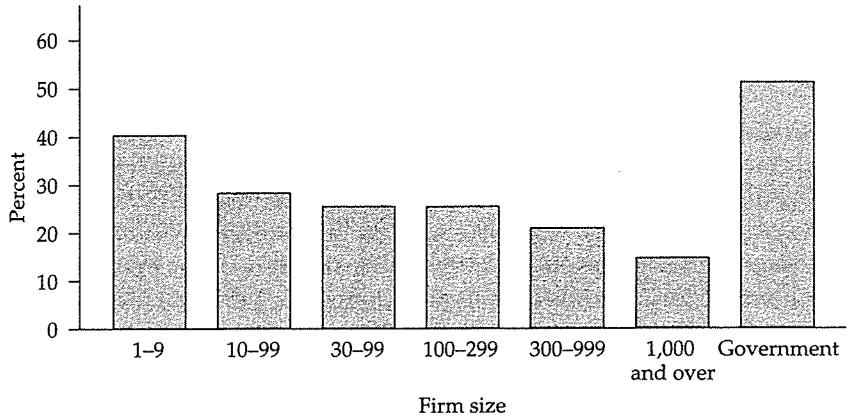

FIGURE 2.4 Proportion of Continuous Workers after the Birth of the First Child by Firm Size

the claim that the growth of employees among the female labor force leads to a discontinuous working trajectory. In fact, respondents who worked as white-collar employees are more likely to withdraw from the labor market after the childbirth than those who worked as blue-collar employees. White-collar work, which has expanded along with industrialization, is closely related to a discontinuous work profile.

Work experience in the government sector increases a mother's chances of staying in her job after childbirth, and this effect is probably associated with better fringe benefits related to childbearing. The government sector is considered to be one of the most favorable places for women to work due to gender equality in employment policies. According to the 1998 NSFJ, about 50 percent of those who worked in the government sector before the birth of their first child managed to stay in their job, which is an exceptionally high retention rate for Japan. When we examine women who worked in the private sector prior to giving birth to their first child, we find that firm size is negatively associated with the proportion of those who stayed in the labor market after their childbearing: the larger the firm, the lower the proportion of those who continued to work (Figure 2.4). Policy makers and managers are increasingly aware of the importance of family-friendly employment policy, and some large firms have a family-friendly work environment (Josei Rodo Kyokai 1999). Nevertheless, at the macro level, it is difficult to see the effect of better fringe benefits in large firms on the mothers' work behaviors, compared with those in smaller ones.

Determinants of Mother's Work in Comparative Perspective

In this section, I compare the determinants of mothers' work in Japan with those in other nations. The data sets used in this analysis are the 1995 Social Stratification and Mobility Survey (hereafter, SSM) and the 1995 National Survey of Living Conditions (Kokumin Seikatsu Kiso Chosa),[3] conducted by the Ministry of Health and Labor in Japan, and the Luxembourg Income Survey data (hereafter, LIS data) for other nations. The LIS data is a highly comparable data set and is valuable for cross-national comparison.

Six countries from the LIS data set are selected for my analysis. They are Germany, Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. I analyze the data sets collected in the mid-1990s for these countries. I chose Germany and Italy since the role of family is strong in these nations for welfare states. In contrast, Sweden has a high degree of gender equality, and it is generally regarded as a champion of the welfare state. Taiwan is included in the analysis because Japan is often compared with only European societies, leading to a highlighting of Japan's peculiarity. The United States is included because its growth in the number of mothers with small children is one of the most important social changes since the 1980s. The United Kingdom is included in our analysis because, like Japan, the proportion of part-time workers among married women is quite high.

Table 2.2 shows the work status of mothers by nation. In Japan, 51.2 percent of mothers are out of the labor force, and among working mothers, 12 percent are either self-employed or family workers. The proportion of Japanese mothers who do not work is close to the proportion of nonworking mothers in Italy. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom and the United States, more mothers are in the labor force than in Japan. The proportion of working mothers is even higher in Sweden than in the United Kingdom and the United States. More than 80 percent of mothers work as employees in Sweden.

In this section, my analysis is restricted to employees since, as we have already seen, the working patterns of employees and self-employed/family workers are different. I also restrict my analysis to only parents and unmarried children. Japan and Taiwan are characterized by a high proportion of multigenerational households (Shirahase 2001), which tend to provide their members with mutually beneficial services. For instance, elderly members enjoy economic security

TABLE 2.2
Mother's work status by nation

	Employees	Self-employed and family workers	Not working
Germany	56.7	4.5	38.8
Italy	37.5	9.2	53.3
Sweden	81.1	3.9	15.0
Taiwan	48.6	10.2	41.2
UK	53.9	4.7	41.4
U.S.	58.3	6.1	35.6
Japan	36.9	11.9	51.2

SOURCES: The data source for Japan is the 1995 National Survey of Living Conditions, and for other nations it is the Luxembourg Income Survey data. The survey year is 1994 for Germany and the United States and 1995 for the other countries.

NOTE: The figures in parentheses are the proportion of part-time workers among mothers who are employees. Other values are percentages of all mothers.

TABLE 2.3
Working mothers' contribution to household income by nation

Mother's income contribution	Germany	Italy	Sweden	Taiwan	UK	U.S.	Japan
Less than 20%	18.5	8.4	20.3	10	43.4	28.8	51.1
20–45%	23.1	47.0	36.6	76.7	39.5	42.4	35.2
45–55%	37.2	26.0	17.9	9.2	7.4	15.3	8.9
55–75%	11.8	11.5	22.1	2.6	5.5	9.6	3.4
75–100%	7.5	4.8	2.9	1.5	4.0	3.3	0.9
100%	1.8	2.2	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.4

through co-residence with the younger generation (Smeeding and Saunders 1998), and young parents benefit from asking grandparents to look after small children. In order to determine the importance of social support for childbearing and childrearing, I focus on mothers who do not enjoy services within the family and thus concentrate on mothers in nuclear households.

In Japan, the proportion of mothers who work as self-employed or family workers is higher than in the European nations at 11.9 percent. The proportion of working mothers as self-employed or family workers is even higher in Taiwan at 14.5 percent. This high proportion of working mothers as nonemployees characterizes these two Asian societies.

Table 2.3 shows the proportion of the mother's economic contribution to the household by nation. The figures calculated are the proportion of

TABLE 2.4
Mother's work status by age of youngest child

Age of youngest child	Germany	Italy	Sweden	Taiwan	UK	U.S.	Japan
<3	38.4 (70.6)	42.4 (41.9)	83.4 (50.2)	41.2	47.3 (65.6)	54.0 (33.6)	17.6
3 to 5	48.3 (56.9)	44.1 (43.3)	73.9 (64.6)	42.3	56.0 (72.7)	60.0 (33.7)	22.4
6 to 9	63.8 (54.1)	39.1 (36.7)	77.0 (63.0)	45.8	66.6 (71.0)	65.2 (36.9)	29.3
10 to 14	72.3 (42.3)	43.4 (36.5)	70.1 (45.1)	36.9	75.4 (71.4)	65.8 (34.8)	47.6
15 to 17	67.6 (36.5)	31.8 (36.7)	57.6 (47.3)	29.6	67.2 (70.2)	59.1 (37.7)	52.3

NOTE: The first values are the percentage of all mothers who work. Values in parentheses are the percentage of mothers working part-time out of all working mothers.

the mother's gross earnings as a share of household gross income. Japan shows the highest proportion of mothers who earn less than 20 percent of the household income, at 51.1 percent. Almost 90 percent of working mothers earn less than 45 percent of the household income in Japan. Japan is characterized by a high proportion of mothers who earn a low share of the household income, but other societies also show a similar gender-earning gap. Even in Sweden, a majority of mothers earn less than 45 percent of the household economy. The United Kingdom also shows a high proportion of mothers whose earnings comprise a small fraction of the total household economy; 43.4 percent of them earn less than 20 percent of the household economy.

