This paper investigates certain women's problems in contemporary Japan. Historically, Japanese believed ideal women fit in the stereotype of "Good wife, Wise mother." Japanese women's main roles were regarded as wife and mother. Especially, motherhood was the main responsibility of women. However, the advance of industry, technology, and methods of communication brought more possibilities to women, strongly encouraging them to work outside the home. Although the trend is towards women's involvement in the paid labor force, there are still controversial issues about mothers working. The stereotypes that underlie these problems cause others to be working mothers and some women to be stay-at-home mothers.

I focused on two groups of women, working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. I started with three major questions in order to
investigate contemporary women's perceptions. Firstly, what caused mothers to decide to either stay home or work outside the home? Types of jobs women have before childbirth, company policies, and ideas their husbands have are key factors. Lack of governmental support for childcare hinders women from working. Stereotypical ideas toward motherhood make contemporary women's situations difficult.

Secondly, are there stereotypical Japanese social perceptions that are significant influences on conditions that women face? Especially in the work situation, in terms of motherhood, women do face gender discrimination.

Thirdly, how do these women cope with the consequences of choices they make? Both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers find social connections a key factor in getting rid of stress from childrearing. The amount of time husbands spend with families greatly influences their wives' stress.

Based on traditional gender based role division, women still have unequal domestic responsibilities, especially in childrearing. However, domestic responsibilities should be both men's and women's tasks. Men and women should cooperate with each other because contemporary Japan is not in a time of "men at work, women at home."
Results obtained through this research, indicate that the traditional idea of “Good wife, Wise mother” has become outdated. Contemporary mothers value “self” equally with roles of mother and wife. The traditional idea of “sacrifice self” does not seem to be attractive or ideal for today’s mothers.
Mothers and Work: Women's Perceptions in Contemporary Japanese Society

by
Kimiyo Yoshizaki

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Kimiyo Yoshizaki, Author
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Imagine if your dear child were killed by the mother of his/her precious friend because of the relationship between that child's mother and yourself? The shocking and cruel news of the murder of Haruna-chan, which happened this way in 1999 in Tokyo, Japan, shows how difficult it can be to be a 'good mother' in contemporary Japanese society. The brief explanation of the Haruna-chan case is that a 2-year-old girl, Haruna-chan, was murdered and then buried by the mother of her classmate. Mitsuko Yamada, the murderess, is 35 years old, and a stay-at-home mother who moved to Tokyo from the countryside. There were numerous reports about this event, but the most significant point, for this study is why Yamada killed Haruna-chan.

Yamada confessed that she killed Haruna-chan because there was a serious psychological problem in the relationship between herself and the mother of Haruna-chan. Yamada killed Haruna-chan not because of a surface reason that can easily be understood,
but because of a mental problem caused by the relationship through their children (Mainichi Shinbun November 27, 1999). Also some police officers who dealt with this case said, "This suspect devoted all of her energy and life itself to her child. She did not live as a woman but only as a mother. It seemed all she was concerned with was her child." (Mainichi Shinbun December 6, 1999) The incident was widely reported in the media.

In a newspaper interview, the contemporary author Masahiko Shimoda observed:

> Often times, those mothers who quit their work in order to raise their children have feelings that they gave up their lives for their children, and they tend to start putting their energies into their children so that their children make their dreams come true in place of their own dreams (Mainichi Shinbun Dec. 14, 1999).

The media reported that Yamada used to work as a nurse in the countryside of Japan. When she was still a student, she said to one of her friends, "I want to be a nurse who can support the mental state of clients." Her dream came true at last, but she gave up what she wanted to devote herself to because of her own marriage. This mirrors exactly what Shimoda said above. She moved to Tokyo six years ago after she married (Mainichi Shinbun Dec. 6, 1999). Yamada just could not adjust to the closed, competitive, and surface
relationships, in which people (especially mothers) heavily compare their individual situations to other families.

There has been an unusual tendency in Japanese society called "brand shikou," meaning "preference of brands." Young mothers have been raised in the generation called "brand sedai," which translates to "brand generation." It means that young people put emphasis on what others have, which school they graduate from, which company they work for, and moreover, in the case of women, which company their husbands work for. Therefore, many people in contemporary Japanese society try to act superior to others by possessing expensive brand clothes both for themselves and their children.

Also, "ojukken" is a fairly new term in the last twenty years in Japanese society. Originally spelled "juken," it means "taking entrance examination;" however, mothers often add "o" to "juken" to linguistically add importance to a common event. As with wearing brand clothes, it is an attempt to be superior to others. Competition to be superior can be seen in the sarcastic meaning of that term, and is probably is a key factor to understanding Haruna-chan's murder.
According to Hendry:

A popular example is for a child to be entered in one of the schools attached to the famous private universities. These are sometimes described as 'escalator' schools, because once entry is gained, there is a high chance that the child will move on through the system with little trouble, entering either the attached university or another of a similar standard. The problem then becomes gaining entry, in practice through the attached kindergarten, and each system has devised ways of selecting such young children (1993: 230).

Putting children in expensive and prestigious pre-schools is one of the ways to show off family status and also it is an easy way for parents to show financial stability. For example, children need to be educated specially by attending expensive private cram schools (some children attend more than one cram school) in order to learn how to pass the entrance examinations to get into those prestigious pre-schools.

Raising children can, and too often does, become an ugly and competitive battle between young mothers. It was reported that the discord between Yamada and mother of Haruna-chan came from the competitive situation of this ojukken.

According to Ohinata:

It is certainly no mistake to say that, as often as opportunity allows, people in Japan stress the
image of a mother who devotes herself to her children, always shows them affection, and is willing to sacrifice her own plans and desires on their behalf (1995: 205).

Certainly, mothers devote themselves to their children in a sense. However, mothers allowing competition to become dangerous raises significant problems that we cannot ignore. Mainichi Shinbun asserts that young mothers are having trouble with rearing their children since they did not go through difficulties when they were children; they cannot endure the situations they cannot handle easily, and don't know how to deal with those difficulties (Mainichi Shinbun Dec. 17, 1999). They do not know how to raise children. Often the ironic phrase, “children are raising children” is applied to young parents. No one is trained to be a parent by nature, and people learn to be good parents step by step by experiencing things with their own children.

In the past, people could learn from grandparents who lived with the family. However, nowadays, people usually don't live with their extended families so that young mothers frequently do not have anybody around them to ask about childrearing. Therefore, these mothers are often under stress because they have to face their children by themselves.
In contemporary Japan, following recent changes in the social system and the laws, the situation should have become better for those young mothers. People have started to question women’s roles and to think women should live not only as a mother, but also as a woman who can pursue her own desires and dreams. Various kinds of new laws have started to support working women nowadays, evidence that traditional Japanese social norms have made it difficult for young mothers to raise their children. There has been a lack of governmental support and back-up from companies. Moreover, an unstable and unreliable childcare system has prevented women from continuing their careers.

Even though the situation has been changing gradually, several traditional ways of looking at women prevail: as domestic workers, mothers, wives, and caregivers. Therefore, these stereotypes hinder women from engaging in work spheres. For example, there used to be strong prejudices about young women who were in their early 20’s. After graduating from junior colleges or 4-year-universities and engaging in the paid labor sector, they were just “koshikake” (workers who are just working there temporarily and expected to leave after they find somebody to marry). They were considered not eager to work. Women who were not married by their late 20’s or above were called, “urenokort” (the unsold goods) or
“yukiokure” (women who missed the opportunities for marriage; it implies people who could not marry), and they were stereotyped as women who have some kind of problem with their personalities so that there was no other alternative but to stick to their careers. These terms are becoming obsolete, however they show a still too-typical idea of women in Japanese society.

Concerning careers, the environment for female workers is limiting. Even though working women may have strong ambitions for their careers, it is very hard to be fairly evaluated by male supervisors. They sometimes even try to eliminate those female workers with career ambitions, harassing them with the excuse that the happiest thing in women’s lives is getting married and having children.

Many of my female classmates and I had similar kinds of experiences while job-hunting before graduating from one of the private universities in Tokyo. While being interviewed by the recruiters of the companies, these questions were asked: “Do you have a boyfriend?” and “Are you going to marry him?” or “Do you want to have babies and will you quit this job?” and so on. None of these questions mentioned here were asked of the male students. It was obvious to me how closed and male-centered Japanese work
society has been. There was something seriously unfair, and in the contemporary situation, is now unlawful.

Nowadays women are struggling with the traditional social norm of being a "typical ideal Japanese woman." Some women tend to make different decisions such as delaying their marriage and having no children even after marriage because they don't want to suffer from gender-based role divisions. Why do women with career ambitions have to delay marriage? Japanese men also handle multiple roles of being a "salary man", husband, and father simultaneously, but appear to have fewer obstacles. It seems women are facing much greater obstacles when handling multiple roles in this society.

As mentioned above, it is often said that when young female students attempt to enter the workforce after graduating from universities/junior colleges, Japanese executives, usually males, assume that those young female students will marry and have children. They assume the money spent on their training will be wasted because the women will quit their jobs. Saso mentions this point:

Four-year university female graduates, who are only one-third of the women attending college, have been penalized in the initial job hunting arena or *shushoku senso* (recruitment war).
because the employers' expectation has been that they would only have several more years to offer. This perception is gradually changing, along with the other changes outlined below; but a conservative attitude towards women, in particular, is very hard to shift (Saso 1990: 37).

However, 29.4% of mothers with children between the ages zero to three work while raising children (Roudou Josei kyoku 2000: 34) and moreover, the number of mothers who work outside the home with children ages four to six (48.5%) and seven to nine (60.3%) is larger. Therefore, it is obvious that a significant portion of these women do not become stay-at-home mothers. Additionally, 34.2% of stay-at-home mothers who have children under the age of three want to work outside the home (Roudou Josei Kyoku 2000: 34).

I divided the women studied in this research into working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. My research questions are:

1) What caused mothers to decide to either stay at home or work outside the home?

2) Are there stereotypical Japanese social perceptions of women and their roles that are significant influences on conditions that these women face?

3) How do these women cope with the consequences of choices they make?
I began with the assumptions that:

1) Working mothers would have negative feelings about working in terms of the lack of the time they spend with their children.

2) Working mothers would tend to directly ask their own mother (or parents) for help.

3) Working mothers would feel sorry for their children because of their work.

4) Mothers with higher educational background would tend to marry later than those mothers graduated only from high school.

5) Stay-at-home mothers would be satisfied with their situation and would not have a desire to return to work.

6) Even if mothers were working, usually their husbands would not do housework chores.

7) Both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers would be highly influenced by their own mothers in terms of whether or not their mothers worked when they were little.

These assumptions were based on the fact that I am a Japanese and grew up in the Japanese society. Therefore, those assumptions were made based on my personal experience and what I have learned through the education that I have received.

This paper will investigate women's perceptions of some of their major roles within Japanese society. It will also investigate some aspects of how women are struggling with their current
situation and what kinds of problems they are facing in contemporary Japanese society. In order to get a clear picture of contemporary women's issues, two different groups of women, working mothers and stay-at-home mothers will be focused on. By comparing the difficulties that these mothers are struggling with and analyzing how their society has influenced their choices, a better understanding of contemporary Japanese women's situations will emerge.
CHAPTER II

JAPANESE LAWS AND
THE INFLUENCE ON WOMEN

On June 23, 1999, *Danjo Kyoudou Sankaku Kihon Hou* (Gender-equal Society Law) was effected in Japan. A gender-equal society is a “society in which both men and women, as equal members, have the opportunity to participate in all kinds of social activities at will, equally enjoy political, economical and cultural benefits, and share responsibilities.” (Sorifu -the Prime Minister’s Office 1999) This law defines the importance of gender equality in Japanese society and shows us the way to proceed to improve our society. This law says both men and women share responsibility and joy of life and that the uniqueness and ability that each person has should be respected in this affluent society regardless of gender. Both men and women should share the domestic responsibilities and respect people’s rights so that women can participate in social activities as do men. According to the Sorifu, the Prime Minister’s Office:

In reality, however, although gender equality has more or less been achieved in Japan as far as laws and legislations are concerned, women’s participation in the policy- and decision-making processes remains
insufficient, and women still have few opportunities to realize their full potential. The traditional tendency to view men's participation in housework and child-rearing as unmanly and the heavy burden of housework, child care and nursing that is still placed on women testify to the fact that Japan is lagging behind other countries in terms of gender equality (Sorifu -the Prime Minister's Office 1999).

Regarding the Danjo Kyoudou Sankaku Kihon Hou (Gender-equal Society Law), there are five basic ideas. First, human rights of both gender should be respected. Second, the system and the customs in [Japanese] society should be taken into consideration. Third, women's participation for policy and decision-making should be promoted. Fourth, both family life and other social activities should be consistent with each other. Lastly, the responsibilities of nation, local public bodies, and citizens should be established and international cooperation should be proposed (Sorifu, the Prime Minister Office 1999).

Therefore, in order to change the social structure in terms of gender equality, various kinds of amendments were enacted. What generated the trend of the movement of this gender equality was the International Women's Day in 1975. The International Women's Day was the beginning of changing women's status in the Japanese society. Emphasizing the protection of motherhood should be
regarded as the most important thing for women because the ability of being pregnant and giving birth is unique to women. Moreover, women should have the same rights and opportunities as men have.

Since April 1st 1999, Japanese laws that relate to working women have changed greatly. First, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, which was amended in 1997, was enforced on this day. Second, the amendment of the Labor Standard Law took effect on the same day.

In the background of these political changes in labor law, there are trends. One is the trend of the changing status of women in the workplace and the movement of international gender equality. In 1998, the number of working women in Japan was 27,550,000 and it occupied 40.6% of the labor force. International ideas of gender equality lead Japan to change its society so that women don’t have to worry about the consequences of being pregnant and having babies while they are employed. Moreover both men and women can support each other in their housework and their careers (Tokyo-to 2000: 1).

Also, the changes of the conditions and restrictions in the workplace have helped women get jobs outside the home even though their jobs are not full-time but part-time.
Since childbirth was regarded as a women’s role, women were segregated and discriminated against in the workplace. However, childrearing is not just a woman’s role but also a man’s task. Moreover, equal responsibility for raising children should be regarded as a social norm.

Even though there were worldwide movements of equal rights for women, still Japanese people understood that working outside the home was the man’s role, and women and children should be under his financial support. Therefore, women gave birth supported by men, and after childbirth, taking care of children and housework were regarded as women’s roles. Up until the 1960s, the labor laws were enacted with the assumption that housework and rearing children were women’s tasks (Tokyo-to 2000:10). A description follows of the laws that have great influence on female workers, mainly on working mothers.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY LAW
(EEOL=Danjyo Koyou Kikai Kintou Hou)

First, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL, Danjo Koyou Kikai Kintou Hou), originally enacted in 1986, was amended and took effect on April 1st in 1999 (Tokyo-to 2000: 1).
Before the amendment, the legislation made a distinction between 'mandatory' (kinshi kitei) and 'voluntary' (doryoku-gimu kitei). "The voluntary provisions were regarded as highly ambiguous and their enforcement was dependent upon the administrative guidance (gyosei shidou) of the Ministry of Labour." (Lam 1993:207) For example, companies could hire fewer women than men, with ads such as '70 males required' and '30 females required.' (Lam 1993:208) Therefore, the original EEOL lacked efficacy in terms of gender equality (Kawaguchi 1997:74). Lam also clearly states, "The equal treatment approach has clearly failed to tackle the problem of indirect discrimination." (Lam 1993: 219) For example, "according to the interpretation of the Ministry of Labour, 'to give women equal opportunity' means 'not to exclude women and not to treat women unfavorably'. To exclude women' means not offering women any opportunity; 'not to exclude women' means offering women some opportunity." (Lam 1993: 207) According to Lam, "On the whole, the Ministry of Labour seems to have compromised with the status quo and makes little attempt to tackle the problem of institutional discrimination." (Lam 1993:209)

This law now deals with: 1) Recruitment, employment, positioning, and promotion; in terms of gender discrimination, the law originally stated that it is one of the company's voluntary
provisions (*doryoku-gimu kitei*) (Lam 1992:104), but it has become a mandatory provision (*kinshi kitei*). Even though there are not penal regulations, if the companies don’t follow the 1999 rule, the Minister of Labor can publicly announce the name of the company.

2) Mediation for solving problems can be started if the employee concerned applies. Until 1999, even if women applied for mediation, companies could deny it and employees could not make it happen. Therefore after the amendment, women have a way to solve their problems. 3) Allowance of “positive action,” which is positive action in order to promote equality, and the mandatory prevention of sexual harassment are also incorporated (Sugimoto 1999:57, Tokyo-to 2000: 120).

Since the original EEOL was regarded as an ineffective law in terms of gender equality, the amendment should bring a better outcome for women.

**CHILDCARE LEAVE LAW (*Ikuii Kyuuugyou Hou*)**

Second, the Childcare Leave Law was approved in 1991, and took effect in 1992, for the purpose of supporting the EEOL (Sugimoto 1999:53). This Childcare Leave Law is what allows parents to take off from work until their children become one year old, and after one year of leave, those who have taken off are
guaranteed the right to return to their previous work. However, this childcare leave had been available for women previously for specific occupations, such as teachers, nurses, and telephone operators. This prior law, effected in 1971, allowed only women to take childcare leave. Now, after the amendment of the Childcare Leave Law, childcare leave is applicable to both male and female workers (Sugimoto 1999:53). Also, if female workers have nursing babies or infants, companies have to allow those female workers a certain amount of break time to nurse children (Sugimoto, Nakata, and Morita 1991:45).

However, even though this law allows both men and women to take leave, it is almost impossible to expect men to use this right. People still have fixed ideas that childrearing is a woman's job. Also, during child care leave, people cannot get salary even though they make it clear to the company that are going back to work after this leave. Therefore, people think it is better if the mother (wife) takes childcare leave so that they can live on the father's (husband's) income (Sugimoto 1999:53-54).

A provision of the amendment of the Child Care Leave Law provides for 25% of a worker's salary every month they are on leave, and it also covers the health insurance and premium. Therefore this
law technically covers both working women and men (Sugimoto 1999:55).

The Childcare Leave Law enacted in 1991 was refined in 1995 into a law concerning the welfare of workers who take care of children or other family members, and is now called the Child Care and Family Care Law (Ikuji /Kaigo Kyuugyou hou). It was further revised in 1997, and enforced as of April, 1999 (Tokyo-to 2000:1).

However, the weak point of this law is that it does not have any mechanisms for enforcement and it is applicable only for full-time workers (Y.Tanaka 1995: 116). Moreover, this law does not have validity for the companies that have less than thirty workers. Therefore, this law needs to be reviewed to consider those now excluded.

THE LABOR STANDARD LAW (Roudou Kihon Hou)

The Labor Standard Law also provides maternity leave, which can begin before childbirth (usually 6 weeks and if more than one baby is expected, mothers can request 10 weeks of leave) and can continue after childbirth (employers cannot let mothers work for 8 weeks after childbirth, unless there is permission from a doctor to start after 6 weeks) (Sugimoto, Nakata, and Morita 1991:44, Tokyo-to 2000: 103-104).
Also, the amendment of the Labor Standards Law (*Roudou Kijyun Hou*) allows women to have the same rights as men; however, at the same time, a restriction that aided women was repealed (Tokyo-to 2000). Overtime work of female workers in the midnight shift (from 10 P.M. to 5 A.M.) and holiday work had been restricted for the protection of motherhood, but those restrictions were abolished in consideration of gender equalities (Sugimoto 1999:57).

There are contradictions in terms of gender equality now. Since each gender has different physical strength, it is hard to adjust everything equally. Motherhood should be supported, but gender equality should be pursued. It is very difficult to make a compromise.

**MANPOWER DISPATCHING LAW (*Roudousha Haken Hou*)**

In 1985, three months after the passage of EEOL, *Roudousha Haken Hou* was enacted. This law acknowledged the dispatching of temporary workers based on a license system. The types of work were limited to sixteen kinds of jobs, such as computer programmers and interpreters. This limitation was enlarged to twenty-six kinds in 1995. The amended law liberalizes the private dispatching industry of paid assignment of workers to temporary jobs. This law concerns maintaining the working conditions for
workers dispatched to various job sites by temporary employment agencies, and securing the proper management of the dispatch enterprise (temporary employment agencies). A preceding law, the Employment Security Law, prohibits the dispatch enterprise; it is recognized as an exception and restricted legally by the 1985 law (Kojien 1991:2733). Further, this new law, Jinzai Haken Hou (= Roudousha Haken Hou), supports temporary workers, and has a strong influence on women's work situations (Sugimoto 1997:58) because temporary work is another option for women who want to work outside the home, but don't want to have the same responsibilities as full time workers.

CHILD WELFARE LAW (Jidou Fukushi Hou)

In April, 1998, an amendment of the Child Welfare Law came into force, almost 50 years after the original law was first effected in 1947. One of the main purposes of this amendment was reconsidering daycare facilities (Sugimoto 1999: 76).

Various changes have occurred in the environment which surround family and children in Japanese society, such as fewer children, the increasing number of double income families, the declining quality of interaction among both family and community, and the increase of child abuse. Following those changes, in order to
accommodate contemporary situations such as diverse needs for childcare services, and the complexity of the problems regarding children, it was important to reconstruct the system of child welfare from the children's point of view (Sugimoto 1999:79).

The main point of the amendment of this law was reconsidering the childcare system including facilities. In addition, the amendment took into consideration the changes due to the increasing number of working mothers, and dual-income families. Further, it focused on the point of view that children's rights to childcare should be centered (Sugimoto 1999: 79). This amendment established the sovereignty of the users of hoikuen (nursing school), and that the rights of choosing and applying to hoikuen belong to parents. Therefore, parents can now request the information about a hoikuen be made public (Maeda 1999: 13).

THE ANGEL PLAN

Contemporary Japanese society is facing serious problems of fewer children and its aging society. Even though the Japanese government encourages women to have more children, the situations such as the childcare system and the childcare leave system in the companies, are not supported by the government
enough, so women cannot have a secure feeling about raising more than one child without giving up their careers.

Since World War II ended, Japan has grown up rapidly, and because of changes in the social system and working environment, Japanese society is facing various kinds of difficulties and problems. For example, changing working conditions of women, family structure, and relationships between local people, has caused women difficulties in handling their own jobs, households and childrearing simultaneously.

Therefore, in 1993, four ministries, Monbu-shou (Ministry of Education), Kousei-shou (The Ministry of Health and Welfare), Roudou-shou (The Ministry of Labor), and Kensetsu-shou (The Ministry of Construction), made an agreement and announced the Angel Plan. This is “Basic ideas about support of childrearing.” These ministries are trying to change Japanese society from what we have now to a new society in which women can give birth and raise their children without social discrimination and be supported by the government through every means (Sakano& Nishida 1997:106).

The Angel Plan is a support plan for overcoming contemporary problems such as the difficulty in handling work and childrearing, the expensive cost of childrearing, and the great amount of
psychological burden associated with childrearing. All of these problems are often mentioned as the background of the “fewer-child” society (Sugimoto 1999:77). Specifically, this plan has five basic ideas: 1) promotion of support for juggling childrearing and work 2) support for childrearing at the family level 3) maintenance of conditions for housing and lives 4) promotion of achievement of a comfortable education and 5) reduction of childcare costs. However, Okurasho, the Ministry of Finance, did not take part in this Angel Plan, and so no budget was provided for the Angel Plan. Therefore, this plan remains as, so to speak, general principles of childrearing (Sugimoto 1999:78).

Nonetheless, these laws and political agreements should improve women’s situations. Unless women’s participation in social activities is supported by laws, Japanese society cannot expect to solve the contemporary problems that it has to deal with; Japan should take actions to solve these problems as soon as possible.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

JAPANESE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A basic idea of Japan's historical background will aid in understanding women's situation in contemporary Japanese society. A picture of the historical continuum will help us understand the Japanese unspoken social norms for women.

By examining Japanese history during four consecutive periods, including an abbreviated Showa period (1926 to 1984, the year before passage of the EEOL), I will show the significant factors influencing women's roles. Explanation of each section will be based on three different points of view: the change in social and economic structure, the change in family structure, and the change in the educational system. From each period, general but important points of view should emerge.

EDO PERIOD (1600-1868)

Woman's Roles, in the Economic and Social Structure

The Edo period is also known as the Tokugawa period. This period is described as the traditional late feudal, or early modern period of Japanese history (Bernstein 1991:2).
In the Edo period, the capital was in Edo (present Tokyo) and the Tokugawa military house monopolized the title of shogun. Class division was clear, obvious and fixed. There were four fixed major social or occupational classes: military (samurai) class, peasant, artisan, and merchant (in descending order of social status). There were many other groups that could not fit into the previous four classes, such as physicians, artists, and court aristocracy (Bernstein 1991: 2). Bernstein explains the strict class system:

Members of one class could not legally intermarry with members of other classes or change their occupational status. Thus, merchants could not become samurai, and samurai could not farm; peasants were forbidden from leaving their land and migrating to the cities to engage in trade (Bernstein 1991:2).

One strong limitation on a woman's role was class structure. For example, a farm woman could not become a business woman, a business woman could not marry a samurai. According to Bernstein, class division is key to understanding the social and family structure of this period:

A woman's socioeconomic position...was determined by her family's social standing. Most people lived and worked within the family, which remained the basic unit of society. Therefore, any discussion of women and gender construction must center on the family system (Bernstein 1991: 2-3).
With class division as the key factor, the next section will examine the family structure of the Edo period in order to present a clearer picture of people's lives.

Woman's Roles, in the Family Structure

Under the strict and clear division of class in the Edo period, as was mentioned above, the lifestyles of people in different classes were completely different from each other. However, in this period, the stem-family household, *ie*, was the ideal family structure in every class. This system retained only one child as heir in each generation (Bernstein 1991: 2).

More than a biological unit, the *ie* is frequently defined as a corporate entity in the sense that it embraced nonkin (servants, adopted heirs, and the like) as well as blood relations (grandparents, their married heirs, and his or her unmarried children) (Bernstein 1991: 2).

Women's responsibilities and tasks were not focused on motherhood in the samurai class. Women usually had to serve their husbands and the elderly, mainly in-laws. Bernstein states:

Although all women were expected to marry, childbearing was not necessarily a woman's primary obligation. While children, and especially sons, were
essential to the continuity of the ie and the care of the elderly, the Japanese family system had ways to compensate for infertility and infant mortality (Bernstein 1991: 2).

People in the samurai class lived in a big house, and there were many servants who took care of the master (samurai). Also, there were several women, nannies, who were responsible for rearing and taking care of the babies when a samurai and his wife had babies. Therefore, in this period, a main task of a samurai class woman was the care of her husband and the elderly, not childrearing.

Woman's Roles, in the Education System

"According to Tokugawa teachings, women served the family best by being uneducated." (Bernstein 1991: 13) In non-samurai classes, during the Tokugawa period, women were expected to work on the farm as well as inside the home. Therefore, there was little recognition of a need for women's education even though the higher-class women had opportunities to learn reading and writing.
MEIJI PERIOD (1868-1912)

Woman's Roles, in the Economic and Social Structure

In the Meiji period, Japan tried very hard to catch up with European countries. However, even though the national trend started to focus on industrial development, roughly eighty percent of the population in Japan lived as peasants. Uno describes the peasant mothers:

Peasant mothers in poor and middling households spent more time at productive [rather] than reproductive labor. Although village mothers toiled at domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare, they also spent long hours cultivating fields and practicing sidelines such as silk reeling" (Uno 1991:18).

Uno’s description fits with the view of “traditional society” in rural areas of Japan's Meiji period. There is a term, *mura-shakai*, which Japanese use for explaining the patterns of the relationships in the small towns that developed in pre-industrial society. *Mura* is a village-size community and *shakai* means society. When the majority of Japan’s population engaged in agriculture, *mura* was always the central focus, and the supervision of *ie* was the basic unit of the people's daily lives. Community played a significant role in everyday life. There was a head of the community and he held the
authority in that community. There were various kinds of traditional customs in this *mura* society, such as local festivals, weddings and funerals of residents of *mura*. There were unspoken but strong bonds and trust in this *mura-shakai*.

Women had multiple roles such as caregiver, cultivator, and housewife in the economic and social structures. Also, women had to support the formal events that happened in *mura* as stage hands behind the scenes. With women's role as stage hands behind the scenes as a key factor, the next section will examine women's roles in family structure in the Meiji period in order to obtain a clearer picture of women's lives.

**Woman's Roles, in the Family Structure**

"The Meiji period (1868-1912) was a time of questioning old customs and practices and of experimenting with new forms, frequently under Western influence." (Bernstein 1991:7) As mentioned above, Japan was in a transition period during the Meiji period in terms of the recognition of women's position in the society. Miyake explains a key political issue of the Meiji Civil Code:

The implementation of the Meiji Civil Code (1898) gave final legal substance to an ideology that functioned to sustain the patriarchal family as the basic unit of the ruling order of the state. This ideology considered the
family to be a part of the state apparatus for exercising power—contrary to the notion in civil society that the family is a "private" institution (Miyake 1991:270).

In terms of women's roles, it was in this period that the doctrine of *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) first appeared and this established a clear definition of husband-wife roles. While the man works outside the home as breadwinner, the woman plays an important role as guardian of the home (Jolivet 1991: 64). She is put behind the scene of the husband's work life. Further, Nolte and Hastings state:

"Good Wife, Wise Mother" became the guiding aphorism for government policy on women and the phrase resonates in Japanese society still today. The term evokes visions of women hovering over their children, providing tutoring and snacks with equal zeal (Nolte and Hastings 1991: 158).

Under this slogan promoted by bureaucrats in the Meiji government, Japan tried to remake its social structure. By giving the *ryosai kenbo* definition of womanhood legitimacy, the government tried to control women's outside opportunities (Bernstein 1991: 7). Bernstein also describes the unfairness toward women in terms of participation in political spheres: "Women were so important to the family, and the family to the state, women were excluded from participation in politics on these grounds" (Bernstein
In the two decades between 1890 and 1910, the Japanese state pieced together a policy toward women based on two assumptions: that the family was an essential building block of the national structure and that the management of the household was increasingly in women's hands (Nolte and Hastings 1991:171).

