

*For graphics, please contact the general editor of ICS*

**Working Mothers in Japan and the Effects  
on Children and Society\***

Jill Steury

*Trinity University*

Japanese society is one in which there is an emphasis on differentiated sex roles. Traditionally, it is the male who works and the female who stays home to care for both house and children. Yet, since the end of World War Two, Japanese women have increasingly been participating in the work force. Due to the nature of the culture, working women have received a lot of attention, and studies and surveys have been performed regarding women working outside of the home. These studies reveal a change in attitude among young women in Japan. Women feel there is more to life than getting married and raising children. However, this change is seen only among young women. Men and older women tend to favor the conventional role of a Japanese woman.

In day care centers, where one would expect the teachers to be supportive of working mothers, they in fact maintain the traditional role of women. Because of day care teacher's continued belief that mothers should not be working but at home taking care of their children, working mothers face many difficulties when enrolling their children in day care centers. Mothers complain of a lack of flexibility in schedule arranging and too much teacher interference. They also complain that day care centers create an environment that is too education oriented than a baby-sitting service should be. In spite of these difficulties, women send their children to day care.

At day care children are integrated into and must get along with a group of other children. This socialization is one that society feels only mothers can provide. In addition, mothers feel that they must instill in their

children the basic cognitive skills that will place them ahead of other children when they enter elementary school. However, given that the atmosphere in day care centers motivates the children to do what the other children can do, children who attend day care are more prepared for the competition they will face once they enter elementary school than are their counterparts at home.

Children are not the only family members to be affected when mothers go to work. Studies reveal that members of a dual-career family experience more participation in household decisions and activities than single income families. And the husband and wife of a dual-career family share greater equality than spouses of a single income family. Children of a dual-career family are assigned greater responsibility for themselves and household duties. Lastly, studies show that, because of the increase in women's participation in the labor force, Japan has been experiencing a decline in marriage and fertility rates.

This information points to several conclusions. In spite of mothers being away from their children and thus unable to create a dependent mother-child bond, children who attend day care learn socialization and dependence, not only on a mother figure, but on their whole day care group. Children who attend day care centers have an advantage over those who do not. This is because they are encouraged to perform as well as the other children. If mothers are unable to care for their children at home, day care centers offer a sufficient substitute. Children also learn to be independent as a result of attending day care. Not only are children more prepared to face competition, but because they have been exposed to the different roles parents of a dual-career family play, these children are no longer restricted to becoming the role their sex dictates. Along with becoming more independent, children will place less emphasis on their group, something which can change the whole nature of Japanese society. Lastly, because of all these changes, the Japanese are going to have to accommodate to these new features of society.

## **Mothers**

Traditionally, women in Japan become mothers. There are three ideas central to the role of women as mothers: "1) the mother is the best care taker and educator of children, 2) the mother-child bonding is the most natural and fundamental one in human relationships, and 3) no other job is better or more suitable for women than mothering." <sup>1</sup> A good mother is one whose responsibility is to her child and who views her child's success as a reflection

of her own identity. This requires a willingness and desire on the part of the mother to sacrifice anything for the sake of the child's success. In fact, society excludes fathers from the responsibility of childrearing because fathers fulfill their societal role by working. Whether a child can build successful relationships with others later in life depends solely on the mother and the way in which she prepares her child for socialization in the child's first three years. With that in mind, a mother creates a relationship with her child in which she is the central object, and everything the child learns is from her. The mother-child bond is one of mutual dependency through which a child learns socialization rather than separation and individuation. "It is only in close contact--more often than not physical contact--with the mother and the large amounts of affection that she bestows that the child can develop normally."<sup>2</sup> This reinforces the notion that women must devote all their time to childrearing and that a child will not develop normally without a mother that dedicates herself to her child.

### **Attitudes toward Working Women**

Given the above view of womanhood, it is assumed that when a female comes of marrying age she will marry, quit her job if she has one, and raise her husband's children. It is appropriate, however, for a woman to either begin working or re-enter the labor force once her children are in school and do not need constant care and supervision.

