



INTER-ASIA ROUNDTABLE 2009

*Gender Relations  
in the 21st Century  
Asian Family*

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## PREFACE

The 2009 Inter-Asia Roundtable was the first of its kind in the Asia Research Institute (ARI), and is scheduled to become an annual event. Its format was based on the concern that there is little dialogue across the major regions of Asia—East, South and Southeast Asia—concerning major social issues, largely because it is often felt that there are such wide differences between these regions that there may be little in common to discuss. However, this year's Roundtable, entitled 'Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family', proved that there are enough common areas of interest to make a dialogue among participants from all regions a very stimulating event.

The Roundtable was held on 17–18 August 2009. It brought together theoreticians and researchers working on the family in different parts of Asia to examine recent trends in the field of family studies, factors affecting family change, and convergences and divergences across and within regions of Asia. Discussions were based on three papers and three brief discussion starters. The participants in the Roundtable, who are listed at the back of this document, were chosen for their strong theoretical foundation and grounded experience in one country or region, and their capacity to think and theorise beyond one country, region or discipline. There were also a further 22 observers, who were able to participate fully in the discussions.

This booklet includes the three papers, a summary of the discussion following each paper, and a summary of the discussion in the three open discussion sessions on marriage, divorce and inter-generational relations, respectively.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>The Construction of Son Preference and Its Unraveling in China, South Korea &amp; Northwest India</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Monica Das Gupta</i>	
<b>Notes on Discussion Following Monica Das Gupta’s Paper</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Family Systems, Political Systems and Asia’s ‘Missing Girls’: The Construction of Son Preference and Its Unraveling</i>	
<b>Gender Relations &amp; Family Forms: Japan as an Illustrative Case</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>Noriko O. Tsuya</i>	
<b>Notes on Discussion Following Noriko Tsuya’s Paper</b>	<b>109</b>
<i>Gender Relations and Family Forms: Japan as an Illustrative Case</i>	
<b>The ‘Queer’ Family in Asia</b>	<b>115</b>
<i>Romit Dasgupta</i>	
<b>Notes on Discussion Following Romit Dasgupta’s Paper</b>	<b>147</b>
<i>The ‘Queer’ Family in Asia</i>	
<b>Summary of Roundtable Discussion</b>	<b>153</b>
<i>Marriage</i>	
<b>Summary of Roundtable Discussion</b>	<b>163</b>
<i>Divorce</i>	
<b>Summary of Roundtable Discussion</b>	<b>171</b>
<i>Inter-generational Relations</i>	
<b>LIST OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>182</b>

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF SON PREFERENCE AND  
ITS UNRAVELING IN CHINA, SOUTH KOREA &  
NORTHWEST INDIA<sup>1</sup>

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We know that son preference is found in certain types of cultures, i.e. patrilineal cultures. What explains, though, the fact that China, South Korea and Northwest India manifest such extreme child sex ratios compared with other patrilineal societies? I argue that what makes these societies unique is that their pre-modern political and administrative systems used patrilineages to organise and administer their citizens. The interplay of culture, state and political processes generated uniquely rigid patrilineality and son preference.

I also argue that the advent of the modern state in these settings has unraveled the underpinnings of the rigid patrilineal rules, and unleashed a variety of forces that reduce son preference. The modern state has powerful tools for incorporating and managing its citizenry, rendering patrilineages a threat rather than an asset for the state. Secondly, the modern state has brought in political, social and legal reforms aimed to challenge traditional social hierarchies, including the age and gender hierarchies of the kinship system. Industrialisation and urbanisation have besides ushered in new modes of social organisation, which reduce the hold of clans and lineages.

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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and should not be attributed to the World Bank, or any affiliated organisation or member country.

## INTRODUCTION

What explains the large geographic variation in the proportion of boys to girls across the developing world? What factors underlie this variation, and what might help bring the sex ratios to more normal levels in the regions where they are currently high?

Most societies show some degree of preference for sons, though this is often quite mild (Williamson 1976). Demographic estimates indicate that some degree of excess female child mortality may be quite widespread, especially at ages 1–4 (Hill & Upchurch 1995; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 1998), though such estimates are sensitive to having an accurate comparator of expected sex differentials in mortality. Avoiding this complex question, we examine which regions and countries have child (under-five-years) sex ratios above the global average (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that in 2005, the child sex ratio was around 1.05 in both the developed and the developing world, excluding China. It also shows that most world regions are at or below this average, including Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, West Asia and Southeast Asia—though the reasons for the outlying observations of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia need to be studied. The only regions with significantly elevated ratios are East Asia and Southcentral Asia, and this is due to the high ratios in China, South Korea and India.