In the Meiji period, domestic tasks that were unspoken norms in the Edo period became mandatory for women under the focus of government policy. With mandated domestic tasks as a key factor, the next section will examine the education systems of the Meiji period in order to obtain a clearer picture how women were educated to manage their roles.
head of household and he had authority in the family. Also, based on the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890), schoolchildren were educated to learn filial piety and loyalty to the state. According to Miyake, “The family-state structure of the Meiji state first took shape in the 1880s, when family-state ideology advocated the merging of the individual stem family with state power and cast the emperor as the great father of his subjects.” (Miyake 1991:270)

In this pre-World War II period, education for women was explicitly designed to prepare them to become a “ryosal kenbo”. “The words ‘wise mother’ signaled the newly recognized importance of educating all women so that they could better perform their home duties, and in particular childrearing, in accordance with ‘the latest scientific knowledge and practice.’” (Bernstein 1991:7)

At that time, the most important factors for women were how well they could manage their finances, and how successful they were with their children’s education. Mothers were the ones who would be blamed by others for children’s bad attitudes, even by their husbands. Japanese mothers were responsible for their children’s educations. Therefore, Japanese education in the pre-World War II era was not suited for women who wanted to get job opportunities outside of the home. Kondo states the same point,
"Women's education...was not designed to help women contribute to the state outside the household context." (Kondo 1990: 268)

In this pre-industrial period, mura provided the education and efficient childrearing environment for the people. "In the society of farm villages, it is a natural thing for parents to teach and give their children the tips and the techniques of their family businesses, but these parents usually were not interested in their children's education." (Suzuki 2000: 70)

Young children spent more time with their grandparents because their own parents were usually very busy with farming. Therefore, by spending time with their grandparents, children learned how to manage households and how to live daily lives directly from grandparents. Also, those grandparents taught their grandchildren traditional customs, culture, and the manners of daily life through their talk with their grandchildren. After retiring from farming, grandparents tended to find the meaning of their lives in educating their grandchildren. It is important to note that children learned social skills and customs not only through the relationship with their grandparents, but also from many other adults in mura as well.

After reaching certain ages, children started working with their own parents and learning their family business, which was
farming. However, in order to be accepted as adults, children had to learn the system of the community and society as a whole. After the age of fifteen, boys entered the group, called *wakamono-gumi*, and learned how to behave appropriately as adults, and how to farm well by imitating their elders. The aim of the *wakamono-gumi* was focused on instilling basic and general skills and not on being unique. People tried to avoid feeling shame.

At the age of around twelve, when they first started their menses, girls entered *musume-gumi*. All the girls lived together in one large house and learned how to sew, how to behave appropriately according to the elders, and how to prepare for marriage (Ishikawa 1997: 155-156). “Communities provided places for children such as the *kodomo-gumi*, *wakamono-gumi*, and *musume-yado* outside the home. It was expected that the entire village community, in other words, would participate in bringing up the children.” (Ohinata 1995: 201) Although the system of *musume-gumi* was spread in this period, it does not mean that it was the same throughout all Japan. There were differences depending on the region because each community had local control of its education system. However, nationwide the purpose of education for girls in *musume-gumi* was training girls to be *ryosai kenbo*. Therefore, education for girls focused on how to be a good wife and
wise mother. Girls learned the skills to manage their domestic roles well.

Even though the focus of education was mainly on the *ryosai kenbo*, “not all Meiji women were necessarily expected to confine themselves to kitchen and nursery.” (Bernstein 1991: 7) According to Bernstein, middle or upper class women could engage in events such as patriotic activities outside the home, and the lower-class women had to work outside the home in factories in order to support the nation’s growing economic development (Bernstein 1991: 7).

With contradiction in women’s social status as a key factor, the next section will examine the changes in women’s perception of their roles in order to understand the basis of women’s struggles in the Taisho period.

**TAISHO PERIOD (1912-1926)**

Woman’s Roles, in the Economic and Social Structure

The Taisho period is well known as the “Taisho democracy.” People started to act for the democratic revolution. In terms of political events, the movement of obtaining a general election system defined the period socially (*Nihongo Dai Jiten* 1989:1169). In 1916
(Taisho 5), a famous political scientist, Sakuzo Yoshino advocated "minpon shugi," which is a democratic doctrine that emphasizes that a nation should be the center of politics. His effort contributed to changes in Japanese law, and contemporary Japanese politics are based on this idea. Therefore, not only politics but also social and cultural movement toward democratic achievement occurred in this period (Nihongo Dai Jiten 1989:1169).

Also, there are two representative terms strongly attached to this period: Taisho modernism and Taisho romanticism. People tended to be "modern girl" and "modern boy." People were strongly affected by the magazines' and media's emphasizing, "fashion" and "westernization."

Silverberg describes this modern girl:

Modern girl was a representation of Japanese culture of the 1920s. Moga (modern girl) was a highly commodified, cultural construct crafted by journalists who debated her identity during the tumultuous decade of cultural and social change following the great earthquake of 1923 (Silverberg 1991:240).

It is said that modern girl was also a representation of the repulsion of the political system which neglected women's outside opportunities. The political system was changing, but not for women's benefit. The political participation of women was restricted,
even though women had multiple roles in the economic and social structures. The modern girl perceived the contradictions between the political system and her exclusion from the changes.

With the modernization of women's perceptions as the key, the next section will examine the changes in women's perceptions toward their roles in the family structure during the Taisho period. This will be examined in order to obtain a better understanding of the confusion and struggles of these women.

Woman's Roles, in the Family Structure

Following the Meiji period, the family system in the Taisho period was based on the Meiji Constitution. Therefore, the main focus of women's roles was managing domestic tasks. However, by the 1920s, the family-state ideology, which had a strong influence in the previous Meiji period, was in the wane (Miyake1991: 270).

During this Taisho period, various magazines about childcare first began to appear (Ohinata 1995:200). The emphasis on motherhood was still strong. Also, the role of women was still focused on domestic spheres. However, under the influence of Taisho modernism, women tended to think of the importance of having their own careers as well. Particularly the number of middle-class women who engaged in the white-collar and professional labor
force grew. These middle-class working women started to question the definition of the gender role (Nagy 1991:209). A new perception of balance between family duties and having a career began to emerge in the short but important Taisho period.

Woman's Roles, in the Education System

After the mid-Meiji period, a capitalist economy developed and it had undermined the ie system. Instead of the kinship organization, the labor organization became strong. During this Taisho period, people started to realize the importance of individualism. It engendered the erosion of the family-state concept of the nation (Miyake 1991: 270).

Especially during this period, a new movement among women that emphasized the importance of women's liberation and independence became popular. "The strongest advocate of the need for equal treatment of men and women in economic life was Yosano Akiko." (Molony 1993:127) Akiko Yosano, one of the famous female authors in Japan during this period, appealed for the necessity of an education that taught women to be more independent. She was critical towards the social system's limitations on women's outside opportunities. According to Rodd, "Yosano Akiko and other
feminists turned their energies toward practical activism during the 1920s, seeking to change women’s lives through education and political work." (Rodd 1991:198) Rodd also describes the significant effort of Yosano:

By educating individual women for self-actualization and economic independence, she was working toward the realization of her vision of a new society in which husband and wives would take equal responsibility for their households and each individual would receive an education that both was practical and encouraged development of individual talents (Rodd 1991: 198).

Taking this new tendency in the women’s movement into account, the next section will examine women’s lives and their problems in the Showa period. Examining the process of the women’s movement during this transition period will help us obtain a better understanding of the contemporary women’s issues in Japanese society of today.

SHOWA PERIOD
(1926-1984, up to passage of the EEOL)

Woman’s Roles, in the Economic and Social Structure

While the Showa period actually lasted until Emperor Hirohito’s death in 1989, the passage of EEOL in 1985 was a
significant historical event for women. In this time period (1926-1984), Japan shifted from an imperial structure to an industrial-based structure. After World War II, Japan became one of the biggest and most powerful economies, with economic growth supported by industrial and technological development.

Although the advanced technologies started to predominate, there were still many women who engaged in the textile and mining fields during the post-WWII period. The number of women who worked in coal-mining industries increased around the time of World War I. “In the decade between 1909 and 1919 the number of female colliers in Japan increased from 38,000 to more than 95,000, the highest point ever in the history of coal-mining women in Japan.” (Mathias 1993:104) Women used to work underground with men. This number decreased because underground work was banned after World War II for the purpose of protection of motherhood. However, following the increase of industrial advancement, there was a severe labour shortage. So women were allowed to work above ground. This trend lasted until the late 1960s when many of the coal-mines were closing down (Mathias 1993:105). Mathias states, “Female labour in the coal-mines has to be regarded as a remnant of the pre-industrial era. Therefore, in contrast to the 'modern type' of female workers in textile industries,
female colliers represent a more traditional type of working women." (Mathias 1993: 119)

During the war years Japanese women...took over men's jobs in the factories and mines. Even though most women suddenly lost these jobs in the late 1940s—the national railways dismissed tens of thousands of women in a single day—the post war reconstruction and the absolute desolation of many households required women to be economically active during the 1950s (Saso 1990: 32).

"At the beginning of the 70's Japan's pride and self-confidence were blossoming: Japan as a nation felt strong because its postwar economic growth had been successful, with yearly growth rates of 9-10 percent in the 60's." (Rosenberger 2001: 14-15) Ohinata explains that the system of marriage and the system of registration, the basis of ie (which is the basic unit of the nation), supported this economic growth. She also says:

And what promotes this modern industrial society was the trend of women's becoming housewives. Men became salary men and more, 'kaisha ningen', which means company men, and the set of full-time housewives and salary men create the gender role division clearly. Men serve their companies by being wage slaves and women became household and childrearing slaves and support their husbands in domestic fields. This helps to create the fixed idea of gender roles (Ohinata 1993:190).
Historically, as mentioned above, agriculture used to absorb the largest proportion of the total labor force and women were as important as men because agriculture was what supported families. All of the family members were engaged in it. Life before the industrial era was agriculturally centered. However, because the Japanese industrial economy increased its rate of growth, the situation changed and agriculture is not the way most people make their living anymore. People had to find another way to get enough income for their lives. Therefore, people moved from agriculture to manufacturing or service industries.

“This shift out of agriculture was especially drastic during the period before the mid-1970s. The proportion of workers engaged in agriculture dropped from 32.6 percent in 1960 to 13.9 percent by the mid-1970s and has declined gradually since then.” (K.Tanaka 1995: 296)

“From the mid-1970s many companies started to talk about ‘utilization of women power’ (josei no katsuyo) or ‘revitalization of the female workforce’ (joshi rodoryoku no kasseika).” (Lam1993: 198)

Lam stated a reason that companies use a female workforce:

Japanese women are almost in total control of the consumer market because they control the family budget. Increased market competition has made more companies realize that in order to remain
competitive, they need to bring in more women and use their ideas in product development, marketing and sales (Lam 1993: 199).

Once service industries expanded and the demand for part-time workers increased, people started to focus on the female work force, especially middle aged or older women who are not engaged in their family businesses or farming anymore. Also, ME (Micro Electronics) encouraged women to engage in the labor sector as well (Sugimoto 1997:55). “The expansion of employment opportunities outside the household has increasingly pulled women into the paid sector. Significantly, the economic activity of married women in the paid sector has continuously increased in the post World War II era.” (K. Tanaka 1995: 297) However, women still confront obstacles in working outside the home because there were and still are unspoken social norms for domestic caregivers, which were constructed historically. Lam mentions, “the majority of the companies used the term ‘utilization of women’ (josei no katsuyo) not ‘equal opportunity’, although positive utilization of women might eventually lead to improvement of women’s position relative to that of men (Lam 1993:206).

“In farming, shopkeeping, or family enterprises the workplace is never distinctly separate from the household, enabling women to
continue to work after marriage and childbirth, whereas wage employment tends to shape the female labor participation pattern by age." (Kawashima 1995: 276)

Even though women started to be engaged in business as paid workers, women were required to complete household and childrearing tasks as well; there was and is still a certain amount of limitation for women in Japanese society. Creighton states that women's workplace patterns are not the same as men's:

Despite increased career opportunities, the socialization of women still emphasizes their roles in the domestic sphere. The tradition of separate spheres---men in the public work world and women in the domestic realm---finds expression in patterns of female work relationships that differ from the industrial norm in studies of male employees (Creighton 1996: 215).

As Creighton indicates, in spite of the increase in outside opportunities, women still had to and continue to struggle with unfair treatment in the workplace based on stereotypical, gender based role divisions.

Japanese women have long struggled with the norms of staying at home and taking care of family members. For women, the working situation has been very tough throughout Japanese history because women have had to work inside to complete housework as well as work outside the home.
The Showa period should be divided into two parts with World War II as the watershed event. It is obvious that women's outside opportunities increased after World War II. Also, women began to have choices as to whether or not they wanted to be a mother. However, before and during World War II, women's reproductive role was under the direct control of the state (Miyake 1991: 277). The Japanese state tried to revitalize the family system and also preserve the Imperial social structure. Women's choice of bearing children was denied by the state. By doing so, the state intended to make it clear that the people were subject to the emperor (Miyake 1991: 279). The Ministry of Welfare even rewarded the families who had many children. Obviously, women's main role during wartime was regarded as reproducing the next generation of Imperial Japan (Miyake 1991: 280).

In Japan, the media started to focus on the ideal mothers during this period. Kondo said, “Ideal typical mothers are represented in film, novels, television, and other media as selfless, sacrificing, and totally giving.... The creation of a safe, secure atmosphere within the uchi [literally it means inside, so in this case inside the home] is another part of mother's work.” (Kondo 1990: 148-149)
Economic growth after World War II changed Japanese society in many ways. One of the most significant changes in Japanese society was the change of the family structure. Japanese people used to live in an extended family, or if they did not live with their parents, they still lived very close to their parents because they engaged in family based businesses such as family enterprises or farming. However, Japanese families faced unstable and unpredictable social and economic conditions following World War II, and under these circumstances Japanese people could not afford to have large families (K.Tanaka 1995: 298). Therefore, people tended towards nuclear families, which included only parents and children. Following the change of industrial structures based on rapid economic growth, the number of families that contained a salary man (paid labor) increased. People forming nuclear families tended to live in urban areas of Japan. This means the number of families that ran family businesses, such as farming, decreased. Women who previously engaged in family businesses ended up staying at home as sengyo shufu (full-time housewives). There were some groups of sengyo shufu in Japan before then. However, it was limited to women of higher economic levels, middle-class women or above. Therefore, during the Showa period, the increase of sengyo shufu was regarded as a symbol of an affluent country. A head of
the household, usually male, was supported by a sengyo shufu, and it helped people to understand the basic idea of gender based role division, which supported economic development in Japanese society. Therefore, this type of family was regarded as a model family and became fixed in Japanese society (Sugimoto 1999: 43).

In this family, women tended to devote themselves to the household and the education of children. As Ohinata states, the family became the center of consumer activity, and the place for the regeneration of energy (Ohinata 1995: 202). “With governmental policy elevating economic growth as the supreme good, male workers were expected to function in the workplace at their fullest potential.” (Ohinata 1995: 202) This trend put women back into the domestic sphere, the supporting “stage hands behind the scenes” again.

However, after the Taisho period, the number of working women increased. Magazines started to have a great influence on women’s lives during this period. Women wondered about the meaning of their roles. After women started to obtain more opportunities to engage in society as paid labor, the way of thinking toward marriage among women gradually changed because educated women tended to pursue their careers rather than devote themselves to the household. Some women postponed their
marriages to their thirties, and even staying single became popular. In fact, women constituted almost 40 percent of the Showa workforce; nearly 70 percent of these were (or had been) married (Y. Tanaka 1995: 99). Marriage was no longer the only path for women to choose to gain a stable life situation because women could make enough money to support themselves.

Although women's ideas toward marriage have changed, getting married is still the most common choice for a Japanese woman. Women are still groping in the dark for a way out of the present situation, but finding a satisfactory solution is not an easy thing to do because of the traditional stereotypes of women and motherhood. “Even among the younger generation, many women still think that the primary caretakers of children are their mothers and, therefore women should stay at home while children are small.” (Kawashima 1995: 271)

Woman's Roles, in the Education System

After World War II, following the change of the economic and social structure, the access to educational resources increased rapidly. It allowed women to have higher education. Those women with higher education increasingly tended to engage in the work situation. Since education raises productivity (and trainability)
higher wages are usually paid to more educated workers; women with higher levels of education stand to earn more and are more likely to be in the paid labor market (K. Tanaka 1995: 300).

People started to think that women should have education and have the right to work with men workers as well. However, as has already been mentioned, even though women have completed high levels of education, many of the companies still have a narrow and traditional view toward women so that women still face difficulties.

Japanese women and their families tend to value higher education because usually higher education gives more career opportunities. In addition, education is viewed as one of the best ways to obtain a better lifestyle, not through their career, but rather through meeting and marrying a man who has bright prospects of becoming an executive in a large company (Saso 1990: 35).
CHAPTER IV

LITERATURE REVIEW

MOTHERHOOD AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS
IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE SOCIETY

In contemporary Japan (this time period includes 1985-present), Japanese people are reevaluating social standards in terms of moral education, gender based role division, and "old, good things," (furuki yoki mono). Since Japan tried very hard to catch up to advanced Western countries after World War II without looking back, there is contradiction in the contemporary Japanese situation. Japanese people are reappraising various kinds of social conditions that they cannot avoid facing, such as fewer children, and an aging society. Rosenberger mentioned this point by referring to the report of Gaimusho (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in 1997:

Japan had new worries in the 90's: domestic recession as economic growth slowed to a crawl, and population shifts as the number of elders grew and the number of children shrank. The fertility rate hovered around 1.4 in the 90's, one of the lowest in the world. In 1995 each person over 65 was supported by 5.8 people, but by 2050, this would decrease to 2 (Rosenberger 2001: 125).

The passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EELO) in 1985 initiated various changes in Japanese society that
have become important women's issues of the Heisei period (1989-present). The EEOL is a watershed event in contemporary Japanese society in terms of changes in women's situations. This law allowed women to have equal opportunities with men legally for the first time after the long years of unequal and politically suppressive treatment for women. Since the passage of the EEOL, women's lives have started to change. Therefore, this section will address the changes in women's perceptions in Japanese society from the time of the EEOL.

WOMEN'S FRUSTRATION IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE SOCIETY

Contemporary Japanese society still has the leftover social norm of “good wife and wise mother” and women are still struggling with this unspoken pressure. It was an ideal created for Japanese women to marry and raise children and there was strong pressure for women to wed within the marriageable age, which is the early twenties. Since women had difficulties with achieving economic independence, marriage was regarded as a form of social security for many women (Yoshizumi 1995:184). Marriage was defined as eikyu shushoku (life time employment) for women in the past.
As has been stated earlier, the birth rate hovered around 1.4 in the 1990's. Actually, in 1998, the birth rate recorded a low of 1.34 (Kousei- Roudou-shou—the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare). This shows that in contemporary Japanese society, there is a serious problem for women to successfully balance both career and family. They find it difficult to accept the terms and conditions of motherhood (Jolivet 1997:1). Although an amendment to the EEOL in 1998 aimed at giving women the same number of opportunities as men, and it contains penalties that were not in the original EEOL; the multiple situation of Japanese women are full of disadvantages. Since the social norm of "raising children as women's main task" is rooted deeply in the society, it is still hard for women who have children to expect equal treatment with men.

Also, the increase of working mothers focuses attention on the importance of governmental support for the childcare system. Due to the lack of child-care options, many women do not have many alternatives; they have to give up their careers if they want to have children (Findlay-Kaneko.1997: 41). Yoshizumi mentioned this point:

Many women are forced to discontinue outside employment once they have children because of the lack of adequate child care facilities and lack of help with child care and household chores from
their husbands, who tend to put in long hours on the job (Yoshizumi 1995:192).

Men are supposed to work outside in order to support their family; on the other hand, women are supposed to complete all of the housework inside the home. Because of these social norms, women who want to continue to pursue their careers instead of getting married tend to postpone marriage. They know that once they get married, it will be very hard for them to handle both household duties, including childrearing, and their careers simultaneously. This way of thinking was not common in the past; however this trend currently pre-occupies Japanese society. Singlehood for women who don't want to be occupied with household duties can be understood as a result of the choice between marriage and work. Singlehood for women has become more accepted as an alternative lifestyle among Japanese women.

Yoshizumi states the changes among Japanese women in terms of marriage:

“To marry” has been regarded as a natural way of living, and “not marrying” has been considered unnatural. Some Japanese women feel it is impossible to have an equal relationship with men in a society in which sex discrimination is still predominant, and so they have begun to choose the option of singlehood or cohabitation with a partner. Singlehood has, at last, so it seems,
become partially recognized as a possible lifestyle, marriage being simply another option (Yoshizumi 1995: 196).

As more women enter the labor force, the traditional division of work by sex (women at home and men at work) has been eroding. Nevertheless, women's primary task is still considered to be housekeeping and childrearing (Kawashima 1995). Therefore, without considering marriage and motherhood, young women now pursue enjoyment in single life (Rosenberger 2001:187). Increased employment opportunities allow women to be more independent and to refuse an undesirable marriage (K.Tanaka 1995: 306). Also, the influence from media has changed women's way of thinking. "Women's magazines seduced young women in particular toward consumption and pleasure but simultaneously reinforced the tensions of national discourse by pulling them toward a new status of marriage and children." (Rosenberger 2001: 130)

The Myth of Sansaiji Shinwa

However, even though women's perceptions of motherhood started to change, it does not mean that women have gotten rid of the pressures from the society completely. Women have been struggling with the social norms of motherhood.
Japan is not peculiar in its traditional beliefs about childrearing. For example, Americans believe that it would be better for children for their mothers to stay home to care for them full time when they are small, and after school as they get bigger, rather than for mothers to work and consign children to daycare or nannies. A child’s intellectual development depends crucially on the amount of attention he/she gets from adults during the first three or four years (Suzuki 2000: 157-158).

There has been a childrearing belief deeply rooted within Japanese society, “sansaïji-shinwa”, which is “the myth of the three year old child.” This means children should be raised by their own mothers at least until the age of three. There is another saying in Japanese, “mitsugo no tama shii hyaku made,” means the soul of a three-year-old child will last till the age of one hundred. This is popular wisdom and it implies the importance of motherhood (Hendry 1993:228).

According to Suzuki, this belief was based on the study by the famous psychologist, Jan Piaget. Piaget discovered the fact that by the age of three, children have created the basis of their development, such as in brain, body, and emotional basis. This basis will strongly affect future development, so children need good influences during this period. This theory became very popular and
changed to be the myth of "children should be raised by their own mothers until they become three years old." Suzuki argues that Piaget did not say that mothers should stay with their children all the time and that Piaget's theory was used as an excuse to keep women inside the house (Suzuki 2000:158).

Since women, historically, have taken primary responsibility for household tasks and childcare, they confront serious obstacles in working outside the home while also being a wife and mother at home. However, women who do have families are working in far greater numbers than before.

Japanese women take very seriously the roles of wife and mother, and probably a majority feel that they should be at home during the early child-rearing years (Hendry 1995:163). But according to Suzuki, in a survey two years after Hendry's in 1997, mothers think that taking care of children is of course very important, but valuing their own lives is also very important; the percent of those mothers who feel this way is 75.7%. This number is far greater than the number of mothers who think that they cannot help giving their time and sacrificing themselves only for their children; women who still feel this way comprise 24.3% of those surveyed (Suzuki 2000:160). According to Rosenberger, the idea of "self" among Japanese women is valued more than before, and this
establishes a different emphasis in thinking about women's roles, especially, motherhood.

Young women in the '90s were intent on self (jibun) as an ongoing process. Their ideal was to incorporate all life's experiences, including the virtues of motherhood and marriage, into a self that developed over time, with the right to grow in centrifugal motion away from home, and the right to come to rest within intimate relations that affirmed it (2001:231).

Also, Rosenberger's description supports Suzuki's statement:

As women marry and have children, they search even harder than before for a hybrid personhood that brings together a sense of self (jibun) centered on self and aspects of an older strength of character. The search is not easy; a sense of opposition between old and new –between motherhood as a position that requires 'no self' and the outside world as a place of self –is common (2001:231).

Japanese society has to adapt the environment for women by freeing women from the fixed idea that 'Mothers have to take care of their children at least until they are three'. Mothers should be free from such a fixed idea because this sansai-ji shiruwa is just a myth. Mothers should not be afraid of this myth, which restricts mothers to the home. The positive image that mothers can take care of their children as well as their careers should be created instead of a negative image (Suzuki 2000: 164).
The Stereotype toward Female College Graduates

“In the 1970s young intelligent women working in large companies were very aware of the pressures to work for only a few years.” (Saso 1990: 230) This trend lasted until the 1990s. Many researchers noted that, female college graduates were suffering from the traditional gender discrimination. Saso states:

Their only role is to please their colleagues, so their career amounts to either a one-way station on the way to marriage – the koshikake (‘temporary bench’) – and early retirement, or else a blind alley for those who fail to get married and become outcasts at their workplace, partly because their seniority status with respect to the younger make employees then becomes ambiguous (Saso 1990:230).

Yukiko Tanaka says, “Japanese business and industry have been reluctant to hire female graduates of four-year colleges. Although the perception has been slowly changing, it is still clear that in employers’ minds, there are different reasons for hiring men and women.” (Y.Tanaka 1995: 101)

Saso mentions this point:

In almost all...cases four-year university female graduates, who are only one-third of the women attending college, have been penalized in the initial job hunting arena or shushoku senso (recruitment war), because the employers’ expectation has been that they would only have several more years to offer. This perception is gradually changing, along with the other
changes outlined below; but a conservative attitude towards women, in particular, is very hard to shift (Saso 1990: 37).

Since the amendment of the EEOL restricts hiring fewer female graduates than male graduates, it is officially stated that female graduates now have the same opportunities as male graduates. However, as the economic recession has made it difficult for both men and women to find a job, female college graduates still suffer from employment difficulties. Also, even if they enter the company, there are several ways that women are treated unequally.

Yukiko Tanaka mentions:

As a rule, male employees are expected to supervise, analyze, make judgments, come up with ideas, and execute plans. Although many men begin at the bottom with low pay, they are trained and gradually promoted, with salary increases. Women, by contrast, are hired primary to assist men and are valued primarily for their ability to organize, work cooperatively, and improve office morale. They are given jobs that involve little training and have few, if any opportunities for advancement (Y.Tanaka 1995 :101).

It is very difficult to change this traditional way of treating female workers because the stereotypes are deeply rooted in the social structures. Although various kinds of laws now support women’s conditions, changing morals and prejudices, and moreover,
improving the work environment, cannot be established in one day and one night.

Women's Changing Perceptions toward Their Roles

The most remarkable change in women's roles is the shift from home duties to the workplace. Women in the workforce as paid laborers expanded in the 70's and 80's. In the mid 80's, the number of women working as paid labor became greater than the number who were not working as paid labor. It means the full-time housewife (sengyo shufu), who was the symbol of the modern Japanese family, became a minority at last. However, this does not mean that the pattern of Japanese working women has changed to that of career women. Domestic responsibilities are still regarded as women's tasks, a vestige of “ryosai kenbo” (“good wife, wise mother”) and the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa periods when women were expected to devote their own lives to their children and family.

Compared with the 70's, women in the 80's were questioning their position in relation to old and new ways. Enticed by promises of individuality and diversity, most women were open to more mobility and individual purpose in their lives — many had been reaching in that direction already (Rosenberger 2001:76).
In the past two decades, changes in women's values have affected their attitudes toward work and their role in society. Awaya and Phillips states, "Not only many kinds of survey and demographic data, but also popular culture reveals that the expectations and aspirations of working women in Japan are changing." (Awaya and Phillips 1996:246) Nowadays women tend to have different perspectives toward their own lives regarding the expectation that they should be full time mothers.

According to Rosenberger:

Women's magazines of the early '80s also carried public discourses that influenced women. Advertisements and articles generally encouraged women to be good homemakers and to enjoy life more by consuming clothes, cosmetics, houses, and household goods. Magazines promoted the ideal of being a middle-class housewife with plenty of money to enjoy life with home as a base (Rosenberger 2001: 69).

As Rosenberger mentions, the influence from media encouraged women to have different perspectives toward their lives. Since the social changes started to allow women to have more opportunities in terms of work, education, and marriage, they started rethinking their own lives. They realize that childrearing and households are not what women need to devote themselves to for their entire lives. Therefore, women have started to pursue careers,
education, and lifestyles that give pleasure and meaning to their own lives. Rosenberger also states, "More than economic independence and cooperation within the company group, work should support the development of a societal self that fit the preferences, skills, and humane desires of one's heart."
(Rosenberger 2001:212)

THE RECENT WORK SITUATION OF WOMEN

Japanese wives now have good reasons to work outside the home. There is a new and favorable image of working women in the media, the lure of extra pocket money, and more free time as well (Y.Tanaka 1995: 118). Saso also mentions, "Evidently for a working mother not only does economic necessity play a part, but also [she has] a desire to prove herself as being somewhat self-reliant, which goes quite beyond the popular image of the meek Japanese wife."
(Saso 1990: 93)

The Increase of Working Mothers

In 1983, the number of married women who have jobs outside the home became bigger (50.8%) than that of stay-at-home housewives for the first time. The jobs those married women do are
not only as full time workers, but also as part-time workers (Sugimoto 1999: 46).

There used to be many working mothers in Japan because people engaged in their family businesses such as farming. Stay-at-home mothers were a minority in Japanese society. Those stay-at-home mothers were usually in the middle class or above. Because of their husbands' occupations, they did not have to work outside.

In the post war era, following the rapid growth of the Japanese economy, men tended to start working as salary men (paid labor) and changed their working style. In 1975, the number of stay-at-home mothers was the biggest and after that, the number of working mothers increased constantly (Maeda 1999: 8).

The biggest reason that the labor market started to focus on women was the changing industrial structure in Japan. The service industries started to expand the needs of labor. In 1997, Keizai kikaku chou published a white paper, which stated "Hataraku Josei--Atarashii shakai sisutemu wo motomete," "Japanese working women: appeal for the new social system" and it said that Japanese society will need women's workforce because of the serious problem of few children and an aging society. However, we still do not have the social system which gives women an affluent life style with their work because we still have the norm of gender roles and we do not
have enough advanced childcare systems. If we improve the daycare situation, women will have more opportunities and it will raise the labor force and maintain the birth rate so that we can balance these two (Maeda 1999:14).

Therefore, often times, after finishing childrearing those women come back to the paid labor sector as part-timers instead of full-timers because they try to manage their roles as domestic caregivers as well (Onose 1996:108). However, the number of mothers who work outside the home when their child is still small has been increasing. In 1998 the survey of Kokumin seikatsu kihon chousa revealed that 20% of mothers who have babies aged 0-1 are working, and one out of every three of those babies is taken care by grandparents (Maeda 1999: 8).

Part-time Workers

According to Lebra, women's occupational careers were classified into three types in terms of whether they are part of or independent of their housewifely role: household occupation, intermediary job, and career occupation.” (Lebra 1984:250) She says that an intermediary job is typically a part-time job and women who work part time tend to be burdened with a dilemma. Their jobs often demand full-time commitment but they don't have any possibilities
for promotion to be career women. Lebra says those part-timers identities remains as housewives. Also, she adds that these women who engage in intermediary jobs tend to be blamed for the neglected children (Lebra 1984:251).