There are women, and their numbers are rising, who have both full time jobs and families. They pay a price, though, because society is not yet ready to fully accept women with young children working full time. Society tends to consider those women who do work as lazy, selfish, and improper mothers. Society "does not see a mother's work or hobbies as legitimate needs for her own growth or even for her mental health. The mother is expected to put off all these activities for the sake of the child."<sup>3</sup> There are some critics who take this idea to an extreme and argue that children suffer irreversibly as a result of their mothers working. For instance, Eto states that children will be "unable to take care of things, be backward in speaking ability, unable to play well (non-quarrelsome), will have a low ability to work, and will be poor at self guidance." The reasoning behind these comments is that mothers who work are not available to teach their children habits and do not talk to them during their language-learning years. As a result, these children "cannot learn to talk even if they want to."<sup>4</sup> These children neither know how to play nor argue. This is unhealthy because the children are then unable to vent aggression.

While this example is extreme, it may not be as extreme as one may think. There is a strong consensus that women who work are not "proper" mothers: society gives these mothers a guilt-trip and day care centers are sometimes more of a nuisance than they are helpful. Women often find it easier to quit their job to take care of their children than to fight against these forces.

### **What is Expected of Mothers**

A good mother not only sacrifices all for her child, but educates her child as well. A child's success reflects the ability of the mother to raise her child. Therefore a mother not only instills in her child the characteristics he or she will need in the future, but she becomes an accomplished mother by having an accomplished child. The Japanese measure a child's accomplishment in terms of success at school. And, to ensure the child's achievement in school, a mother begins orienting her child toward education from a very early age, even before preschool begins:

Most mothers in urban areas teach their preschool children to read and write the phonetic alphabet, and most children can count to one hundred and work simple computational problems involving amounts under ten before they reach first grade. Most preschools do not teach these abilities systematically, and it is largely due to the efforts of the mother that the child develops the skills before he enters first grade. (White, 95)

Although preschools do not always teach counting, math or the alphabet, these are things the child will learn when he or she enters elementary school. The mother teaches her child these skills by spending time with the child, playing with him or her, and interacting with him or her rather than observing while the child plays.

Through this constant interaction, a mother tries to train her child to concentrate. She accomplishes this by keeping her child doing only one thing at a time. A Japanese mother does not feel that spending most of her time concentrating with her child is a waste of that time, nor does she feel she could be doing something better or more enjoyable for herself.

A program of intensive learning at an early age is a fully conscious strategy on the part of the mother to improve her child's chances in competitive examinations to come. . . [the driving force is] her desire

to engage her child actively, and the cognitive content of that activity is simply the current vehicle for that engagement. (White, 97-98)

The mother teaches her child that, more important than the outcome of an action, the way in which something is performed is the measure of the child's character. Thus, attitude, energy, patience, and attention to detail are the elements which a mother focuses on instilling in her child.

Cognitive development is not the only process on which a mother consciously concentrates. She also works to foster the child's dependence upon herself:

The Japanese child learns to believe that he cannot solve his problems himself, but needs his mother...the Japanese prefers to have things already arranged for him...the dominance by parents is not...mere authoritarianism, but rather a reluctance or lack of satisfaction in making independent decisions. (Goode, 353)

This is a socializing force through which a child learns dependence upon others. Japan is a collectivist society in which an individual's group is the most important part of one's life, more important than being an individual. The child learns his or her proper role through mother; if the child is a girl, she will accompany her mother while cooking, cleaning and doing laundry, and the mother will teach her the correct way of doing such tasks. If the child is a male, his mother will help him focus on more male-oriented activities such as playing sports or playing with masculine toys. A mother also uses the masculine way of speaking with him so that he learns to speak like a man. Japan is a masculine culture. This means there is an emphasis on differentiated sex roles. Therefore it is important that a child learns from an early age what kinds of tasks a female should perform, and what tasks are appropriate for a male. Females would be made fun of for using masculine style speech and males would be made fun of for helping mother cook. Thus, it is important that a mother teach her children their proper societal role.

### **Reasons Why Women Do Not Work**

Although the traditional view of women pressures them to be professional housewives and educators of children, women are increasingly participating in the Japanese labor force. Although most female employees occupy low paying part time jobs, women are indispensable to Japan's

economy. This is partly because they are employed cheaply and disposed of easily. It is also in part due to an acute labor shortage. Unemployment is at an all time low of two percent, yet some two million job openings remain available. Today women constitute forty percent of the labor force. If the Japanese were to live faithfully by and enforce the conventional definition of mother, they would face economic decline.