Country-level data can hide much regional variation in large heterogeneous countries like China and India (Map 1). In China, the highest child sex ratios are in the coastal and central regions. The large western region shows modest or no evidence of elevated child sex ratios, and similar patterns are seen in the northern region and parts of the south. In India, high child sex ratios are concentrated in the northwestern region, while the rest of the country shows moderate or no elevation in these ratios.

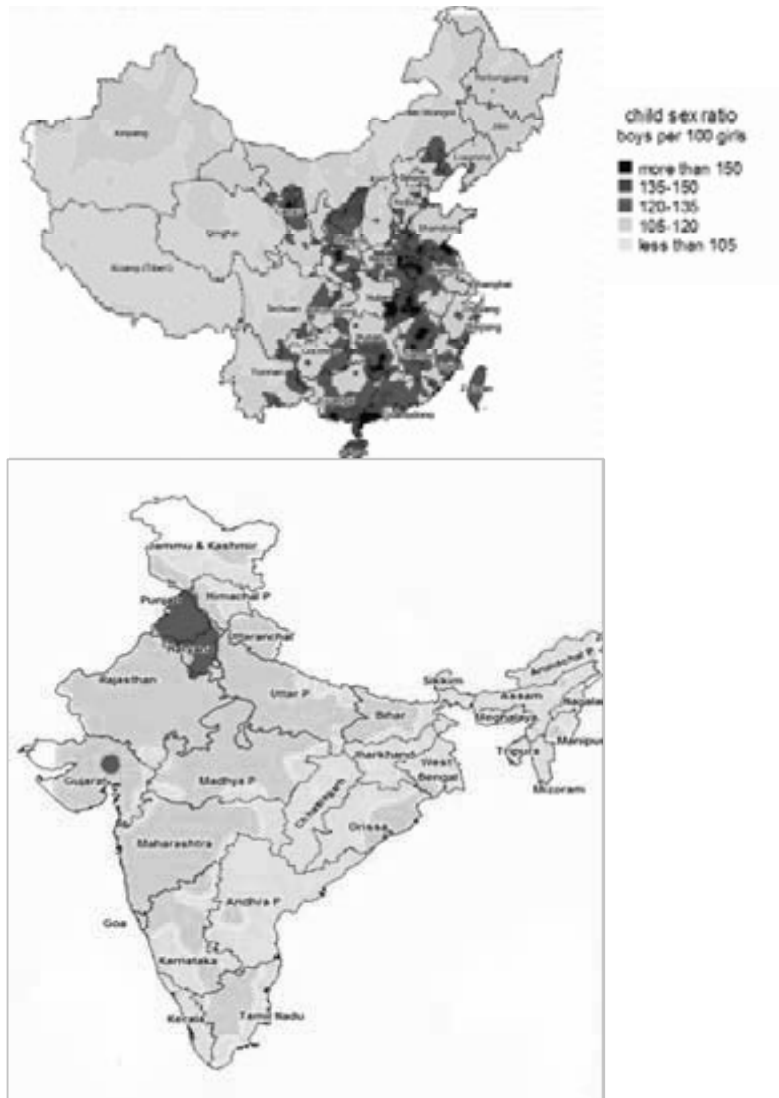
TABLE 1. Sex Ratios of Children Aged Below Five years in Developing Regions, 2005 (individual countries in each region are shown only if their child sex ratios are above the average of 105).

More developed regions	105.4	
Less developed regions, excluding China	104.9	
<hr/>		
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	104.1	
Sub-Saharan Africa	102.0	
Mauritania	106.4	
North Africa	104.5	
Tunisia	106.6	
ASIA	110	
West Asia	104.8	
Armenia	116.7	Christian
Azerbaijan	116.4	Muslim
Cyprus	106.8	
Georgia	115.3	Christian
Iraq	105.9	
Israel	105.9	
Qatar	105.2	
United Arab Emirates	105.1	
Southeast Asia	104.1	
Malaysia	105.7	
Singapore	107.3	
Brunei Darussalam	106.6	
East Asia	120.6	
China	122.4	
Republic of Korea	108.1	
Dem. People's Republic of Korea	105.2	
South Central Asia	107.3	
Afghanistan	105.9	
India	108.6	
Nepal	105.3	

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009) (advanced Excel tables).