A mother's propensity to work varies with the age of her youngest child. In Japan, the number of mothers with small children aged three and under is limited, as I have already pointed out. Even among the younger generation, a majority supports the idea that mothers should devote themselves to their children when they are younger than three. Table 2.4 presents the proportion of working mothers by the age of their youngest child. The highest proportion of working mothers with very small children younger than three can be found in Sweden; more than 80 percent of these mothers are in the labor force.

Only a small minority of mothers with small children are in the labor force in Japan. The proportion of Japanese working mothers with a child three or under is 17.6 percent, and the proportion of working mothers with children ages three to five is 22.4 percent. The proportion of working mothers with children aged six to nine also remains low, at 29.3 percent, the lowest among the seven countries.

In Taiwan and Italy working mothers with small children are in the minority, 41.2 percent and 42.4 percent, respectively. However, even as

TABLE 2.5
Wife's contribution to household income (%) by age of youngest child

Age of the youngest child	Germany	Italy	Sweden	Taiwan	UK	U.S.	Japan
<3	21.40	43.33	52.91	35.71	30.11	35.51	26.22
3 to 5	29.17	44.19	53.40	34.33	27.16	34.58	29.86
6 to 9	33.24	44.78	52.68	33.36	25.57	33.48	24.51
10 to 14	35.71	43.83	52.55	33.22	24.00	31.84	19.99
15 to 17	35.41	42.51	51.45	36.04	28.00	29.44	22.43
Total	32.63	43.89	52.72	34.18	26.88	33.48	22.9

the age of the youngest child increases, the proportion of working mothers does not increase substantially. It appears that the age of the youngest child does not affect a mother's economic behavior.

In the United States, workers have become a majority since the 1980s among mothers with small children (age three and younger), but mothers' work in the United States is not as common as in Sweden. Working mothers in the United States, however, are characterized by a high proportion of full-time workers: about two-thirds of working mothers are full-time workers. By contrast, the proportion of part-time workers among working mothers is high in the United Kingdom. More than 65 percent of working mothers with the youngest child age three and older are part-time workers in the United Kingdom. In Germany, the proportion of part-time workers among mothers with the youngest child younger than three is very high, but the proportion of part-time workers declines significantly as the age of the youngest child increases.

Table 2.5 shows the proportion of a wife's earnings in the household income by the age of the youngest child among dual-working couples. The proportions show how much the wife contributed to the household income and indicate the importance of the wife's work to household income. Let us look first at mothers with children younger than three. In Japan and Germany, where most mothers with the youngest child younger than three do not work, the proportion of the wife's income is also relatively small, 26.22 percent and 21.4 percent, respectively. On the other hand, Italy shows a high figure at 43.3 percent. Although the proportion of working mothers is relatively low in Italy, once Italian mothers decide to work while having a small child, their contributions to their household incomes are higher than in other societies. Working mothers are a minority in Italy, but this group of mothers probably faces a situation where they must continue their work in order to maintain the income level of the household.

In Sweden, where the majority of mothers with small children younger than three work, the extent of the mother's contribution to the household income is highest at 52.9 percent. The extent of mothers' contributions does not substantially change as the youngest child becomes older. This finding suggests that Swedish mothers' contributions to the household economy largely remain stable no matter how small their children are.

Japan stands out in Table 2.5 in that the contribution of the wife's earning is limited almost without regard to the age of the youngest child. The overall proportion of the mother's earning to the household income is smallest in Japan, at 22.90 percent. The highest value can be seen in Sweden, at 52.72 percent. This observation probably derives from three related points: first, the propensity of Japanese women to interrupt their careers; second, the fact that the increase in the proportion of working mothers with school-age children comes from those who return to work as part-time workers in lesser jobs; and third, the large gender wage gap. A large number of mothers who reenter the labor market do so with low pay, particularly as part-time workers, when their youngest child becomes older. Correspondingly, the number of mothers who stay in the labor market throughout the family formation process is still small in contemporary Japan.

The extent of the economic contribution of mothers to the household income overall does not differ much by the age of the youngest child among the seven countries except in Japan and Germany. According to our results in Table 2.5, mothers who continue working throughout the family formation process appear to be a relatively constant proportion. On the other hand, the extent of the average proportion of the mother's contribution to the household income fluctuates more with the age of her children in Japan than in the other nations. I plan to examine in more detail what such a relatively large fluctuation in the extent of mothers' contributions to the household economy in Japan means using longitudinal data in future research.

Matsuura and Shigeno (2001) and Nagase (1997) have already shown that in examining female labor force patterns, it is important to take into account the part-time or full-time work distinction. The husband's income level affects the likelihood of the wife's full-time work, but not of part-time work. Matsuura and Shigeno (2001) suggested that women assess the three alternatives of full-time work, part-time work, and not

TABLE 2.6
Multinomial logit analysis of mothers' work by nation

	Germany	Italy	Sweden	UK	U.S.	Japan
Full-time						
Constant	2.179	−2.931	−10.462**	−4.112*	−0.414	−10.228**
Age	0.141*	0.438**	0.542**	0.231**	0.291**	0.694**
Age squared	−0.177	−0.523**	−0.635**	−0.292**	−0.038**	−0.078**
Husband's earning	−0.550**	−0.368**	0.260**	−0.022	−0.329**	−0.977**
Higher education	1.474**	1.501**	2.093**	0.985*	1.660**	0.247
High school diploma	0.648**	2.022**	1.433**	0.376	1.263**	0.403
Child younger than 3	−2.412**	−0.082	0.626**	−0.669**	−0.499**	−1.275**
Part-time						
Constant	−7.414**	0.274	−11.495**	−1.782	−0.946	−7.936**
Age	0.328**	0.339**	0.623**	0.119*	0.025	0.403**
Age squared	−0.449**	−0.383**	−0.778**	−0.165*	−0.036	−0.049**
Husband's earning	0.080	−0.404**	0.254**	−0.010	0.054	−0.493*
Higher education	0.591**	2.052**	1.778**	0.386	0.987**	−0.515
High school diploma	0.808**	3.739**	1.565**	0.188	0.723**	0.180
Child younger than 3	−1.525**	−0.049	0.372**	−0.907**	−0.619**	−2.673**

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

working at the same time. Therefore, I resort to multinomial analysis to examine the determinants of these three outcomes: full-time work, part-time work, and not working.

Table 2.6 presents the results of a multinomial logit analysis on mothers' working behavior. In this analysis, I use the Social Stratification and Mobility Survey[4] (hereafter, 1995 SSM survey) because the National Survey of Living Conditions does not include the educational variables and full-time and part-time distinction. In the LIS data, I distinguish between full-time and part-time employment by using the working hours per week. If the working hours are shorter than 35 hours, the employment is regarded as part-time.[5] There are three hypotheses to be tested. The first hypothesis is the human capital hypothesis, in which mothers decide to work depending on their level of educational attainment. The higher the educational attainment, the more likely they are to work. The second hypothesis is the household income hypothesis, in which women's economic behavior depends on the level of the household income as represented by the husband's income. According to the Douglas-Arisawa hypothesis, a husband's income level is negatively associated with the probability that his wife works. The third hypothesis is the family-cycle hypothesis, in which having small children is critical for a mother's decision whether or not to work, regardless of her educational level and her husband's income. The presence of a small child discourages mothers from working, no matter how well they are educated or how much their husbands earn.