Several changes have taken place over the years that contribute to the alteration of women's attitudes toward working outside the home. The first is that the average life span for females has increased. Women are finding themselves with many more years ahead of them in which they are free from their childrearing duties than in the past. Female participation in higher education has increased, and "rapid economic growth and increasing industrialization. . . has also had a great impact on the economic activities of women."<sup>5</sup> In addition, some women work to get extra money to send their children to classes outside school or to tutoring sessions.

Because of Western influences, women are changing their views of marriage and rejecting the idea that happiness is found in marriage. This change in attitude can be seen in the results of a comparison of a 1972 survey with one taken in 1979. The results are given in the chart below.

<u>1972</u>	<u>1979</u>	
Women who want to get married		68%
62%		
Women who do not want to get married		14%
25%		
Women who think marriage brings happiness	22%	12%
Women who think marriage is not necessary if a woman can support herself	10%	23%

When asked what is most important to the achievement of sexual equality, 42 percent responded that "women themselves should work to raise their status through the acquisition of knowledge, technical skills, [and] economic power," and 25 percent said that "the various prejudices and traditions that discriminate against women should be reformed."<sup>6</sup> From this information, it appears that young Japanese women are willing to put marriage aside in exchange for a career. Because women now question the notion that happiness is found in marriage, and because they are beginning to postpone or reject marriage in favor of a career, marriage rates are declining. There is a visible decline in fertility rates as a result of a decline in the number of marriages.

Suzuki predicts that "within the next two decades Japanese women's sex role attitudes may shift toward an egalitarian orientation similar to that of American women's." She also asserts that Japanese women have become more individualistic and more egalitarian since 1972.<sup>7</sup> This reemphasizes the idea that a woman's role is not limited to the home, but a woman can make her own decisions about what kind of life she will lead. Bankart found that, "unlike older cohorts, young women may perceive motherhood as limiting freedom and autonomy rather than providing them with a sphere in which to become independent and powerful."<sup>8</sup> Younger and better educated Japanese women are beginning to de-emphasize the importance of the traditional maternal role. When interviewed, university women showed they were less accepting of a narrow definition of women's roles than were older women with children and single university men.

It is important to note that most of this change is seen only among females. Reports show some men would like their wives to work because they would like to be able to discuss world events and have intellectual conversations with their wives. However, when questioned about what would happen when their wives became pregnant, the men almost always reverted back to the traditional view of women and motherhood. Stated differently, the men expect that their wives would quit work and become professional housewives.

While the young women's comments reflect a change in attitude, traces of tradition remain in their answers. This causes one to wonder just how far women are willing going to go to pursue jobs in lieu of family. For example, one woman said, "(it is) a woman's responsibility to care for her child once she has them, even if she didn't want them or doesn't like them equally." Single women also doubted that working mothers could raise children as well as non-working mothers; apparently they recognized the difficulty of managing both career and motherhood.<sup>9</sup>

Although these contradictions in attitude seem frustrating, there are some actual changes in women's behavior. While many women are not giving up marriage and children, neither are they giving up work. In fact, mothers are increasingly participating in the work force before their children enter school. About half of working women are married. And six out of ten have children under 18 years old, one out of five have children under six years of age. Yet society still pressures these women to treat their children as though they are not the children of working mothers. This means that mothers are held as responsible for home and child care duties as those women who do not work. Therefore, working women must find suitable care for their young children.

Most mothers enroll their children in day care centers. There are several problems involved in this, however. Though day care centers are established to provide working mothers with assistance in raising children in a stimulating environment, the teachers generally hold the same view of working mothers that the rest of society holds. This does not prevent the teachers from taking good care of the children enrolled, but it adds stress in the mothers' lives.

### **Day Care Centers**

There are different types of child care, each with its own societal meaning. The first, *yochien*, is the "normal" half day kindergarten (not day care) and it functions as part of children's one or two year period of pre-schooling. *Hoikuen* are day care facilities, and the children who attend this type of child care are consistently catalogued along with orphans, or the physically and mentally handicapped. Day nurseries, *hoikuen*, are child welfare establishments which cater to children who "need to be cared for by institutions" or "who lack nurture at home." For a mother to enroll her child in day care, she must qualify, meaning she must prove herself unable to care for her child. She must also obtain proof from her employer that she is indeed working. Mothers who work part-time have lower priority than full-time mothers for enrolling their children in *hoikuen*. There is an assumption that "it is only when there is absolutely no alternative that the child should be allowed to attend a day-care center."<sup>10</sup> This is because the fees are set on a scale based on ability to pay.