#### 4 Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family

MAP 1. Geographical variation in child sex ratios in China (2000 census) and India (2001 census).



Source: Guilmo & Attane (2007) (maps copied from their earlier draft at <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic533932.files/Guilmo%203.pdf>)

The story of high child sex ratios is well-documented. We know that girls have a biological advantage in survival over boys, right from conception (Waldron 2005). We also know that in some settings, girls' biological advantage is reversed by a strong preference for sons, resulting in higher mortality of girls before birth or during early childhood.

We also know that son preference is found in certain types of cultures, i.e. patrilineal cultures, and that the more rigidly patrilineal the culture, the greater the discrimination against daughters.<sup>2</sup> In such settings, daughters are formally transferred, on marriage, to their husband's family and can no longer contribute to their natal family. This drastically lowers the value of daughters relative to sons, reducing parents' willingness to invest in raising girls.

What explains, though, this fact that some patrilineal societies are organised into such tight units defined through the male line alone, leaving so little flexibility for women to play a part in their household of birth, indicated, for example, in their not being permitted to inherit parental property even if they have no brothers? What distinguishes these societies from other patrilineal societies that do allow some flexibility of this kind?

In this paper, we argue that this results from differences in political systems, i.e. what distinguishes China, South Korea and Northwest India from other patrilineal settings is that their traditional political systems used patrilineages to organise and administer their citizens. This required the unusually rigid manifestation of patrilineal kinship rules. The interplay of culture, state and political processes shaped gender roles and the relative value of boys and girls to their parents, and explain the large geographic variation in child sex ratios between countries, as well as between regions of China and India. We also argue that the advent of the modern state in these settings has unraveled the underpinnings of the rigid patrilineal rules, and unleashed a variety of forces that reduce son preference.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Das Gupta 1997, 1999).

## THE ROLE OF KINSHIP SYSTEMS IN SHAPING GIRLS' AND BOYS' RELATIVE VALUE TO THEIR PARENTS

Kinship systems shape the relative value of girls and boys largely through their rules of inheritance. The details of these rules vary considerably on the ground, so some simplification is needed to distinguish their main differences.

Inheritance is through the male line in 'patrilineal' systems, through the female line in 'matrilineal' systems, and through both the male and female lines in 'bilateral' systems. Rules of residence are 'patrilocal' if a couple lives with the husband's kin after marriage, 'matrilocal' if with the wife's kin, and 'neolocal' if the couple establishes a new household after marriage.<sup>3</sup> Rules of residence are subject to considerable variation on the ground, depending on the circumstances. For example, even in a strongly patrilocal system, if the husband lives and works in a different place, the wife may join him there and set up a neolocal unit. Neolocal residence rules can go with any of the three types of inheritance system.

### MATRILINEAL KINSHIP SYSTEMS

Matrilineal kinship systems are rare today. Where the dominant system is patrilineal, legislative and other measures premised on patrilineal principles will gradually erode matrilineal property relations and social systems. This process is still ongoing in the matrilineal societies of Northwest India and in the Yunnan province of China (Hua 2001; Nongbri 1993).

Fox (1967, ch. 4) also pointed out that matrilineal kinships systems can become inherently unstable once pressure on resources grow and property becomes scarce and valuable, leading men to seek to control their parents' property, as with the Nayars of South India. Arrangements can then become complex as the men pass on their property to their sisters' sons, generating a clash between matrilineal inheritance rules and the men's desires to provide for their own sons. Such pressures are far lower if there is an abundance of land to cultivate, or in hunting and gathering societies, where there is little property to be passed on.

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<sup>3</sup> These residence rules are sometimes called 'virilocal', i.e. living where the husband lives, or 'uxorilocal', i.e. living where the wife lives.

## BILATERAL KINSHIP SYSTEMS

Bilateral kinship systems permit a great deal of flexibility in inheritance and residence. People recognise kin on both the father's and the mother's side, may inherit from either side, and a couple may live with relatives on either side or by themselves. Kinship obligations are fluid and negotiable. Bilateral kinship arrangements are becoming increasingly common in the modern world, where rigid rules of inheritance and residence are being broken down by the exigencies of living and working in an industrialised economy.