The dependent variable is the current work status of mothers with children: full-time workers, part-time workers, and not working (reference category). The explanatory variables are created with reference to the three hypotheses. The educational level is represented by two dummy variables: whether mothers obtained higher education or not, and whether they graduated from high school or not. Since the educational system differs greatly across societies, we constructed these dummy variables to present a wide range of educational systems. The log of the husband's income (referred to in our discussion as "husband's income") and whether or not the youngest child is younger than three years (referred to as "child dummy" or "small child") are the explanatory variables, corresponding to the second and the third hypothesis, respectively. We add the mother's age to take into account the age effect, and we also add the square of the age to take into account the nonlinearity in the age effect.

Let us start with the results for Japan. Age, age-squared, husband's income, and the child dummy variable are statistically significant for full-time work, and the same variables also show significant effects for part-time work. The probability of working full-time increases as mothers get older, up to a point, and then decreases at older ages. As Douglas and Arisawa predicted, husbands' incomes are negatively associated with their wives' working behavior. Whether they have a child younger than three significantly affects the mother's work. Having small children discourages mothers from being in the labor force. The educational level of mothers, on the other hand, does not exert any significant effect on whether mothers are in the labor market. The same pattern is found for the contrast between mothers working part-time and mothers not working. Thus, in Japan, the hypothesis about the negative impact of the husband's income level and the family-cycle hypothesis were supported, but the human capital hypothesis was not supported by our analysis.

In the United Kingdom, the effects of age, age-squared, higher education, and a small child are statistically significant in predicting if mothers work on a full-time basis. However, the husband's income does not show a statistically significant effect. In the United Kingdom, how much their husbands earn does not change the probability of mothers' work activity. In the analysis of predicting part-time work (as opposed to no work), only age and the child dummy are statistically significant.

In the United States, all explanatory variables are statistically significant for predicting full-time work (as opposed to no work). Even in the United States, the husband's income negatively affects the likelihood that mothers work full-time. The likelihood of working part-time is affected by the level of education and the presence of a small child. Mothers with high-school diplomas or higher education are more likely to have part-time jobs, and having a small child younger than three discourages mothers from having part-time work. However, the husband's income level does not exert a statistically significant effect.

In Sweden, all the explanatory variables affect the likelihood of working both on a full-time and a part-time basis. It is interesting to note that the husband's income level is positively associated with the wife's work, and having a small child increases the chances of work. I suspect that the positive effect of having small children on mothers' work is partly due to the cohort effect in which the younger generation is more likely to have small children and at the same time more likely to work than the older generation. In Germany, the likelihood of working full-time is affected by all the explanatory variables. Whereas educational attainment is positively associated with the mother's work, the husband's income and the child dummy are negatively associated with the mother's work. The effect of the husband's income disappears when we consider the likelihood of working part-time in Germany.

In sum, the husband's income is negatively associated with a mother's work in all of these countries except Sweden and the United Kingdom. The human capital of the mothers represented by educational level is also an important determinant to mothers' work in all societies except Japan. The lack of the impact of educational attainment among married women in Japan is peculiar among industrial societies, and probably reflects the ongoing constraints on women who would otherwise pursue career ambitions.

Female Income and Fertility

In this section, I analyze the impact of the wife's income level on the number of children she bears. In the previous section, Japanese mothers are characterized by the low level of labor force participation while their children are very small, and the very low level of their economic contribution to the household. In this section, focusing on working women, the effect of income level on the number of children will be examined.

TABLE 2.7
Regression analysis of the number of children among working women by nation

	Germany	Italy	Sweden	UK	U.S.	Japan
Constant	−0.083	0.471**	1.387**	−0.286	1.165**	0.962
Age	0.033**	0.021**	0.037**	0.046**	0.030**	0.043**
High school education	0.029	0.146*	−0.095	0.344*	−0.464**	−0.148*
Higher education	−0.023	0.054	−0.168	0.165	−0.645**	−0.850**
Professional job	−0.131	0.044	−0.065	−0.244**	−0.096**	0.179
Lower white-collar job	−0.269**	−0.154*	0.035	−0.140*	−0.043	0.205*
Farm job	0.334	0.196	0.163	−0.365	0.032	0.259
Own income	−0.032**	0.001	−0.138**	−0.054**	−0.068**	−0.010**
Other income	0.017**	−0.001	0.056**	0.010*	0.026**	−0.019

NOTE: "Own income" is the log of the respondent's own income. For women not working, the income is set at zero. "Other income" is the log of household income other than the wife's income.
$^*p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

The claim that the increase in the number of married women working outside the home is associated with the low fertility rate in Japan implies that if women are more likely to work and earn higher income, they are less likely to have children. Table 2.7 presents the results of a regression analysis of the number of children among working women who are married. Eight explanatory variables are included in the analysis: age of the respondents; the medium-level education dummy variable indicating whether their educational attainment reaches secondary education or not a higher-education dummy variable indicating whether their educational attainment reaches tertiary education; three occupational dummy variables (using the blue-collar occupation as the base category), representing professional and managerial occupation, lower white-collar occupation such as sale and clerical, and farm occupation; log of the woman's income; and log income of other members of the household that acts as a rough estimate of the husband's income.

The most important finding in Table 2.7 is that all societies, except Italy, show a statistically significant negative effect of women's income on the number of children. The higher a married woman's income, the fewer children she has. Furthermore, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States show a positive effect of other household members' income on the number of children. Therefore, a relatively high economic power of the wife in the household lowers her fertility behavior. Women may be discouraged from having many children because it probably forces married women to depend more on other family members, most likely their husbands. Alternatively, this negative relationship may show that family is incompatible with career success. In

Japan, there is no significant effect of other members' income in determining the number of children, whereas the husband's income shows a negative effect on the mother's labor force participation (Matsuura and Shirahase 2002).

Educational attainment in Japan, as well as in the United States, negatively affects the number of children. We already know that Japan is peculiar in that higher education does not increase women's economic activity. In most other industrial nations, obtaining higher education increases women's attachment to the labor market while they have children. Some claim that the increased level of education among Japanese women contributes to increased human capital in their offspring (Brinton 1993). It may also signal, as we have mentioned, that women still find it more viable to marry into an income rather than trying to earn it themselves.

Our results suggest that how much wives earn and, consequently, how much they contribute to the household income are important in explaining their fertility levels. The economic power of the wife in the household is a crucial factor in determining the number of children. Therefore, even though the labor force participation rate of women might increase in response to better childcare support, if the gender gap in wages and career trajectories persists, the negative relationship between the wife's economic power in the household and fertility levels will not change.

It is no doubt an important policy issue to expand and improve the provision of childcare facilities and daycare centers, but an equally relevant policy issue deals with how to change the male-breadwinner model of employment and how to make the labor market more gender-equal.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I examined the work profile of married women and the extent of the mother's contribution to the household income in the late 1990s in Japan. Married women still tend to drop out of the labor force in Japan. The growth of employees working outside the family resulted in the physical separation of work and family and led to an emergence of a discontinuous work profile beginning in the 1960s. As they are currently configured, white-collar clerical and sales jobs discourage women from staying in the labor market because of the limited prospects for career advancement.