Instead of making a working mother's life easier by having her child in day care, problems often arise which complicate rather than facilitate these women's lives. The day care system in Japan allows for little flexibility in arranging schedules; mothers cannot choose how many days per week or

even how many hours a day they will send their children. They must choose either to work full time and have their children enrolled full time, or not work and stay home with the children all day. The inflexibility of scheduling at day care centers is a result of societal attitudes. It is only acceptable for a woman to work if her family faces economic difficulty. If this is the case, then of course a woman would work full time. When mothers want to enroll their children only on certain days, they imply that work is something casual for them, as if they only want to work a couple of days a week for their own enjoyment.

One would think that day care center employees would be supportive of working women, but in fact, they maintain the idea that working mothers are selfish. Teachers had three main criticisms of working mothers:

1. The mothers of their children are selfish. They want extra money for their own comfort and are willing to sacrifice their children for it.
2. The mothers are dependent on the teachers to the point of being abusive of them. For example, mothers do domestic chores during day care time and arrive late to pick up their child.
3. The mothers are young and do not know how to raise children.  
(Fujita, 78)

The teachers tend to blame mothers for the children's problems; they expect mothers to perform domestic chores and to raise children the same way full-time housewives do. It is interesting that day care teachers have such views about working mothers when they themselves are working women. One can speculate that these women feel guilty about working and thus defend themselves by criticizing the mothers who enroll their children. Another alternative is that these women feel justified for working because they are around children all day, and because they are helping the poor children of working mothers by offering their own nurturing care. Whatever the reason, the teachers do not offer working mothers much support.

In spite of the lack of support from teachers, mothers continue to send their children to day care. However, one problem leads some women to conclude that it is easier to quit their job than deal with day care centers. The problem arises when a child gets sick and is turned away from the center. In most cases, a child is only sick for a short time and the parents can take turns staying at home to care for the child. However, if an illness persists, a mother finds it easier to quit her job than continually take time off work. The frequency of illness can be quite high in child care facilities. Because employers do not allow their employees much sick leave, when a

child is sick parents often find that an easier solution than taking off work is just to feed their child aspirin to reduce the fever and ship him or her off to day care. Once at day care, the germ spreads to other children and mixes with already existing germs. Doctors, like much of society, are unsympathetic and blame the mother for her child's illness. They say it is a result of the mother working instead of fulfilling her proper role of mother by staying home and caring for the child.

Similarly, mothers have complaints about the teachers. They say that teachers interfere too much, create competition between mothers, and turn day care more into a school environment than a child care center. According to Fujita, there is a tendency for teachers to use their own ways of raising children instead of listening to how the mother raises her child and using the mother's method. Therefore, the child's real mother sometimes encounters trouble when attempting to enforce her own methods of child rearing. Competition between mothers occurs because teachers evaluate children as if they were all at the same developmental stage at a time when an age difference of six months means a gap in learning abilities among young children. Mothers of good children are praised, and mothers of children described as having problem behavior are left feeling inadequate and inferior to the other mothers. The teacher's evaluations are given publicly to all the parents in the class, so in addition to knowing how one's own child is doing, the parents also know how all the other children are doing. While this situation may create uncomfortable feelings among the mothers, it socializes and prepares the children for the competition they will face at school. Mothers experience friction with the representatives of an institution with whom they should be cooperating. Instead of being supported, working mothers are being blamed for their children's problems.

### **What Day Care Centers Do**

There are, however, good aspects of child care in Japan. While mothers criticize day care centers for creating a competitive environment, children are stimulated to compete and learn and are socialized in the process. Although mothers are "supposed" to begin educating their children before formal schooling, if they are working mothers they do not have the time to invest in educating their children. The day care center therefore provides a way for women to have their children educated--thus fulfilling social obligations--and work at the same time. Teachers feel their job is to act the part of "mother," and to somehow overcome the artificial

separation between mothers and their children that occurs when the mother goes to work. The conception is one that has a strong orientation on the future and stresses shaping the total child. Day care teachers place an emphasis on the education of "whole-persons." This means that day care involves a "constant accent on the moral, educational, and emotional dimensions not only of "hard" curricula, but also of eating, going to the bathroom, and sleeping."<sup>11</sup> Thus, while most of society feels that only mothers can orient children to do such tasks, it is apparent that day care centers achieve that goal as well.