Bilateral kinship systems are also 'traditional' in many societies, even from the pre-modern period. They are common in Southeast Asia, as documented in ethnographies of the Malays and the Filipinos, and ethnographies across Indonesia (Java, Bali, Borneo) and Thailand.<sup>4</sup> Since unilineal descent and inheritance is not practiced, people typically do not remember kinship relationships beyond their grandparental generation. Carsten (1995) has documented this 'genealogical amnesia'—a term that she noted was coined by the Geertz— in ethnographies across Southeast Asia. The '...concern is with the lateral expansion and size of the family and kin group than with the lineal depth of relationship' (Fox 1961).

Studies in Indonesia and Malaysia have shown that old people receive support from both sons and daughters, and also support them in turn (Frankenberg *et al.* 2002). A study in the Philippines found that old people are equally likely to live with married sons as with married daughters, in sharp contrast to Taiwan, where the likelihood is overwhelmingly in favour of married sons (Casterline *et al.* 1993).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Banks (1983), Dube (1997), Fox (1961), Frankenberg *et al.* (2002), Geertz (1961), Geertz & Geertz (1975), Limanonda (1995), and Ong (1990). In Bali, Geertz and Geertz (1975, p. 1) sometimes found large organised kin groups with corporately-owned common property, but with members of these groups not necessarily having any detailed knowledge of the genealogical relationship within the group to which they belong.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these systems can verge on matriliney. In North Thailand, daughters are the main source of old-age support; the norm is for newly-married couples to live with the wife's parents for some years, and for the last daughter to stay on and inherit the land and house after the parents' death (Limanonda 1995).

## 8 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

These bilateral kinship systems generate little distinction between the value of sons and daughters to their parents. This contrasts with patrilineal kinship systems, as illustrated by the fact that Malaysia's ethnic minorities of Chinese and Indian origin manifest strong son preference, unlike the majority Malay population (Goodkind 2006).

Islamic inheritance law can reduce gender equality in bilateral settings and increase it in patrilineal settings, since it enjoins that girls get half the share of boys. Banks (1983) argued that Malays usually continue with equal division of property among girls and boys despite the Muslim law, but Ong (1990) argued that this customary practice is being undermined by Islamic revivalism. In strongly patrilineal systems, Islamic law brings in some measure of gender equity, at least in principle (see below).

### PATRILINEAL KINSHIP SYSTEMS

Patrilineal kinship systems are the most common traditional systems across Europe, East and South Asia, and several African societies. However, most of these societies offer some flexibility in the actual practice of inheritance and residence rules, while only a few are rigidly patrilineal.

#### *PATRILINEAL SYSTEMS THAT PRECLUDE EXCHANGE BETWEEN PARENTS AND ADULT DAUGHTERS*

Northwest India, China and South Korea have rigidly patrilineal kinship systems, of which their basic organisational logic is strikingly similar despite considerable local variation in detail. The traditional social organisation prevailing in these settings in the early decades of this century, and also, to a large extent, in today's rural areas, is one in which villages had their dominant clans, to which the majority of men belonged. Lineages are strictly exogamous, and marrying within the clan constitutes incest. On marriage, a woman is 'exported' to her husband's lineage; her



(temporary) 'slot' in the household ceases to exist, and a new (permanent) 'slot' is created for incoming brides.<sup>6</sup>

Daughters are effectively lost to their parents when they marry. Fox's (1967, p. 117) description for China, as follows, is equally applicable to Northwest India and South Korea:

*...the lineage unloaded its consanguine women [the women born into it], and once they were gone they were gone. It obtained brides from other lineages to bear up sons to its name. Thus, the Chinese illustrate with harsh clarity the point about the lineage not having any use for its 'non-reproductive' members [its 'rubbish']. A woman has no role as sister and daughter, but only as wife and mother...*

Thus, it is that only men constitute the social order, and women are the means whereby men reproduce themselves. Access to key economic and social assets depends on one's position in a lineage, so enormous importance is placed on carefully recording the precise lineage ties between men for generations. Women are recorded, if at all, only in the capacity of the wives of the men who gave rise to succeeding generations of men. Ancestor worship seals the corporate patrilineage, binding all its male members together in rituals honouring their male ancestors.

Patrilineages function as corporations. Although land is privately held, people cannot sell land inherited from the patrilineage to an outsider, without giving members of the lineage the first right of refusal.<sup>7</sup> A man without sons would typically seek to acquire one by re-marrying, or by adopting the son of a male kinsman. Bringing in a son-in-law is very difficult, because the lineage would bring to bear a lot of pressure to keep the land within the lineage. The driving motivation is to continue the patrilineage, by whatever means possible.