More than 70 percent of married women in Japan stopped working at the time of the birth of the first child. The probability of quitting their job was higher if they worked as a clerical worker or in any nongovernment job. Married women who were employed in large firms with more than 1,000 employees were more likely to stop working than those who were employed in small-scale firms. Even in the late 1990s, the majority of married women showed a discontinuous work pattern due to their family responsibilities.

The majority of working mothers return to work, after a temporary withdrawal due to childrearing, in order to supplement the household economy in Japan. In other words, most working mothers in Japan do not develop their own careers, and are simply secondary earners in the family to augment family income. This low proportion of mothers who invest in their career through continuous involvement in the labor force accounts for the persistence of the M-shaped curve of female labor force participation at the macro level. Furthermore, when the wives' economic contribution to the household budget is high, indicating that their incomes are relatively high, they tend to have fewer children. Offering the opportunity of better jobs for women and helping them stay at work throughout their family cycle will be crucial to lowering the high cost of marriage and childbirth in Japan.

Under the current work setting in many Japanese firms, there is no assumption that family responsibilities are shared by both the husband and the wife. A strong male-breadwinner model of employment has been firmly established since the era of high economic growth (Ochiai 1995; Mari Osawa 1993; Ueno 1990). The very important point that tends to be missed in arguments about family-friendly policies is how to make it possible for fathers as well as mothers to be involved in childrearing and caring for other family members. It is difficult for fathers to share family responsibilities given their extremely long working hours. In fact, one of the significant factors in explaining the extent of the husband's participation in household chores is his work time. The longer the husband's working hours, the less likely he is to do family chores (Shirahase 2000b). Therefore, making the workplace more family-friendly could be accomplished by making the employment system more flexible for men as well as for women. If a more flexible way of work, particularly during the early stage of family formation, is available for not only women but also men, the temporary withdrawal from the labor force or temporary shift to part-time work will probably not have the same detrimental effects on career development. Building a family-friendly welfare state requires reconstruction of the fundamental employment system, rather than simply providing childcare support services to women workers.

Notes

1. The data come from the National Survey of Welfare and Attitudes conducted by a group of sociologists (headed by Professor Shogo Takegawa, University of Tokyo) in April 2000.

2. I constructed three occupational dummy variables with "blue-collar occupation" as the reference. They were self-employed dummy including family workers, professional dummy, and white-collar occupation dummy, such as clerical and sales.

3. This research was conducted as part of a project entitled "A Study of the Future Social Security System in Response to Changes in the Family Structure and Employment Pattern," which was supported by the Health Science Grants (2001–2002), Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare.

4. The SSM surveys, which are national representative surveys, have been conducted by Japanese social scientists every ten years since 1955, and female respondents have been included in the survey since 1985. I would like to thank the 1995 SSM Survey committee for allowing me to analyze the data.

5. Taiwan is excluded from our analysis because I could not make the distinction between full-time and part-time employment given the data.

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〔特集〕　シニア層の生活・生きがいと年金

第１章

シニア層の生活実態：多様な生き方と経済格差

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1.　はじめに

本稿では，シニア層を経済格差から検討し，人生の後半期における多様な生き方と経済格差の関係を探る。少子高齢化は現役層と高齢引退層との世代間アンバランスをもたらし，現役世代の負担が増えることは必須である。さらに1.25という2005年の合計特殊出生率が公表され，毎年出生率の最低値が更新される。これまでの社会保障制度が高齢層に過重していたことを問題視し，諸政策が少子化関連へと大きく傾いている。限られた財源の中，ニーズの高い層に焦点を当てる制度の再設計が求められていることに異議を申し立てるつもりはないが，高齢者対若年層，または高齢者のいる世帯対幼い子をもつ世帯といった対立軸を設定することは果たして望ましいことであろうか。確かに，若年層の失業率は上昇し，非正規雇用割合も高い。若年層における経済格差も拡大傾向にある。しかしだからといって，高齢者を十把一からげにして高齢層への負担を一律に増やすのは安易である。若者の生き方，壮年層の生き方も多様になったように，高齢者の生き方も多様である。高齢期はこれまでの生き方の違いが蓄積されて格差の程度が最も大きくなる時期である（白波瀬 2005）。高齢期における経済格差をみてみると格差の程度は近年減少傾向にあるが，経済格差が相対的に大きい年齢層であることに違いはない（白波瀬 2006）。

大竹（1994；2005）や大竹・斎藤（1999）は所得格差の拡大の多くは，人口の高齢化によって説明されるとする（西崎・山田・安藤　1999）。最近の格差拡大に対する異常な議論の高揚に対して，大竹(2006)は実質的な格差がそれほど大きく変わったわけではないことを強調する。世間が騒ぐほど所得格差が急激に拡大していないことを実証データを用いて説明する大竹の主張には説得力がある。しかし，全体人口に占める高齢者割合が高くなったことを指摘するところから一歩踏み込んで，高齢期における所得格差の大きさの意味が十分に議論されていない。そこで，本稿ではまず高齢期の経済格差を就労との関連で検討し，高齢者のいる世帯の収入構造を検討する。次に，高齢者の属する世帯との関連から，高齢者の経済的ウェルビーイングを議論する。特に，これまで経済的保障を含む生活保障機能を高齢者に提供してきた子世代と同居する三世代世帯に着目して，世帯の中の高齢者の位置づけを探る。

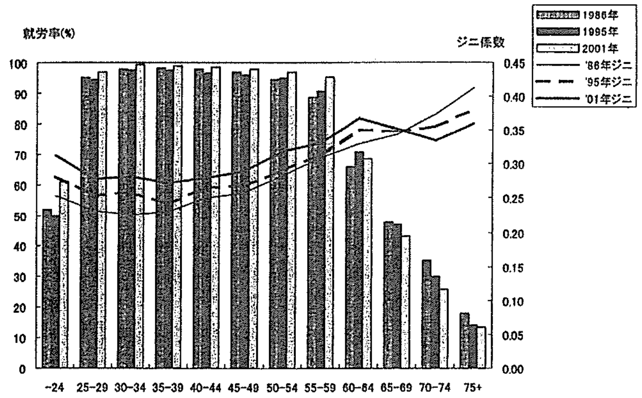
本稿での分析内容は，まず60歳以降のシニア層について全体像を示し，次に65歳以降の高齢層に焦点を当てて経済格差を議論する。また，時系列変化については，1986年，1995年，2001年の３時点を比較する。本分析で使用するデータは，1986年，1995年，2001年の国民生活基礎調査（厚生労働省大臣官房統計情報部各年）である[1]。

2.　シニア層の就労率と経済格差

図１は，世帯主年齢階層別に各年齢層の就労率とジニ係数によって提示した経済格差の変化を示す[2]。世帯主の就労率は1986年から2001年にかけて，50代まで上昇の傾向にある。これは完全失業率が1986年2.8%，1995年3.2%，2001年5.0%，と上昇している状況（総務省　2005）を考えると，世帯主就労割合の上昇は少々意外な印象を持つ。しかし，上昇した世帯主就労率は，世帯主となるには一家を支えることのできる者であることが一層求められるようになったとも解釈できる。