"Female part-timers are a source of cheap labor. Even though they work almost as many hours as full-timers, they make seventy-six cents for every dollar that full timers make (the wage gap increased in 1990 to seventy-one cents to a dollar)." (Y.Tanaka 1995:119) In 1981, one out of every four female workers (and one of twenty men) was a part-time worker, but in 1990, one-third of the 18 million female employees were part-time workers (Y.Tanaka 1995:120). The number of part-timers is increasing rapidly. The more recent research done by one media company shows that the total number of working women in 1998 was 20,730,000. The percentage of part-time workers in this number was 36.5%; this means one out of every three working women works part-time (Aidem 2000: 12). Since the notion of childrearing as a mother's responsibility still holds firm in Japan (Ota.1999: 6), it is hard for them to function as full-time workers with children. It is a fact that one-third of those part-timers did not have social security or health insurance benefits. However, they chose to work as part-timers because of the flexibilities of work hours and an easier commute.
The type of work these part-timers do is mainly running the cash register in supermarkets or convenience stores, selling goods at department stores, delivering ready-made meals to families and so on.

For mothers who really need to add financial support for their households, working part-time is a short cut and the easiest way because they don't want to have heavy responsibilities nor have expectations from their bosses. Their focus is just income, and not job satisfaction as with career women. “Temporary employment, which is even more flexible than part-time work, has become more popular in Japan in recent years.” (Tanaka.Y.1995: 120) A majority of part-time workers are married women who want to combine their family responsibilities and gainful work (Tanaka, K 1995, Onose 1996:108). Mothers usually tend to work as part-time workers because they have responsibilities inside of the house as well, such as taking care of their husband, children, and households. Therefore the number of women who tend to raise their children first and then go back to their work as part-time workers is increasing (M curve) because it is more acceptable for a company to hire those women as part-time workers, compared to full-time workers.
Also, working part-time is one of the best ways for middle-class women to have their own money to spend on whatever they want. According to Saso:

When I have asked Japanese wives why they have chosen to work, one of the reasons which is often cited is to improve the family's lifestyle by providing additional money for clothes, leisure activities and the children's education, rather than actually to support the family, let alone just helping with necessary household expenses (Saso 1990: 93).

The part-time role enables women to have more flexibility and diversity in their lives. Although women are restricted from long hours, and they will not have opportunities to be promoted, still women can broaden their own world by making new and individualized relations with other part-time workers (Rosenberger 2001: 71).

According to Rosenberger, “The government emphasized part-time work as progress into society, while women often characterized it as a way out of problematic homes.” (2001:114) She said that working part-time was different from person to person.

For some salarymen's wives with higher education, part-time work provided an economic, social, and psychological sense of individuality, often constructed as an antidote to stress from housewifely self-sacrifice. For the lucky few it was simply one more arena in the multiplication of stages in a woman's rich life (2001:113 -114).
At the same time, she states the frustration that part-time workers feel when they compare themselves to other women in the workplace.

Part-time work as a life-course solution to raising children created frustration for women who were highly educated and who had held good jobs before having children. More than enjoyable relations with other women, they were struck by differences between themselves and other women (2001:116).

There is a severe problem with being part-time workers. It is about the tax system. If the yearly salary of part-time workers exceeds 900,000 yen (which is about $731.7 when the exchange rate $1= 123 yen), they have to pay the premium of unemployment insurance; and if the yearly salary exceeds 1,300,000 yen (which is about $10,569), they have to pay the premium of both health insurance and welfare pension. Therefore, when the yearly part-time salary is somewhere between 1,000,000 yen (which is about $8,130) and 1,500,000 yen (which is about $12,195), and supposing that the yearly salary of the husband including tax and premium is 6,000,000 yen (which is about $48,780), the total household income decreases. Unless the yearly salaries of part-time workers exceed 1,500,000 yen, the household income will not increase (Ohashi 1993:103). Therefore, part-time workers have to adjust
their work hours in order to make sure their income will not decrease because of this tax system.

Full-time Workers

The number of the women who work as full-time workers is increasing constantly. Saso discusses the tendency of women seeking full-time work:

Especially since the hours are often not much less for part-time work in Japan, some Japanese mothers would actually prefer to have all the benefits associated with full-time work, except that they are deterred by the total lack of flexibility in hours worked by regular employees. Even so, the fact that their part-time earnings are relatively low and that, in general, incomes in Japan are no longer rising does mean that there are signs of a trend towards mothers actively seeking full-time work (Saso 1990: 153).

However, even though career opportunities have increased, social norms still emphasize women's roles in the domestic sphere (Creighton.1996: 215).

Thanks to the 1985 passage of the EEOL (amended in 1998 to allow the government to announce the name of the companies that break the law), it is said that the women's work environments are getting better and women can get equal opportunities with men. However, there is still a criticism of this law. A 1998 book by Yuko
Ogasawara indicates that although the law has been in effect more than a decade, opportunities for OLs (Office Ladies) to be promoted into management remain limited.

Creighton mentions:

The law urges companies to provide training for women and to allow them access to the male-dominated career track, but does not require that these opportunities be extended to all women employees. Companies have turned to multitracking, assigning women to either the career track or the non-career track (Creighton 1996: 203).

This is based on the idea of "women will quit jobs when they marry." It is now illegal to treat women differently from men and gradually, companies have started to realize the significance of using the female workforce. Yukiko Tanaka states:

An acute labor shortage, which started during the 1980's, encouraged business and industry to consider young women with career ambitions and drive more seriously. More women are now working as much from a sense of independence, self-worth, and career commitment as out of economic necessity (Y.Tanaka 1995: 105).

However, there are still different kinds of prejudice and segregation within Japanese "men's society." Japanese society and the business world still have fixed stereotypes that the breadwinner should be male; males should manage the work place and female
workers should just support male workers. Female workers are just like accessories for male workers. This comes from the belief that most female workers would quit their jobs in order to get married and become full-time housewives by the time they got trained. Women have been encouraged to work until marriage, quit to raise a family, and reenter the labor force, if at all, after the children are grown.

Therefore, the companies thought that spending money in order to train the female workers might be a waste of time and money, and they did not want to pay for their training. Typically, men who had authority in the companies usually did not expect women to keep their jobs long. On the contrary, women were considered just as housekeepers. These views still remain to some extent even now. Rosenberger records these discriminatory ideas toward women in her own research done in Japan:

Discrimination against women at work undercut women's sense of a mature societal self. Women in my study were about evenly divided on whether they experienced discrimination on the job, but their perceptions depended on how committed they were to getting ahead. Thirty percent felt personal discrimination strongly. Twenty-one percent felt none personally, but did experience it at the system level (Rosenberger 2001: 199).
Also, Rosenberger mentions in Chapter 7 in "Gambling with Virtue," the same book cited immediately above, that there are various perceptions of discrimination. Some women see a general discrimination by the system against women. Most tend to see their talents not used adequately, but don't criticize the whole system; they don't see the whole picture. Others see men and women as different, and thus consider the "discrimination" natural.

In Japan after the EEOL was passed, amended and began to be enforced, the work situation for women changed gradually. The companies gradually have given women more power and responsibilities, which women could not expect before. The company tends to give more opportunity to women and expects them to create new business because women have different views than men do. If women do not have to worry about family, they can concentrate on their careers. They can work to higher expectations and get more opportunities from the companies. Women can insist on their rights in the company. However, even if the company tries to give more opportunity to women, promotion for women is still not easy and acceptable among traditional "male-centered" companies. This is not the typical attitude of all the companies and it is changing, but the changing situation is very hard for the companies that value old ways of managing business.
Unmarried women have more flexibility than married women. Japanese business world and society should reexamine this unfairness because the rights of working should be given to all workers. "Mothers with small children generally are not engaged in the paid sector due to the difficulty of reconciling their competing roles." (K. Tanaka 1995: 295) Japanese mothers are having difficulties with balancing their multiple roles.

M Curve

Rosenberger states, "Encouraged by government to work in an 'M curve,' with peaks of work before and after marriage, younger women began working at larger companies and older women at smaller companies" (Rosenberger 2001:18). "M curve" shows women quit their job either when they get married or when they have babies, and they become full time housewives and mothers until they finish childrearing. Once they finish childrearing, they start to work outside again either as part-timers, or temporary workers. Therefore, the number of working women decreases when they are around 25-40 years old, and increases after around 40 when they finish childrearing (Ishikawa 1997:44). According to the survey of "Rodoryoku chousa" in 1999, the survey of the work force, the number of female workers who are 20-24 years old was 72.4% of all
20-24 year olds, and 45-49 years old was 71.8% of all 45-49 year olds; these two groups were the peaks of M curve with the bottom being the 30-34 years old group (56.7% of all 30-34 year olds). Compared to the numbers of ten years ago, we can see the M curve itself shifted up.

However, for women who really need to have more money, working as a part-time worker isn't enough. Those women are still facing serious limitations in the work place; especially women with children have to struggle with this situation.

*Kirin* (Giraffe) Shape

"M curve" has been representative of the typical working pattern of Japanese women overall. However, there is a differing tendency in the working pattern of female college graduates.

First, the female college graduates have high expectations toward their careers and most of them start working after completing their degree. However, they tend to quit their jobs by their early 30's. The percentage of these female college graduates not in the working force is higher than the percentage of high school graduates.

Second, college graduates in the workforce bottom out in the age group 34-39. This compares to high school graduates, who
bottom out in the workforce in the age group 30-34. This suggests that when women complete their educations later, they tend to marry and give birth later.

Third, as mentioned above, among the college graduates in the workforce, the age group 35-39 is the lowest. This number does not rebound up in their 40's and 50's to the extent that it does for high school graduates. Therefore, after 35 years old, the number of high school graduates in the workforce is larger than that of college graduates. (Rodosho Josei-Kyoku 2000: 50)

The reasons for this tendency is because the work environment makes it difficult for women with higher education to return to work once they quit jobs. Saso mentions this point:

Once an educated women has exited from the labour force, it would hardly be worth her while returning after the early child-rearing years as most of the jobs available for reentrants are poorly paid, unskilled positions in retailers and in small manufacturing companies. Thus re-entry is generally associated with downward occupational mobility into work not requiring special skills (Saso 1990:38).

Especially women with higher education who had held good jobs before having children feel frustration with the situation if they work part-time; they cannot be valued as much as they used to be (Rosenberger 2001:116). Those women tend not to compromise and
decide to stay at home unless they can find jobs that they can be satisfied with.

WORKING SITUATION OF MOTHERS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Managing Multiple Roles

In the past in pre-industrial society in Japan, mothers could not spend time only for childrearing because they had heavy duties of farming and managing households. Mothers could not take all of the responsibilities of childrearing. Yet, even if mothers did not spend a lot of time on their children, children usually had opportunities with other children in the neighborhood. Also, children had contacts with adults in local communities (mura), so children could learn much from those people. Mothers did not have to worry about their children so much. There was trust among local people, and also among the relatives living close to each other, so people were helping and supporting each other in terms of their childrearing (Maeda 1999:7). However, Japan is no longer an agricultural, community-based society. Nowadays it is very difficult to find those relationships and bonds among the urban communities because people are always very busy with their own
lives and usually do not have time to care for other people's children.

Since Japanese women still bear the expectation of the society of being responsible for taking care of their children, it is hard for women to work outside the home, especially when women have children who need to be taken care of. Mothers have to plan their work or other aspects of their schedule according to the child care conditions available to them (Iwao 1993: 144).

However when mothers with little children have to work, what are they going to do with their children? If they are lucky, they will have relatives, friends or even neighbors that will mind their children for them. Yet realistically, it is difficult to find people who are willing to do this because usually other people are also busy with their own lives. Therefore, daycare is one of the most important factors that working mothers must consider in order to balance their work and their family lives. Women trying to balance all their roles must do a great deal of juggling, adjusting, and compromising as well as learn to cope with the inevitable stresses and frustration (Iwao 1993:146).
Alternatives for Working Mothers

**Daycare in Japan: Hoikuen & Youchien**

During the 1960's rapid economic growth, following the increase of working women and nuclear families, the lack of daycare centers became a severe issue. The movement of increasing daycare centers took place throughout Japan, mainly in the cities (Morita, Nakata, and Sugimoto 1997:28). Nowadays, following the increase of the number of working mothers, the number of the children who attend daycare has also increased. The more mothers work outside of the home, the more people have started to recognize it is necessary and important for both mothers and children to use daycare.

In Japan, there are two different childcare systems; one is called *hoikuen* (nursery school) and the other is called *youchien* (kindergarten). *Hoikuen* accept children under one year old. However, children cannot enter *youchien* until they become three years old. In 1999, the Ministry of Education decided to allow children who become three years old to enter *youchien* on their birthday, although they used to wait until the next April (Maeda 1999:34).

In spite of the decrease in the number of children, the number of children who attend the *hoikuen* has been increasing every year.
because of the increase of working mothers. On the other hand, the number of children who attend youchien has been decreased almost 13% in the last decade (Maeda 1999: 33).

There are two main types of youchien, competitive entrance and non-competitive. Some competitive youchien are attached to higher level schools and are very prestigious. They require entrance exams. Non-competitive youchien allow entrance by application only but often require parents to spend much time in application procedures.

Due to the competition of getting large enrollments, most of the youchien have “pick-up bus, school lunch, and swimming pool” as basic services. However, the problem of youchien among parents has been the short hours of childcare because the open hours that youchien set, as a rule, is 4 hours a day (Maeda 1999:34). Therefore, mothers who work full time tend to use hoikuen as their option.

The number of the children who attend hoikuen was 1.79 million in 1998. Taiki-jidou, which means those children who are waiting to enter hoikuen (they applied but could not be accepted because of the limitation of the capacities) numbered 40,000 in April 1998, and taiki-jidou kept increasing to 60,000 in October that same year. The number of children hoikuen could accept increased by 45,000 more in the next spring, which is in April 1999, but still the
number of taiki-jidou was 32,000. This means that although the number of the children keeps decreasing every year, the number of working mothers keeps growing faster, so that even the increasing capacity to accept children cannot catch up (Maeda 1999: 2).

People used to believe that using hoikuen is a symbol of a poor family. Because mothers have to work outside to support income, babies and children have to suffer by attending hoikuen. Therefore, mothers who work outside had to endure criticism from neighbors and relatives. Even though this belief diminished after the increase of working mothers, there has been another factor, which sometimes prevents mothers from pursuing their careers. It is the immature system of hoikuen itself. Mothers have fear and worries in their mind about using hoikuen.

However, as the quality of the hoikuen has improved, people have started to think positively about using hoikuen these days. There are many experts of childcare at hoikuen and those experts can provide mothers useful information about taking care of children. Sometimes children can learn a lot more than they can by just living only with their own mothers. The norms of the hoikuen have changed from the place where working parents put their children because there was no other way than using hoikuen, to the place where parents can expect to get good education for their
children. Japanese hoikuen is a necessary factor for the society to improve women's lives. Women's getting involved is now one of the effective ways to make businesses run smoothly because women have so much vitality and potential. However, there are still many problems among Japanese systems. For example, usually the hoikuen does not stay open long hours, but mothers have to use some hoikuen to keep their full-time jobs (Sakamaki 1999).

Following women's advance within the work environment, the daycare system has become big business recently even in Japan, where daycare is not that popular historically. Since there are so many different kinds of daycare centers available in Japan and some are good while others are not, we must address the issue of quality daycare systems. Even though parents pay a lot of money, they might not get high quality care. Nobody can be sure of the quality of the daycare environment. We cannot be satisfied with the situation for children who have to spend most of their time at daycare, if this is not the most comfortable place for them. There are always possibilities that children may have some kinds of psychological impact if they cannot be in quality daycare. People have started to realize the current situation of the childcare environment is not good enough because there are a lot of mothers who are having trouble dealing with their own children. Mothers
don't know how to raise their children, and have started to get
distressed about this.

People started to think that *hoikuen* could be one of the best
places that mothers can rely on and ask for some advice when
mothers have trouble or problems about their childrearing. *Hoikuen*
should not be just for working mothers but also for mothers who
stay at home because stay-at-home mothers also have struggles
with childrearing, just as working mothers do (Maeda 1999:5).

People also have started to think that working mothers who
use *hoikuen* can get benefits by relying on the caregivers at *hoikuen*
because those caregivers are professionals and know how to take
care of children well. Iwao mentioned the point that using daycare
helps working mothers have a positive attitude about working:

> Working mothers’ efforts are supported and greatly
aided by the staff members of day care centers and
nurseries, who are instrumental in children's upbringing
(in toilet training and in teaching children to dress and
undress, brush teeth, use chopsticks, sing songs, play
games, etc.) (Iwao 1993:132)

Also, those mothers who are using *hoikuen* make friends with
those who are also working mothers and facing the same kinds of
problems. Children as well as their mothers can make friends easily
at a *hoikuen* (Maeda 1999:7). Caregivers at *hoikuen* should be
regarded as “another parent” who takes care of our children every day during the day while we are working (Sakano & Nishida 1997: 138).

At hoikuen, professionals called hobo (meaning childcare workers) take care of our children. Dieticians always program the meals children eat so that it is very healthy. Hobo take children for a walk if it’s a sunny day, or children can play in the pool during the hot days in summer; those hobo do all they can to entertain children. People say that the children who grow up in the daycare are stronger psychologically than other children who grow up under their mothers’ care. Children can learn how to adjust and cooperate by playing with other children (Suzuki 2000: 163-164).

For public hoikuen, the local government gives subsidies so that the amount of expense parents have to bear is less than using private hoikuen. The environment is much healthier for children than if stressed mothers take care of their children all by themselves. The most important thing for children is not how long they spend with their mothers. How they spend their precious time together is more important than how much time is spent together (Suzuki 2000: 163-164).

Since most hoikuen have the system of daily journals between mothers and hobo to exchange information about childrens’ mental
and health conditions, mothers can know what kind of activities their children are doing at the hoikuen and hobo can know what kind of problems children have at home and vice versa.

Nowadays the roles of hoikuen have changed gradually based on the mothers’ needs. Hoikuen have started to focus on events for stay-at-home mothers as well as working mothers because those stay-at-home mothers are also facing various kinds of problems about their childrearing and have few acquaintances to talk to. When stay-at-home mothers need somebody who can take care of their children temporarily, for example, for a wedding or funeral of relatives, they also can rely on those daycare centers now (Maeda 1999:11).

Hoiku mama

The limited capacity of hoikuen is a serious problem among working mothers. Before using hoikuen became a common thing to do, mothers who needed an alternative for them tended to use hoiku mama. Hoiku mama is a caregiver who takes care of about three children at her own house. Now, using hoiku mama is getting very common. However, there is no governmental support in terms of finance. This system became popular between the 1950s and 1980s,
and again people have started to realize the significance of *hoiku mama* these days.

People believe there are merits of using *hoiku mama*. One is they are very flexible because they take care of children in their own houses. Second, the number of children is small and mothers do not have to worry about their children being neglected by the caregiver. Also, thirdly, children can feel more comfortable because they can be surrounded by warm environments at *hoiku mama's* houses rather than public spaces.

At the same time, there are several problems about *hoiku mama*. One is *hoiku mamas* usually take care of children by themselves without anybody's support. Therefore, the care depends on the ability of the *hoiku mama*, and the level of caring for children will differ and the difference could be huge. However, it is very hard to check the quality of the care since those *hoiku mama* use their own homes as care centers; this means those places are closed, not open, as other *hoikuen* are. Also there are no substitute caregivers when those *hoiku mama* get sick (Maeda 1999:46).

Also there is another problem about using *hoiku mama*. According to Iwao:

Babysitters who will come to watch children in their own homes are not widely available, and trustworthy
live-in domestic help is very expensive and hard to find today, a result of the higher standard of women's education and their preference for office (nondomestic) jobs (Iwao 1993: 144).

Baby Hotels

Yukiko Tanaka mentions another alternative for working mothers, "The number of baby hotels mushroomed throughout Japan during the 1970s, although most Japanese learned about their existence only through television news reports of various accidental deaths of the children in these hotels, mostly caused by suffocation." (Y.Tanaka 1995: 65)

This baby hotel system is not very common nowadays. However, still there are many kinds of facilities that accept the children of working mothers who cannot find other alternatives because baby hotels usually stay open much later than other hoikuen.

However, usually these baby hotels are not officially registered and are not gaining any governmental support. There is no guarantee for children's safety. The lack of information about these facilities promotes the frustration and worries among working mothers who really need to obtain help from these alternatives.
Problems

Many kinds of changes have appeared for the purpose of improving women's condition in terms of their working and family lives. However, women are still struggling with their current situations. Even though, “traditional gender based role division” has been gradually changing, there is still unfairness in the contemporary Japanese society.

Ogasawara states that most male workers do not quit their jobs no matter whom they marry. No matter what kind of family situation they have, most of the male workers move to a new place once their company tells them to do so. Also, most of the male workers usually don't take childcare leave no matter how many children they have. All of these are attributed to being because male workers think of their work and family separately (Ogasawara 1998:58). What makes it possible for men to work outside with a split attitude from family is because women don't think of their work as split from family life. The attitude of most of the companies that request male workers to prioritize their work first also requests women to live lives such that men are able to prioritize their work (Ogasawara 1998:59). In contemporary Japan, “father might be the supporter of the household financially, but it is the mother who watches over the health and well-being of each member of the
family, runs the household, and keeps the family bonds strong." (Iwao 1993: 126)

On the other hand, once women quit their jobs, women tend to focus too much on childrearing. Then, it will cause another problem. Regarding their offspring as *jibun no ichibu* (part of themselves), mothers find it difficult to treat them objectively or maintain the detachment that will allow them to enjoy the children (Iwao 1993: 133). Japanese mothers are usually analyzed as too self-sacrificing. As mentioned in the introduction, mothers are now struggling with their situation. They are trying to find a way out from a muddled field of contemporary women's problems in Japanese society.
CHAPTER V
METHODOLOGIES

For this thesis research, two main methodologies were chosen, a survey done first and an interview done second. A survey was chosen to discover if a general idea about contemporary mothers’ situations among the young generations would emerge. Then, based on the results and answers from the survey, the interview could focus more on the mothers’ specific situations such as young mothers’ real lives, struggles, and solutions. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty mothers.

In order to conduct my research, I used the process of "grounded theory", which originally was presented by Glaser and Strauss (Dick 2000). According to grounded theory research processes, we will face various sets of data when we do specific research. Based on the data we obtain through the research, several patterns of themes and relationships will emerge. There form what is known as a "grounded" theory. We will not compare these with a particular hypothesis but with the other theories resulting from the same kind of research. This approach aims to understand the data
of the particular situation. Therefore, it is regarded as a local level of theory not a global one.

Grounded theory is an emergent research process with some similarities to action research of what most differentiates grounded theory from much other research is that it is explicitly emergent. It does not test a hypothesis. It sets out to find what theory accounts for the research situation as it is (Dick 2000).

SURVEY

Sample

In order to obtain a general idea about working mothers and their family lives, a broad survey that included both men and women was designed. This group included both people married and single, and focused on people somewhere between 25 and 35. The reason for the focus on this age group was although there are many studies about Japanese working women and mothers, the preponderance of those studies focused on generations whose ages are now somewhere between the 40s and 60s. Therefore, in order to obtain new perspectives and opinions, the younger generation was targeted. The reason both married and single people were included
was to uncover a larger social understanding as to what the popular beliefs are about being a mother and work.

Originally, this was supposed to be achieved by attending two weddings where I was to randomly approach forty individuals and ask informal questions designed to uncover basic demographic information. This included a brief written questionnaire that addressed their thoughts on marriage and women's work (for an example of these questions, see appendix A-1).

In the end, a total of 34 responses, which include 21 men and 13 women, both married and single, were gathered. Although the total number gathered from this survey was smaller than the number of the original plan, their answers contain a lot of interesting, valuable and significant insights that could be used to shape further research.

Procedure

At the first wedding, due to the groom's request, it was not possible for me to walk around and ask people to help. Therefore, for the first survey, I asked the people at the reception desk at the party after the formal reception to act as intermediaries, by passing the survey out to those people who checked in, both men and women and both single and married. Generally those people who
attended the party were around mid 20s to 30s, which fit samples of future interviews. However, there were many people who were already drunk, and were concentrating on catching up with their old friends, so it was very difficult to get them to fill in those questionnaires and return them. Those survey questionnaires were supposed to be put into envelopes which would be self addressed, but the plan had to change because there were so many drunk people and it seemed very hard to make sure they sent it back filled in.

I explained the purpose of the study to people who got the survey at the party and asked if they would be willing to participate (I also told them that a consent form was attached – see consent form at Appendix B-1). Also, I did let them know that that they had a choice not to answer.

There was some trouble. One of the drunken people complained about the survey. His complaint was about the aim of the survey. He said doing that kind of survey at the party was an inappropriate thing to do. It showed that there are many people who have different perspectives and opinions.

The first survey at the party did not go as well as planned. Even though a total of 26 responses (including 17 men and 9 women) were obtained, the process was confronted by social
obstacles. Therefore, an additional survey at a different wedding, which I had planned to conduct, was omitted.

To make up for omitted survey, the plan was changed a little. I started handing the survey, which is the same questionnaire that I used at the wedding (Appendix A-1), to my acquaintances. There was a firm commitment that they would help out since they were the acquaintances of the researcher. Their age group was somewhere between 25 and 35, they were accessible and those people could be counted on to write the answers themselves. At this point those acquaintances were asked if they or friends of theirs who were married and have children would be willing to participate in the research. There was a slight problem with passing out the survey to acquaintances. Those acquaintances were given extra time to fill in the survey and some forgot to send it back to the researcher.

The original reason that this survey was conducted was to get a general idea about mothers who have jobs outside of the home. Moreover, the questions that were prepared for the intensive interviews were tested to see if they covered all aspects of the issue. Also, using the results of the survey helped to expand the conversation when the interviews were conducted. Eight responses
from the acquaintances, including four men and four women, both married and single, were gathered.

INTERVIEW

Sample

In order to get a clearer picture of contemporary Japanese women's issues, two different groups of women were targeted: working mothers who used maternity leaves and came back to their careers (or even were still on their maternity leaves), and mothers who quit their jobs either before or after having their baby.

A total of thirty women, including twelve mothers who had quit their jobs to be full-time housewives after childbirth, and eighteen mothers who still have their previous work or are on maternity leave, were interviewed. The age of those women was somewhere between 26 and 38. The age of their child (children) was somewhere between zero to five years old.

A parameter of my sample population is that these interviewees were middle class mothers. I included two single mothers but both of them can get support from their own parents so they are regarded as middle class people as well.
Procedure

The objective was to bring out their spontaneous feelings and thoughts in a relaxed setting. From September of 2000 till December of 2000, approximately three months was spent interviewing and the month of January was spent organizing results in Japan.

In terms of getting a sample for the interviews, I posted some announcements on web pages that deal with working mothers’ issues (See appendix C-1). Also, a woman who works at Tokyo Women’s Plaza, which is an organization that supports different kinds of women’s activities and deals with different issues, forwarded the e-mail through the List Serve. Lastly, I sent out e-mails to other acquaintances. This mail explained the study and asked if they could think of anybody around them who would be willing to help with the project. The project was briefly explained to those acquaintances through e-mails so when they found somebody, they could talk to those people, give them a short explanation about the project, and get those people’s permission for the researcher to directly contact them. Some of the acquaintances recommended themselves to be in the sample. This is what is called “snowball sampling” and it worked well. Later on, I got many replies from those acquaintances that had introduced their friends who fit
in the sample. Also, I got replies from mothers who saw the announcement on the web.

In order to explain the purpose better and make them feel more comfortable about the project, I talked to those people over the phone beforehand. Then according to their schedule and preference, a time and place was set to meet. In that way, setting time and place was very easy. For mothers who kept in touch through e-mails, the same thing was done.

From these results, I formed the two core groups of women for my sample for a total of thirty women. I conducted semi-structured interviews, including some open-ended questions so I could explore some various topics, which would not be expected to arise otherwise. Also, some questions were interjected from time to time, following their train of thought, so that the interviews would reveal their spontaneous thinking.

However, there were difficulties with finding stay-at-home mothers. This might imply tendency in young Japanese women’s lives. The age group set for the sample was still young and therefore their babies (children) are still very little; it might be that those young mothers did not have opportunities or enough time to get information from such sources as the Internet as compared to working mothers. Working mothers may have more opportunities to
access the Internet and get information. (I will talk about this aspect more in the data section.) Therefore this remained a limitation of the study.

The mothers' preferences, in terms of the place, time, and total environment, were respected. Some of the mothers preferred to have the interview at their own homes and some did not. However as long as the interviewees did not care, the interviews were conducted at their homes so that made it possible to see what their situations looked like. It was very important to observe their lives to some extent. If they preferred to an interview outside the home, a coffee shop close to their houses was chosen as a place. Some of them wanted to take their babies with them, and some did not. Therefore, the environment of the interviews differed from person to person. However, each interview lasted approximately one hour and was taped. Those audiotapes that I recorded were kept in a locked safe box for the purpose of keeping their privacy.

The interviews were intended to uncover the reasons for the women's current status, either as at-home mothers or working mothers (Questions, see Appendix D-1, Consent form E-1). The sizes and policies of their companies were also taken into consideration since these factors can be directly related to women's ability to take
maternity leave and the overall flexibility they had or have in terms of parenting.
CHAPTER VI

RESULT FROM SURVEY

The survey had a total of thirty-four responses from twenty-one men and thirteen women, both married and single. The results will be divided into two groups. One is the group from the wedding and the other is the group of the researcher's acquaintances. Although the sample from this survey is smaller than average, the primary goal of this survey was getting broad and general ideas from young people about working mothers in Japanese society, and a variety of insights were obtained from them. Moreover, the results were useful as references when actual samples were interviewed. Therefore, this survey went well overall.

Table 1. Age, Sex and Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aged</th>
<th>Single Men</th>
<th>Single Women</th>
<th>Married Men</th>
<th>Married Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey at the Wedding</td>
<td>24-34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Acquaintances</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SURVEY AT THE WEDDING

As mentioned previously, I used an intermediary to pass out the survey questionnaires at the reception desk because it was the request of the groom. Using an intermediary made it harder for me to obtain more responses. However, the results are useful for understanding the general idea and tendency of the thoughts of young people about working mothers. Therefore, I will divide the information into four groups: single men, single women, married men, and married women and see what their ideas look like. The data from this survey is in Table 2 below. It includes twenty-six respondents, both men and women, and both single and married.