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<sup>6</sup> In the rare cases when women do return, they and their parents have to struggle to make it work, because other members of the village resist the incursion on their property rights; see case studies in Das Gupta and Li (1999), and Das Gupta *et al.* (2003). This continued to apply in China even after private property was abolished, because women lost their right to be supported from communally-held property once they married (Gao 1994).

<sup>7</sup> For China, see Duara (1988, pp. 94–95).

*PATRILINEAL SYSTEMS THAT PERMIT EXCHANGE BETWEEN PARENTS AND ADULT DAUGHTERS*

In contrast to the above, there is relative flexibility in applying the rules of patrilineal family systems elsewhere. For example, in peasant Europe, and also in Japan, parents without sons would typically have their daughter and her husband inherit the property.<sup>8</sup> The emphasis is thus more on reproducing the 'household' rather than the father's lineage. The potential for support from daughters is also very different. In large parts of rural Europe, it is completely acceptable for grown daughters to remain single for many years as part of their parents' household, supporting and being supported by the ageing parents.<sup>9</sup>

In North Africa and the Middle East, inter-marriage between cousins is common, so women often remain in close proximity to their own parents. Kandiyoti (1988, 1991) refers to the belt of 'classic patriarchy', which extends from this region through to India and China. Referring to the practice of patrilocal marriage throughout this belt, she noted that

*[t]he extent to which this represents a total break with their own kin group...varies in relation to the degree of endogamy in marriage....Among the rural Arabs of the Levant, there is much greater mutuality among affines...*

(Kandiyoti 1991, p. 31)10

Even in non-endogamous marriages, relations between parents and daughters continue after marriage. Moghadam (2003, p. 124) pointed out that '[a]mong Arabs and Iranians, ties to the natal family are hardly ever broken, even in out-marrying situations, and so the daughter has recourse to her own family...'. Cousin marriage is also common amongst South Asian Muslims. In Pakistan, a 2004–2005 survey of 3100 randomly sampled women in Punjab and Sindh provinces found that 77 per cent of the women

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Arensberg & Kimball (1968), Nakane (1967), and Sieder & Mitterauer (1983).

<sup>9</sup> See Sieder and Mitterauer (1983), and Arensberg and Kimball (1968). A fuller comparison of these Asian and European kinship systems, and their theoretical and empirical ramifications, has been developed in Das Gupta (1999).

<sup>10</sup> Note that whether or not an individual parent is endogamously married, (s)he will absorb the social norms set in the framework of the overall level of expectation that daughters will not be lost to their family after marriage.

had married a blood relative, and 62 per cent had married men from the same village or a nearby village (Jacoby & Mansuri 2007).

Islamic law also enjoins that daughters inherit from their parents, albeit half the share of sons, though daughters in many patrilineal Islamic societies forego their share in order to maintain their brothers' support in the event of marital problems (Kandiyoti 1998, 1991). Yet, having such a law offers women greater rights and protections than the rigid patrilineal situation of there being no question of inheritance, and little question of returning to brothers for support should the marriage not work out.

Patrilineal kinship systems are also found in many African societies. There is much on-the-ground variation in the type of kinship systems (Guyer & Peters 1987), but the literature indicates that women have considerable economic autonomy.<sup>11</sup> Women earn significant amounts through activities such as agriculture and marketing, and keep at least part of the earnings, building up their own assets. Kandiyoti (1988, p. 276) described this as 'women's refusal to allow the total appropriation of their production by their husbands'. Ekejiuba (2005, pp. 44–45) noted that women in patrilineal societies in rural West Africa are unlikely to inherit their husband's property after his death. This motivates them to work hard to earn and accumulate their own assets, and they also keep up economic links with their natal kin, contributing to their kin's weddings and funerals. Such potential for autonomy is denied to women in the patrilineal societies of China and India, whose labours accrue to their husband's lineage.

Ancestor worship is found in many places, including several African societies and Japan. However, it is only in China, Korea, and in a more limited way, Northwest India, that people are obliged to worship all their male ancestors in systematic recognition of their position in the lineage.<sup>12</sup> In African societies, ancestor worship does not emphasise the continuity of the male line. Instead, ancestors are worshipped on an ad-hoc basis, with those who appear notable or powerful being selected for worship. In Japan also, ancestor worship is much less formal; people can exercise choice as to which departed souls to care for, and worshippers can include non-kin

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Kandiyoti (1988), and the readings in Cornwall (2005).