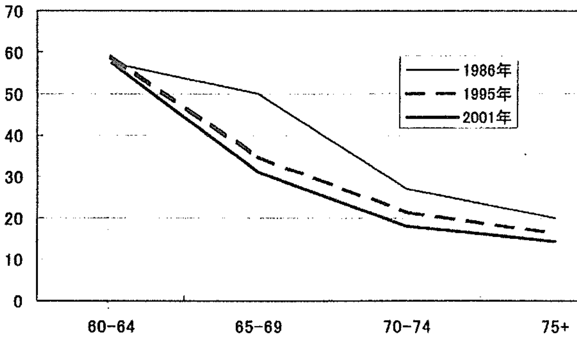
世帯主年齢階層別に就労割合をみると，50代までのほぼ９割の大多数の世帯主は仕事をもっている。

図１　世帯主年齢階層別，世帯主就労率とジニ係数



出所）「国民生活基礎調査」（各年）

図２　シニア層の世帯主年齢別，雇用収入割合



出所）「国民生活基礎調査」（各年）

しかし，その就労割合は60代に入って大きく減少する。60代前半の就労率は，1986年65.7%，1995年70.7%，2001年68.6%と，仕事を持つものの割合は９割から大きく減少し，60代前半では３分の２程度が仕事を持つにいたる。しかし，60代後半になると過半数が仕事を持たなくなり，仕事を持たない割合は1990年半ばから上昇する傾向にある。仕事を持たない者（無業者）の割合はその後も増加し，2001年時点で75歳以上の世帯主が仕事を持つ（有業者）割合は13.3%に過ぎない。

このようなシニア層における仕事を持つものと持たないものが混在する状況は，経済格差にも重要な影響を与えうる。事実，世帯主年齢階層別にジニ係数を算出すると，60代前半をピークにジニ係数が高くなり，60代後半にはジニ係数が近年低下する傾向にある（図１）。仕事を持つ割合が減少すると共に特定年齢層の経済的不平等の程度が低下する背景にあるのは，有業者と無業者との格差よりも無業者の間での格差が台頭する就労構成上の変化である。仕事を持つことでより高い経済的ウェルビーイングを手に入れることができ，仕事を持つものと持たないものの格差は大きい。30代から50代まで世帯主はほとんどが仕事を持っており，仕事を持つものと持たないものの格差は全体の格差に寄与しない。しかし，60代になると仕事を持つものの割合が大きく減少し，仕事の有無が所得格差を引き上げると考えられる。

事実，仕事を持たないものが3分の1程度になる60代前半のジニ係数は高い。

高齢となって仕事を持つという選択ができなくなると，就労所得に伴う経済格差の影響は小さくなる。世帯収入に占める雇用収入割合は世帯主年齢が高くなるほど低下する(図2)。近年雇用収入割合は大きく減少し，年金収入割合が上昇した。この，年金収入割合の上昇は特に65歳以上の高齢期における経済格差の縮小と関連していると考えられる。

もっとも，就労割合の低下だけによって近年の65歳以上高齢層における経済格差の低下を説明できるわけではない。高齢層の低所得割合の低下が経済格差縮小に寄与している点も忘れてはならない。年金制度をはじめとする社会保障制度の充実がその背景にあることは想像に難くない。高齢層に加重した社会保障制度が問題視されているが，だからこそ高齢層の経済的リスクは改善された。高齢層の低所得層減少は，これまでの社会保障制度の成果の一つである。

本分析の結果は，高齢層における就労促進はそれ自体望ましいことであるが，経済格差との関係からみると，仕事を持つものと持たないものとの格差も考慮にいれて高齢者雇用政策を検討すべきことを示唆している。1980年代半ばから2001年にかけての高齢層の経済格差の縮小は，社会保障制度の充実がその背景にあった。仕事を持つことによって経済的ウェルビーイングが大きく改善されることはよいが，仕事を持てない（仕事を持つことが選択できない）状況にある高齢者が，低い経済的ウェルビーイングに甘んじなければならない状況があることを見逃すことはできない。

欧米に比べると日本の社会保障制度の規模はそれほど大きくなく，まだ改善の余地は多く残されている。それでも以前から比べると日本の社会保障制度は改善されてきた。だからこそ，高齢期，特に一人暮らし高齢者の低所得割合は大きく改善され，高齢期の所得格差の改善が実現された（白波瀬　2002；2006)。しかしいま，合計特殊出生率1.25という少子化が加速度的に進む中，若年層，幼い子をもつ家庭へと社会保障の焦点は高齢層から大きく離れようとしている。社会保障制度に関する議論の対象を高齢層から若年層へ180度大きく方向転換するのではなく，高齢層における経済格差が改善されたという実績をしっかり受け止めて，ライフコース全体を視野にいれた社会保障制度改革議論が必要とされている。さもないと，高齢期における経済格差が再び拡大し，人生の後半期において人々が不平等を再確認することになる。

3.　世帯の中の高齢者

高齢層は多様である。同じ高齢者でもどのような生活の場（世帯構造）にいるかによって彼/彼女らの経済的なウェルビーイングが異なる。白波瀬(2002)は，一人暮らしか，子世代と同居しているかといった世帯構造の違いが，高齢者の経済的ウェルビーイングを左右することを明らかにした。藤村（2001）は経済状況のみならず，どの程度の人的交流や情報量を保有しているかによって，恵まれた環境にあったものはより有利に，不利な環境にあったものはより不利になるのが高齢期であるとする。経済的のみならず社会的な資本量そのものも累積され不平等がより鮮明に顕在化するのが高齢期である。そこで本節では世帯構造に着目して，世帯における高齢者の位置づけが高齢者の経済的ウェルビーイングにどのような影響を与えるのかを検討する。

高齢期における三世代同居は経済的，世話的な支援を異なる世代間で行うことを容易にし，同じ世帯内で相互依存的な支援サービスの授受が行われてきた（Smeeding and Saunders 1998；白波瀬 2002)。しかし，近年，高齢者は三世代世帯よりも一人くらしや夫婦のみ世帯，ひいては未婚子と同居する核家族世帯に属する割合が高くなった。本稿では，高齢者がどの世帯構造に属するかだけでなく，高齢者が世帯の中でどのような位置にあるのかを世帯主役割に関連させて検討する。

65歳以上の高齢者がいる世帯において，高齢者自身が世帯主になっている割合は，1986年51.8%，1995年68.6%，2001年74.4%と上昇する傾向にある。近年高齢者のいる世帯は，一人暮らしや夫婦のみ世帯，未婚子と同居する核家族世帯が上昇し，このような世帯構造分布の変化が高齢世帯主世帯の割合を高めた。高齢者自身が世帯主となる確率の上昇は，世帯構造の変化と連動している。2004年において，高齢者がいる世帯のうち三世代世帯の占める割合は21.9%であり，20年前の44.8%から半減している（厚生労働省　2005)。これまで高齢者は若年世代(子世代)と同居することで，生活保障機能を同じ世帯の中で享受することができた。そこでは子世代が世帯主となって，高齢者の面倒をみるといったパターンが優勢であった。

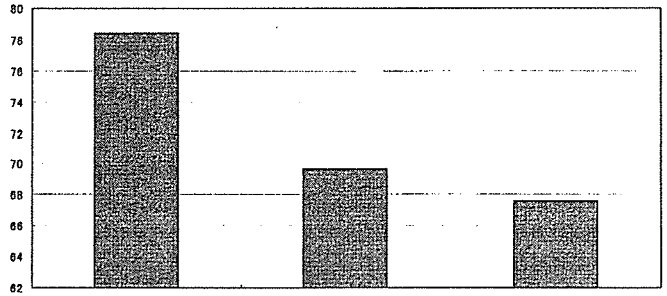
事実，三世代世帯において，高齢者以外の若年世代が世帯主である割合は1986年8割近くあったが，2001年に同値は67.6%と3分の2近くに減った（図3)。ここからも，高齢者が三世代世帯の中で占める位置が変化していることが想像できる。