Day care centers are, in many ways, similar to the child's home. Because teachers view themselves as mother substitutes, they are patient and caring with the children. "What is considered important...is not drastically different from what is valued at home. But the context is quite different: instead of learning through the mother's persuasive, engaged, and constant attention, the child at school learns through more impersonal, though still engaged direction."<sup>12</sup> While day care centers give working mothers priority of enrollment, some non-working mothers prefer to send their children to day care. This is because of the emphasis placed on self-reliance. Children learn in day care that getting along with others is valued as an end in itself. The child also learns that there is a right way to do something and that it is worth the time it takes to do something the correct way. The goals in a preschool are to raise children full of sensitivities, competence, physical strength, sympathy with friends and a capacity to respond well in various environments. This implies that even if a mother works and enrolls her child in day care, the child still learns and may even benefit more than the child of a professional housewife. White illustrates this idea with her comment, "If the home is an indulgent environment, it is no wonder Japanese parents feel that social and other training must take place outside it."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, while a working mother views day care as merely a place where her child is cared for while she works, the day care teachers do more than baby-sit:

They place the child and the mother into a wider social context by evaluating the child's performance and comparing it with others: The mother-child pair is placed in competition with other pairs, as they will be in the school system later. Day care, therefore provides a transitional stage between home and school. (Fujita, 83-84)

While a mother does not ask for her child to be socialized and educated during day care hours, that is exactly what happens.

### **Dual Career Families**

In households where the mother works, she feels societal pressure to fulfill the same housework and child care responsibilities as non-working mothers. However, there is evidence that some dual career families do not submit to such pressure. Fuse asserts that "in the working family. . . various family affairs tend to be carried out and decided in cooperation with some members of the family, not solely by an individual member or an expert in each area."<sup>14</sup> Participation in decision making processes and housework involving all family members is higher in families of which the mother works. As opposed to the professional housewife, a working mother is allowed a greater say in more masculine areas of decision making such as financial matters. The consciousness of a working mother differs with that of a non-working mother. The working mother's attitudes and values are shaped through communication with her colleagues:

Differences in the wife's consciousness as well as the factors influencing it would certainly affect, define, and limit not only socialization practices in the family but also the very content of the various spheres of communication among the members of the family.  
(Fuse, 332)

Children are greatly affected by the increase in participation among all family members and also by seeing their mothers in roles other than the traditional one of mother.

### **Decline in Fertility**

As stated earlier, as women reject conventional attitudes toward marriage, a visible decline in marriage rates occurs. This decline, which began during the 1970s, is attributed to several factors: increased urbanization, the change in women's attitude toward working outside the home, and the increased participation of women in the labor force. In 1960 there were 14.5 marriages per 1000 people ages 15-64. By 1986 this had dropped to 8.6 per 1000 people. The growth rate in 1989 was 0.33 percent.

As women have entered the work force in increasing numbers, marriages have been postponed, the average size of the family has declined, and the divorce rate has risen. The increased economic independence of women, through labor force activity, has been a major factor behind changes in the traditional family over the last three decades. (Sorrentiono)

This decline in fertility is also linked to the difficulties involved in having a child at day care. "Day care centers exist, but they typically close at 5 p.m. 'It's hard to pick up the kids on time if you've got to deal with a two hour commute from the office,'" one woman said.<sup>15</sup> Because of the already existing labor shortage, the Japanese government is becoming worried about what the future will be for the Japanese economy.

## **Analysis**

### **Child Care**

There are a couple of ideas about the effects on children as a result of their mothers working that need to be discussed. The first is the idea that a child will not develop normally without an indulgent mother who creates a dependent mother-child bond. The purpose of developing such a bond is to teach a child to be dependent on another person rather than being dependent on him or her own self. Because Japan is highly group oriented, this dependence is extremely important, and society thinks that a child must first learn such dependence from mother. Day care centers, however, foster this dependence as well, and in fact, children who attend day care may learn dependence on others more fully than the child of a professional housewife. This is because the mother-child bond is between only two people. At day care, children not only learn to depend on their teachers, but they also come to depend on the other children in their day care group.