Table 2. Survey at the Wedding, Aged 24-34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Prefers Wife Works</th>
<th>Woman Works Now</th>
<th>Basic reasons for wife working</th>
<th>Has Child Now</th>
<th>No Child Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Men</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Economic; good influence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Economic; self fulfillment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Men</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Women</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Economic; mental refreshment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One married man did not give an answer
Single men, Detailed Responses

In general, single men have positive ideas toward working mothers. Those who favor "working" gave two main reasons: economic contribution and the good influence on the family, including themselves. Specifically, those who gave economic reasons made comments like, "There is no other choice because I know I cannot make enough money;" and, "It is very hard to manage childrearing, housework and their outside work, but they have to work anyway because of economic reasons."

Some single men thought that working outside helps women be attractive and it brings the family a positive influence as well. Those who gave these social reasons made comments like, "It is great for women to work outside the home in order to pursue their hopes and dreams;" and, "I want the wife to have good and positive influences, and also to keep herself pretty." Although all these single men have a positive idea toward women's working, they still value the importance of the role of mother. Especially, when children are small, men are concerned about mothers' working. A 25-year-old single man said, "They have to care for the family. While the children are small, I want them to stay at home with the children."

Also, when asked what would be the main qualities for being a "good" mother, those single men who preferred the future wife to
work outside the home answered that the most important factor for mothers to be a "good mother" is love (37%). Then, "being able to discipline well;" "thinking of her family first;" and, "manner of training children and patience;" followed. One respondent answered, "Valuing their time to devote themselves to their hobbies" is the most important factor for being a "good" mother. What he implied was mothers should value their own world as individuals so that they can refresh their mind and do not have to focus only on family matters, including childrearing. This man recognizes individuality (self), which is an important women's concern in contemporary Japan.

There is a contradiction between economic need and emotional need. Single men who had negative ideas toward mothers' working did realize the positive influence on women of their work as well as the economic contribution to household income. However, while they recognize the importance of working for women, they are more concerned about the loneliness they and their children would feel. The reason a 27-year-old single man preferred his future wife to stay at home was because he would feel lonely; he said what he does makes him think this way (his occupation was not given). At the same time, when he answered about his general idea about working mothers, he strongly agreed with women's working even
though he added the comment, "as long as it does not bring any bad influence." A 24-year-old single man clearly said, "I want my future wife to stay at home and devote herself to childrearing." He gave the reason:

Since my father died when I was little, my mother raised me by herself; therefore I don't deny mothers' working. However, I got used to the situation where mother was absent and I sometimes felt lonely. That is why if I have my own child, I don't want him/her to feel what I felt.

As with single men who preferred their future wife to work outside, these single men who preferred their future wife to be stay-at-home mothers think that "love" is an important factor for being a "good mother" as well as "communication with her [nuclear] family."

Although two of the single men did not give an answer about their preference of the future wife working outside the home, one said that the important thing for being a "good mother" is "gentleness and ability to discipline," which is similar to the answer of single men who preferred their future wife to work outside the home. These two factors, gentleness and ability to discipline, are in contrast to each other, but this is how Japanese believe that mothers should train their children.
Single women, Detailed Responses

In general, single women do not disagree with the idea of mothers working, but their answers varied. Even though working is now a part of their lives, after marriage, they believe they also have to think of their families. For women, then, it is a matter of ability or preference if they can or want to handle multiple roles. The main reasons one 29-year-old single woman wanted to keep working was because she wanted to have “self” by working outside the home. She wanted to work in order to obtain mental satisfaction and to fill economic demands; she answered that mothers’ working outside the home is good. She also mentioned the importance of husbands’ support when mothers work outside the home.

On the other hand, three single women do not want to keep working after marriage. Two gave reasons. A 26-year-old single woman cited preference, saying, “I just want to relax being at home.” A 27-year-old single woman cited ability, saying, “I want to maintain my household and I don’t have any confidence handling both housework and outside work.” These three women who don’t want to work after marriage all think that the most important thing for a mother is her child, and that a mother has to care for her child well even if she works outside the home and has less time. What these three women thought was important for being a “good mother” was:
"cheerfulness," "big heart," and "giving up their own dreams---
mothers should not put any pressure on their children because the
children are not the ones who can make our dreams come true,"
and also, "listening carefully to what children want to say and then
to talk to them." Compared to men, women have to think of
themselves as being in situations in which they have to manage
multiple roles, and expect that it will keep them extremely busy.
Women did not bring up the factor, which single men brought up, of
"ability to discipline well" in order to be a "good" mother.

Married men, Detailed Responses

In general, married men think it is good for mothers to work
outside in terms of their self-esteem as well as supporting
household income. Answers from men who favor mothers' working
included, "If she just stays at home, it makes her stressed;" and,
"It helps our household income." They know that they need to help
mothers in terms of housework in order to make mothers' situation
better. Otherwise, their wives cannot handle it. Married men who
favor mothers' working said the important factors of being a "good
mother" are: "When mothers communicate with their children, they
should not be emotional;" and, "Mothers have to teach them clearly
what is good and what is wrong."
Compared to single men, married men tend to be concerned more about the influences on their children, especially, when children are small. Married men who have negative ideas towards mothers' working gave answers like, “I think mothers do not have to work outside. Of course it is a little hard economically, but I want my wife to stay home and to ‘dosshiri kamaete’ (take things easy);” and, “Childrearing is so hard and I really think it is okay for her to stay at home.” As with single men, there is a contradiction between economic needs and emotional needs. One of the respondents said, “If there is an economic reason, we cannot help it, but at least while our children are small, I really think mothers should stay at home with them.” The main factor of being a “good” mother that married men tend to cite is “teaching children manners.” As a whole, married men seem to value women's role of mother more than women as individuals.

Married women, Detailed Responses

Eighty percent of these respondents include mothers who currently work either full-time or part-time. In general, married women tend to have positive ideas toward working. Even though there are limitations on the time that they can spend with their children, they think it is important to have their own time and to
have outside influences. One mother who favors mothers’ working but who currently is a stay-at-home mother said, “Since working mothers have less time compared to stay-at-home mothers, it is very important to value their time spent with their children.”

Those who had positive ideas toward mothers working gave comments like, “Working outside the home is much better than just staying at home and living in a world with only the children and husband;” and, “I think working outside will make mothers feel more fresh and it will give a good influence on the family as well.” Also, “Mothers can get advice from other working mothers at their workplace and working outside the home helps mothers get rid of their stresses from childrearing.”

Overall, mothers tend to view positively mothers’ working as long as they can manage their time and multiple roles well. In terms of the factor of being a “good” mother, these mothers who preferred mothers’ working gave several answers. One interesting answer that I got is, “toki ni ha amaku, toki ni ha kibishiku”, translating, “be sometimes sweet, sometimes strict,” meaning that mothers should control their emotions well in order to discipline their children well so that their children won’t be indulged. Also, from these two answers, “Don’t put your emotions on your children,” and, “Don’t think that we, mothers can control our children,” we can see the
difficulty and temptation of childrearing. Also, "physical strength" was another point that I got from married women who are currently working which is not mentioned by the other three groups. Also, "communicating well with children," and, "teaching children what is good and what is bad so that they can think and judge for themselves," are two other important factors for being a "good" mother mentioned by this group. An interesting point made by one of the full-time working mothers was:

My mother was working when I was little; I think it is okay for mothers to work outside of the home. Of course I felt lonely when I was little, but even though mothers work outside the home and have less time with their children, if they can communicate with their children well while they are with their children, their children will understand their situation.

From what she says, we can see the same situation that one of the men mentioned about the loneliness he experienced. However, the response was different from what that single man gave. It is important to note that men and women have slightly different perceptions of mothers' working. Mothers tend to put themselves in a situation as a working mother and then value their individuality as much as they value their family, including their children.

Although married women tend to think positively toward mothers working, we cannot ignore the conflicted answers from
other mothers. A 28-year-old working mother who just returned to work after her childcare leave said, “I cannot agree with mothers working outside the home because I know children feel lonely.”

A 28-year-old mother, self-employed and working part-time, said, “Working outside the home helps us to refresh our minds, so I think it is good, but at the same time, I know children would feel lonely, so they will be sacrificed if mothers work outside the home.” Therefore, even though these conflicted mothers want to value their individuality, they still tend to make their role as mother their main concern. We can see the frustration of today’s mothers. What these conflicted mothers brought up as important factors for being a “good” mother is “patience” and “affection toward children.” A woman in this married women’s group mentioned the importance of governmental support for working mothers, but none of the responses from the other three groups mentioned this.

SURVEY OF ACQUAINTANCES

Next, I will show the data from the survey of acquaintances. I got a total of eight responses including both men and women and married and single.
Table 3. Survey of Acquaintances, Aged 24-30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Prefers Wife Works</th>
<th>Woman Works Now</th>
<th>Basic reasons for wife working</th>
<th>Has Child Now</th>
<th>No Child Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Single Men</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Broaden perspectives</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economic; self fulfillment; be more informed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Men</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Economic; be more informed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, although the number of responses is small, it contains a lot of significant information. Therefore, as I did with the results of the survey at the wedding, I will divide the responses into four groups; single men, single women, married men, and married women.

Single men, Detailed Responses

Single men were positive towards mothers’ working. Both single men preferred their future wives to work outside the home because mothers working will bring positive influence to their family. A 30-year-old man said, “It is up to her actually. But I think women working outside the home after marriage is a very good
thing. 'Men at work, women at home' is an old way of thinking. Now, both men and women should do the childrearing; it will make the family relationship better I think." A 25-year-old single man answered that mothers should recognize the fact that they are mothers, and that is the important thing for mothers. This man added:

Generally, mothers spend more time than fathers and the influence that mothers give their children is big, so working outside the home enables them to obtain a broad idea of things and have a wide view. It will give a good influence to their children because children will also work in the future.

What he meant was mothers could be good examples for their children in terms of working outside the home.

From their answers, men respect women's working, but at the same time, they expect mothers to be responsible for their children. The factors these men thought as important for being a "good" mother, are: "love" and "shitsuke (manners training)." Again, they emphasize the mothers' responsibility as the trainer of children. It implies that in contemporary Japan, there is a special perception that women are still in charge of shitsuke for children.
Single women, Detailed Responses

Although single women think it is very difficult to handle multiple roles as working mother, both of the single women answered that they would like to work after they marry. The reasons these women gave are: “I want to make myself shine forever, and I think I need to work for economic reasons as well;” and, “Working outside would enable me to absorb information always.” Both women mentioned the positive aspect of being a working mother. A 27-year-old woman answered:

I don't think women should decide to quit their jobs because they've got a baby. If they want to work, they should. Recently, there are a lot of crimes of mothers hurting their own children. If the reason is coming from the stress of being at home, even though the amount of time they spend with their children decreases, I think working outside would help release them from stress. The only thing working mothers have to take into consideration all the time is switching their mind between work and home.

A 25-year-old woman said, “Working mothers seem to use their own time efficiently without tying it to their family. On the other hand, they may neglect their children, which I think is a problem.” Both of them brought up contemporary problems in Japanese society, hurting children and neglecting children. They think that having outside relationships will solve the contemporary problems in terms
of childrearing. Also, working outside the home brings mothers self-esteem. "As long as they can be responsible for their family" seems the basic qualification for mothers working.

What these single women think are the important things for being a "good" mother are: "trying not to project personal dreams onto children;" and, "love for children and gentleness as well as strictness." From these answers, we can see that these women think it is important for mothers to see their children objectively. Also, it is important to have the third person point of view, which enables mothers to be strict with their children.

Married men, Detailed Responses

In general these two men had similar ideas toward mothers' working even though their situations differ from each other. One has a newborn baby and the other has no child. One of the married men has a wife who works full-time. The other has a wife who stays at home with their daughter. Both of them answered that it is better that mothers do not work while their children are small even though they have positive ideas toward mothers working. One of them, who has no child, said:

If mothers work outside, they will see many people at work and other places so they can learn a lot of things
other than just family matters. I think it will bring a good influence not only for themselves but also for their family. At the same time, working outside the home will help mothers get rid of their stress. Of course, "working mothers" that are too busy is a problem, but as long as they can keep their normal daily lives, it is a good thing for them to work.

Another 27-year-old father said, "If we don't have any children and my wife works, it would help household income, but since we have a baby, I am satisfied with our current situation." The reason he thinks this way may result from his statement that important for being a "good mother" is "warm care of children." He added:

I think for mothers, childrearing plus also working outside, if they find something they really want to do, would be better, but for children, it is better for them that their mothers stay with them all the time. If mothers stay home to take care of children, fathers don't have to worry about family and can devote themselves to work for the family.

Married men tend to value their wife's role of mother. From this comment the 27-year-old father made, we can see that there is still an idea of gender based role division in the young generation.
Married women, Detailed Responses

These women have positive ideas toward mothers' working. Both of them think that working outside the home makes it possible for mothers to have social contact and it will help them refresh their minds. Also, they think mothers' working will bring positive influences to their children, which is the same answer that one of the single men brought up. Helping household income is one of the responses I obtained from one married woman, but it is not the main reason that she prefers mothers work. A 26-year-old full time worker said, "Working outside does not mean that they are being lazy about childrearing. Making children watch their mothers work will give a positive influence to children, I think. Once women decide to have children, mothers should not do anything that would sacrifice their family." A 27-year-old part-time worker said, "Working outside makes it possible for mothers to keep mothers' own worlds so that they don't have to worry about *ikuji noiroze* (neurosis from childrearing). Also, working outside makes mothers stay young."

The most important things for being a "good" mother for them are, to "scold children when mothers need to, praise and compliment when mothers need to;" and, "respecting children's personalities because children have their own characteristics and
are not part of mothers.” These are exactly the same in substance as what single women cited.

A 27-year-old woman added, “I think both mothers who have jobs outside the home, and mothers who stay at home to manage household duties are ‘working mothers’, and the most important thing for mothers is being proud of what they are doing.”

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

From these results obtained through the survey, we could see the fact that including both men and women, and both single and married, people have positive ideas toward working mothers generally. Obviously, there are contradictions toward mothers working, but most of the respondents think that working outside will have a positive influence on mothers. They think this positive influence will be effective to create a better atmosphere inside the home.

Of course, most of the respondents, both men and women, are concerned about the influence on their children, especially when children are small, but they tend to think more that staying at home the whole day with their children will make their own world narrower. Female respondents tend to think that having less
opportunity outside the home will make mothers stressed easily. However, especially from male respondents, I got an impression that they respect their wife's (or future wife's) preference toward their career.

Since working mothers can obtain larger perspectives by meeting people outside the home, it enables them to enliven themselves. Although men tend to agree with mothers working, still they expect wives to prioritize their family. The most difficult part of being a working mother is managing multiple roles: mother, housewife, and worker. This is the main concern of female respondents.
CHAPTER VII

CASE STUDIES

I have chosen nine individual stories from the thirty individuals to present in detail. The stories were selected as representative of concerns and problems of people in the larger sample. The details of stories show that people of different situations are dealing with a common set of problems. I will then refer to several of the stories in presenting the data from the thirty interviews. The nine chosen cases are those of Akiko-san, Keiko-san, Mika-san, Fumiko-san, Saori-san, Chikako-san, Yuka-san, Hiroko-san, and Masako-san.

CASE STUDY 1: AKIKO-SAN

Akiko-san, who is in her fourth childcare leave, was chosen because she works outside the home with four children. Having four children is rare in contemporary Japanese society. Moreover, she moved to a new place in order to solve the daycare situation. In addition to these facts, her husband is not a typical Japanese man who prefers his wife to complete housework if it is possible. Therefore, this case study would help to obtain an interesting and unique perspective of a contemporary Japanese situation.
Akiko-san is a 36-year-old mother of four children (two daughters, two sons), who is on her fourth maternity leave and lives in a house newly built in a residential area surrounded by greens in Setagaya-ku in Tokyo. She was interviewed at the end of summer in September. Her house is about twenty minutes away by bus from the nearest station. The area she lives in is crowded with many houses and I saw many children playing in the street.

On that day, she apologized to me because her third child, who was supposed to be at hoikuen, was at home with us. There was a sports festival at his hoikuen that day and Akiko-san tried to watch them race from behind a wall, but he saw her and started to cry because he missed her. Before the interview, she apologized repeatedly. However, the child's presence was not a problem as life with small children is filled with unexpected happenings.

Work

Akiko-san works for a company which manufactures various kinds of office and home supplies. She mainly takes care of the paperwork when worker's relatives die, such as sending flowers. She said, "I am doing work that anybody, like part-time workers, can do. Maybe high school students or even junior high school students could do it."
Akiko-san analyzed herself saying that in terms of work she was very unsupportive and did not try to help her co-workers very much and was not an efficient woman before she became a working mother. She did not know how to manage her work well. Even though she had plenty of time, she tended to put off assigned work till the next day if the deadline was not on that day. Therefore, “I did not have trust from other people at work because I did not work as much as I work now.” After she married and became a mother, she realized how important it is to be efficient to handle her multiple roles because there are always unexpected emergencies, such as children getting sick, and in that case, she has to take off from work. Now, she knows she is very lucky to have such a nice environment at work. She said because people know her situation as well as her work, they are very supportive.

Husband

Akiko-san’s husband, a 39-year-old mechanic, is a person who really likes to do housework. She said, “People often say, ‘because you have four children, that is why your husband is supportive and does the housework’ but it is not true. Even before we had children, he was a person who did that.” She said,
For example, I really like playing tennis and I asked him, "Can I go out and play tennis?" and I went, and came back. Dinner was ready. Isn't that good? After I came home, I wanted to take a shower first so I did. While I was taking a shower, he started doing laundry; he washed his clothes and mine.

When I asked Akiko-san about the ratio of housework between herself and her husband, she gave me the number of 7:3, husband to wife. "It does not mean I am not doing anything, but I do less than he does." There are no rules about housework between them. We often hear the story about husbands who neglect their children and never help their wife with housework, but in her case, it is not a problem because he does more than his wife. This is not a typical example of a Japanese couple, which is that the wife usually has responsibilities for housework and the husband tends not to do so much.

The amazing thing for me was that Akiko-san's husband sleeps with their youngest daughter who is three months old, and Akiko-san sleeps with the rest of the children. Therefore, he gives the baby milk and changes her diaper during the night. Akiko-san is not now working because of the childcare leave; yet he does it with no question. In Japan, the husband usually does not wake up to care for the baby during the night even if baby cries. Moreover, some husbands even complain about a baby’s crying.
Akiko-san laughed and said, "I did not realize there were those kind of men out there." She talked about her own father. According to her, her father was a typical Japanese father who had the idea that childrearing is a woman's job. Therefore, she also thought that and did not wonder about it. "Maybe if I started from that level, it is very easy for me to do things." And she added, "It is very dangerous for my two daughters who are watching my husband, because they might think all of the men in the world are like this. If so, they would have a hard time finding an ideal husband in the future for sure." According to Akiko-san, her husband said, "If it is possible, I want to be a full time househusband." However, when they think of the income they would not get, it would be very difficult. Akiko-san’s husband’s case is not common in Japanese society.

Life with Four Children

Although he seems to be a very good father, he actually dislikes children. His priority is his wife rather than children. Therefore, he prefers to stay at home while Akiko-san is playing with her children at the park. Her husband fixes lunch and dries the futons (Japanese sleeping pads). They are making up for each other
in a way, but they both do what they want and, and it works very well. Again, this is not a common example.

Akiko-san said that she worked in order to raise four children. Since she was reared with three other siblings, she wanted to have four children herself. She wants her own children to experience a merry and happy life with their brothers and sisters. She adhered to her dream of becoming a mother of four children. Yet, her husband made it clear if they were going to depend on only his income, he would not want to have more than two children, and Akiko-san really wanted to have four children, so she decided to keep working. She laughed, “I work not because I like what I am doing. I work because I wanted to have four children.” She said,

So, I think women, who first found a job they really wanted to do would face difficulties because taking maternity and childcare leave would be a disadvantage, which would affect their careers. If I were doing more responsible jobs, it would be impossible for me to take maternity leave so many times like I did, but I am doing what everybody can do.

There are two main kinds of working patterns for women in the Japanese work environment: career track and non-career track. What Akiko-san mentions above as responsible jobs is career track. Because women are expected to work as much as men do, including
transferring to different places, it was impossible for her to choose a career track with four children.

Hoikuen

Akiko-san's children go to the hoikuen, located three minutes walking distance away from home. It is very convenient for Akiko-san; she and her husband moved to the current place because of hoikuen. They used to live in Kanagawa prefecture, next to Tokyo, thirty minutes away, and there, she had a hard time with the hoikuen situation. She used a hoikuen fifteen minutes walking distance away from home for her first child and when she had her second child, fifteen minutes was too much for her. So, she and her husband decided to move.

This is a typical problem among working mothers. Since the open hours of hoikuen are limited, they either have to use another center if they cannot pick their children up from hoikuen, or try to finish up their work in order to make it before the hoikuen closes. This hoikuen situation is one of the biggest concerns among working mothers in Japan.
Trip to the United States with two-year-old Daughter

When Akiko-san was on her second maternity leave, she decided one thing. “I want to go traveling.” While she was working, she only took the day off when a child got sick or when her children needed preventive shots. She realized she could use the time during childcare leave for herself without hesitating. She told her husband and he said as long as she pays for herself, it was okay with him.

Since Akiko-san’s parents are self-employed, she asked her husband’s mother to take care of the baby and flew to the United States, where she visited once when she was a student, in order to see her old host family. It is worth mentioning that she asked her mother-in-law to take care of her newborn baby. Because in Japan, there has always been unspoken discord between the two, usually a daughter-in-law does not want to ask a mother-in-law for a favor. Thus, it was extraordinary in Akiko-san’s case, that she asked her in-laws to care for her new born baby and took off for the United States.

The experience she had as a mother made her change her way of thinking about things. The situation of a “car society” such as the United States is very different from Japan. Because everyone drives a car, there are huge and free parking lots everywhere. The fact that American people used cars for shopping with babies was different
from what she did with her own babies. Yet, her experience in the United States changed her life. She did not have a driver’s license and she always had trouble taking two babies to the store with a stroller. Now, she has a car, which carries four childseats. She drives that car everywhere even though there are still parking problems in Japan because of the limits of space.

She said, "I changed the way of thinking about things. I thought I should not think something is impossible before trying things. If we think something is impossible before trying, we don’t have to do it, but that’s it, that’s all. There would be no change for it." She analyzed her own situation as very lucky. She said, "Everything comes along eventually. Accidentally, I started working for my current company. And the company I work for has so many working mothers by chance. I think I am very lucky."

She talked about her experience, saying that staying at home with children made her feel like she was left alone in the home. Therefore, returning to work after childcare leave made it possible to walk by herself after dropping her children at hoikuen. She has an opinion toward mothers’ working:

If children used to be cared for at home [by own mothers] and then suddenly they could not be cared for at home, it would be a pity for children. It is strange, but if children grow up in a situation where
their parents are working, it is not a pity at all. For example, if people could hear sounds, and suddenly lose their hearing, they would know the sounds they cannot hear anymore. Those people are the most pitiful, I think. Therefore, if a mother starts as a stay-at-home mother, and later starts working, children will feel lonely.

She has a positive feeling about using hoikuen as well. Having professional teachers for her own children gave her relief. She said, “I had totally forgotten the merry feeling of walking alone.” She looked happy and filled with dreams. Even though she is very busy, she is doing what she really wants to, which is being a mother of four children.

CASE STUDY 2: KEIKO-SAN

Keiko-san, who is an architect, works in a male-centered traditional work environment. She has experienced various kinds of gender discriminations at her workplace. This would help exemplify the idea of difficulties that women still have to suffer from because of traditional ideas of women.
Work as a Woman

Keiko-san, a first-class registered architect, works for one of the biggest and most prestigious construction companies in Japan. She is a 34-year-old mother of a 2-year-old daughter, Mio-chan. She has been working for the same company for twelve years as an environment designer of buildings where men are prevalent historically. She said, "The construction industry has a traditional nature with many prejudices. In order for women to be in charge of responsibilities, they are required to make more of an effort, I think."

She told me the reality of working as a professional woman in this traditional working environment:

Not only when the people who work in the same section, but also when people from different sections, such as carpenters and others, see me first, the attitude toward me is different from that toward men. Therefore I have to break down the walls. I have to obtain the trust from those people, so that I have to try really hard and gradually they understand.

Keiko-san told me about some severe facts that women are facing in the traditional work environment:

Men can be assigned work or responsibilities even though they would not have to prove themselves to bosses, but if we, women do prove ourselves to them, they would say 'Why are you saying such a thing?', but
unless women prove themselves to bosses, women would never be assigned work for sure.

Keiko-san gave me two examples of words that other people said to her directly: “How come you are working even though you are a woman?” “If your husband is at home, you had better go home and take care of him.”

She said that when she was younger, she experienced harassment from men because she was a woman. She said, “But even if we care about those things, it does not help anything, so I just don’t trust those people, that is it.”

Maternity Leave and Childcare Leave

Until her daughter became one year old, she took maternity leave and childcare leave. There was not a problem of her returning to the same section because of company rules. She said, “Of course, there might be something to do with the atmosphere of the company, but in my case, I was not the first woman in this company to take maternity leave and childcare leave. There were many women who had taken leave, so it was easy for me to take it.”

Keiko-san brought up one of the serious issues here: “Also, the timing of when parents put children in hoikuen can be problematic. My daughter was born in April so that just a year later,
when she became a year old, we could place her in hoikuen, and so it was easy for us."

Since her work requires her to take a lot of time for overtime work on weekdays and extra work on weekends, she said that she was worried about returning to work after childcare leave. She said:

To tell the truth, even during the childcare leave, I was wondering if I should go back to work or not. There are so many unpleasant things with working, but I forgot about those things while I was off and I thought maybe staying at home only to take care of children would be boring, so I then returned. After I returned, I remembered things I had forgotten.

Cooperative Husband

Keiko-san and Nobuaki-san, a 34-year-old architect in the same company in a different section, have been married for eight years. There is a rule between Keiko-san and Nobuaki-san that they will do the overtime work every other day by turn. When they have overtime work, they work until 11:00 or 12:00 at night, and when they don't have overtime work, they go home around 6:00 o'clock p.m. Basically they have two day weekends but when it is busy, they must work weekends.

Keiko-san said, "The work I am doing is very hard and time
consuming; I sometimes ask myself 'Why I am doing this because I am not seeing my daughter."

Since Keiko-san and Nobuaki-san take turns for overtime, one of them comes home late every night on weekdays; they can hardly have time together. That is a concern for her in addition to raising her daughter.

Also, because of the traditional nature of the company, there are some people in different sections who say mean things to her indirectly, such as “How come she is doing so much work (even though she has a little child)?” Of course, there are some prejudices toward women, but there are prejudices toward men as well. Keiko-san said:

My husband is scolded by his boss because he works overtime half as much as other men do since we made a rule that we take turns. I do not think it is pity, but more like...people look at women and think there is no help for it. But when it comes to men, there is no pity. If there is a child at home, why does he have to go home early?...that kind of thing. Since my husband is a person who does not care about things too much, he says he just nods when he is scolded. I think that is another thing we have to think about.

Before having a child Keiko-san had a talk with Nobuaki-san about housework and they decided to divide the housework. Before they married, Nobuaki-san had ideas of gender based role division
because his mother was a stay-at-home mother. She said, “We are the same age, we both graduated from the same university and we work for the same company. Therefore, in his eyes, there was no reason to make difference between him and me, I guess.”

Nobuaki-san does all kinds of housework, such as cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, and childrearing. He wanted his wife to keep working because he did not want to get all of his wife’s attention if she became a stay-at-home mother. What he means here is if Keiko-san does not work and stays at home with Mio-chan, her concern will be focused on childrearing. When her own world is narrowed, her concern and interest will soon direct to him. Also, she said he did not want to be asked to do this and that. Moreover, Keiko-san thinks if she does not work, it will be difficult economically for them and he does not want that.

For Keiko-san, Nobuaki-san is something like “unmei kyoudoutai” meaning, cooperation of destiny. She said, “We are more like war-buddies.” “We can understand each other well, but at the same time, we are rivals.” It is often heard that Japanese men change after they marry. They start to expect their wife to take care of them. Of course, the situation has been changing but it is true that there is still an idea of gender based role division between men and women. Especially when a wife does not work outside the home,
the husband thinks this wife takes care of domestic work while he makes money outside. Therefore, even now, it is more typical to think that women serve men to some extent. Regarding this gender based role division, Keiko-san and Nobuaki-san are not a typical model of a Japanese couple.

Since they are doing the same kinds of work, they can talk about it at home; therefore they can understand each other very well.

Hoikuen

Keiko-san chose her daughter's hoikuen because it is located close to their house and the hoikuen has a system of encho hoiku, which means they stay open later, compared to the average open hours of other hoikuen, which close at 7:00 p.m.

Keiko-san and Nobuaki-san take turns taking their daughter to hoikuen and picking her up everyday. They live in Chuo-ku, in central Tokyo and it takes them about forty minutes to commute each way. Therefore even if they work till 6:00 p.m., they will make it in time to pick up their daughter. Her daughter already understands the fact that because her mother works outside of the home, she goes to hoikuen. Keiko-san said, “Of course, I think she must feel lonely, but she got used to the situation.”
She thinks that childrearing is something very interesting, and she feels sad and sorry for the fact that she is giving it up in a way because she is too busy and focusing on her work.

In terms of activities involving her daughter, there are no gatherings that include parents at the hoikuen, which she said is very lucky because they are too busy to take off for those activities.

In hoikuen, there are different kinds of outside activities that include parents such as sports festivals, recreation, and meetings for parents. It is regarded as very useful both for parents and teachers to get together to exchange information. However, at the same time, making time for participating in these activities is one of the difficulties for working mothers because, often, those activities take place on weekdays.

Her Own Mother

Keiko-san said that she always wondered when she watched her own mother being "sengyo shufu" (full-time housewife) and that is why she decided to work.

After my mother finished raising children, I think she was groping for a way out of her situation. I felt that way. She tried various things and just recently she finally found something she really wants to do. Also, when my friend’s parents divorced, her mother had to start working
and chose the work so to speak, water business [serving alcohol], and at that time, I thought it is not good and I started thinking about the importance of having a career for women.

Self

Of course, there is an economic reason that Keiko-san works, but at the same time, she wants to feel that she has been doing what she really wants to in life. She said, “I am doing what I like, but I don't think I did all of what I wanted to and I could do. That is why I am still working.”

In a situation in which she would not have to work outside the home to provide extra income, she would not quit working but change the style in which she works. Since working full time is very hard and it gives her certain limitations with childrearing, she wants to work part time. She said that she has reservations about “sengyo shufu,” and she does not want to be a full-time housewife. She said:

In my interpretation, I think sengyo shufu is a virtual image that men created in order to support the rapid economic growth era and I don’t want to be on the wave of it. It is easier when I stayed at home and experienced it while I was on my maternity leave, but I really don't want to be a housewife. I want to be different.
Keiko-san thinks that both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers are trying to put each other down by complaining about each other's situation. “Women should respect each other in order to change the current situation.”