3-2.　三世代世帯の中の高齢者

図4-1は，高齢者が世帯主となっていない世帯(以降，非高齢世帯主世帯）における世帯主以外（主に，高齢者）の所得分布である。非高齢世帯主世帯との

特集

図3　三世代世帯における非高齢世帯主割合（%）



出所)「国民生活基礎調査」(各年)

図4-1　非高齢世帯主三世代世帯の世帯主以外の所得分布（%）

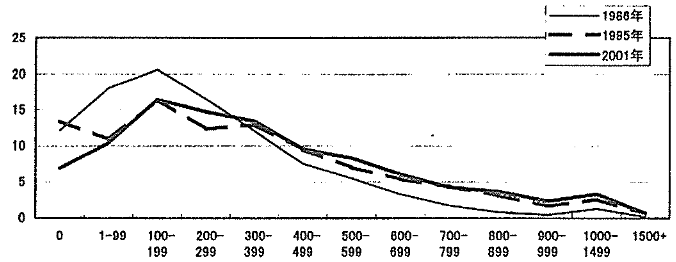
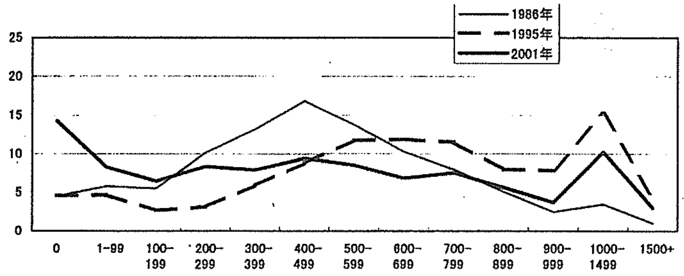


図4-2　高齢世帯主三世代世帯の世帯主以外の所得分布（%）



出所)「国民生活基礎調査」(各年)

比較のために，高齢者が世帯主となっている世帯(以降，高齢世帯主世帯）の世帯主以外（主に子世代）の所得分布を図4-2に示した。図4-1での明らかな変化は，低所得層において世帯主以外の収入割合が減少し，中・高所得層に所得分布が若干移行していることである。若年世代と同居する高齢者の所得分布が中・高所得層にシフトした背景の一つに年金水準の上昇が考えられる。それでも1986年から15年間に，非高齢世帯主世帯における世帯主以外の所得分布パターンは大きく変わらない。高齢者以外の世帯員が世帯主になる場合，世帯主以外の所得は低所得層に偏っており，若年世代と同居することで高齢者が経済的なウェルビーイングを獲得している状況が図4-1より確認できる。

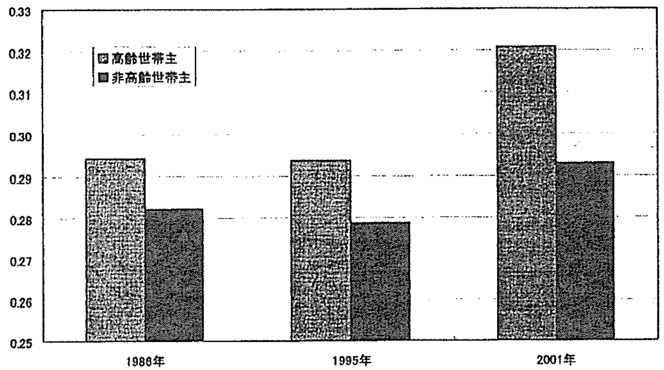
高齢世帯主世帯の状況に移ろう（図4-2)。非高齢世帯主世帯と異なり，高齢世帯主世帯における世帯主以外の所得分布のパターンはこの15年の間で大きく変化した。1986年，世帯主以外所得分布は中所得層を頂点とする山形を呈していたが，1995年には山が高所得層に移行して，高齢者が世帯主でありつつ実質的には高齢者以外の世帯員によって生計が賄われている状況が出現したことが見てとれる。そして2001年，二つの山が現れた。高所得層割合は減少したがひとつの山は高齢層で認められ，高齢世帯主以外の高い所得によって高齢者の経済的ウェルビーイングが底上げされる状況がある。しかしその一方で，高齢世帯主が低所得の子世代を面倒見る状況が，もうひとつの山から推測される。2001年，高齢世帯主世帯の世帯主以外所得分布は大きく二極化しており，高齢世帯主によって家計が支えられている層とたとえ高齢者が世帯主となっていても家計は同居する世帯主以外（多くは子世代）の収入によって支えられる層が混在している。

三世代世帯収入に占める年金収入割合[3]をみると，非高齢世帯主世帯では同割合が1986年の9.2%から2001年には13.1%に若干上昇しているがそれほど大きく変化していない。しかし，高齢世帯主世帯では，18.8%から27.6%へと大きく上昇している。これは図4-2でみたように，世帯主以外の世帯員の低所得割合が上昇し，高齢者である世帯主が若年世代の面倒をみる状況が近年になって増えてきたこととも対応する。三世代世帯の中で，高齢者は同居する若年世代に面倒をみてもらえるとは限らなくなった。

最後に，高齢者のいる三世代世帯の経済格差をみてみよう。高齢世帯主世帯の経済格差（ジニ係数）は，1995年から2001年にかけて0.29から0.32へと上昇した(図5)。高齢世帯主世帯の経済格差の上昇程度は非高齢世帯の場合よりも大きく，その一つの理由として高齢世帯主世帯の低所得割合の上昇があげられる。

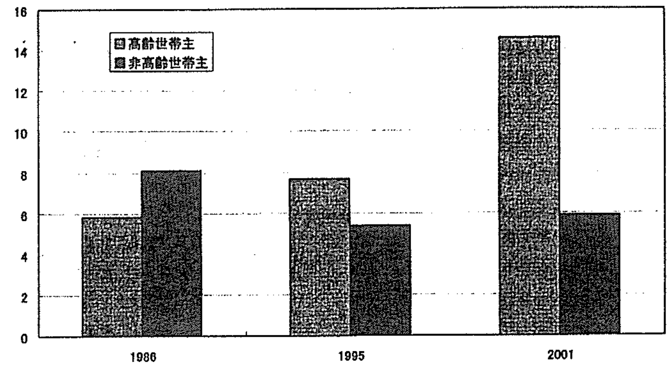
高齢世帯主世帯の低所得割合[4]は，非高齢世帯主世帯に比べて大きく上昇した(図6)。高齢世帯主世帯の低所得割合は1986年以降一貫して上昇し，特に1995年の7.6%から2001年の14.6%へと倍増している。一方，非高齢世帯主世帯の間で，低所得割合は1986年から1995年にかけて8.1%から5.4%へと低下し，その後ほとんど変化していない。三世代世帯は単身世帯や夫婦のみ世帯に比べると，依然経済格差が相対的に小さい(白波瀬 2006)。それでも三世代世帯内部で異質性が高まっており，それは三世代世帯に生活する高齢者の位置づけの変化とも関連している。

図5 高齢世帯主/非高齢世帯主別，高齢者のいる三世代世帯のジニ係数



出所)「国民生活基礎調査」(各年)