<sup>12</sup> In most of India, ancestor worship consists mostly of a series of funerary rites to help a deceased person make the transition from this world to the next.

who were fond of the deceased person (Smith 1974). Unlike China and South Korea, in Japan, Buddhism continues to exert a far greater influence on funerary rites and ancestor worship than neo-Confucianism. 'Buddhist priests, for example, are commonly hired to recite sutras at Japanese funerals and death-day rites, and Buddhist images frequently adorn domestic altars in private homes' (Janelli & Janelli 1982, p. 177, citing Robert J. Smith).

These more flexible forms of patriliney can generate some son preference, as evidenced in some excess female child mortality in pre-modern Germany (Klasen 1994), and in the Middle East and North Africa today (Hill & Upchurch 1995, Table 1; Yount 2001). However, the levels of excess mortality are far higher in the rigidly patrilineal settings, to which we now turn.

### THE ROLE OF THE PRE-MODERN STATE AND POLITICAL SYSTEM IN FORMALISING PATRILINITY IN CHINA, KOREA AND NORTHWEST INDIA

In China and Korea, there was a concerted effort by the state to propagate Confucian values, to reinforce the ruler's authority and to build a strong authoritarian state. This involved pressuring and incentivising people to form themselves into patrilineages, and to adopt elaborate rituals of ancestor worship that tied the lineage members together. This was designed to promote stability and loyalty to a series of nested corporate groups, i.e. the household, the lineage and the state. Avenues to status and power lay in the lineage. The roles and status of each member in a household and lineage were specified, under the unchallenged authority of the (male) head of the family. These authoritarian kinship relationships were mirrored through the political hierarchy, culminating in obeisance to the king.

Presented as a civilising force, this enabled the state to control local societies through lineage organisation and lineage elites, minimising the need for force and expensive administrative outreach.

*[In Korea], ...the 'Confucianization' of society was first and foremost a cultural process...a civilizing process that promised to humanize social mores and practices by transforming morality. Of course, it had a political facet as*

*well: it gave power to monarchs, courts, and associated elites.*

(Ko et al. 2003, pp. 8–9)

*[In China, lineages defined the polity], ...linking villages to the normative universe of the higher orders of Chinese civilization.*

(Duara 1988, p. 87)

The propagation of Confucianism was also accompanied by efforts to obliterate Buddhism, with its emphasis on individual self-realisation and salvation, which was perceived to detract from loyalty to the family and state (Deuchler 1992, Faure 2007, ch. 8). At least in China, this conflation of religion with the administrative and political systems went further; the hierarchy of the gods mirrored the organisation of social and political life on earth (Wolf 1974), with the Stove God placing the family in the administrative and political realm of the empire. As Faure (2007, p. 13, p. 216) described, '[d]eities are dealt with as if they were emperors and officials', and 'religion and ritual...played a central role in relating the Chinese imperial state to local society'. While Japan also adopted some aspects of the Confucian culture, it was not systematically used to reinforce state power (Berthrong 1998, ch. 6).

## CHINA

Confucianisation as a civilising process was actively propagated by the state from the Ming dynasty onwards in China. As described below, lineages were held responsible for ensuring law and order within their own groups, and linked, through rituals and economic incentives, with the imperial bureaucracy.

This enabled the extension of the boundaries of the empire with minimal administrative and military presence:

*[t]he reach of the state was not unlimited. During the imperial era (the state's) official authority extended directly only to the county magistrate... (Below that, the state relied on the lineages) to enforce its edicts and maintain social stability.*

(Ikels 2004, pp. 90–91)

14 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

As Siu and Faure (1995) put it, this system ensured that ‘even when the imperial bureaucracy was physically distant its impact was symbolically intense’. They further argued that

*[a]lthough contact with the imperial bureaucracy by localized descent groups might only have been imagined or symbolic, higher-order lineage halls or academies based in regional cities and provincial capitals were arenas in which upwardly mobile local groups maintained direct dialogues with imperial officials.*

(Siu & Faure, 1995, pp. 211–212)

Studies of China have shown the fascinating incentives for ethnic minorities to abandon their kinship systems and organise themselves into patrilineages, in order to promote their own interests and exclude others from access to resources. Becoming Confucianised offered ethnic minorities the opportunity to enter the dominant Han ethnic fold, and access the benefits of belonging to the mainstream culture:

*Lineages, then, are complex historical constructions in which kinship and descent have come to serve as legitimizing labels for claims to settlement rights and territorial control...cultural institutions [in this case lineage] and political economy [in this case territorial control] never ceased to constitute each other through time.*

(Siu & Faure 1995, pp. 213–214)

*The construction of lineage,...ethnic identity, and popular religion in south China were dialogues creating identities, setting boundaries, asserting entitlement, and enforcing exclusion. The processes were integral to the expansion of the late imperial state, which presented itself less as an administrative machinery than as a cultural idea. As the former, the state was remote; as the latter, it was penetrating because its symbolic codes...shape[d] perceptions of viable options.*

(Siu & Faure 1995, p. 17)

Faure (2007, p. 10) referred to ‘the centrality of ancestral sacrifice as the linchpin connecting state authority and local communities...by adopting neo-Confucian rituals, [local communities] drew upon the authority of the state in positing

common descent as the foundation of territorial relationship. Local communities thus colluded with the state in treating lineages as the building blocks of orderly society’.

Those who failed to participate in this system were perceived to be uncivilised, second-class citizens, but could redeem themselves over time by subscribing to the dominant mores:

*Those marginalized were often labeled inferior and politically undeserving to the point of not belonging to the same cultural universe.*

(Siu & Faure 1995, pp. 213–214)

*Contrary to the impressions of the established lineages that Zhigang had been a rather ‘uncivilized’ place with mixed surnames...[a]n Ou surname lineage did establish itself, building seven ancestral halls. By...1837, it was able to put together a genealogy.*

(Siu & Liu 2006, p. 301)

Siu and Liu (2006, pp. 290–291) further described how in the Pearl River Delta during the Ming and Qing dynasties, some segments of the local population appropriated symbols of state power and

*...converted themselves into ‘legitimate’ members of the imperial order. By calling themselves Han, they distinguished themselves from indigenous populations in the area. In this process of self-differentiation during the Ming and Qing, single-surnamed communities arose in the Pearl River Delta. They acquired vast areas of river marshes, controlled markets and temples, and flaunted literati connections. What were seen as orthodox notions of Chinese culture and markers of identity were improvised by the upwardly mobile to create a language of exclusion that was eventually shared by state officials and the locally powerful.*

Other local populations excluded from this system were denied settlement rights, which Faure (2007, p. 4) explained were rights to exploit common property resources, such as cultivating land that was not privately claimed, building houses on wasteland, and gathering fuel from the hillsides and fish from the streams or the sea.

Elsewhere, Siu and Faure (1995, pp. 211–212) described  
*...the daunting growth of the He lineage and its ancestral trust in the last three centuries. It prospered on the reclamation of the sands among the numerous tributaries of the Pearl River, and subsequently on the rents it collected from tenants who were largely labeled as Dan and denied settlement rights. As its economic base expanded and diversified, lineage identity and ritual aggrandizement intensified...A lineage genealogy was compiled and aggressively used to set clear boundaries against tenants and neighbors, even though the document contained blatant inconsistencies about the very founding of the lineage.*

Faure (2007, p. 363) described how in the Guizhou mountains,  
*...from the eighteenth century on, commercial logging provided a sudden impetus for economic development. The Miao people living in the area took immediately to the use of land deeds as evidence of land rights, enforced ethnic boundaries between themselves and the immigrants from Hunan who flocked to the region, began building timber houses in the style of Han village houses, and, by the nineteenth century, compiled written genealogies as they distinguished themselves in imperial service by providing men to fight against the Taiping.*

Another incentive to be fully incorporated into the Confucian kinship system of the Han majority was that this was a requisite for upward mobility into the civil service, with all the prestige and power associated with it (Ko *et al.*, 2003, p. 19).

Lineages, with their networks, also became engines of economic growth—especially in China’s southeastern coastal region with its rich potential for commerce and trade—as well as integral components of the Ming state (Gates 1996, Faure 2007, p. 7). As Faure (2007, p. 14) stated, ‘incorporation via the ritual process tied the lineage closely with the growth of business and the pooling of capital for investment purposes’.

Mao sought to destroy lineages and their rituals, but since 1989, with encouragement from local governments, lineages have been revived in South China to consolidate ties with overseas Chinese who invested heavily in the economy (Shu 2004; Siu 1989).