Personally she is thinking about opening her private office in the future because there are limitations at big corporations, such as at the one where she is employed. However, she really likes what she is doing, therefore she wants to continue working at her own pace.

CASE STUDY 3: MIKA-SAN

Mika-san was chosen because she works for the biggest telecommunications company that is well known as a company that has a supportive environment for female workers, especially married women. Since she originally had an idea of quitting work when she married and it changed, this could be a good reference to understand the importance of the supportive environment for working mothers.

Supportive Environment of the Company

Mika-san is a 30-year-old OL (office lady) at the biggest telecommunications company in the Ikebukuro (Tokyo) branch. She
is a mother of a 3-year-old daughter, Reina-chan. She lives in Saitama prefecture, which is located about an hour away from Tokyo. People refer to it as a bedroom community because people who work for a company in Tokyo live there only to sleep.

Mika-san has been working for seven years at the same company after she graduated from one of the private universities in Tokyo. Every day, she spends an hour each way for her commute, and she works five days a week with weekends off. Her husband also works for the same company that she works for, the same branch but in a different building.

The company Mika-san works for is well known as the most supportive and comfortable workplace for women, especially for married women. The reason is because the company recommends and welcomes women to take maternity leave and childcare leave without any questions. Originally, Mika-san had the idea of quitting her job after getting married, rather than quitting her job after having children. However, the company she entered had a different environment compared to other companies.

My company never asks women if they would quit working when women marry. People in my company think it is natural to keep working after marriage, same as with childbirth. Even after childbirth, it is natural to keep working. There is such a supportive atmosphere. Also, my mother-in-law was a working mother and my
husband was a person who had the idea that women had better work and he wanted me to work, therefore, I decided not to quit.

Her company has a high returning rate among married women after childbirth. She said, “Almost one-hundred percent!” Choosing to work after childbirth is a natural thing for women because they have the right to continue their career, but it is very difficult to accomplish in the contemporary Japanese work environment. Mika-san said, “I heard that there is one woman who is on her third or fourth maternity leave now and she has not showed up for almost ten years because she gets pregnant continuously, but still my company would welcome her.”

After the amendment of the EEOL, most companies try hard to change their way of treating women because they cannot break the law. However the atmosphere of the workplace, and also people’s fixed ideas, cannot be changed easily even by an amendment of the law. There are many women who are still struggling with these fixed ideas, but in Mika-san’s case, it is not a problem at all.

Mother’s Influence

Mika-san lives very close to her parents. Currently her mother lives by herself in Saitama prefecture while her father works as a
university professor in Hiroshima prefecture, which is about five to six hours away by bullet train from Tokyo. Her mother has been a stay-at-home mother for her entire married life. Mika-san's mother spends half of her time at her father's place in Hiroshima, or traveling around so that she does not stay home almost half of a month. According to Mika-san, her mother is very active and energetic as well as conservative enough to complete all of the domestic work under her husband's control. She said:

I always watched my mother doing almost all of the housework. She completed it perfectly, so I always thought that housework was something I would do after marriage and I did not have any question about it. So, I did not think that I would ask my husband to do it.

While we were chatting after the interview, she talked about her mother a lot and told me how she respects her mother. Her father is a typical "traditional Japanese father." Therefore, she knew that her mother had a hard time being with him sometimes. However, as I already mentioned, now her mother enjoys her own life traveling around, spending her own time for what she wants to do, and also taking care of her granddaughter, Reina-chan. Mika-san also said her mother is very supportive of her work, and always tries to make the situation better for her in order to help her keep
working. She said, “I sometimes ask my mother, ‘What did you do when I was little?’” Her mother is also a very good advisor for her.

**Hoikuen**

Reina-chan goes to a *hoikuen* in the community. When Mika-san talked about priorities when she decided on her daughter’s *hoikuen*, she said, “First, we took into consideration if the *hoikuen* is close to my house or not. And second, the reputations of the community people were important for us.”

Mika-san’s mother usually takes Reina-chan and picks her up every day when she is available. When her mother is away, Mika-san is responsible for picking her up, not her husband. The *hoikuen* Reina-chan goes to is located between her own house and her parents’ house, about two or three minutes from each of the houses, which is a very convenient location for both Mika-san and her mother.

Sometimes, the *hoikuen* has gatherings and activities that include parents. Mika-san said there are no gatherings or activities for parents on weekdays so that they don’t have to take off work. Almost all of the activities, either she or both she and her husband attend when it comes to big events such as sports festivals.
Reina-chan

Mika-san said that all of Reina-chan's friends' mothers work outside the home, so Reina-chan does not feel strange about her mother working outside the home. She said, "As I see with Reina, I think children who go to hoikuen are better at making new friends. They experience various things at hoikuen, things I cannot do for her if I was taking care of her by myself. I think that is a very good thing for her."

Mika-san said that even if Reina-chan becomes a little older and asks her to stay home, she would keep working after she had a talk with Reina-chan about the family situation to help her understand. Of course, if there is a problem with Reina-chan and the only solution would be for her to stay home, she would quit and stay at home with her.

Self

Mika-san sometimes has opportunities to drink outside with her friends after work. I think she is very good at switching mentally between mother and working woman. Mika-san said, "I will be lazy if I stay at home. Because I am working outside the home, I want to be prettier, I want to wear nice clothes, and I want to polish myself."
Working puts me in that environment that makes me think about doing that."

She has a strong will that she would like to continue her work as long as she can because she wants to be responsible for what she does. Therefore she is very affirmative about working mothers. The more she devotes herself to what she does, the more she has an objection towards mothers who put their children into hoikuen only because they don't want to be with their children. She is a person who is proud of being a working mother.

If she has some problems concerning childrearing, she asks her "mother friends" whom she met at Reina-chan's daycare center, or talks to her senior co-workers. Talking to those people helps get rid of her stress. She seems to know how to survive in her current situation. She added, "I want to be busy; I want to make myself busy always. I want to devote myself to something. I cannot just stay at home, I always want to be pressed for time and do many kinds of things." I got the impression that Mika-san wants to be like her own mother who always has so much energy for challenging new things that keep her busy.

Lastly, here are some phrases she used that are humorous. After she gave the ratio of 9:1=Mika-san: Yuji-san (her husband), which refers to the responsibilities of housework, she said, "It is
much faster if I do housework than my husband, and more, I don't want him to do it.” When asked why, she said, “Hmm... for some reason, it's not working. Even if he does something, I don't like the way he does it and I have to re-do it anyway.”

CASE STUDY 4: FUMIKO-SAN

Fumiko-san who works as a nurse was chosen because she clearly said that she would keep working even if the work were unpaid. Therefore, for her, working as a nurse means a lot more than just her career for supporting household income.

Working as a Nurse

27-year-old, Fumiko-san is the mother of Hirofumi-kun, one-year old. She is a nurse at a general hospital in Tokyo and works for outpatients. She has been working at the hospital for almost five years including three months of maternity leave and four months of childcare leave. Now she works only during the day from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Before she took maternity leave, she worked night shifts in the ward as well.

As I put my son in the hoikuen, I had to adjust the length of my childcare leave, but there was not any explanation about it beforehand. I was going to apply to shorten my childcare leave and come back to work
earlier. When I applied for returning, I had to fill in the exact date when I would return... but I was not sure if I could get the permission from the hoikuen... because usually the hoikuen announces acceptance at the last minute... Then people said that once I put the date, I couldn't change it anymore. I asked the person at the office, 'If I could not put my child in the hoikuen by this date, what should I do?”, and she said, "You have to manage it somehow." That was all I got as an answer. And then, she added. "We will make you work from this date!" "We will make you work and you will manage your child's situation by yourself."

Since her son, Hirofumi-kun was born in September, she had to put him in a hoikuen the next April, because he could not enter in that September. Luckily, she could place him in the hoikuen in the next April; she did not have to suffer from any trouble about paper work between herself and the hospital. She said:

People who worked with me really cared about me when I was pregnant. They really cared for me, but they really could not. Do you understand what I am saying? People really cared about me but I felt like I should not bother them (because they were also very busy with their own work for other patients).

Working as a nurse is already very hard because of the long work hours and harsh work environment. It brings nurses a great amount of stress, even without having children.

However, Fumiko-san wanted to keep working. About her work, her husband, Yoshimasa-san, a 26-year-old police officer did
not say anything. However, she requested to change her section and switched to her current section so she does not have to work at night. The work she is doing is not the same as what she did when she worked at the ward. Therefore, she does not have to feel pressured as much as she felt before. She said the only thing she thinks about after work is just being tired.

**Hoikuen**

Fumiko-san chose the *hoikuen* where Hirofumi-kun goes because it is close to her house and also close to her parents' house. She asks her parents to take him and pick him up.

I put my son in a public *hoikuen*, but I heard from other people about a non-approved *hoikuen*. Their cost is almost the same as what we are paying, but there, children can go swimming outside the *hoikuen* even though they might charge more for doing those activities. They sometimes do what the wards' limits do not allow and it seems very interesting for children. I thought we had better think more.

Yet, she does not have any plans to change the *hoikuen* for Hirofumi-kun. "He got used to the teachers at the *hoikuen* where he goes now, so...." It is very important for children to have a warm environment and a good relationship with teachers (*hobo*). Therefore, she is satisfied with the current *hoikuen* situation of
Hirofumi-kun.

By appointment, mothers can have opportunities to talk to the teachers at the *hoikuen*. She used that opportunity once and took a day off for it. It was a good opportunity for her to get to talk to the teachers at the *hoikuen*. Establishing a trustful relationship with teachers is one of the most important factors for keeping a good environment for children as well as working mothers.

Husband

Yoshimasa-san works an irregular shift, and even for daytime work, he does not come back until 8:00 p.m, so he does not have time to do housework on a regular basis. Even if he stays at home when he is off work, he does not help Fumiko-san unless she complains about it. She said, “When it is his day off, he watches our son, but it is different from ‘women’s childrearing’, and it is one third of what women do. He may think being with a child means childrearing, I think.”

Since Yoshimasa-san was too busy with his work, Hirofumi-kun did not remember his father’s face at first. According to Fumiko-san, Yoshimasa-san did not have any idea about how to deal with a baby in the beginning. This is a typical example of a
father-baby relationship. Especially when a father is extremely busy with his work, it is very hard to make time for children.

Support from Parents

Even when Fumiko-san cannot come home because of occasional overtime work, she does not have to worry because her parents watch Hirofumi-kun. She said, "If I have to work until very late and come home late, my parents would feed him and give him a bath before I come home." Because of her parents' support, her pressure and stress from handling multiple roles are small enough to control by herself.

As a Working Mother

In case of emergency, it is sometimes really hard for Fumiko-san to take off. For example, when Hirofumi-kun was delirious with fever, a teacher at hoikuen called her at the hospital, but she asked the hoikuen to watch him until she could leave work in the early afternoon when the hospital takes a break.

When asked about the reaction from other people who work with her at the hospital to the fact that she had to go home early, Fumiko-san said,
Doctors usually said, "That's too bad, you should go home," but other co-workers have no facial expression and seemed like, "oh...", and they would not say, "You had better hurry." The chief nurse, a middle-aged single woman, usually said, "No, way" or "Again?", that kind of thing.

Usually people think what keeps working mothers from having a supportive work environment comes from the ironic comments made by male workers or bosses. However, especially in a workplace where many women work together, sometimes women have severe and intense non-supportive relationships because of their marital status. For example, as in Fumiko-san's case, when a woman in a high position was single and had no children, she did not cooperate and sympathize those mothers struggling with handling multiple roles.

On the other hand, she talked about how being apart from her own son makes it possible for her to see him objectively.

Speaking in the extreme, we often hear about mothers' gyakuitai (hurting). I think when people say that stress comes from childrearing, some people might wonder why, but I think the reason is because mothers cannot have their own pace because of their children. People will have stress whenever adjusting to other people's pace, I think. And children think that they are the best and they think others will adjust everything for them and it is too much for mothers sometimes. When I was on my maternity leave, I thought that way, like, "again?" and tried not to watch him, or just let things go. Yet, now, I
am not with him always so that I can catch the difference from his face, and wonder “what happened at hoikuen today?” or something like that. I think now I can touch him directly, so to speak, from the bottom of my heart, I can touch him.

Because she experienced the life of staying at home with her son the whole day during her maternity and childcare leave, she realized how hard it is for her to be a stay-at-home mother. She analyzed herself having been too stressed because she could not keep her own pace and time. She could not stand her son crying all the time. However, working outside makes it possible for her to make quality time with Hirofumi-kun. She can now cherish her son much better than before she returned to work.

Before she became a mother, she thought that a working mother might neglect their children and those children are to be pitied. Yet, now as one of the working mothers, Fumiko-san thinks that she is not inferior to mothers who stay at home and spend all day with their children at home. She manages both her time and her mind well.
Self

Fumiko-san is almost ninety percent satisfied with her current situation. She wanted to be a nurse and made her dream come true. She talked about herself like this:

Not inside the home, but outside of the home, I cannot express myself unless I am being a nurse. If I quit this job as nurse, I would lose my confidence for going out. I am not a person who is sociable. I am shy of strangers. If I see strangers, I cannot go into those strangers' group voluntarily. But if I see people as a nurse, I am different, and I can talk to them. That is why I think that I have to be a nurse.

Even if Fumiko-san does not have to work, she wants to work. Even if the work is unpaid, she wants to work. Of course if she works she would get money and it will help her daily life economically. Yet, money is not what she pursues, she is obtaining something more valuable for herself as "self."

She analyzes herself with a laugh, as having been too nice to everybody without saying "no," but she can say "no" now and she sees herself as stronger than before.

Moreover, now she dreams of improving her situation. She is trying to be a public health nurse in the community, or to become a teacher of health education at an elementary school. After Hirofumi-kun enters elementary school, she wants to start studying and get
certification for her public health goals. She is full of drive. She is very energetic even though she seems very quiet. She has her own dreams as a woman, not only as a mother and I think it is possible for her to make it happen because she is doing what she really wants, what she really likes in order to be "herself."

In the past, a mother tended to be seen as someone losing her own identity. Since a Japanese mother has been expected to devote herself to becoming a good wife and wise mother, there has been less emphasis on "self" as a person and as a woman. Japanese mothers now tend to pursue their own lives as women, not just as accessories of husbands and caregivers of children and seniors.

CASE STUDY 5: SAORI-SAN

Saori-san works for her father's self-employed company. She also lived with her own family (later she moved to a new place but close to her parents' house). Therefore we could investigate the significance of living with (or close to) family and how it affects working mothers' mental stabilities.

Living with Her Own Family

Saori-san, a 26-year-old mother, works at her father's self-owned company. When this interview was done, she lived with her
own family in Chiba prefecture, located thirty minutes away from central Tokyo. Saori-san and her husband, Takahiro-san, 28, were waiting for a new place to be built and later, they moved to the new place. Since Saori-san lived with her family, she could get support in many ways from her mother and her siblings. Her mother usually takes care of her 10-month-old son, Kentaro-kun, while she works outside the home during the day. Saori-san did not have to cook meals because her mother does it for whole family at the same time. So far, she did not have any problem with childrearing because she has her mother around and usually talking to her mother solves her problems. Also, living with her family helps her to refresh her mind because she has a big family, including two sisters and a brother. Just talking to her family helps her to refresh her mind.

After moving to the new place, they live about ten minutes away from where Saori-san's parents' house is located; therefore she analyzed herself as being very lucky. When she has some problems, she can easily rely on her family.

Work

Since Saori-san's father is in charge of the company, everything was very flexible for her such as taking maternity leave and childcare leave. She took about a total of a year break from work.
Saori-san's husband also works for the same company. Therefore, she has a very supportive work environment.

She usually works five days a week and has two-day weekends. She works about 8.5 hours a day on average including lunch time. It makes it easy for her to manage her roles because her work does not require so much overtime.

Saori-san said she wanted to work even if she does not have to. She said, "I do not mean that I want to make money but I want to have touch with people, get out of the home and always expose myself to outside information." Working outside makes it possible for her to make sure she lives her own life.

Switching Mentally

Saori-san added that she is very satisfied with her current situation because she goes to work where people need her and she also tries very hard to take care of her son as mush as possible. She said, "If we stay with children all the time, we will be stressed out because they would not listen to what we say...but I am spending less time with my son and it helps me to change my way of looking at him because I always try to see what is good in him." She switches her mind as well as her roles between work and family very well.
However, she said that she usually does not think of herself as being a mother or being somebody's wife. She does what she wants to and needs to, but she does not do anything consciously. She is just being natural. She laughed and said, "When people see me as a wife and mother, I start to think and to be conscious of the fact that I am a wife and mother now, but usually I am not thinking that way."

Saori-san brought up one of the serious issues:

People who live far away from their parents, or people who don't have facilities to place their children, I think it is very necessary to increase the facilities where we can place our children without any worries. In terms of time, a place that is open twenty-four hours should be ready for those mothers. In my case, I am not working for money now, but there are many people who work because they need money in order to make their own living. For those people, I think it is very important to consider the places where parents can put their children.

In Japan, people used to live with extended family, therefore a mother could have support from her own family or her in-laws. However, now people live with their nuclear family and often times, they live far away from their parents or even from their hometown.

As Saori-san mentioned, her situation can be considered as very lucky because it makes it possible for her to manage her life as a working mother. However, there are so many people who cannot
get support from their relatives, and it is very hard for those people to handle both working and raising children without support from government.

Contemporary Japanese situation

Saori-san also mentioned about one serious issue while we were chatting after this interview:

I saw a TV program the other day and it showed the session of the Diet, members of the Diet were discussing about the issue of daycare system, about the increase of the number of the daycares, which support working mothers. But I heard one of the members, who was old and arrogant say, ‘There is no need for such a new system because mothers should just stay at home to take care of their children and they don’t have to work outside the home so that we don’t have to consider about increasing daycare centers,’ something like that. I was so surprised at his saying such a thing but I think it showed the contemporary Japanese situation. It is just immature.

I agree with her because this country still has to grow in terms of understanding the importance of women’s socialization. Changing people’s fixed ideas is very difficult but necessary to improve women’s work environment.
Own Dream

Lastly, she talked about her dream of moving to Okinawa, which is the southern part of Japan where her grandmother lives. She really likes Okinawa, and she wants to build her own house there to show her son how great it is to live in Okinawa. She said, "I am working and saving money because of my dream of building a house in Okinawa."

She enjoys her own life. She seems to be filled with energy. Her dream must give her so much vitality. For her, working outside the home is an important step to making her dream come true.

CASE STUDY 6: CHIKAKO-SAN

Chikako-san is an assistant professor at one of the national universities. She has a clear and strong idea that women should have their own career. Since we have a fixed idea of a national university as stable and supportive workplace, we could observe an employment situation of which people are jealous. Also, she is the only one who mentioned using a baby sitter as an alternative. Therefore, we would be able to obtain an interesting perspective.

Chikako-san, a 38-year-old mother, who works as an assistant professor at one of the national universities in Chiba
prefecture, about ninety minutes away from Tokyo. She is a mother of a ten-month-old daughter, and now on her childcare leave.

Childcare Leave

Usually people have a stereotype toward teachers, in her case professors, which is that they can obtain plenty of time off since they work for public schools or national universities. However, according to her, taking childcare leave was difficult since there were no other women who took childcare leave before in her university. Chikako-san said:

Taking childcare leave is difficult. Especially, because the university where I work did not have this precedent before. I think my university is behind as a national university. There was a woman who took maternity leave in a different school but she struggled against the traditional system and became the first woman ever who took it. It means there was no woman who took maternity leave. I think in terms of the system, national universities are behind.

However, it does not mean that people who work for the universities do not know about the laws which support women. Even after the amendment of the law, which allows women to take a certain amount of time off, there was no woman did so. She analyzed that it implies how hard it is to take childcare leave. She
added that there is an atmosphere that a man using childcare leave, which is supported by law, is not welcome.

Her Husband

Chikako-san's husband, 38-year-old businessman Koki-san, is very supportive and understands her desire to pursue her own career. Therefore, in terms of childrearing and housework, he is very supportive even though he can spend only a small amount of time with his daughter since he comes home very late on weekdays. Koki-san is already started to train himself to get used to handling housework. After Chikako-san's return to work, he also has to have responsibility as well for housework. Chikako-san and Koki-san communicate very well. She said that when she has some problems or troubles with childrearing, she always talks to Koki-san and usually she solves them. She is the only one who clearly said that talking with her husband is a frequent way of solving childcare problems.

Using Babysitter and Hoikuen

Chikako-san thinks that she will use a babysitter for the first year after she returns to work. She obtained the information about babysitters from people who currently use babysitters. However,
using a babysitter is not common in Japanese society. Therefore I was interested in the reason for her decision and asked the reason. She said:

Children do not have strong constitutions. Even if we place my daughter in hoikuen, she will come back with some kinds of sicknesses. Many of the mothers who use hoikuen for their children told me that one of the parents has to take off about half of a week because children always get sick because of the hoikuen environment. I think it will be a big stress. I think for both parents and children, the stress will be big. So, until my daughter gains physical strength, maybe for a year, we will use a babysitter for our daughter.

She added that she would place her daughter in hoikuen after a year of using a babysitter. However, Chikako-san said that there is no hoikuen in her neighborhood so Chikako-san and Koki-san are considering, if they win the lottery for entrance permission, that they will place their daughter in a public hoikuen no matter where the hoikuen is. However, if they cannot win, they will place her in a private hoikuen because there is no other alternative for them.

Also, she added, after they place their daughter in a hoikuen, if their daughter gets sick, they will use byouji babysitter, an emergency babysitter. Therefore, she said they will have to give up the salary that one of the parents makes for paying those childcare
expenses. She said, "I know it costs a lot, but it will not last that long, maybe two or three years."

As a Working Mother

Chikako-san clearly said that she would not give up her career even if her daughter wants her to stay at home after she becomes a little bit older. For her, working outside is a natural thing and there is no special reason for it. She said, "It is the same as the reason why men work. I cannot imagine my own life without my career." She said she would raise her daughter to help her think that it is a natural thing for women to work outside the home.

Being a Precedent

Chikako-san said, "I am already fighting in the situation of being a precedent. I have to take leave for my fellow female workers, otherwise they will have difficulties taking leave."

She also mentioned that compared to other companies, it is easy for women to take leaves because professor positions will not go away and they can come back to the same position where they used to work. At the same time, they have to confront and overcome a great amount of pressure from co-workers.
She has a clear vision and desire to be a full professor in the future. However, the traditional system of “nenko-joretsu”, seniority system, prevents her promotion. She said that it is not a matter of gender, but the seniority system that is the obstacle. Therefore, even if someone has the qualifications to become a full professor, he/she cannot obtain the promotion easily. Chikako-san has to struggle with an additional level of Japanese tradition, the seniority system. Lastly she said, “I know everybody is fighting now in order to pursue their careers and they are trying really hard. So, I don't want to be a bad example and also, I don't want to be behind them.”

CASE STUDY 7: YUKA-SAN

Yuka-san is very satisfied with her current situation as being a stay-at-home mother although she originally took maternity leave and childcare leave. Since she could not place her son in hoikuen before she returned to work, she had to quit her job. It is a good example of difficulties young working mothers have in terms of placing their children in a hoikuen situation.
Taking Maternity Leave and Childcare Leave

Yuka-san is the 27-year-old full time mother of Tsubasa-kun, her 3-year-old son. She married when she was 23 years old and soon after had a baby. She worked for a construction company in Tokyo, working in the accounting section for two years. Yuka-san took a total of a year off including maternity leave and childcare leave. “I was thinking about returning, I meant it. That's why I took maternity leave.”

Her husband, Yuji-san, a 27-year-old salesman, did not say anything about her decision of returning after childcare leave, but privately, he wanted Yuka-san to stay at home to take care of their future child. She said:

I think the company I worked for was very good, there wasn't much overtime, they allowed us to have two-day weekends, and I simply thought it would be waste of opportunity for me if I quit. I also thought I would never get such a nice working environment at another company if I quit that company, so I wanted to return.

The company she worked for had few female workers; therefore she became the first woman to take maternity leave. She said, “They seemed a little confused because they had never dealt with those issues before, but it is our right to take off, and they
said, 'We will be waiting for you after a year.' Since it is provided in company regulations, they let me take it."

Problem with Entering a Hoikuen

Yuka-san never returned to work. To be more accurate, she could not return. It does not mean she changed her mind after a year nor her company made her quit after all, but she had trouble with finding a hoikuen for her son.

In Japan, there is a strict deadline for entering public daycare centers. One deadline is in April, and the other is in September (in some places), and if parents cannot put their children in during this period, they have to wait until the next year. She said, "We tried, but we could not get permission for my son because there were so many parents who applied for that daycare center. Therefore we did not have any other place to ask for my son, and I had to give up my work."

One question came to mind, what did her company say about it? She answered, "At first, they seemed like, 'We gave you a certain amount of time off because we thought you would come back...’ kind of attitude, but then they understood and proceeded with the paper work for me."
Luckily, the next spring in April, she was able to put Tsubasa-kun in one of the yochien (kindergartens) in their neighborhood. She said, “We got selected by a lottery (because there were so many people who wanted to put their children there).”

This is a problem most working mothers suffer from, when trying to put their children in a hoikuen. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are many children called taikijidou, who want to enter the hoikuen but must wait in Japanese society, and it is the biggest worry for working mothers who don’t have any other choice, such as relatives or neighbors who would take care of their children while they are at work during the day.

Support From Family

Until Tsubasa-kun became three months old, Yuka-san and Yuji-san lived with Yuka-san’s parents at her parents’ house, ten minutes away from where they live now. Therefore she did not have any pressure with completing housework and usually her mother, who has been stay-at-home mother, did it for Yuka-san and her husband.

Now, Yuka-san does most of the housework on weekdays because Yuji-san comes home very late every night, around ten or
eleven, so he does not have time. Therefore, on weekdays he has no
time to play with Tsubasa-kun either.

It does not mean Yuji-san is not supportive or that he does
not help her at all. He helps Tsubasa-kun eat when he is around,
which is mostly weekends. He takes Tsubasa-kun to the park on
weekends. He cooks meals on weekends and so on. She said, “I
think he is very supportive about both childrearing and housework.”

When Yuka-san has worries or troubles, she asks her mother
and it helps her a lot. She also talks to other mothers whom she
met at the park in the neighborhood; mothers of other children have
now become her own friends. This is how she solves most of her
problems about childrearing.

Self

Overall, Yuka-san was very satisfied with her current
situation. At the time of the interview, she was in the fifth month of
pregnancy (due in May 2001), so she will be a mother of two
children in the near future. She said that she does not want to go
back to work so she can spend time with her children as much as
possible while they are little.

Of course, being a wife and being a mother is important
to me, but I really think if I thought that I lived for my
children or for my husband, I would be in trouble in the future. I want to have my own time for something I like, such as hobbies, and have time to hang out with my own friends as well. I know it is very hard to complete everything perfectly but I want to cherish my family and later when my children become a little older, I would like to gradually start doing something I like as well.

However, now, she is trying to get ready for being a mother of two children. The urgent concern for her is the new baby and Tsubasa-kun.

After I have one more baby, I will be very irritated and get stressed, but I will try not to make them feel it because children are very sensitive about our feelings. Also, for children, the parents' good relationship is the most important thing, I think. If I argue with my husband, my son immediately notices and feels the difference. Therefore I always want to keep a good relationship with my husband and try to manage childrearing well.

Lastly, she told me that she admires those working mothers who manage working and childrearing, but at the same time, she cares about those children whose mothers work outside, "I really want those working mothers to spend their time for their children as much as they can because they cannot have the same amount of time as we, stay-at-home mothers do." She seemed very satisfied with the fact she is a mother who stays at home and spends her time with her dearest son.
After this interview, I went with Yuka-san to her parents’ house to get Tsubasa-kun (since she had the interview that day, Yuka-san asked her mother to pick Tsubasa-kun up from *yochien* [kindergarten] in the early afternoon, and he stayed at his grandparents’ home till early evening). As soon as he saw his mother, he started talking about what happened at *yochien* that day. It was a lovely sight and I cannot forget the smile of Tsubasa-kun after he kissed Yuka-san. I thought she would not give up her occupation as “mother” for the time being.

CASE STUDY 8: HIROKO-SAN

Hiroko-san is a stay-at-home mother who wants to live with her own parents. She brought up the issue of the difficulty of living in a nuclear family. She also brought up the issue of the support from government and the difficulty of maternity and childcare leave system that women are still facing.

Hiroko-san, a 28-year-old stay-at-home mother, who worked as an OL at Narita airport in the freight section for four years, has a seven-month-old son, Takuma-kun. She lives in Chiba prefecture, about two hours away from central Tokyo.
Living in a nuclear family

Hiroko-san lives very close to her own parents. Therefore, it is easy for her to come and go. However, it is different from living together with them. Hiroko-san talked about her current situation:

I think living in a nuclear family is hard. It is not that I am talking about childrearing. I think my son seems lonely. My son and I spend almost 24 hours a day alone. If his grandparents were around us, even if they didn't take care of him, their existence itself would make me feel easy and it would be a good influence for my son as well.

In her case, her husband married into her family's (muko), and also her parents' house is very close to where Hiroko-san lives now. Therefore, if they are going to live with parents, it will be her parents. What she implied here was what we often hear about trouble between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, but she does not have to worry about it. Hiroko-san added:

To tell the truth, right now, I am not talking about the housework or my career or anything but I feel lonely, so I think living with parents would be better for us. Almost twenty-four hours a day, there are only the two of us. But I think there are many families like ours. I think it is not good, the contemporary Japanese situation. I know we cannot do anything about it in a way, but I think not living in a nuclear family is better for both parents and children, and moreover for grandparents.
Raising the Child

Hiroko-san is satisfied with her current situation of being a stay-at-home mother. When she has some problem with childrearing, she can ask her mother who lives close to her. She told me about the charm of childrearing as being a benefit for a stay-at-home mother:

Children grow up day by day. Obviously, each day is different and I want to be with my son even though I know it is hard. Until my son enters youchien, or maybe elementary school, I want to be at home. When my son comes home, I want to be at home for him. So, I want to work outside the home, but while my son is little, I would rather spend time with my son.

She wants to have two more children. Therefore, she wants to stay at home until the third child enters elementary school. She talked about her idea about working mothers:

To tell the truth, when I see mothers who start working even before their children become a year old, I feel sorry for their children. Because those mothers cannot be with their children when their children are the most adorable, I think those mothers are also to be pitied.