図6 三世代世帯の低所得割合（%）



若年世代と同居することで高齢者は日常的な経済的保障支援を容易に受けることができ，複数の世代が同居する世帯のこのような生活保障機能はまだ基本的に維持されている。しかし三世代世帯の高齢者が比較的恵まれた経済的保障をこれまでと同じくらい享受できるかというと，そうではなくなった。三世代世帯で経済的な優位性を依然として満喫できるものもいれば，高齢者自身が若年世代を支えるような家計維持者としての役割を継続しなければならない場合もでてきた。高齢者にとっての若年世代との同居の中身は一様ではなくなった。

4. シニア層の中の格差

欧米に比べると日本の高齢者は労働市場との関係を長期に継続し，また生活の場も多様である。これまで高齢者の典型的な老後の暮らし方は，子世代(特に息子世代）と同居することにあった。しかし，子世代と同居する三世代世帯が減少し，高齢者の一人暮らしや夫婦のみ世帯が増加した。その背景には，子世代と同居せずとも生活できる経済的な基盤が整備され，日本の社会保障の充実が高齢層の経済レベルの上昇に寄与したことは疑いない。しかし，平均的に経済水準が底上げされたことと，経済格差の程度とは区別して考えなければならない。すでに述べたように，高齢期はこれまでのさまざまな格差が蓄積される時期だからである。

本稿では，高齢者が働くということと三世代世帯における高齢者の位置づけに注目して議論してきた。高齢層の就労については，近年就労率の低下とともに世帯収入に占める雇用収入は下がっており，仕事の有無による経済格差の違いが縮小された。仕事を持つか持たないかによって高齢期の経済格差が大きかった反面，仕事を持つものの間での賃金の低下も手伝い，仕事を持たないものが増えたことで雇用所得が家計に及ぼす影響力が下がったとも解釈できる。さらに，公的年金水準の上昇によって年金で生活する状況と稼働所得で生活する状況との落差が縮小された。

21世紀にはいり高齢者が三世代世帯で生活する割合は低下したものの，三世代世帯は高齢者の一人暮らしや夫婦のみ世帯に比べて低所得割合も低く，年金収入が占める割合も低い。しかし，近年，高齢者が経済的に自立する力は社会保障制度の充実にともなって上昇し，子世代と同居することの経済的緊急性が低下した。一方，経済状況の悪化に伴って親に同居を申し出る経済的余裕がない若年層が増えた。高齢者が子世代と同居している背景には，高齢者自身が経済的な厚生を子世代との同居によって獲得するという状況のみならず，子世代が高齢層と同居することで経済的厚生を確保するような場合が出現してきた。

三世代世帯の中での高齢者の位置づけに二極化が現れてきた。子世代が提供する経済的福利を満喫で

きる層と，高齢者自身が子世代に経済的福利を提供している層である。高齢者といえどもその生き方は多様であり，その多様な生き方は経済格差とも連動していた。多様な生き方がありそれに伴う多様なニーズは高齢層としてひとくくりに捉えて横並び的に高齢福祉制度を設定することの限界を示唆する。これから一層必要とされるのは，一人くらしの高齢者や三世代世帯に生活する高齢者がもつ多様なニーズに対応する柔軟な複層型の高齢者政策である。

〈注〉

[1] 本分析は，厚生労働科学研究政策科学推進事業研究「少子高齢社会における社会経済的格差に関する国際比較研究」（平成16年～18年度）の一環として実施された。

[2] 本稿では，総所得から税・社会保険料等の拠出金を引いた可処分所得のジニ係数をもって経済格差をみる。

[3] ここでの年金とは公的年金をさす。

[4] 全世帯の可処分所得中央値の5割に満たない場合を低所得とする。

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Trends in Income Inequality: A Sociologist's Perspective

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1. Disparity and inequality

There have been many discussions recently about disparity. In these discussions, disparity and inequality are often not well distinguished. What is meant by inequality and disparity is not clear, and these concepts often overlap. Let us try to make a distinction between disparity and inequality. When considering disparities, we must first note that there are certain baselines and expectations to measure the degree of disparity (Sato 2005). When there is deviation from the baseline or expected value that has been set, the deviation is measured as the degree of inequality or injustice. This deviation refers to ranking, and it is the "difference in ranking" that can be described as "disparity". The difference can be expressed by how far it is deviated from the standard value which is set to zero, and disparity indicates the gap between the actuality and the desirable state, such as the state of no differentiation. While it is most often considered that it is preferable that disparities be small, the problem is that how much differentiation we tolerate is ambiguous because the standard or expected value is not absolute. For example, we can ask whether what we are aiming for is a society in which there is no disparity and where everyone is the same. Of course, a situation that deviates greatly from the state of no disparity is not desirable. However, it is questionable whether a society with no differentiation exists in real life. It would be "unfair" if there were no wage differentials and those who performed better than others would receive the same reward as those who underperformed.

If each person is fairly assessed for his or her performance, the consequent gap in income can be regarded as fair. On the other hand, inequality based on unfair assessment and "unreasonable" factors unrelated to the person's ability should not be allowed. When income is not the result of fair assessment but of unreasonable factors, the gap in income is regarded as unfair and inequitable. This unfair evaluation plays an important part in the concept of inequality that goes beyond the concept of disparity. A certain benchmark is introduced into disparity, insofar as it is the "difference in ranking," and a certain order is established based on social value. While disparity and inequality are very similar concepts, social norm and the concept of assessment are more strongly reflected in inequality than in disparity. In other words, an absence of disparity may not always be desirable, and the degree to which income reflects the assessment of an individual's performance and ability determines how fair the income gap is.

Therefore, disparity is a concept with an emphasis on measurability, while inequality is a concept which is influenced by the social norm, and the issue of social justice is deeply involved in its definition. For the purpose of this study, let us define inequality as disparity with a stronger sense related to social norm. Inequality is about the demarcation of to what extent the "difference in ranking" is acceptable as social justice. It is a concept of distribution linked to social values.

2. Stratification structure as a background of inequality

Just as economists are concerned with wages and income, sociologists are concerned with occupation and the inequality issues have been discussed within the theoretical framework of stratification and class. This is because sociologists consider occupation as the most reliable proxy variable for expressing the quality of life, including lifestyles. This is based on the idea that the difference between a doctor and a road construction worker, for instance, is not only about the difference in income, but also about the difference in social prestige, employment security, and life chances.

Inequality is closely associated with the concepts of unreasonableness and inequality that goes beyond quantitative differences. Economic inequalities, as represented by income gaps, imply comprehensive differentiation in socio-economic advantage/disadvantage among individuals and households. Weber described "social class" as a broader concept of prestige and social status besides the possession of economic assets (Weber 1946). Inequality is comprehensive because it goes beyond the present possession of assets per se and includes the differences for future opportunities in life that people possess. It is a critical process that the amount of wealth includes the potential ability to cope with risks that people might face in the future. High educational attainment and high income have meaning in themselves, but what is more important is that they can potentially minimize uncertain risks that might occur in the future.

Another point that cannot be overlooked in considering stratification is that we should take into account not only individuals, but also households as a basic unit of consumption. In economics there exists the concept of household economy; however, the central unit of analysis, based on economic reasoning, is the individual who is assumed as an economically rational actor. In sociology, we pay attention to families and communities which surround and interact with individuals. One of the unique features of sociology is that it considers not only the individual, but also the individual's relationship with others in the family, the household, the community, and the society. This is the reason why sociology has traditionally studied rural villages and families. With the advance of industrialization and urbanization, the function of rural villages to provide life security to family members no longer works well, and family size is becoming smaller. The declining family size partly derives from an increase in the number of people who choose not to marry or to marry late and in the number of divorces. At the same time, the functions of the family are also changing. An individual is not an abstract unit of analysis but perform particular roles in their life such as wife or husband, daughter or son, and mother or father. This understanding of the individual behavior placed within certain relational boundaries is called "roles", and certain expectations are attached to each role. Role expectation, for example, of "how a wife should behave" or "the duty of the eldest son," is derived from social norm that is applied to an individual's relation with others. Individuals make choices under the constraints of various role expectations in their life.