The second idea is one that concerns mothers. It is the conception that because pre-schools do not teach the alphabet, counting, or simple mathematical computations, their children will be at a disadvantage when they enter elementary school. Because she works, a mother cannot spend the time needed to teach her child these skills. However, it is not necessary for the mother to teach her child such skills before first grade because these are skills that are taught when a child enters elementary school. In fact, a

child who attends day care may have an advantage over children that do not once they enter elementary school. This is because the day care child has already been exposed to group learning and competition in the day care. Even though the child who stays at home with mother knows how to count before entering elementary school, he/she has not yet been exposed to interaction with people other than mother, nor has the child experienced competition with others. In fact, such a child has only experienced indulgence, and because of a lack of interaction with other children in a competitive environment, that child may not get along as well and may have difficulty competing with others once in elementary school. Because of pressure from society to fulfill the proper role of mother, women who work should appreciate that day care centers provide a socializing and educating environment. Given that some mothers who do not work but want to enroll their children in day care, one realizes the importance of the group socialization that occurs in day care centers. In spite of the problems involved with arranging schedules and deciding what to do with sick children, the centers do mothers a favor because they prepare the children for the competition they will face when they enter formal schooling. Day care teachers stimulate the children's activity by creating a school-like atmosphere. They also provide an acceptable substitute for home, both in the care teachers give the children and in the socializing process that takes place. In fact, the values that a mother teaches her child, such as attitude, energy, sensitivity to and sympathy with others, and attention to detail, are also emphasized at day care centers. Because mothers are supposed to start the education process before formal schooling begins, day care centers allow women to work and have their child educated, perhaps even more so than the one-on-one interaction that occurs at home. Women do not need to feel guilty about working when a stimulating environment for their children does exist.

At the same time the children who attend day care centers are socialized and learn to become dependent on others, they also learn a certain degree of independence. This is because, even though day care teachers act as mother substitutes, they are unable to provide the children with constant supervision and one-on-one interaction. This lack of continual adult-child interaction, coupled with the encouragement of self-reliance found in day care centers, children who are enrolled in day care centers become more independent than their counterparts at home. Not only do children learn independence through their experience at day care, but they also learn it at home. A full time housewife indulges her children so much so that they do not know how to do things on their own. Because a working mother places

responsibility on her children to help with the housework, these children learn to do things on their own and to depend on themselves. Whereas the child of a professional housewife might wait for things to be done for him/her, the child of a working mother may be more assertive and go out and do things for him/herself.

Thus, although society feels that if a child is not raised in an indulgent manner by his/her mother at home the child will not function normally, it has been shown that day care centers provide adequate care for children of working mothers. Children who attend day care centers learn dependence on others and group socialization, perhaps even more so than the child who interacts only with mother. Because day care centers create a competitive learning environment, children are more prepared for the competition in elementary school. Day care centers place the same emphasis as mothers on values such as sensitivity, attention to details, and learning the right way to perform a task. Lastly, children who attend day care learn to be self-reliant.

### **Attitude Change**

While the change in attitude seen among young women shows a new awareness of what women feel they are capable of doing, it is only among these young women that the change has occurred. The rest of society has shown that it is not yet ready to be a supportive force backing women in their decision to be full-time employees. Because of this lack of support, many women, although they want to work and become successful in their professions, yield to societal pressures to conform to the traditional role of mother:

At present even female university students recognize the importance of that role (motherhood) although they no longer regard it as their only alternative. [However,] there remains in Japan a strong cultural endorsement of motherhood even in a time of rapid social change. It may be that for sometime to come. . . Japanese women of childbearing age will continue to experience less role flexibility than they wish. (Bankart, 75)

The process of accepting women working is slow. However, there is a force motivating acceptance. This is both in the change in attitude seen among young women and the increase in the number of women participating in the work force. As more women enter the labor force, they

cause changes in society which cannot be ignored nor rejected, and a resulting acceptance of working women by the rest of society will ensue.

### **Cultural Implications**

Society is going to face radical changes in years to come as a result of women working. These changes will occur in three areas: labor, orientation to the group, and role playing.