Work

Hiroko-san has an idea of returning to work. Since she quit her previous work before she gave birth because of the difficulty of
overtime work, she has to find a new job. She said, “When I see people who are officials, or people who take maternity leave and return to work, I kind of envy them because they have a place that they can return after their leave.” She added:

For those officials, who take maternity leave, the work environment is completed, and they must be blessed with their work situation. I think it is a smart choice for them to engage in those jobs. Especially now, when there are few jobs available, like for me, if people quit their full time work and try to find another job, it is a very difficult thing to do.

Truly, it is very difficult for anyone who wants to get a job in contemporary Japanese society. Especially mothers who have young children tend to be kept at a distance from the companies. She is really concerned about this situation. Hiroko-san added, “Like in other countries, if the work environments were improved and both mothers and fathers could have time for their children without any question, it would be the best I think.”

Future plan

She wants to have her own career in the near future. She said, “The time I am going to spend for myself will be much longer than the time I spent for working after I graduated. Therefore, I
really think that I need to do something. So, I don't want to do anything with a luke-warm attitude no matter what I do.”

She is considering her future job right now. She started to think about getting certification of clearing customs. She used to work at a freight section and thought it was not the job that she could continue for her entire career life. However, at the same time, she knows that once she got the certification, she would not have to worry about getting a job anymore, since the need for those people who have the certification is still great. However, she is still struggling with this idea because she knows that she will not have a problem with obtaining a position as a professional career person if she has that certification, but at the same time, she knows working full time at the section is hard in terms of time. Since her own mother taught piano for students at home, she saw many students come into her house. Her mother taught fifty students a week at the busiest time, and she thinks it is good to have such a job at home. She laughed and said, “I cannot start a new business, so I have to go out to work.”

The reasons she wants to go out to have her own career is to keep herself attractive, and always expose herself to the world. She said, “I always want to be a woman.” She is trying to figure out her own way to be satisfied with her own life as a woman.
Gathering with friends

On the day I interviewed her, I visited one of Hiroko-san’s friend’s house because there was a customary gathering of young mothers. There were five mothers including a mother who is on childcare leave and a working mother. The purposes of the gatherings are talking about their daily lives and exchanging information about childrearing. However, the main reason is getting rid of their stress and worries of childrearing by sharing their problems with other mothers who are in the same situation.

Some of them have known each other since high school, but most of them met at the periodic health examination for pregnant women. Therefore, it seemed to me, they were war-buddies. I could understand how important it is for those mothers to have these kinds of friends. It must have made their whole life as mothers different.

CASE STUDY 9: MASAKO-SAN

Masako-san now enjoys childrearing as a stay-at-home mother. She says she is also growing up by raising her son. She originally supported the idea of mothers’ working even though she experienced the loneliness of being raised by a working mother
when she was little. Now, she questions the social systems that support working mothers. Her example is a good reference of stay-at-home mothers who want to return to workplace but cannot because of the lack of the support from government.

Masako-san is a 33-year-old, mother of a two-year-old son, Atsushi-kun. Masako-san and her husband, Makoto-san, 36 years old, live in Saitama prefecture, which is located about an hour from Tokyo.

Previous work

She worked at an optical company for about ten years and before she gave birth, she quit her job. She said that she did not have any question about quitting her job when she got pregnant because she had never heard of other women who took maternity leave and childcare leave. She even said, “The company I worked for might not have those systems. Maybe nobody has taken it. People quit when they give birth and then return, I think. Or, maybe I just don’t know about it.”

Her husband, Makoto-san works for the same company at which Masako-san used to work, He is very busy with his work as an assistant shop manager, and usually works for about ten hours a day on average. Therefore, he cannot make time to do housework
or even take care of Atsushi-kun. She said, "He does not come home until ten-thirty or so, and even if I want him to help me, he just does not have time. Even if it is his day off, he stays in bed because he is so tired."

Childrearing

Masako-san did have an idea of returning to work as a part-timer, but now, she is not thinking about it. Referring to her son's current development, she said, "It is the most interesting period for me to take care of my son, I think." She is satisfied with her current situation of being a stay-at-home mother. Masako-san said, "I think I enjoy my situation now, which is not working outside the home and staying at home with my child. Men work outside the home, and they cannot experience this feeling, so I think I am lucky in a way."

However, she said, "The only problem I have now is the stress from childrearing...yeah, that is it." She analyzed herself as being stressed because she just stays at home with her son. By watching him, she said that she is watching herself again. She said, "When we are raising a child, we can recognize the bad points inside of ourselves. All of the negative parts inside of myself makes me feel so bad. Therefore, I think I am raising my child and at the same time, I
am growing up with him.” She said that she did not have time to think of herself when she was working because she was too busy to have time. Her priority was work, and family (while she did not have a child), and that was it.

Masako-san sometimes visits her own parents in Chiba prefecture, an hour away from Tokyo, so she can rejuvenate herself. She usually spends about a week hanging out with her friends when her mother can watch Atsushi-kun.

When she has some problem with childrearing, she usually reads books, which are written about childrearing, how-to books, or she talks to her friends whom she met at the lecture classes for mothers, or she talks to her mother. She said, “If we had grandmothers around us like we used to have when we were little, it would be much easier for mothers to take care of children, but nowadays, living with grandparents is not as common as it used to be.” As Masako-san mentioned, in contemporary Japanese society, most young couple do not live with their parents. Therefore, especially mothers who do not work outside the home have to spend most of their time with their little children and obviously they cannot have time alone.

Masako-san said that as she raises her child she also “raises herself.” That is, as her child grows, so does she. She used the term
“ikuji” and said that it usually means, “raising child.” She pointed out that “ikuji” (pronounced the same, but written differently in Japanese) can also mean “raising self.”

Her own mother

Masako-san’s mother works as a nurse; therefore she had the experience of being lonely at home after school. However, she did not think it was wrong or bad. She developed her basic idea of women’s working when she was little. She did not have any objection with her mother’s working.

Maybe when I was in junior high school, or high school, I started thinking if I get married and get divorced, I have to work for myself in order to live and that means I have to have certain kinds of certification in order to work outside the home.

In Japanese society, there were and are stereotypes about working mothers because people think that working mothers neglect their children. However, Masako-san had an objection toward those social stereotypes since she has positive influences from her own mother who worked outside the home.
Working mothers

Masako-san sometimes thinks about working outside now.

She talked about the necessity of the changing social system, which still gives working mothers a hard time in terms of juggling multiple roles.

Working mothers have to switch mentally. While they are working, they just concentrate on their work. After they come home, they are just mothers. While they are doing housework, they are mothers and wives, too.... In order to keep working outside the home, it is necessary to change their mindsets as well. Otherwise they cannot manage their lives. In the contemporary Japanese situation, the social system is not well developed, especially for women's working outside the home.

Since her son is still two years old and needs a place where someone can watch him and take care of him, she has to take this into consideration. She said, “If I work outside the home, I need a place for my son. Also, I have to keep some time for doing housework. I think it is very hard for me to do. So, if I work, I want my husband's work hours to be shorter, then I can work a little.”

She added, “If I can find a place to take care of my son and if I can really trust that place, I would work full time, but maybe I will work part-time.”
As she mentioned, many of the mothers I interviewed said that their husband's long work hours are a big problem for them. Masako-san said that since her husband cannot come home early and he is always tired on his day off, he does not have enough time to communicate with Atsushi-kun. This is another common problem among Japanese families now.

Her own life

Masako-san said that always staying at home is very boring. She does not feel bored now because Atsushi-kun is always around. After her son becomes a little older and enters youchien or maybe elementary school, he would not spend time at home like he does now and she will have her own time. Then she will find something she really wants to devote herself to. She is not sure if “the something” is work or hobbies, but she really wants to go into the society and the world. In that sense, she is thinking about working again.

Masako-san added, “When I talk to people who are in the same situation, I can have the same feeling with them, and I find that there are many people who are in the same situation. That helps me a lot to get rid of my stress.”
On the day, I interviewed her, she preferred to have this interview done outside the home, and she chose a donut shop near the station. The length of the interview was longer than we expected, but she said with a smile. "It was so much fun to talk to you today. I was looking forward to this because this was a good opportunity for me to talk to a new person and I knew that would refresh my mind. It worked well." Normally she hardly has time to enjoy a cup of coffee alone.

After the interview, I saw Makoto-san carrying Atsushi-kun on his shoulders. They came to the station to see Masako-san. Since Makoto-san was off that day, the three of them went to the supermarket to buy groceries. When Masako-san saw Makoto-san and Atsushi-kun, Masako-san's face turned from the relaxed face of a woman in conversation to "hahaoya no kao" (a mother's face), smiling but filled with responsibilities. "Hahaoya no kao" is a Japanese expression which shows that mothers' faces usually seem to be filled with a sense of their responsibilities.
CHAPTER VIII

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS

I completed a total of thirty semi-structured interviews. In terms of the size of the sample, it seems smaller than average; however I consistently focused on in-depth interviews. Therefore, the results should be able to show and cover the significant aspects of the contemporary Japanese women's situation.

I interviewed eighteen working mothers, including five mothers (about 27.7%) who were on either their maternity leave or childcare leave. Also, I interviewed twelve stay-at-home mothers. The difference of the sample size implies the limitation of these interviews since I had difficulty finding samples of stay-at-home mothers.

Table 4. Mothers' Working Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Currently Work</th>
<th>On Maternity Or Childcare Leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Mothers</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay-at-home Mothers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The each theme that I am going to show was represented overall in all interviews including nine case studies in the previous chapter.

WORKING MOTHERS: THEMES

In this section, I will describe the themes I obtained through interviews by giving examples. First, I am going to deal with the contemporary working mothers' issues.

Regarding interviews with working mothers, I tried to include mothers who engage in various kinds of occupations such as nurse, architect, flight attendant, university professor, pharmacist, and so on. By doing this, I could obtain different perspectives of the Japanese work environment, especially the difficulties working mothers are facing because of the traditional ideas about women and mothers held by people in different fields.

For working mothers, the most difficult part of being a "working mother" is how to manage their multiple roles simultaneously. Three of the working mothers' roles include mother, wife, and career woman. Moreover, we cannot ignore the significance of "self" for working mothers, which means the value and the meaning of their life as a woman. These are what we have to cover in order to understand the working mothers' situation in
contemporary Japanese society. Therefore, I would like to show different variables in these working mothers’ situations with illustrations from all the interviews.

Hoikuen (nursery school)

First, the most serious issue could be how to take care of their children while they are working outside the home. In most of the cases, those working mothers whom I interviewed used hoikuen (nursery school) for their children. However, most of the hoikuen don’t stay open late enough to enable working mothers to complete their overtime work. Therefore, working mothers have to somehow limit their work in order to pick their children up. It is the main concern for working mothers.

The distance from the home to hoikuen is one of the keys to success in handling multiple roles for working mothers. Akiko-san, in the case study, moved to a new place in order to solve the hoikuen problem. She used two different hoikuen for her two children (before she had two other children) because she could not place her second child into the same public hoikuen she used for her first child. Therefore, finding the time for commuting and picking their children up was a very difficult task for her. Then, she decided to move to her current place, which is located very close to
her first child's hoikuen, and she placed her second child in the same hoikuen where her first child goes. Moving to a new place just because of the hoikuen may seem extreme. However, this is a serious and important issue in Japanese society now.

Table 5 shows the priority which working mothers took (or take) into consideration when they chose (or choose) hoikuen for their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Live with Parents</th>
<th>Close to House</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Anywhere</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently Working</td>
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<td>9*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Including one mother who chose hoikuen close to their parents' house

Two of eighteen (11.1%) working mothers do not use hoikuen because they live with their own parents and their parents take care of the children. About 66.6% of working mothers I interviewed chose their children's hoikuen because of the location. Whether or not the hoikuen is close to their house was their main concern. Then, two out of eighteen mothers (11.1%) chose on the basis of the
environment of the *hoikuen*, such as if the *hoikuen* provides a lot of opportunity for outside activities, whether or not children can have a free environment, or if the *hoikuen* has a big yard and so on. One of eighteen mothers (5.5%) chose a *hoikuen* which is located very close to her parents' house (because her mother is responsible for picking her daughter up), which is also location. There was a mother (5.5%), who is now on her childcare leave, who would choose wherever her daughter could get entrance permission. However, the reason for her saying that was because there is no *hoikuen* around her neighborhood so that even if she wanted to choose *hoikuen* close to her house, it is already impossible.

Overall, it is obvious that working mothers who use *hoikuen* take into consideration the location of the *hoikuen* as their priority. This implies that it is hard to manage their time unless they have somebody who can be responsible for their children's being picked up. It is a time consuming task, but there is no other way for working mothers who don't have somebody who will watch their children while they are at work. Their husbands usually cannot take the responsibility of picking children up because men tend to work longer hours than women (of course it differs by occupation and working style). In order to handle this picking up, working mothers sometimes have to compromise or reduce the amount of their work,
including overtime work, to some extent. This whole hoikuen situation is the biggest problem for working mothers.

In terms of hoikuen, there are mainly two groups. One is public and has governmental support, and the other is private and does not have governmental support. Based on the scheme which the government has, the Ministry of Health (Kousei-shou) checks the quality of hoikuen periodically in terms of the facilities, management and so on. Also, the quality of caregivers is important as well as the different kinds of programs and curricula these hoikuen have. There are different environments concerning rules and disciplines even among the public hoikuen. The cost of using hoikuen is different from place to place. Some examples will illustrate these points.

Some of my respondents mentioned the cost of hoikuen. I did not ask them to give exact numbers. Some of them said that even though they are a double income family, this does not mean that they are a rich couple. Usually the wife's income would go to the cost of childcare. Therefore, as long as mothers work outside, they have to sacrifice their income for childcare unless they have someone at a lesser cost who can take care of their children while they are working outside.
Second, for working mothers, the work environment is also one of the biggest concerns in terms of their mental stability. For example, regarding overtime work, working mothers have to minimize their overtime work in order to pick their children up, as mentioned above. If there were no understanding from bosses and co-workers, working mothers could not manage their work. Since working mothers already have unspoken pressure from handling multiple roles, when they come across troubles with their co-workers, especially with their own bosses, it is a big stress.

According to the number I got through my interviews, in terms of understanding from their bosses, five of eighteen (27.7%) working mothers I interviewed clearly said their bosses are very supportive. Without support and understanding from bosses, working mothers cannot juggle multiple roles. Ayumi-san, a 36-year-old architect who has two daughters, experienced a struggle with her situation of being a working mother. When she returned to work after her maternity leave and childcare leave, her first daughter often got sick and she had to take off frequently, almost a half of a month. She told me that she was thinking about quitting her job because she could not even come to work and she felt bad about it. However, her boss showed his understanding with words.
'Until it becomes warm in spring, you cannot help it.' My boss told me so. Actually, I was thinking that I could not continue because I could not even come to the office half of a month, but my boss said it to me. That made me feel much better and...yeah, truly, after it got warm, my daughter did not catch a cold anymore and I could come to work without any problem.

She repeatedly said how much her boss's understanding and support meant to her to keep her career. Her boss has been her mental support and it made it possible for her to reduce her stress.

Seven out of eighteen (38.8%) working mothers I interviewed said that their companies have cooperative environments, and also their co-workers are very supportive of working mothers. Because of the working environment, those mothers do not have to feel uncomfortable and the understanding from their bosses and co-workers encouraged them to keep working even after childbirth. Including those mothers who said that their bosses were very supportive, a total of twelve of eighteen (66.5%) mothers mentioned that having a comfortable environment helps them handle their multiple roles, especially the two main roles of working woman and mother.

Michiko-san, a 28-year-old OL at the main office of a food company in Chiba prefecture, said she has a supportive work
environment. Her boss cherishes his family and he understands the importance of family, so he is very supportive. Also, there are many female co-workers that are also married and they understand her situation well.

Masayo-san is a 33-year-old mother of two sons and works in the design section of a confectionary manufacturing company. She brought up one of the significant points:

Personally, I am satisfied with my situation, but when I see Japanese society as a whole, including other women, I am not satisfied with the situation. When we think of Japanese society, I think this country is still immature. First, when we, women find out that we are pregnant, we hesitate to tell our company. It is different from men's situation. Men do not have to tell but women must tell. I don't agree with this kind of situation.

What she implied was a kind of gender discrimination in the work environment. It is sometimes very hard for women to tell their bosses about the fact that they are pregnant. It is because there are so many other things that women have to take into consideration before telling their bosses. Of course, men do not have to take maternity leave; therefore they do not have to request anything. However, it is not the point, and what Masayo-san wanted to point out was the prevailing atmosphere, and that women should not have to worry about their work because of the fact that they are
pregnant. Being pregnant is a natural thing in which men cannot take part; therefore women should be treated fairly.

Teachers do not have to worry about such discrimination. Atsuko-san, a 31-year-old mother who is a music teacher, said there were no difficulties for her to take maternity leave and childcare leave because there is a system in her school so that the school can use a temporary teacher in the place of her. Especially teachers usually have more flexibility because there are many precedents, and the system of maternity leave was established and used even before the law was enforced. In that way, teacher is a special occupation which provides support systematically. It has been a very popular occupation among Japanese women.

A workplace where most workers are women sometimes helps to reduce working mothers’ stress because their co-workers also experience the same difficulties, and working mothers can have conversations about those difficulties. A pharmacist, Yoko-san, a 31-year-old mother who is currently on her childcare leave, said she has many friends and co-workers in the workplace who are also working mothers. Therefore, for her, taking maternity and childcare leave was very easy. Moreover, she can have a great amount of support from those co-workers who are precedents. She is very lucky to have such an environment. On the other hand, there is also
another tendency, such as Fumiko-san, in the case study, experienced. If women in high position are single, sometimes they harass working mothers because they cannot understand those working mothers' struggles. Therefore, working mothers are still struggling with the current situation.

Switching Mentally Between Career Woman and Mother

Families are valuable resources for single working mothers. A 26-year-old flight attendant of Japan Airlines, Takako-san, who became a single mother because of divorce, lives with her own family and her 2-year-old son. Living with her own family makes it possible for her to have a great amount of support from her own family. While she is abroad because of her job, her family is responsible for her son.

Thanks to her family's support, she is able to work as much as she wants and that makes it possible for her to engage in what she really wants. Takako-san said that she was very satisfied with her current situation because she is doing what she has wanted to do for a long time, which is working as a flight attendant.

When I am abroad, I always think of my life and I usually forget about my life in Japan, and once I come back and stay with my son, I never think of my work. I am not choosing either one of them, but I think I
always take a clear-cut attitude toward situations. I think I am well balanced. Thinking of only work, or only family is a very sad thing, but I have both of them, and try to use those parts properly, I think.

This is how she is switching her mind between work and her son. However, her case is not common. She has a fortunate environment because she lives with her own family and she can ask for their support.

Childrearing causes mothers to change work style. Michiko-san, a 28-year-old mother, who works at an optical shop in Saitama prefecture part time, was originally a full time worker in the same company and worked for seven years. Before she gave birth, she quit her work as a full time worker because she was not sure if her future child would be fine or not. Her company offered her maternity leave, but she wanted to try childrearing first and see what childrearing is like. After a ten-month absence, she returned to the same company as a part-timer, works five days a week and five hours a day average. She said she originally wanted to stay at home with her child and be a full time housewife. After she spent some time with her child, she realized that she wanted to work outside the home. She implied that to stay at home and watch her child the whole day is stultifying.
Michiko-san said, "Now, I always think I want to take care of my child, cherish my child as much as I cherish my work." Since she can have time away from her child, she is very satisfied with her current situation. Also, she said working outside helps refresh her mind when she touches her child. She added that because she is not staying at home and watching her child all the time, she does not lose her original spirit of childrearing.

Staying at home can cause severe stress. Mika-san is a 33-year-old mother who works at one of the biggest construction companies in Tokyo. She told me about the stress she had during her childcare leave. She did not know anybody in her neighborhood and had no time for herself because she spent her time with her daughter everyday in a small room in Tokyo. While Mika-san stayed at home with her little daughter, she did not think that she would suffer from _ikuji noiroze_ (neuroses from childrearing), but she analyzed herself, "Maybe I was about to get in the same situation as those mothers whom I saw on TV." She said when she watched news about mothers who hurt their own children, she could understand those mothers' feelings. When her daughter cried continuously, she had thoughts like, "no more!" She told me that when she held her daughter in her arms she wondered what would happen to her daughter if she let her daughter drop.
Mika-san also talked about her current situation as a working mother. She used the expression of “switching shift.” According to her, since she works outside, she has different kinds of stress from both work and family. However, because she works outside, she can have two different worlds inside of her. When she comes to work, she can concentrate on her work without worrying about her family matters so much. Also, she can have her own time with her friends at work, and this helps her to refresh her mind and get rid of the stress from family. On the other hand, at home Mika-san spends her time with her husband and daughter and she does not think of her work at all. In that way, she can refresh her mind and get rid of her stress from work. She said, “I think I am well-balanced.” She also added, “It is a surprising thing even for me, but I think I am switching my shift very well.”

Mika-san added that the first and best thing she had after returning to work was having a cup of coffee by herself. “I felt so happy and I could really enjoy the cup of coffee. I was like ‘Oh, I can enjoy a cup of coffee...!!’, and it was the happiest moment for me.” It seems a very tiny joy for us, but this quote makes us realize how hard it is for mothers to have time alone. Working outside the home made it possible for her to remember herself as a woman. However, even though working mothers are mostly satisfied with their current
situation, they are always struggling with handling their multiple roles.

Mika-san said she feels sorry when she has to go home early or to take off work, because of her daughter's unexpected sickness. Also, the fact that she cannot work overtime because of picking up her daughter makes her feel sorry for not helping co-workers. Even though her boss understands her situation well, and his understanding supports her a lot, still she cannot get rid of the sorry feeling. Because of the traditional gender based role division deeply rooted in Japanese companies as well as Japanese society, it is very hard to change the atmosphere surrounding those working mothers.

Being a Precedent

Even though the amendment of the EEOL and other laws regarding women's work were passed ten years ago, the actual system of childcare leave does not penetrate deeply. Therefore, some of the working mothers I interviewed are now trying to be precedents for fellow female workers. Since they are in situations where no example has gone before, each of the following working mothers is trying very hard to be a good example for fellow female workers.
Thanks to the efforts of these precedent setters, working mothers' situations should be improved.

Masayo-san talked about herself trying to be a good precedent. Since there are few precedents in her company, she thinks that if she gives her work up, people in her company would think that she could not handle it because she has children.

Here is another example of a precedent setter. Michiko-san, a 28-year-old OL in Chiba prefecture, mentioned above, was the first woman who took maternity leave and childcare leave in the main office. She took a total of six-months of maternity leave and childcare leave. It was not difficult for her to take maternity leave and childcare leave. She could have taken longer leave but there were personnel changes in the main office and she was afraid of being away too long because if she was away too long, it would be very hard to adjust to the new relationships, especially with new hires. Although she had mental preparation before returning, it was hard for her to change mentally from mother to worker and adjust herself to the work when she returned to work.

Since the work at her company requires overtime work and people have to come to the office early (the work hour starts from 8:30a.m.), it was very hard for women to keep working after childbirth, handling both work and childrearing. Therefore, there
was no precedent before Michiko-san. She returned because there was a post waiting for her and there was an economic reason as well. Therefore, for her, being a precedent is one of the tasks for which she is responsible. She said, “I want to do my best as a precedent.”

It is very important to know what kind of job rights working mothers have. In order to pursue careers, working mothers should be able to state and insist on the basic rights the law gives them. Hisako-san, a 34-year-old OL in Tokyo shared her interesting experience. Her company deals with light metal and there are several branches and factories throughout Japan. There are a few women who took maternity leave and childcare leave in the factory office in local areas of Japan. In local areas, people still tend to live with (or close to) their parents after marriage so couple can get support in terms of childrearing from their parents. For example, grandparents can take care of children before children enter hoikuen. After children enter hoikuen, grandparents will help, taking part in dropping off and picking up children on a daily basis.

In a main office in Tokyo, where Hisako-san works, there is a woman who took maternity leave and childcare leave twenty years ago when there was no system of sogo-shoku (career track) and no childcare leave system. Therefore, Hisako-san became a precedent
after the laws were enacted. However, her company did not pay enough attention to the details of the amendment to the Childcare Leave Law. There were two main reasons for it: one is because there was no woman who took maternity leave and childcare leave for such a long time, and the other is when Hisako-san was about to take leave, her company was facing serious difficulties with management. Her experience was that she was asked and recommended to quit work by her company telling her there would not be any possibilities for her to be promoted even if she stays longer.

Therefore, she researched the law and pointed out the significant measures that her company did not notice in order to insist on her own rights and to continue her career. She was placed in a different section after returning from childcare leave, which is an illegal action but since she can learn and master special skills with her new work, she accepted the company's offer. However, she is negotiating with a labor union because there should be a strict rule in the company that women can return to the same position. Thanks to Hisako-san's energetic contribution, there is a woman who followed her and is now on her maternity leave.

Until the system is settled and practiced deeply, women still have to face the difficulties and struggles. But without trying,
nothing will change, especially in the work environment where there are norms of gender based role divisions.

Gender Based Role Division

Six out of sixteen (37.5%, because two of my samples were single mothers) working mothers talked about her husband’s absence, especially on weekdays. Since they are also working outside as their husband does, they want their husband to help them with housework, but usually, men have to work longer than women and their husbands cannot do housework as much as the women want. Fumiko-san, in the case study, clearly mentioned this point. Also, Yoko-san, a 31-year-old mother who is a pharmacist and currently on her childcare leave said that her husband supports her very well. However, usually he cannot come home early on weekdays, therefore, he cannot do housework on a daily basis.

Here is a comment from Masayo-san, whom I mentioned previously:

In Japan, usually men don’t do the housework unless they are asked. I always want my husband to do it voluntarily, but he does not. So, whenever I want him to help me, I have to tell him, which is so stressful. Then, I don’t feel like asking him anymore and just finish by myself.
Even though Masayo-san admits that her husband helps her and supports her better than other men, she still questions this current situation in Japanese society, which still keeps the traditional gender based role division. Traditions in Japanese culture and social norms that are rooted deeply the society prevent women from having equal opportunity and less burdens of housework.

Mika-san also said, “Men doing housework is a natural thing and I don’t think it is special.” However, inside, men still think that they are doing housework to support the wife. Therefore, even though women try to obtain trust and responsible work in the workplace, the stereotype of “women at home” gives difficulties for them in pursuing their careers. Also, in the reverse of gender discrimination, as in the case of Keiko-san in the case study, especially in the work environment that still has the vestige of gender discrimination, it is very hard for men to put their emphasis on their family life. Overall, in the Japanese work environment, there is still a tendency that men work longer than women. Therefore, this trend makes it difficult for men to engage more in the domestic spheres.

Another example of gender based role division is community-based activities or activities managed by volunteer parents' groups at hoikuen. In terms of the husbands' participation in the
community-based activities, one of the respondents brought up her own example. One respondent said that outside activities are not only for mothers to participate in, and she asked her husband to participate. He listened to what she said and now her husband is playing a role as the head of a volunteer parents' group.

Since there has been a strong stereotype toward those fathers who often participate in community activities as kind of strange or unusual (even though they are valued as good husbands and fathers), men tend not to get involved in this "women's arena." However, once fathers know that other fathers are willing to participate in those activities, they don't feel strange or ashamed of being active in their community.

_Tenuki_ (Omission)

While I was interviewing working mothers, I often heard the term, "_tenuki._" meaning omission. Half of the mothers (9 out of 18) answered they are somehow omitting their housework. Two out of eighteen mothers live with their own parents and they could get help from them, so I did not include those two mothers.

Two mothers gave me exactly the same interesting phrase, "We will not die because of the dust." This is a sarcastic way of saying they don't have enough time to clean their house because
they have to spend their after work time with their children, but they try not to care because it is nothing serious and also they think that their husbands cannot complain even if their rooms are not cleaned or organized well.

Noriko-san, a 35-year-old mother, works part-time at two different workplaces; one is a counseling room, and the other is a political organization. She thinks that working outside is very interesting and she wants to keep working even if she does not need to, because what she likes about her work is pursuing yarigai (fulfillment from work). However now, she is extremely busy with her work and does not have enough time to do housework. Inside of herself, she wants to make some more time to spend on housework. She talked about the time she spends on housework as “I am not doing it almost at all, I sometimes fix meals but...that’s it.” Her husband does not complain if their room is messy and not organized well, or when her husband gets home, dinner is not ready. She analyzed that it is because her work enables them to get extra income even if it is a small amount. Therefore, he does not say anything.

Mika-san, mentioned above, also said with a laugh, “It is hard to handle everything simultaneously but I think doing housework can be omitted a little bit.” As well as switching
mentally through their multiple roles, changing the way of thinking about things appears to be another important way for working mothers to survive.

Yuko-san, a 27-year-old single mother who works at a dentist's part time, said, "Since I don't have a husband now, I think my life is very flexible." She can take it easy in terms of completing housework since she does not have a husband. For example, she mentioned that about cleaning the room she does not have to feel pressure because someone who cares if the room is not organized well does not come home. She also said, "I am doing housework by prioritizing tasks so I don't think doing housework is a burden for me". She mentioned that doing laundry could be omitted sometimes because she does not have a husband. Usually in Japan, if married men don't wear ironed clean shirts, it implies their wife is not well trained.

As Yuko-san implied, since there are high expectations for women to complete housework perfectly, many popular magazines tend to stir up and create the image of "ideal housewife," working mothers often think of themselves as being less than ideal. However, in a way, tenuki is a good way to be efficient in order to manage multiple roles for working mothers.
Efficiency

As many mothers mentioned in previous sections, using time efficiently is one of the keys to managing multiple roles for working mothers. They have to manage domestic chores as well as outside work. But they are not always in control of when and how demands are made on their time. They have to juggle time and roles. "We can take medicine and just hold on if we feel sick, but we cannot do it for our children. Moreover, we cannot plan when our children will get sick." This is a comment of Yuko-san, a single mother who works part time at a dentist's. As Akiko-san mentioned, mothers tend to analyze themselves as being more efficient after returning to work after childbirth.

Michiko-san analyzed that her attitude toward her work was changed and it became more efficient than before she took leave.

Usually people have to contrive and use inventive ideas in order to improve and to work efficiently. I think it spurred me because I want to go home as soon as possible anyhow. I always think "in order to go home early..." something like that. But it does not mean that I give my work and responsibilities to someone or postpone what I have to do, but try to get things done and go home.

Without mentioning directly this efficiency, overall, working mothers responded that they are trying to be efficient in terms of way they spend their time. They have to take off work (usually paid
as each company has prescribed a certain amount of days off with pay) when their children get sick. Again, mothers cannot control children's unexpected sickness. Therefore, mothers have to be very careful with handling their work.

Information/Connection with the Society

Lack of information is what most working mothers told me bothered them about their experience of being at home while on their leaves. When I asked working mothers why they work outside the home, most of them said that they wanted to expose themselves to the information in society. Of course, some of them have economic reasons to work, but even if they don't have economic needs, they said they want to work part time to make their own money.