3. Inequality between classes and inequality within the class

Society is not in a state of uniform vacuum. People are stratified based on income, occupation, property, and so forth. In fact, the majority of people think that society is unfair. Discussions about inequality were revived in the late 1990s, and interest in disparity continues unabated to this day (cf. Tachibanaki 1998; Sato 2000; Ohtake 2005). What is behind this active revival of the discussions on inequality? What mechanism is there that makes people actually feel the existence of disparity and inequality? To answer these questions, we will briefly examine the trends in the stratification structure and economic gaps using the Social Stratification and Social Mobility National Survey[1] (hereafter, SSM Survey) data, which has been conducted every 10 years since 1955. The class categories were constructed based on occupation, employment status

[1] The author is grateful to the committee of the 2005 Social Stratification and Social Mobility National Survey Project for the use of the data.

(employers, self-employed, family workers, etc.), firm size, and managerial status of male respondents[2] at the time of the survey (Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero, 1982).[3]

There are two major points of discussions in this analysis. One is the inequality between classes and the other is the inequality within the class. For example, the economic conditions of the farming class relative to other classes in the entire stratification structure refers to the first question of inequality between classes, whereas the economic gap within the same farming group refers to the second question of intra-class inequality. I would like to show what has and what has not changed in terms of inter-class and intra-class inequality.

A major change in the distribution of the stratification structure is represented by a substantial decrease in the farming class and an increase in the professional and managerial class. Whereas the farming class accounted for about 40 percent of the total in 1955, the corresponding figure in 1995 has dropped to 6 percent. On the other hand, the professional and managerial class, who made up about 10 percent of the total in 1955, became the largest class with 37 percent of the total by 1995. Now let us examine the inter-class inequality against this background of change in the stratification structure.

Table 1 shows the ratio of the mean household income (logarithmic value) of a particular class to mean household income (logarithmic value) of the total sample. Positive values indicate comparatively advantageous economic conditions in relation to the whole, whereas negative values indicate comparatively disadvantageous conditions. In 1955 the white-collar classes, comprising the professional and managerial class and the clerical and sales class, clearly enjoyed the economically advantageous positions in the stratification structure, but by 1965 the economic advantage of the clerical and sales class had declined considerably. This may be due to the decline in the overall wage level of the class resulting from the increased participation of the youth and women in the workforce. The relative economic advantage of the professional and managerial class also declined from 1955 to 1965, but it has

[2] Since only male respondents were included in the SSM surveys from 1955 to 1975, the analysis was restricted to men.

[3] The six class categories in our analysis are (1)professional and managerial, (2) clerical and sales, (3) urban self-employed, (4) farm, (5) skilled manual, and (6) semi- and un-skilled manual (hereafter, unskilled manual).

Table 1: Change in Economic Inequality between Classes*

	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995
Professional and managerial	0.492	0.311	0.260	0.221	0.219
Clerical and Sales	0.405	0.050	0.189	−0.043	−0.204
Urban self-employed	0.035	0.120	0.078	0.081	0.117
Farmers	−0.249	−0.265	−0.156	−0.313	−0.166
Skilled manual	0.088	0.105	−0.120	−0.148	−0.344
Unskilled manual	−0.098	0.154	−0.159	−0.195	−0.287

* Average household income of class *i* (logarithmic value) – average household income of the total sample (logarithmic value)
Source: 1955 to 1995 SSM Surveys
Shirahase, Sawako. ""*Mieru Kakusa" to "Mienai Kakusa*"" ("Visible inequality" and "Invisible inequality"), *Keizai Seminar* (Economic Seminar) August 2005, p.34, table 1.

stabilized since 1975.

The relative economic status of the skilled manual class is also on the decline. As with the clerical and sales class, the proportion of the youth in the skilled manual class increased, and this demographic change in the class membership structure causes a relative decrease in wages. In the unskilled manual class, the proportion of both youth and elderly aged 65 and over is high, and here two kinds of members at two different life stages coexist in the same class. From 1985 to 1995, the economic situation of the skilled manual, the unskilled manual, and the clerical and sales classes deteriorated relative to that of the professional and managerial class. It is probable that the economic gaps between the professional and managerial class on one hand and the clerical and sales and the two manual classes on the other widened as a result of the burst of the bubble economy and the stagnation in the labor market. The professional and managerial class remains the most economically advantaged class, even though the extent of their advantage changed.

What, then, happened regarding income inequality within the class? In Table 2, the household incomes of each class are divided into quintiles, and the ratios of the fourth quintile to the first quintile within each class from 1955 to 1995 are indicated. The greater the value, the wider the economic gap within the class. As for the professional and managerial class, the economic gap decreased until 1975, after which it widens. While the relative economic advantage of the professional and managerial class in terms of the mean household income has been relatively stable, the intra-class economic gap has been on the increase since 1975. This trend of a growing economic gap in recent years suggests that not all those in the professional and managerial class can uniformly enjoy economic advantages.

Table 2: Gap in the Household Income within the Class *

	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995
Professional and managerial	3.429	2.333	1.800	1.899	2.167
Clerical and Sales	3.429	2.564	2.667	2.400	2.250
Urban self-employed	3.200	3.175	2.368	3.000	2.600
Farmers	3.571	2.667	2.333	3.139	2.250
Skilled manual	3.200	2.793	2.200	2.000	2.667
Unskilled manual	2.000	2.429	2.000	2.400	2.222

* The fourth quantile/the first quantile. The value 1 indicates no disparity.
Source: 1955 to 1995 SSM Surveys
Shirahase, Sawako. ""*Mieru Kakusa" to "Mienai Kakusa*"" ("Visible Inequality" and "Invisible"), *Keizai Seminar* (Economic Seminar) August 2005, p.34, table 2.

As for the clerical and sales class, the intra-class gap has been narrowing consistently since 1955. For the skilled manual class, which also has a high proportion of the youth, as does the clerical and sales class, the intra-class gap declined from 1955 to 1985. On the other hand, the proportion of elderly is increasing among the self-employed and farming classes. In regards to the self-employed, the intra-class gap narrowed substantially between 1965 and 1975, after which it increased and decreased in a zigzag fashion. Among farmers, it grew considerably between 1975 and 1985, which was the period that coincided with the substantial increase in the proportion of the elderly farmers; however, the intra-class gap decreased in the following 10 years. As for the unskilled manual class, which has both the youth and the elderly in its workforce, the gap has been relatively stable, although small fluctuations in the extent of economic gap can be seen.

While the extents of income inequality within the class vary from class to class, there has been no major change in the pattern of the overall stratification structure since 1975. Inequality has always been a feature of Japanese society. There is no particular pattern in the change in the degree of economic inequality. Inequality did not suddenly emerge in Japanese society. In fact, Seiyama (2000) stated: "The emergence of the unequal society is only the retelling of the same old story." The pattern of change in economic inequality differs from class to class. In some the intra-class economic inequality consistently narrowed, but in others the changes are in a zigzag fashion and do not show