Japan is already experiencing a labor shortage, with unemployment at two percent and two million unfilled jobs, yet more women are rejecting marriage and childbirth. In 1989 the population increased by 0.33 percent, and the Japanese government is worried. Because of this fear, the government has begun to realize that it must accommodate working mothers. It is going to have to begin offering help to working women because the Japanese economy desperately needs their participation in the work force. This help must come in the form of incentives such as more accommodating day care centers and improved sick leave policies so that women can more easily combine work with motherhood.

It needs to be stressed that although children of working mothers do become more independent, it is not a total rejection of dependence on others. However, in a society where the group is emphasized above all else, even a small amount of independence has consequences for the group. Self rather than child-motivated mothers are increasing. And as a result they are influencing their children both directly by assigning chores and indirectly by being observed to become self-reliant. Husbands and wives are sharing household responsibilities with each other and their children in those families where both parents work. Day care teachers encourage children to do things on their own rather than having things done for them. All these forces fostering independence are at the same time diminishing involvement with the group. Typically, collectivist cultures, like that of Japan, emphasize harmony and cooperation among the group more than individual function and an individual's responsibility. Although the process of becoming independent is very slow and Japanese people are still very much tied to the group, as they learn to be more self-reliant, the Japanese will turn from seeking group acceptance for their actions to doing what they want to do.

In addition to an increased level of independence, children of dual-career families learn that their role is not gender limited. Because husbands assist their wives in household chores and wives participate in making household decisions, children see their parent's role flexibility. No longer is

a female child brought up with the idea that she must be a full time mother when she grows up, nor is a male child conditioned that he should not help in the kitchen or other female oriented tasks. This has a tremendous impact on a society that places so much emphasis on sex-role differentiation. Future generations are going to be more accepting of females performing traditional male roles and vice versa.

Although society may not like the idea that women are working outside of the home, it is a fact. There are too many forces working in the direction of increased female participation in the work force to reverse this phenomena. Therefore, Japan must adapt to this new situation. Adaptation calls for an alteration of attitudes and accommodation to working mothers. A new society is emerging in Japan, and it is a society that includes women more, fosters independence, and has more flexible roles than in the past.

\* *Paper presented to the biennial conference of the Institute for Cross-Cultural Research, San Antonio, TX March, 1993. The author wishes to acknowledge the role of Donald Clark who directed this project in the Senior Seminar for International Studies at Trinity University, Fall, 1992.*

## Notes

1. Mariko Fujita. "It's All Mother's Fault: Childcare and the Socialization of Working Mothers in Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies* (Winter 1989), 75-76.
2. Eyal Ben-Ari. "Disputing About Day-Care: Care-Taking Roles in a Japanese Nursery." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* (Autumn 1987), 204.
3. Fujita, 75.
4. Jun Eto. "The Breakdown of Motherhood is Wrecking Our Children." *Japan Echo* 4 (1979), 103-104.
5. Kazuko Sato, Mitsuyo Suzuki and Michi Kawamura. "The Changing Status of Women in Japan." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* (Spring 1987), 91.
6. Sato, 95.
7. Atsuko Suzuki. "Egalitarian Sex Roles." *Sex Roles* 24 (1991), 256-57.
8. Brenda Bankart. "Japanese Perceptions of Motherhood." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13 (1989), 60.

- 9 Bankart, 64.
10. Ben-Ari, 204-205
11. Ben-Ari, 206.
12. Merry White. "Learning At Mother's Knee," *The Japanese Educational Challenge* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 103-105.
13. White, 104.
14. Akiko Fuse. "Role Structure of Dual Career Families." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (Summer 1981), 332.
15. Jim Impoco. "Motherhood and the Future of Japan." *U.S. News and World Report* (Dec 1990)

## References

- Bankart, Brenda.  
1989 "Japanese Perceptions of Motherhood." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13: 59-75.
- Ben-Ari, Eyal.  
1987 "Disputing About Day-Care: Care-Taking Roles in a Japanese Day Nursery." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* Autumn: 197-216.
- Condon, Jane.  
1985 *A Half Step Behind: Japanese Women of the 80s*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.
- Cook, Alice.  
1978 *The Working Mother*. New York: New York State School of Industrial Labor Relations, Cornell University.
- Eto, Jun.  
1979 "The Breakdown of Motherhood is Wrecking Our Children." *Japan Echo* 4: 102-109.
- Fujita, Mariko.  
1989 "It's All Mother's Fault: Childcare and the Socialization of Working Mothers in Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies* Winter: 67-91.
- Fuse, Akiko.  
1981 "Role Structure of Dual Career Families." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* Summer: 329-335.
- Goode, William.  
1963 "Japan." *World Revolution and Family Patterns*. London: The Free Press of Glencoe: 351-356.