Masayo-san said the reason she works is because she wants to enliven herself inside of the home. She mentioned her experience when she stayed at home while she was on her maternity leave. “I felt like my world was getting narrower. When I stayed at home, the topic that I could think of was such as ‘I saw this on TV’ or ‘my neighbor said like this.’ However, if I work, I can see people at work, both single and married, so I can hear different kinds of stories from them.”
Hisako-san, mentioned above, still participates and exchanges information through those group activities and makes friends who suffer from similar kinds of problems. She has been researching about managing her life with work and child since before she got pregnant because she has a strong will to continue her career. She attended lectures and symposiums, using Internet and media to collect information. She also attended voluntary activities in groups and talked to people to solve problems.

Mika-san said her life changed after she placed her daughter in hoikuen. As mentioned above, she did not know anyone in her neighborhood while she was on her maternity and childcare leaves. However, she could meet many good people because she placed her daughter in hoikuen. By placing her daughter in hoikuen, she could make good friends with other mothers. She started to get involved in various kinds of activities in the community with those mothers and shares information with them. She did not know anything about the community and her life was closed, but connection with those mothers who have the same experiences and worries helps her not only handle her work life but also enjoy her private life as well.

Shinobu-san, a 27-year-old mother who works at a foreign affiliated firm which deals with fodder, also said that working
outside makes it possible for her to learn what she cannot learn if she stays at home. Also, she wanted to have social connections and have her own time, therefore she decided to work outside. She also participates in a group which is active in the ecology movement where mothers who have the same interests get together. That is how she activates herself as a person.

Working mothers have many outside opportunities to meet new people and get involved with new group activities. Moreover, they have easy access to the Internet. They make use of this in order to manage their lives as working mothers. Working mothers through their companies, have more opportunities to use Internet, which has become a convenient and useful way to obtain and exchange information. Therefore, working mothers can more easily and often take advantage of Internet access to obtain various kinds of information compared to stay-at-home mothers.

Influence From Their Own Mother

The closest model of motherhood for the working mothers that I interviewed were their own mothers. Therefore, more or less, they think about their situations in comparison to their own mothers. However, they tend not to stick to the traditional idea of motherhood
and try to find their own way by pursuing their careers. This was one of the interesting points that I found through my interviews.

I noted whether interviewees' mothers worked while raising young children because I thought it might be significant if there are any connections between their current situations and their mothers' situations when the interviewees were little. For example, Ayumisan, a 36-year-old architect said:

I had been watching my own mother staying at home and stick to us; I hardly helped my mother with housework because she was thinking that children were fine as long as they were studying, that kind of thing. I am not meaning to deny my mother but I always thought that was something different from what I wanted in my own life. I thought women should be more independent, and not depend on men...women should not be like an accessory of men...it is not right....

Keiko-san, in the case study, talked about her thoughts about sengyo shufu, how she questioned it, and how she tried not to be one of them. Now, she is trying to move on her path as working mother even though there are difficulties in front of her, it is the way she decides to proceed.

Not only reflecting on their mothers' paths, but also looking back on their own experiences as a child, was one of the interesting points. For example, Michiko-san clearly said that she didn't want
to place her own daughter in *hoikuen*. Because she had experienced loneliness while her mother worked outside the home, she did not want her daughter to feel the same way as she did. On the other hand, in Takako-san’s case, she also experienced the loneliness of being alone at home after school because of her mother’s absence. Takako-san was raised by a working mother who worked as a beautician. She told me that when she was little, she had an idea of being a stay-at-home mother, so she would be able to watch her children the whole day, from morning to night. However, the idea has changed now because she found what she can really devote herself to.

Objectifying their Own Children

Five of eighteen (27.7%) working mothers I interviewed mentioned that working outside makes it possible for them to have a composed attitude toward their children because they can refresh their minds by seeing other people at their work. Also, they can have their own time without watching their children. That helps them watch their children objectively.

Masayo-san talked about her experience:

If we stay with our children the whole day, we get irritated and I knew that I scolded my son just because I was
irritated, it was just my emotional thing. But now, I am working outside the home and spend some time apart, so I always look forward to see my son when I pick him up. It's working better now, I think.

This is a common idea among working mothers. Takako-san, a flight attendant, gave an example of stay-at-home mothers in her son's outside activity class:

I can look at my son very objectively. When I see mothers who watch their children the whole day from morning to night, they scold their children so much. But I see my son is one character and don't have an idea that my son is my belongings, I can see him objectively. For example, "oh, he is saying something selfish" or "he is now whining" something like that. I think I can have some distance from him and it is a good thing.

Since they have their own world outside the home, even though they do not have time to spare, they can refresh their minds by interacting with other people outside the home. It makes working mothers look at their children objectively and this is one of the best points working mothers mentioned.

Having their own time (and money sometimes) makes it possible for working mothers to devote their energies to their outside activities and their own interests. They seem to be investing their time to enliven their lives. I had an assumption that working mothers would suffer from their busy life cycles but in reality, even
though they are busy, they seem to be very satisfied with their own lives. They all don't forget to give themselves some time to think of themselves as individual women.

STAY-AT-HOME MOTHERS: THEMES

Stay-at-home mothers have different kinds of problems compared to those of working mothers. The amount of the time stay-at-home mothers can spend with their children is greater than that of working mothers. Since having less time was the working mothers' concern, it could be a valuable comparison. Therefore, here, I am going to give some results of what stay-at-home mothers' lives look like and also, categorize the problems those stay-at-home mothers are struggling with.

Own Time

Stay-at-home mothers usually spend most of their time with their children everyday. When I asked those stay-at-home mothers how long they were spending with their children daily, almost all of them answered that they were with their children except for the time while they were sleeping. However, since they are usually sleeping next to their children, they spend 24 hours a day with their children technically. It is very hard for these mothers to make time alone.
As some of the working mothers mentioned, having their own time away from their children can help working mothers refresh their minds. Then, I started to wonder what those stay-at-home mothers think about their current situation in terms of their own time, and asked them about their ideas.

Many mothers emphasized that they missed the time that they previously could spend for themselves. Toshie-san, a 26-year-old stay-at-home-mother who worked as a dietitian in one of the biggest university hospitals in Tokyo for three and a half years, talked about her current struggle of being a stay-at-home mother. She said, “I don’t think I am satisfied with my current situation. I always hang out only with my 11-month-old son, and I don’t have my own time. It is my biggest problem and I really want to do something about it.” This comment is not uncommon. I got many answers like this.

Lacking time for herself also bothered Hiromi-san. She is a 26-year-old stay-at-home mother who used to work as an OL, and has a newborn baby, Hinako-chan. Hiromi-san and her husband thought that it is natural for mothers to stay at home to take care of children while they are little. Therefore, she quit her work, and about quitting her job, there was not any hesitation for her. However, now she is struggling with her situation because she has
to spend time with Hinako-chan the whole day alone. One of her biggest problems of being a stay-at-home mother is not being able to make her own time alone easily or not having her own time alone at all.

On the other hand, there are some mothers who said that they are not having trouble from not having their own time now although they used to struggle with the situation. Miho-san, a 27-year-old stay-at-home mother of Asahi-kun, said that she got used to the situation. She thinks it is the natural thing that she cannot make her own time. She said she gave up in terms of her own time at this moment and now she enjoys her time with him.

Yuki-san, a 26-year-old stay-at-home mother, said, “My son goes to bed around nine o’clock (she does not have any difficulties with putting him asleep), so I can have my own time for about four hours until around 1:30 a.m. at night.”

Miyoko-san, a 26-year-old stay-at-home mother now enjoys her time with her son. However, she talked about her experience, “Sometimes, just doing nothing, or maybe having a cup of coffee is enough... that’s what I thought.” This is exactly the same as what one of the working mothers brought up. Staying at home only with children requires a great amount of patience, otherwise mothers will get stressed out.
Masako-san, in her case study, also emphasized the stress caused by childrearing. Once stay-at-home mothers can change their way of thinking like Miho-san did, being with children all the time would not be so burdensome for them. There should be a better situation when children grow up enough to show their feelings by using simple words. However, not being able to have their own time still makes mothers get stressed easily. The reason stay-at-home mothers cannot make their own time might be attributed to the environment they have. Especially when they live in a nuclear family, and their husbands cannot come home early, stay-at-home mothers have their time confined by their little children, spending almost the whole day alone with them. If they have someone around, stay-at-home mothers can make their own time alone by asking him/her to watch their children for a while, even if it is a small amount of time. In the next section, I am going to look at aspects that stay-at-home mothers brought up as the reasons for the difficulties of their daily lives as stay-at-home mothers.

Living in Nuclear Family

Japanese people tend to live in a small family after the rapid economic growth period since people don't engage in their family
business or family farms anymore. More people live in urban areas with small families, which include only parents and children.

Five of twelve (41.6%) stay-at-home mothers interviewed live close either to their parents’ or their parents-in-law’s house. However, none of the mothers live with their own parents or parents-in-law. I cannot say my sample is representative of Japanese society, but at least this result points us to the tendency of nuclear families.

Masako-san, in the case study, said that living with grandparents would bring good influence for children as well as their mothers. As she mentioned, since people don’t live with their parents, young mothers have to find someone whom they can really talk to when they have problems with childrearing. She brought up the issue of living with grandparents.

Hiroko-san, in another case study, also emphasized the necessity of having someone around. Other people, including grandparents, are important influences on their children, and help both mothers and children refresh their minds. Since young mothers tend to spend time with their little children alone, it is a necessary thing for both mothers and children to have someone around to avoid an intense atmosphere. Even though little children
cannot talk, they can feel the atmosphere, and having a warm and comfortable environment will give children positive influence.

Living close to their parents or parents-in-law makes it easy for mothers to come and go to those parents’ houses. It helps them to refresh their minds. Living in a nuclear family makes it difficult for stay-at-home mothers to have communication with other people. Especially when those mothers do not have very many friends in their neighborhood, they feel like they are living in a closed world.

Chikako-san, a 30-year-old stay-at-home mother who used to work as an OL at a computer company, also said that she usually visits her parents-in-law on weekends. Since for her parents-in-law, her daughter Hideka-chan is the first grandchild, they cherish Hideka-chan very much. While parents-in-law are watching Hideka-chan, Chikako-san can relax for just a little bit. She doesn’t have to feel pressure by watching her daughter all by herself. For stay-at-home mothers, lacking this kind of communication is one of the biggest problems in their daily lives. Establishing this communication is one of the effective ways to get rid of stress.
Stress from Childrearing --- *Ikuji Noiroze* (Neurosis from Childrearing)

Stay-at-home mothers usually spend most of their time only with their children. However, since a baby cannot speak, mothers cannot get an answer even if they talk to them. Therefore, sometimes mothers cannot have conversations with anybody except a little baby. Miyoko-san said, "*Akachan* [babies] cannot talk and all they can do is cry. Crying is the only way they can express their feelings." Since her husband comes home very late on weekdays, she has to spend time with her son all the time, and she said now she got used to it but at the beginning, it was really hard for her to endure. Especially crying makes mothers get very nervous and irritated. Since mothers cannot control children's temper, and especially babies cannot talk but only cry, mothers have to endure the difficulties.

Hiromi-san is also struggling with her situation of not being able to communicate with other people. She said:

If I stay at home the whole day, because *akachan* (baby) cannot return words, I talk with her but I cannot have actual conversation with anyone. Sometimes I cannot talk to anyone, cannot have conversation with anyone the whole day. It makes me so stressed. I really want to talk to someone, I don't care who it is but I want to talk to people.
In order to avoid being in an intense and stressed situation, Hiromi-san usually goes to her parents-in-law's house, which is very close to where Hiromi-san and her husband currently live, with her daughter to see parents-in-law. Since her parents-in-law work as self-employed people, there are many people at their office. Therefore, Hiromi-san just goes there to refresh her mind by seeing people there. She added that she tries to go out at least once a day so that she can refresh her mind. She said going out only to take a walk is better for her daughter as well.

The most serious issue among young mothers is the stress of childrearing itself. When it comes to the extreme version of stress, mothers could suffer from *ikuji noiroze*, neurosis from childrearing. Media, such as newspapers and TV programs and common magazines, often discuss this *ikuji noiroze* as a contemporary problem, especially among young mothers. It is said that the closed environment where mothers cannot have someone to talk with about their problems freely promotes this *noiroze*. As many of the working mothers mentioned in their experiences during their leaves, stay-at-home mothers suffer from the stress of childrearing.

Miyoko-san, mentioned above said, "I did not think that I would suffer from *ikuji noiroze*, but I could understand that there are mothers who are suffering from it. When my son couldn't stop
crying, no matter what I did to treat him, I thought I would not endure if this situation lasted long." Also, Miho-san said,

My husband and I were saying, 'no, more!' and we thought about throwing my son out the window when my son did not stop crying during the night. Since we hardly could sleep for about a month, because of his crying, we were always tired and we always had black stuff below our eyes. I remember those days and it was so hard.

For mothers, childrearing requires a lot of patience. Mothers have to learn step by step to overcome new situations and difficulties and they get accustomed to the problems. Childrearing is a continuous challenge, which brings mothers a great amount of stress. Finding ways to get rid of stress emerged as one of the important concerns of the interviewees.

As I stated at the beginning of this thesis, in the case of the murder of 2-year-old Haruna-chan by mother Yamada, the mother of Haruna-chan's friend, stay-at-home mothers tend to have more stress from childrearing than working mothers. As the mothers tend to focus on their children, the competition among these mothers accelerates in terms of their children's education.

Yamada was concerned about the competition of her child with Haruna-chan because Haruna-chan's mother always made Yamada feel that Yamada's child was inferior. Yamada feared having
to live with this competitive stress throughout her child's education. Without external balances, Yamada focused all her energy and concerns on her child and murder was the result.

*Kouen Debyu* (Debut in the park)

This is a very sarcastic term fairly new in Japanese society. This term was created by media to explain the fear and worry of mothers who try to enter the new environment, which is a park in their neighborhood, as a stranger for the first time. Sometimes mothers go to the park to let their children play with other children. Also, going to the park makes it possible for mothers to make new friends. The bond and relationship among young mothers is very unique, compared to school friends or co-workers. They start to make friends with other mothers who have children about the same age.

As working mothers make friends with other mothers through *hoikuen*, stay-at-home mothers usually make friends with other mothers by going to the park in the neighborhood. If mothers can make good friends with other mothers at the park, one of the best ways to get rid of stay-at-home mothers' problems of childrearing could be by talking to other mothers.
However, it is said that when mothers first try to take their children to the park, they have to struggle with the dilemma of being a stranger and being a newcomer in the fixed group of mothers who already use the park as their place of gathering. Media increases newcomers' problems by saying that *kouen debyu* has become a new kind of challenge and barrier for mothers.

Noriko-san, a 35-year-old part-time working mother whom I mentioned in a working mothers’ section, talked about her experience while she was taking some time off and being a stay-at-home mother. Regarding this “*kouen debyu,*” she said:

I was a good friend of a mother, my next-door neighbor. It is like *kouen debut*....... you know, we hear a lot about mothers who cannot enter the park, but in my case, it was opposite. Every day, from the terrace, I heard the invitation of “----- chan, let's go to the park!”. I was asked to go with her, and I could not say no, so I went to the park with her. Of course, we chatted at the park with other mothers. But what they talked was always about our children and I could not stand the situation. I could not endure that kind of life. Then I thought, it is not going to work anymore and I decided to start working outside the home.

As I already mentioned in the chapter of introduction, there are so many discords in mothers' relationships. They always try to check other's situation and compare others to themselves. Also, they try to be superior to others. Of course, the park is a good place
for mothers to talk and solve their problems of childrearing, but sometimes, those relationships bring negative influences to mothers, which is another reason for their stress.

The Way to Get Rid of the Stress of Childrearing

When I asked them whom they usually ask for help when they have problems or troubles with childrearing (I allowed them to give plural answers), eight of twelve mothers (66.6%) answered own mother or mother-in-law. Also, eight of twelve (66.6%) said that they ask their own friends.

Masako-san, a 27-year-old stay-at-home mother lives close to her own mother (her father passed away already). Her mother has a shop near the house and works as a head of cosmetic sales ladies. Also, Masako-san’s elder sister who is now pregnant, and her husband, live with her mother. Therefore, during the day, Masako-san always hangs out at her mother’s house to spend time with her sister. She said, “I am a person who is easily stressed out and thinks too much, so I always come to jikka (my parents’ house) and refresh my mind”. As Masako-san said, mothers who live close to their own mother tend to ask for help directly to their own mother. Also, talking to their own mothers can help stay-at-home mothers solve their problems easily.
Tomoko-san, a 28-year-old mother of Yuto-kun, said when she does not want to be with him at home alone, she usually goes to the children's center or her friend's house to spend time with her friends as well as Yuto-kun's friends. She added:

Mothers who have children around the same age group can share similar kinds of problems. Especially, babies aged 0-year-old have big differences month to month, so I often ask like, 'my baby is like this...how about yours?' then other mothers say, 'yeah, same as mine'. It could be good consultation, as well as a good way to get rid of my stress.

As I mentioned in the case study of Hiroko-san, some mothers said that they had a certain group of friends who could get together periodically. By talking to other people, stay-at-home mothers can recognize that they are not alone suffering from the situation or having difficulties with childrearing. Refreshing their mind and getting rid of their stress is the key to surviving the situation.

Merit of Stay-at-home Mothers

Although stay-at-home mothers tend to have intense situations compared to working mothers, there are good points to being a stay-at-home mother according to the responses I obtained through interviews with stay-at-home mothers. Although not having their own time is a serious problem for stay-at-home mothers, at the
same time, spending time with children all the time could be a good thing for mothers. As Hiroko-san, in the case study, mentioned, stay-at-home mothers tend to think that they are having precious time because children show mothers different faces every moment and obviously they grow up day by day.

Hiromi-san said the same thing, “I can see that my daughter grows every day and every hour. I can see her the whole time. It is a very good part of being a stay-at-home mother.” Staying at home with them and spending their time with their children makes it possible for mothers not to miss tiny differences and changes.

Miyoko-san said:

Sometimes in the morning, I see those working mothers place their children in hoikuen and go to work. I feel sorry for those children because they are still very little. At the same time, I think those parents are also to be pitied because they don’t know the first time their children start to walk, or they cannot see all of their children’s faces.

Miyoko-san also said that watching their son start to walk for the first time was a very precious moment and it made her very happy.

Toshie-san, mentioned above, said:

Since I spend time with my son all the time, I think we are communicating well and our connection is getting stronger. I think it is very good for children because their basic characteristics are created
during this period. It will affect their future life. Also, I can make his meals by myself.

Hiroko-san, a 27-year-old stay-at-home mother who used to work at one of the prestigious department stores, is satisfied with her current situation. Because she can spend a lot of time with her son, Hirohito-kun, she can watch him doing something new that he could not do the previous day. She also said that if she worked and placed Hirohito-kun in hoikuen, he would do it while she is not around. She thinks that is a sad thing as a mother.

Obviously, compared to working mothers, stay-at-home mothers can have more time to spend with their children. However, it could be a demerit as well as a merit for mothers. What can make stay-at-home mothers situation better is support from their husbands and other family members such as their own family or family-in-law.

Gender Based Role Division

Through my interviews, I found that husbands of stay-at-home mothers tend to spend less time doing housework compared to husbands whose wives work outside. As Yuka-san, in the case study, mentioned, some of the husbands of stay-at-home mothers help them a lot in terms of both childrearing and housework. For
example, Miho-san, the mother of Asahi-kun, and her husband, Takao-san, share the housework responsibilities based on the rules that Miho-san made. Takao-san is a professional volleyball player so that he can come home earlier than other salary men, and he can have much time to spend with Asahi-kun. Therefore, Miho-san is satisfied with her situation in terms of her husband’s participation in the domestic tasks. However, her case is not common. Usually men tend to work long hours and moreover, they have to spend about an hour, on average, for commuting.

From some responses, we could see that there is still a stereotypical idea of gender-based role division. Hiromi-san, a 26-year-old stay-at-home mother, talked about her idea of housework, “Unless I am very tired, I think housework is my job. So, when I am very tired, I sometimes ask my husband to do the dishes, but most of the time, I do them by myself.” Even before she gave a birth, when Hiromi-san and her husband both worked outside, she did complete most of the housework. Therefore, although Hiromi-san can have help from her husband, she thinks domestic tasks are her duty.

Tomoko-san mentioned that her husband’s attitude toward housework changed greatly. Now he helps her a lot more than before she gave birth even though he usually comes home very late
at night. In terms of childrearing, Tomoko-san mentioned an interesting point:

I think there are big differences between what I expect him to do, and what he thinks he is doing. I am spending the whole day with my son, so I have a lot of things that I want him to do like this and like that. However, when I talked to him, he said he wants to take a rest when he is off work. But even if I say to him like, 'Okay, then I will go out and work, so I want you to watch our son,' I cannot make the same amount of money that he makes now. So, I realized, as I cannot work as he, he cannot do what I do. I think it is role division.

Compared to those working mothers who share their housework responsibilities with their husband, stay-at-home mothers tend to complete most of the housework by themselves. One of the reasons is that their husbands cannot come home early enough to do housework. Also, stay-at-home mothers tend to think that housework is their duty because they are not working outside the home. I could see clear gender-based role division here.
Reasons to Quit Previous Jobs

Table 6: Reasons for Quitting Previous Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crisis of Urgent Miscarriage</th>
<th>Quit Voluntarily</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Hoikuen Situation</th>
<th>Difficulties of Commuting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the reasons those stay-at-home mothers quit their previous jobs.

Five of my sample worked until about seven to eight months of pregnancy and then quit their previous work. The main reasons were they wanted to make sure their babies were healthy. Also, they wanted to try childrearing at least until their children enter youchien or elementary school. Four (one third) of my sample quit their previous work when they found out that they were facing the crisis of urgent miscarriage. They wanted to continue but their body condition did not allow them to do so. One sample wanted to continue but quit because the workplace was far from her home and it was hard for her to commute. Another one quit when she married because of her husband's request. One quit after childcare leave as in the case study because she could not place her child in hoikuen.
Their reasons vary but overall they are satisfied with their current situation as being with their children.

Idea toward Work

Although stay-at-home mothers enjoy their current situation as being with their children all the time, they tend to want to return to work after their children grow enough to enter youchien or elementary school. Here is a table showing stay-at-home mothers’ work preference in the near future.

Table 7: Work Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Maybe Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Maybe Part-time</th>
<th>Not planning to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Including those who answered "maybe," half of my samples want to return to work full-time. Also, 41% of them answered, "want to work part-time". However, although they want to return to work, they tend to wait until their children become old enough to enter youchien or elementary school. Also, since many of them are now
considering having another one or two children, it will be another five to ten years until they start to work in reality.

In general, stay-at-home mothers tended to want to have their own income that they can spend on themselves without concern for their husbands' opinion. Chikako-san said her problem with being a stay-at-home mother is not having her own money that she can use without caring about anything. She added, "If I worked, I could have my own money that I can use however I want. However, now I am spending money that my husband makes, and trying to make ends meet on his salary. So, I feel I cannot touch that money for myself."

Yuki-san mentioned the same point, "Because I don't have any income, I feel inferior and cannot say what I really want to tell my husband. When I asked my husband why he works so much overtime, he said, 'If I did not work, we couldn't have money. Right?' I thought that was true." Therefore, she wants to go back to work full-time. She is now trying to collect various kinds of information about the schooling system in order to obtain certification. That would be a strong weapon to get a higher position as a female worker. This is exactly the same as what Hiroko-san mentioned in the case study. Mothers who quit their career because of childrearing tend to think that they had better obtain some kind of certification that will be to their advantage. They think it is very
hard to find a job without having certification, especially if they want to work full-time.

Not only for the economic reasons, but also in terms of self-esteem, stay-at-home mothers want to work outside the home. Many of them answered they don't want to live in a closed world and they always want to try to put themselves in a situation filled with information. Also, they want to keep the feeling of connection with society outside of the home.

Self

Another interesting point I found is mothers tend to think more about their own future as a woman, as an individual. They always care and think of their children first, and this may not change; however, as much as they think of their children, they also value their own future. As Yuka-san, in the case study, said, if they only think of their children and their family, they will be stuck in the situation where they lose their own “self” as a woman, as a person.

Miho-san said, “I don’t want to use my son or my marriage as my excuse for not doing what I really want. I want to do what I want to do for my own life.” Masako-san, a 27-year-old mother, also said the same thing, “I don’t want to try to endure beyond my power and
say 'Because I have a child...' like this later on. So, I want to try whatever I want to do."

Hiroko-san, mother of Hirohito-kun, said, "I want to be a cool woman, so I want to manage my work and I also want to do housework perfectly. It is meaningless only to dream, it is not going to be anything unless I make it happen!!" As mentioned in the previous section, stay-at-home mothers already have visions of their future lives. They seem to try to find ways to live their own lives on their own terms. They are struggling with their current situation as much as working mothers. However, I could see their positive attitude toward their own future.
CHAPTER IX
DISCUSSION

In this section, the discussion will be proceed in the form of comparisons between what I have learned through the review of the literature and the data I got through my surveys and interviews. Also, comparisons between working mothers and stay-at-home mothers will help to focus the contemporary problems of women in Japanese society.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Through the pre-interview survey and interviews, various points were found. The interviews revealed that both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers are struggling with their problems to some extent. Some findings were contrary to my initial expectations. I expected to find that one group would have markedly more problems than the other. This is not the case. The problems are different in type. Stay at home mothers’ greatest problems are not being able to have their own time, and not being able to be independent because of the fact that they are not working. Working mothers’ greatest problems are centered about the hoikuen situation, such as the hoikuen does not stay open late enough to
enable them to complete their overtime work, and spending less
time with their children than do stay-at-home mothers. In quantity,
neither group has overwhelmingly more problems than the other.

One remarkable point is working mothers have a positive idea
about the fact they are working outside and that their children go to
hoikuen. However, at the same time, the hoikuen is one of the
biggest worries among working mothers regarding its open hours
and difficulties of entrance. In addition, working mothers have
multiple roles of being mother, wife, worker, and working mothers
switch mentally and prioritize their housework chores. However, it is
possible for working mothers to manage their own lives well. What
these working mothers are trying to do in terms of prioritizing their
multiple roles is based on the idea of tenuki. They think they are not
doing as much as stay-at-home mothers do in terms of housework
chores. However, it does not mean that they are valuing their
children less. They are somehow juggling their housework chores
with the demands of their jobs, but they are prioritizing
childrearing. Therefore, what they really do is place less value on
their physical chores.

In terms of the way mothers make friends, there was a
difference between working mothers and stay-at-home mothers.
Working mothers tend to make friends with other mothers who
place their children in the same hoikuen. The relationship with other mothers helps them solve their problems and refresh their minds because those other mothers have similar problems due to working. On the other hand, stay-at-home mothers tend to make friends with other mothers whom they meet in the hospital when they have periodic check-ups at hospitals, and whom they meet at the park in their neighborhood.

Regarding gender based role divisions, even though men tend to value mothers’ outside opportunities, they still prioritize mothers’ domestic roles to some extent. As a matter of fact, since men tend to work more hours than women, it is very hard for working mothers to ask their husbands to do the same amount of housework even if working mothers want their husbands to. On the other hand, stay-at-home mothers tend to complete most of the housework chores without husbands’ help. In both cases, in terms of childrearing, their husbands try to help them. We can see that there is still a leftover influence of the historical idea of gender based role divisions in contemporary Japanese society.

Many working mothers have supportive environments in which their bosses and co-workers try to cooperate with them and understand the difficulties of handling multiple roles. This is one of
the key points influencing whether or not working mothers can have positive ideas toward their careers.

Stay-at-home mothers tend to be satisfied with their current situation of being stay-at-home mothers because they can spend plenty of time with their children and so they don't miss small progressions that their children make each day. However, at the same time they are having problems with getting their own time away from their children and it makes them stressed.

In contemporary Japanese society, it is accepted that mothers work outside. For both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers, we could see the shift of meaning of motherhood. Mothers can work outside by using hoikuen. Likewise, stay-at-home mothers can place their children into hoikuen after children become three years old.

However, following the changes in the meaning of motherhood, there is a controversial issue among mothers about working mothers. As Keiko-san mentioned in the case study, working mothers and stay-at-home mothers devalue each other in terms of attending to children's needs. Also, there are some stereotypes toward those children whose mothers work outside, that the children of working mothers are too aggressive and hurt other children.

Educational background, by which I mean the number of
years of schooling, is not the key to whether or not mothers
decide to continue their careers. Rather, having specific skills or
certifications may have a strong relationship to whether or not
mothers decide to continue their careers. Therefore, stay-at-home
mothers who want to return to work full-time tend to think of
getting some kind of certification in order to obtain better jobs.
Although stay-at-home mothers think of returning to work, they
tend to wait until their children enter youchien or elementary
school.

It is difficult to generalize the case of single mothers based on
my research because I only had two interviewees who were single
mothers. The problems that they had were different based on their
occupations. One of them works as a flight attendant and she can
make good money compared to other working mothers. Her case is
an unusual example because she did not have any financial
difficulties. However, the other one who works part-time said it is
very difficult to live financially as a single mother because of the
lack of governmental support. As mentioned earlier, help from
parents if the single mothers live with (or close to) their parents
makes a great difference in their daily lives and their level of stress.
COMPARISON OF MY FINDINGS

With my assumptions/expectations

I began with several assumptions. I assumed first that working mothers would have negative feelings about working in terms of the lack of the time they spend with their children and so they would feel sorry for their children. However, according to my respondents, working mothers tend to think positively about the fact that they are working.

Using *hoikuen* makes it possible for working mothers to have positive feelings about childrearing since they can obtain specific and useful advice from well-trained professional caregivers. A mother who placed her children in a public *hoikuen* in Tokyo mentioned that the place she uses for her children is well-known for the high quality of its caregivers, and she is very satisfied with their care. Based on the parameters that the government has set, those public *hoikuen* are checked periodically so that a high quality of childcare will be maintained.

Mothers can exchange information and talk about their own problems with other working mothers that use the same *hoikuen*. Also, since after children adjust to the *hoikuen* situation, children learn and experience various kinds of new things through *hoikuen* activities, mothers think using a *hoikuen* brings better influence to
children as well. Therefore, contrary to my assumption, working mothers feel positive about the fact that they work because they can take advantage of placing their children in a hoikuen.

Second, I assumed that working mothers would tend to directly ask their own mothers for help and their mothers' support would make it possible for working mothers to have outside careers. Only thirty-eight percent of my respondents answered that their primary supporters are their mothers (parents). Especially, those respondents who live close to (or live with) parents usually rely on their mothers (parents). However, it is difficult for respondents who live far away from their mothers (parents) to ask for help on a daily basis. Therefore, it depends greatly on the distance between where they live and where their parents live.