- Gudykunst, William and Yun Kim Young.  
1992 *Communicating with Strangers*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Higuchi, Keiko.  
1980 "Changing Family Relationships." *Japan Echo* 3: 86-93.
- Impoco, Jim.  
1990 "Motherhood and the Future of Japan." *U.S. News and World Report* Dec 24: 56-57.
- Lebra, Takie Sugiyama.  
1984 *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfillment*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lock, Margaret.  
1990 "Restoring Order to the House of Japan." *The Wilson Quarterly* Autumn: 42-49.
- Miller, Karen Lowry.  
1991 "The 'Mommy-Track', Japanese Style." *Business Week* March 11: 46.
- Naoi, Michiko, Carmi Schooler.  
1990 "Psychological Consequences of the Occupational Condition Among Japanese Wives." *Social Psychology Quarterly* June
- Osawa, Machiko.  
1988 "Working Mothers: Changing Patterns of Employment and Fertility in Japan." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 36: 623-645.
- Sato, Kazuko, Mitsuyo Suzuki and Michi Kawamura.  
1987 "The Changing Status of Women in Japan." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* Spring: 87-108.
- Smith, Karen, Carmi Schooler.  
1978 "Women as Mothers in Japan: The Effects of Social Structure and Culture on Values and Behavior." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* Aug: 613-619.
- Sorrentiono, Constance.  
1990 "The Changing Family." *Monthly Labor Review* March: 41-58.
- Sugimoto, Yoshiko, Ross Mouer.  
1989 *Constructs for Understanding Japan*. London: Kegan Paul International.
- Suzuki, Atsuko.  
1991 "Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes." *Sex Roles* 24: 245-260.
- Trager, James.  
1982 *Letters from Sachiko*. New York: Atheneum.
- Ueno, Chizuko.

- 1987 "The Position of Japanese Women Reconsidered." *Current Anthropology* August-October: 75-84.

White, Merry.

- 1987 *The Japanese Educational Challenge*. New York: The Free Press.

- 1988 "Work and the Family: Four Case Histories." *Japan Echo* Special Issue: 60-66.



---

\* Paper presented to the biennial conference of the Institute for Cross-Cultural Research, San Antonio, TX March, 1993. The author wishes to acknowledge the role of Dr. Donald Clark who directed this project in the Senior Seminar for International Studies at Trinity University, Fall, 1992.

<sup>1</sup> Mariko Fujita. "It's All Mother's Fault: Childcare and the Socialization of Working Mothers in Japan." *Journal of Japanese Studies* (Winter 1989), 75-76.

<sup>2</sup>Eyal Ben-Ari. "Disputing About Day-Care: Care-Taking Roles in a Japanese Nursery." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* (Autumn 1987), 204.

<sup>3</sup>Fujita, 75.

<sup>4</sup>Jun Eto. "The Breakdown of Motherhood is Wrecking Our Children." *Japan Echo* 4 (1979), 103-104.

<sup>5</sup>Kazuko Sato, Mitsuyo Suzuki and Michi Kawamura. "The Changing Status of Women in Japan." *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* (Spring 1987), 91.

<sup>6</sup>Sato, 95.

<sup>7</sup>Atsuko Suzuki. "Egalitarian Sex Roles." *Sex Roles* 24 (1991), 256-57.

<sup>8</sup>Brenda Bankart. "Japanese Perceptions of Motherhood." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13 (1989), 60.

<sup>9</sup>Bankart, 64.

<sup>10</sup>Ben-Ari, 204-205.

<sup>11</sup>Ben-Ari, 206.

<sup>12</sup>Merry White. "Learning At Mother's Knee," *The Japanese Educational Challenge* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 103-105.

<sup>13</sup>White, 104.

<sup>14</sup>Akiko Fuse. "Role Structure of Dual Career Families." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (Summer 1981), 332.

<sup>15</sup>Jim Impoco. "Motherhood and the Future of Japan." *U.S. News and World Report* (Dec 1990)