Here, it is important to mention the significance of the cultural expectation of the in-law relationship with Japanese mothers. It is very helpful to live with one's own parents or parents-in-law in terms of support for childrearing. However, there is a big difference if a woman lives with her own mother or her mother-in-law. The expectation of in-laws that their daughter-in-law be submissive to them may seem to be an historical vestige but it is still remains. Therefore, living close to (or with) in-laws can bring a
great deal of stress to the daughter-in-law. However, if women live with their own mothers, their stress is much less.

Another assumption that I started with in terms of interviews with stay-at-home mothers was stay-at-home mothers would be satisfied with their situation and would not have a desire to return to work. Mostly, stay-at-home mothers are satisfied with the fact they can spend plenty of time with their children. It means that they think they are completing their role as a mother well. However, in terms of their "self", they are not satisfied with their current situation. Since they do not have their own time, and they do not have their own income, they tend to feel like they are not independent. Also, for them, having contact outside the home in the society means a lot. By realizing that they are part of the society, they can have some self-confidence because they are needed in the society. Again, here the case of the murdered Haruna-chan shows the contrast between having positive outside contact and having competitive relationships, which cause stay-at-home mothers the extreme stress that may have caused such a cruel murder.

Also, I began with an assumption that each respondent's current situation of being either a working mother or a stay-at-home mother would show a relationship to each respondent's mother's choice in this matter. For example, I often heard my friends say that
since they were raised by stay-at-home mothers, they would want to be stay-at-home mothers. They thought it was the way mothers should be. Also, other friends who were raised by working mothers tended to say that they had wanted their mothers to stay at home so that they did not have to feel loneliness. Therefore, inside of me, I always had an idea that daughters see their mothers' path and it effects their decisions.

However, “the respondent's mother's choice” was not a predictor of these today's mothers' decisions. Because today's mothers tend to value their own lives as individuals; what appears to be a predictor in how today's mothers make choices is whether each's mother fit the Meiji-period stereotype, “good wife, wise mother” (sacrificed “self”) or not (preserved “self”). Today's mothers who were raised by Meiji-period stereotypical mothers tend to not want to be like their mothers, whom they view as being “men's accessory” wives and mothers. Though they respect the choice their mothers made, current mothers don't want to sacrifice “self” by being men's accessories. Current media encourage working mothers in this new tendency toward mothers' concern for their own lives by publicizing their options as individuals. Today's mothers are not attracted to the “good wife, wise mother” idea of motherhood. They are trying to value their own “self” compared to their own mothers.
With Literature

Jolivet mentions, "It would appear that those who practice *tenuki*, that is those who manage to reduce the amount of housework they do to an absolute minimum, have a strong sense of self-preservation." (Jolivet 1997: 19) Jolivet's finding is supported by responses mentioned in the result section of my interviews with working mothers, which show them changing mentally to omit some housework chores so that they can control their time efficiently in order not to feel pressure of being ideal housewives.

Also, using *hoikuen* is one of the effective ways for mothers to survive the difficult period of childrearing. As many in my sample said, they know how to manage their own time in order not to get stressed. From what those mothers said, I could see that they try not to be too perfect because it is impossible. They know that they would suffer from stress from childrearing otherwise.

Based on the research done by Nihon Roudou Kikou, Roudou-shou (Ministry of Labor) reported that especially mothers who quit their previous job because of childbirth tend to have worries about their abilities to return to work. Those mothers also tend to think that they should obtain certifications or licenses in order to find new jobs (Roudou-shou 2000:93).
This Roudou-shou report parallels my samples' answers, which do indeed show working mothers tend to have jobs requiring specific skills such as teaching and nursing. The answers from these working mothers tended to be like, "I work because this is what I have wanted to do". On the other hand, most of the stay-at-home mothers' answers did not show fondness or attachment toward their previous work. Their answers tended to be like, "It (the job they had) was not what I wanted. I also thought that was not what I should devote my life to." Compared to those working mothers, stay-at-home mothers do not have attachment to their jobs. Therefore, having specific skills, certifications, and licenses appears to be also one of the keys to whether or not mothers continue their careers after childbirth.

In terms of educational background, studies show that women who have higher educational backgrounds tend to marry and give birth late (Roudou-shou 2000:57-59). However, in my research, I did not obtain the responses that support this viewpoint. Rather, as mentioned above, it seems that the predictor is more likely to be their skills obtained through their educations.

Rosenberger states, "Weak as they are in the larger system, young women are pushing Japanese society to consider what it would mean to live life as if "self were self" (jibun ha jibun) in all
arenas of life.” (Rosenberger 2001:212) Rosenberger’s statement is supported by the responses I obtained through my research. Regarding their future vision, there is a similarity between working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. These two groups of mothers are positive about their future. Both groups of mothers tend to value their own lives as individuals. Most of the stay-at-home mothers I interviewed answered that they want to return to work either part-time or full-time. In addition to economic reasons, they want to pursue their own dreams. Today’s mothers don’t feel pressure to sacrifice self. As much as they value their role as mother and wife, they think a lot about their own lives as individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What the Government Can Do

As has been shown, the two groups’ (working mothers and stay-at-home mothers) problems are different in type. Thus, I recommend that

1) Government policy should not favor one group over the other (working mothers or stay-at-home mothers).

2) Government policy should distinguish between the two groups and address the specific needs of each.
For example, for working mothers, the government should make more facilities that stay open late so that working mothers can place their children there while they are doing overtime work; and for stay-at-home mothers, the government should provide more public spaces and opportunities in public centers so that stay-at-home mothers can use those opportunities to socialize with other mothers who have similar worries and problems.

Based on the results from the pre-interview survey, I noted a tendency that most respondents, including both married and single, and men and women, think mothers should value their own “self”, which is individuality. Also, most respondents think that having some social connection is the key factor for mothers to nourish a sense of self and individuality, supporting my view that there should be government-supported activities that help stay-at-home mothers obtain more contact opportunities outside the home in order that each not feel as if she is the only one who suffers from childrearing problems.

The government should reconsider the hoikuen situation immediately and make more facilities that stay open late. Working mothers cannot usually expect husbands to take the responsibility of picking children up from hoikuen because the company does not encourage men to leave work early. It is currently difficult to find a
hoikuen which stays open late enough to accommodate overtime work. Also, changing the admissions date, such as to “open entry,” for public hoikuen would help working mothers. Improving the hoikuen situation would solve this problem of working parents, and help relieve the working mothers’ stress. If the hoikuen situation improved, women who now consider continuing their careers after childbirth will not hesitate to take some time off for childcare leave and then return to work by using hoikuen as their alternative.

What Companies Can Do

Companies should adapt policies so that male workers can have more family time to participate in domestic chores. It would make the mothers’ situations easier because usually absent husbands make mothers’ domestic responsibilities greater than they should be. Also, when company’s policies pressure husbands to work lots of overtime, working mothers cannot depend on their partners to pick up children at hoikuen. This makes it difficult for working mothers to advance their careers.

In terms of career opportunities, companies should eliminate the age limitation for female workers when they hire married women who quit their previous jobs because of childbirth and childrearing. Since the age limitation prevents middle-aged women who really
want to return to work full-time from engaging in full-time work, those women cannot obtain respected, well-paid opportunities (Roudou-shou 2000:89) even if they have strong will and enthusiastic motivation, and so they end up working part-time.

Companies should make onsite childcare facilities. This would be one of the most effective ways that companies could improve conditions for working mothers. Also, companies have to change the internal policies that make working mothers’ and their husbands’ situation difficult in terms of handling their multiple roles. For example, companies should encourage husbands to take childcare leave. Companies should encourage husbands to leave work earlier without worries about “backstabbers.”

However, the most important point that we have to take into consideration is changing the company policies and government attitudes toward female workers.

Companies should encourage female workers to pursue their careers, and also companies should give more responsibilities to female workers. Once the company policy supports female workers and once a maternity/childcare system is established completely and favorably, female workers will have positive mindsets about taking maternity and childcare leaves. It will relieve working mothers’ stress of handling multiple roles. Then, female workers will
not quit and companies won’t have to worry about wasting costs for training those female workers. With female workers’ greater participation, male workers would have more time to spend with their families and not be under too much pressure because female workers could take men’s job responsibilities to some extent.

What Individuals Can Do

In addition to expecting support from companies and the government, individual Japanese have to think of what individuals and couples can do to improve the situation in terms of juggling childrearing and careers. By exchanging and obtaining information, working mothers can learn how to be successful with childrearing as well as their career and marriage. One of my respondents, Hisako-san, said that Hisako-san and her husband started to research about the laws and the tips for managing their married life with their careers before getting married. Habits they developed while engaged continue to help them even now, after the first child. She said she volunteers for various kinds of group activities that interest her. She collects information by attending public lectures and using the Internet. According to her story, we can see the importance of individuals’ taking personal responsibility and actions in order to improve their current and future prospects.
Akiko-san in the case study also took personal action by choosing a house that is close to their hoikuen. Locating close to a hoikuen solves problems of the hoikuen situation. The living place should also be located where it is convenient for parents to commute. Using a hoikuen close to home makes it possible for working mothers to get involved in outside activities with other working mothers met through their children’s hoikuen.

Locating close to parents and keeping good relations can relieve stresses of time and expenses. Working mothers can rely on parents without worries of childcare cost, overtime work, and the quality of the daycare system. Whereas living with grandparents can cause a new and different set of troubles and problems, living close to parents can provide benefits while avoiding difficulties of living together. In Japan, we have a well-known term regarding living close to parents, “the distance where the soup would not get cold (soup no samenai kyorî).” It means that it is very convenient to live close to parents. Not living together with grandparents makes it possible for both parents and children to have a fresh and better relationship versus living with them. Since contemporary Japan has the worries of an aging society in which lonely old people die without being noticed by other people, living close to their children and
grandchildren may bring the positive benefits of companionship and self-worth for grandparents as well.

Compared to working mothers, stay-at-home mothers have less opportunity to meet new people outside. However, having social connections and participating in outside activities makes those stay-at-home mothers feel better by knowing that they are not the only ones who suffer from childrearing. Therefore, stay-at-home mothers should stay alert for opportunities to participate in the neighborhood activities that are promoted and given either by non-government organizations or the government. They should check bulletin boards at community centers, libraries, and children's centers for opportunities to get involved in local activities. For example, one respondent said that she found a local volunteer group that taught how to make healthy snacks for children without using artificial ingredients. By attending the volunteer group, she learned about ecology activities as well as tips of childrearing.

Attending open health lectures for new mothers at government clinics and public health centers, and going to children's centers, parks, and playgrounds in the neighborhood would help relieve stay-at-home mothers' stress, as some respondents pointed out. Being house-bound is the biggest cause of stress for stay-at-home mothers. Increasing the chances of meeting other new mothers
would help them get rid of their stress. Since stay-at-home mothers have fewer opportunities in terms of information (working mothers can obtain broad information through work and Internet use at their companies), community-based activities are a way for stay-at-home mothers to relieve the stress of isolation.

Mothers should also encourage fathers to be more active and get involved in various neighborhood activities that expand their local acquaintances and friendship. Women can take steps to help men break the gender-based stereotype of being a "wage slave." For example, community activities are commonly viewed as a "woman's arena". By encouraging fathers to participate in local activities such as festivals, men learn more about the community activities that children are involved with. It helps fathers develop a community based identity to balance, and lessen the pressure of, the "wage slave" stereotype. Also, fathers would have more opportunities to talk with their children based on what they learn through community activities because one of the main concerns and topics of conversations among those fathers who are involved in the community activities is about their children.

Both men and women have to value domestic responsibilities as much as they value their careers. Not only making the changes in the government and company policies, but also changing the
individual perceptions would improve couples’ situations.

Childrearing is not just a woman’s task, but a man’s task as well. Changing each one’s way of thinking and perception toward childrearing, should change men’s historical attitude of gender based role divisions and make women’s lives better.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

One day, when I was in a crowded train in Tokyo, I saw one businessman who held a little baby in his arms and carried a compact stroller with him. Unconsciously, I looked for his wife. But she was not around. He was by himself with his little son. It was a very unusual scene for me, and for others as well. People did not say a word, but there was an atmosphere that people did have curiosity about him.

It was early afternoon and he was in a business suit and had a stroller. Since everybody was watching him implicitly and explicitly, he looked ashamed, as if he was doing something wrong or strange. Then, he took off at one station in a hurry. Soon, I realized that I did not have to look for a mother of the child just because the baby was with his father. He was just being a father of his son. Even though he wore a suit, it did not mean he couldn't be a father. His son might have been sick and suddenly he had to pick him up. Or his wife might be in the hospital because her due date was coming. Either way, he was just being a father, doing what he needed to do.
However, I think this story shows the general idea and tendency of people in contemporary Japanese society. People have a hard time getting used to those situations not based on typical gender based role divisions. Because everyone thinks that a father works outside the home while the mother is taking care of the children, seeing the businessman with a stroller was not a common thing. I assumed that there were many people who were watching him as if he was to be pitied. I could not help making a bitter smile to myself about what I did unconsciously.

This was only one piece of a picture of daily life in Japan. However, it shows the significant tendency in contemporary Japanese society, which is a fixed idea that people have that is based on the gender based role divisions. We tend to focus on the unfair treatment toward women in the workplace. However, if we try to change the work situation and the social system, men will suffer from the traditional idea of gender based role divisions as well.

As we saw in Keiko-san's case, she and her husband take turns doing the overtime work and picking their daughter up every other day. As Keiko-san pointed out, there are still many obstacles to men being responsible for domestic tasks. There is still an environment that men cannot take part in domestic responsibilities because it used to be shameful for a man who is a head of the
house. As much as women struggle with their contemporary situation, men might be suffering from the situation also. Of course, changing the traditional ideas that are historically rooted deeply in Japanese society is not an easy task for us. However, unless we try to change these social tendencies, nothing is going to improve.

Therefore, each of us Japanese has to realize that each one of us still has the stereotypes and fixed ideas about gender based role divisions. We are the ones who have to take small actions in order to change this contemporary situation. I got a strong impression from the mothers I interviewed, that regardless if they work or not, mothers have strong views toward their own future. They are trying to change their situations. They are trying to improve their future life. No matter how difficult, they have a strong will to move forward.

I had an assumption that mothers’ current situations as mothers and wives would cause them to give up their futures as individual because their daily lives are busy. It is as if it is a continuous war battle, and society has already decided their futures to some extent. However they were filled with energy and dreams. It was the biggest surprise and best discovery for me.

My research was accomplished with one-one-one interviews with only female interviewees. Because of the restriction of my interviews in terms of gender, the answers lean toward female
perspectives. However, I obtained many valuable comments from male respondents through my written surveys, and obtaining answers from males on the surveys was effective in forming a clearer picture of the contemporary Japanese situation.

Therefore, for further research, I would recommend conducting one-on-one interviews with the husbands of both working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. Unless working mothers obtain their husbands' understanding and cooperation, they cannot manage their multiple roles. Therefore, investigating men's perception would be one way to make the picture of contemporary women's situations clearer.

Further, the expectations that wives have for their husbands, and that husbands have for their wives may differ from each other. Therefore, interviewing their husbands separately from those mothers will help us obtain different point of views toward mothers' roles.

The murder of Haruna-chan, the shocking incident mentioned in the introduction, has influenced Japanese society to realize how difficult it is to be a mother in contemporary Japan. There are on-going controversial discussions about mothers' situations in the media. In one sense, this was not just a tragic incident since it has
begun to help Japanese society realize the importance of reconsidering the current childcare system.
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What’s gender-equal society?  

Sugimoto, Kiyoe  

Sugimoto, Kiyoe  
Suzuki, Kouji  

Tanaka, Kazuko  

Tanaka, Yukiko  

Tokyo-to  

Uno, Kathleen S.  

Yoshizumi, Kyoko  
APPENDICES
Appendix A-1: Survey Questions

For Male respondent

1. How old are you?
2. Are you married? Yes / No
   If Yes: How old were you when you got married?
     (Please move on to #3)
   If No: At what age do you want to get married?
     (Please move on to #4)
3. If you are married:
   Is your wife working outside? Yes / No
     If Yes: As part-timer or full-timer?
     If No: Did she want to work?

   How do you feel about her working or not working?

   What are the advantages and disadvantages?
     (Please move on to #5)

4. If you are not married:
   Do you want your wife to work outside?
     Why? Why not?
     (Please move on to #6)

5. Do you have children? Yes / No
   If Yes: How many?
     How old are they?
   If No: Do you want to?
     (Please tell me your reason)

Qualitative Questions for Men

6. What kinds of things do you think you need to do in order to be a good father?

7. What kinds of things do you think you need to do in order to be a good husband?
8. What kinds of things do you think a woman needs to do in order to be a good mother?

9. What kinds of things do you think a woman needs to do in order to be a good wife?

10. What is your opinion about working mothers in general?

For Female respondent

1. How old are you?

2. Are you married? Yes/ No
   If Yes: How old were you when you got married?
   (Please move on to #3)
   If No: At what age do you want to get married?
   (Please move on to #4)

3. If you are married:
   Are you working outside? Yes/ No
   If Yes: As part-timer?
   If No: Did you want to work?

   How do you feel about working or not working?

   What are the advantages and disadvantages?
   (Please move on to #5)

4. If you are not married:
   Do you want to work outside after getting married?
   Why? Why not?
   (Please move on to #6)

5. Do you have children? Yes/ No
   If Yes: How many?
   How old are they?
   If No: Do you want to? (Please tell me your reason)
Qualitative Questions for Women

6. What kinds of things do you think you need to do in order to be a good mother?

7. What kinds of things do you think you need to do in order to be a good wife?

8. What kinds of things do you think a man needs to do in order to be a good father?

9. What kinds of things do you think a man needs to do in order to be a good husband?

10. What is your opinion about working mothers in general?
Appendix A-2: Survey Questions (Japanese)

＜男性の方へ＞

1. あなたの年齢を教えて下さい。
2. あなたは既婚者ですか？ ハイ・イイエ
   ハイとお答えの方・・・何歳の時に結婚されましたか？
   (3. へお進み下さい)
   イイエとお答えの方・・・いくつぐらいで結婚したいですか？
   (4. へお進み下さい)

3. もしご結婚されている場合
   あなたの奥様は外で働かれていますか？ ハイ・イイエ
   ハイとお答えの方・・・パートタイマーとしてですか？
   それともフルタイマーとしてですか？
   イイエとお答えの方・・・奥様は（結婚後も）外で働きたいと
   おっしゃっていましたか？

   奥様が外で働いている事(または働いていない事)にたいしてどのよう
   にお考えですか？

   メリット、デメリットは何でしょうか？
   (5. へお進み下さい)

4. もしご結婚されていない場合
   あなたは奥様になる人に外で働いて欲しいですか？
   それはなぜですか？
   (6. へお進み下さい)

5. お子さんはいらっしゃいますか？ ハイ・イイエ
   ハイとお答えの方・・・何人いらっしゃいますか？
   おいくつですか？
   イイエとお答えの方・・・お子さんを欲しいと思われます
   か？
   それはなぜですか？

   あとこの質問は全員の方への共通の質問です。

6. 「良い父親」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？
7. 「良い夫」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？
8. 「良い母親」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？
9. 「良い妻」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？
10. あなたの一般的な「働く母親」に対する考え、意見をお聞かせ下さい

ご協力大変ありがとうございました。
尚、大変手数ですが、下記の欄にあなたのご署名をお願いします。
(匿名をご希望の方は空欄で結構です。)

承諾書

私は今回のアンケートの意図を理解した上、吉崎喜美代に協力しました。

お名前

日付け

＜女性の方へ＞
1. あなたの年齢を教えて下さい。
2. あなたは既婚者ですか？ ハイ・イイエ
   ハイとお答えの方・・・何歳の時に結婚されましたが？
   (3. へお進み下さい)
   イイエとお答えの方・・・いくつくらいで結婚したのですか？
   (4. へお進み下さい)
3. もしこ結婚されている場合
   あなたは外で働かれていますか？ ハイ・イイエ
   ハイとお答えの方・・・パートタイマーとしてですか？
   それともフルタイマーとしてですか？
   イイエとお答えの方・・・あなたは結婚後も外で働きたいと思っていらっしゃいましたか？

母親が外で働いている事(または働いていない事)にたいしてどのようにお考えですか？
メリット、デメリットは何でしょうか？

(5. へお進み下さい)

4. もしご結婚されていない場合
あなたは結婚後も外で働きたいですか？
それはなぜですか？
(6. へお進み下さい)

5. お子さんはいらっしゃいますか？ ハイ・イイエ
ハイとお答えの方・・・何人いらっしゃいますか？
おいくつですか？
イイエとお答えの方・・・お子さんを欲しいと思われますか？
それはなぜですか？

あとの質問は全員の方への共通の質問です。

6. 「良い母親」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？

7. 「良い妻」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？

8. 「良い父親」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？

9. 「良い夫」になるためには何が必要条件だと思われますか？

10. あなたの一般的な「働く母親」に対する考え、意見をお聞かせ下さい。

ご協力大変ありがとうございました。
尚、大変お手数ですが、下記の欄にあなたのご署名をお願いします。
(匿名をご希望の方は空欄で結構です。)

承諾書

私は今回のアンケートの意図を理解した上、吉崎喜美代に協力しました。

お名前 ____________________________ 日付け
Appendix B-1: Informed Consent Document

Date:
Dear (respondent)

I am currently a graduate student at Oregon State University, majoring in Applied Anthropology. For my research project, I will investigate contemporary women’s stereotypes in relation to family and work. I would like to explore the relationship between working mothers and their children, with a focus on how it has been influenced by Japanese society. This issue is very interesting to me as I am a woman from Japan. One of the goals I have in pursuing this thesis is to understand what can be done to improve the social position of women in contemporary society today.

I would like to investigate and analyze the challenges that women face in contemporary Japanese society by focusing on their career and family lives. My analysis will be based on interviews, surveys, and first-hand experiences. On a broader scale, I will be looking at women’s perceptions of Japanese society.

The answers you provide are strictly confidential and special precautions have been established to protect the confidentiality of your responses such as the use of pseudonyms in computer data analysis and thesis. Those audiotapes that I am going to record will be kept in a locked safe box. Also I will not record if you do not want me to, and in this case, I will take notes. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question at any time.

If you have any questions about the interviews, please contact me, Kimiyo Yoshizaki at [***] ***-****. If I am not available when you call, please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Just in case, here is my address:

*** Kasugacho,
Iruma-shi, Saitama 358-0006
Japan

Thank you very much for your help. I really appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kimiyo Yoshizaki
M.A.I.S. (Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies) Student
Oregon State University

If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the IRB Coordinator, OSU Research Office, (541) 737-8008.
Appendix B-2: Informed Consent Form (Japanese)

9/9/2000

各位

私は、現在アメリカオレゴン州立大学で応用人間学修士課程に在籍しております吉崎喜美代と申します。現在「働く母親—現代の日本における女性の社会認識」をテーマにした卒業論文に取り組んでおります。
そこで今回のご結婚式の場をお借りして、現代の若者の意識調査のようなものをさせて頂きたのです。
もちろん、皆様のプライバシーはお守りしますし、頂いたお答えを他へ洩らすことはありませんので、お答え頂ける範囲での皆様のご協力をお願いいたします。
尚、アメリカの大学では個人のプライバシーや人権問題に対して大変厳しいため、今回のごアンケートにお答え頂ける方にはアンケート用紙の一番下の欄にご署名をお願いいたします。

何かご質問などございましたら、下記まで、ご一報ください。

358-0006
埼玉県入間市春日町*.*.*.*.*
042-***-**** (TEL/FAX)

オレゴン州立大学大学院
応用人間学修士課程
吉崎喜美代
Appendix C-1: Announcement on the Web

Hi, my name is Kimiyo Yoshizaki. I am currently a graduate student at Oregon State University, majoring in Applied Anthropology. For my research project, I will investigate contemporary women's stereotypes in relation to family and work. I would like to explore the relationship between working mothers and their children, with a focus on how it has been influenced by Japanese society.

If any of you would be willing to participate in my project through interviews that I will conduct in this coming Fall from September, please contact me. I am looking for those mothers who fit in one or more of these categories.

1. Who lives in/near Tokyo.
2. Who is aged 24-35 years old
3. Who, after childbirth,
   A. Took maternity and childcare leave and has returned to work
      a) FULL TIME
      b) PART TIME
   B. Is being a stay-at-home mother

If you are willing to be in my sample, please e-mail me. I really appreciate your kindness and concern in advance.

Kimiyo Yoshizaki
Kasugacho
Iruma-shi, Saitama
358-0006

Oregon State University
M.A.I.S. (Masters of Art in Interdisciplinary Studies)
Appendix C-2 Announcement on the Web (Japanese)

ウェブページ掲載の協力者募集用メール

皆様はじめまして。
私はアメリカオレゴン州立大学で応用人類学修士課程に在籍しているものです。現在「働く母親たち—日本社会における女性認識」をテーマとした修士論文に取り組んでおります。

そこで皆様にお願いがあります。
この論文はインタビューを主な資料として進めていく予定にしており、私の簡単なインタビューにご協力頂ける方を探しております。
この秋9月から一時帰国をしますので、その際にご協力頂ける方はいらっしゃいませんでしょうか？
一応、条件がありまして、

1. 東京近郊にお住まい

2. 24～35歳の女性

3. 結婚され、お子さんがお出来になられてから

A. 育児休暇を利用して職場復帰（現在保育園等を利用しながら）された方
   a) その際、フルタイムで出産前と全く同様の職場環境におられる方
   b) 又はやむを得ず、パートタイマーとして働かれている方

B. 退職され、専業主婦として今後も職場復帰予定のない方

以上の条件に当てはまる方を30名ほど探しております。
誠に勝手ながら、財政難により謝礼等お約束出来ないのですが、それでも構わないという方、どうか直接Eメールでyoshizak@ucore.orst.eduまでご一報頂けませんでしょうか？何卒よろしくお願いいたします。

オレゴン州立大学応用人類学修士課程
吉崎喜美代
Appendix D-1: Interview Questions

For working mothers

WORK
1. What corporation do you work for? And what is your position?
2. Briefly explain what your main responsibilities at work are.
3. What is your husband's (occupation/position/main responsibilities at work)?
4. Did you already have a child/children when you started the current work?
   If Yes: Why did you choose this work?
   Were there any difficulties obtaining that job because you have a child (children)?
   What were your husband's feelings about you taking a job?
   If No: Did you take maternity leave?
   If Yes: Was it difficult to take the maternity leave?
   Was the decision to return after the maternity leave difficult? Why?
   If No: How did you handle it?
5. How many hours do you work a day?

CHILDREN
How do you divide your time between work and taking care of the children? (Open-ended question)

1. How do you take care of your child/children when you are working?
   Are you using a daycare center?
   If Yes: How did you choose the place?
   Who has the responsibility to take the child (children) to daycare and pick him/her up?
   If No: How do you take care of the child (children) while you are at work?
2. How do your children feel about the fact that you have a job?
3. Are you as a parent involved with any of the daycare activities?
4. How much time do you usually spend with your child (children) per day?
5. What types of activities do you do with your children?
6. Do you help your children with their homework?

FAMILY
How is it for you working and also getting the housework done? (Open-ended question)

1. How many hours do you dedicate to housework per day (approximately)?
2. How do you manage (handle) your family responsibilities?
3. Do you have any help with housework?
   If yes: who helps you?
4. Is your husband supportive of childcare? Housework?
   Please give examples
5. Are/Is your children/child supportive?
   Please give examples

SELF
How do you feel about your situation of working and having children in relation to your ideas about self/self fulfillment? (Open-ended question)

1. Why do you work outside of the home?
2. Would you want to continue with your job even if you didn't have to (e.g. financial stability)?
3. What is your priority: mother; wife; worker?
   (Please rate from one to three, one being most important and explain why you chose it this way)

PROS and CONS
1. Could you give an example of one of the problems that you face as a result of having a job?
2. Could you share an example of one of the positive experiences that you've had as a result of working outside of the home?

For stay at home mothers

WORK
1. What corporation did you work for?
2. What was your position?
3. What is your husband's (occupation/position/main responsibilities at work)?
4. Did you already have a child (children) when you started the previous work?
   If Yes:
   Why did you choose this work?
   Were there any difficulties in obtaining that job since you have a child (children)?
   Did your husband say something to you about getting a job?

   If No:
   Did you take maternity leave?
   If Yes: Was it difficult to take the maternity leave?
   If No: How did you handle it?
5. How many hours did you work a day?
6. Briefly, what were your main responsibilities at work?

CHILDREN
How do you divide your time in relation to housework and taking care of the children? (Open-ended question)

How much time do you usually spend with your child/children per day?
What types of activities do you do with your children?

FAMILY
Do you have any expectations of your family with regard to family/household responsibilities? (Open-ended question)

1. How many hours do you spend doing housework per day (approximately)?
2. How do you manage (handle) your family responsibilities?
3. Does anyone help you with the housework?
   If yes: who helps you?

4. Is your husband supportive of childcare? Housework?
   Please give examples here
5. Are/is your children/child supportive?
   Please give examples here
SELF
What do you feel about your situation of being a stay-at-home mother in relation to your ideas about self/self fulfillment? (Open-ended question)

1. Why did you quit working outside?
2. Would you want to go back to work even if you didn’t have to?
3. What is your priority: mother; wife; worker?
(Please rate from one to three, one being most important and explain why you chose it this way)

PROS and CONS
1. Could you give an example of one of the problems that you face as a result of being a stay-at-home mother?
2. Could you share an example of one of the positive experiences that you’ve had as a result of being a stay-at-home mother?
Appendix E: Informed Consent Form for Interview (Japanese Only)

2000年9月
各位

私は、現在アメリカオレゴン州立大学で応用人類学修士課程に在籍しております吉崎喜美代と申します。現在「働く母親―現代の日本における女性の社会認識」をテーマにした卒業論文に取り組んでおります。そして、その論文の主な資料として、対面インタビューを用いることにしました。現代の母親達の実態を少しでも現実に近い形で把握するためには皆様に直接お話を伺うことが一番的確な方法であると考えたからです。
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以上のことをご理解頂いた上、私のインタビューに応じていただけるかたには、形だけではありませんが、下記の承諾書にご署名をお願いいたしますので、お手数をおかけいたしますがどうぞよろしくお願いいたします。
尚、何かご質問等ございましたら、下記まで、ご一報ください。

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オレゴン州立大学大学院
応用人類学修士課程
吉崎喜美代

承諾書

今回のインタビューの趣旨を理解した上、吉崎喜美代に協力しました。

お名前__________________________日付け

ご協力大変ありがとうございました。