The system generated strong pressures from both living and dead kin, for people to bear sons to continue the family line and care for the ancestors. Not bearing a son was a major dereliction of filial duty. It was believed that one's own soul, and that of one's male ancestors, needed to be cared for by male progeny, and that without this care, the dead would become what, in China, is known as 'hungry ghosts'. No pension plan could cover care in the after-life. Supernatural sanctions reinforced this filial duty, with the belief that angering the ancestors through unfilial acts could bring their wrath down upon one in this life, bringing bad luck.

## KOREA

The process of Korea's Confucianisation has been studied in careful detail. During the Choson dynasty (1392–1910), a process of rigorous social engineering was carried out, borrowing heavily from readings of the Chinese texts (Deuchler 1992, 2003). The existing bilateral family system was replaced with a rigidly patrilineal system, abolishing girls' rights to parental property and the possibility of couples living with either the man's or the woman's family (Deuchler 1992, pp. 80–81, Ko *et al.* 2003, pp. 10–11). Ancestor worship was strenuously promoted, to strengthen corporate bonds within the lineage and to the rulers (Deuchler 1992, p. 133). A Department of Rites refined the details of this patriarchal authoritarian regime, and fought relentlessly over centuries against the survival of traces of the old bilateral system of kinship. As Deuhler (1992, p. 111) noted,

*[s]ocial organization was tied together by a threefold mechanism: the domestic sphere, represented by the wife, was subordinated to the public sphere, represented by the father and son, they in turn were the sovereign's subjects.*

An 'extraordinary strength of agnatic solidarity' (Janelli & Janelli 1982, p. 181) was generated by the close link between an individual's fortunes and that of his lineage. This was a highly ascriptive system, in that access to political power, as well as to the economic and social assets of the lineage, was regulated through one's position in the lineage. Lineages commonly held some joint property, which was used to support ancestor worship rituals, and to help lineage members in need. Lineage members interacted frequently in the context of daily life and specified rituals, and offered a source of mutual support and mutual supervision: 'the

*p'a* [lineage] performed many of the social services on the local level that are now provided by public schools, police, and social welfare agencies' (United States 1990).

Strong supernatural sanctions ensured conformity to the Confucian rules. Kendall (1984) described beliefs in ancestors and ghosts in rural Korea in the 1980s, and spelled out how they served to generate a great deal of pressure to conform to the needs of the corporate group.<sup>13</sup> Ancestors with male descendants to care for them could be a benign influence on their family. Even these, though, could be restless and dangerous if they died with unfulfilled desires, such as not seeing their grandsons. Those who died unmarried or without male descendants were believed to be filled with resentment and could create all kinds of problems for their siblings and other kin. It is apparent that there was much pressure from a wide range of family members to ensure that individuals performed their filial duties of marrying and bearing sons quickly, and caring for their ancestors.

The main features of this kinship system were maintained through the twentieth century:

*During the colonial period (1910–1945) under the Japanese, the Confucian norms of loyalty and filial piety continued to be taught in schools...and the norms of the patriarchal family system with a male house head were written into the Civil Code. Household registration records used to enforce these norms also served to aid the colonial authorities in social control.*

(Sorensen & Kim 2004, p. 156)

After becoming independent, the South Korean state formally legalised the rules of patrilineal social organisation into the Civil Code in 1958.<sup>14</sup> The traditional principles of loyalty to the ruler and filial piety were thus used to help maintain social and political stability under a series of authoritarian governments.

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<sup>13</sup> See also Janelli and Janelli (1982).

<sup>14</sup> *Inter alia*, these stipulated that family headship must be held by the men in the line of the eldest son, that inheritance should be through the male line, that men must marry outside their lineage, that women should be transferred to their husband's family register upon marriage, and that the children belong to the father's lineage even in the case of divorce.

## NORTHWEST INDIA<sup>15</sup>

Much of Northwest India used to be dominated by the Jats, who had a lineage system organised along principles similar to those promoted by the neo-Confucians in China and Korea. The origins of the system are unknown, but records indicate that the basic elements of the system have been in place since at least the thirteenth century (Pradhan 1966). The Jats stretched across the present-day Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh and parts of Rajasthan.

As in China and Korea, the Jats' clans were patrilineal, patrilocal and exogamous, organised into territorial units in which one clan would dominate. Daughters leave the parental household on marriage. While a man might seek help from his mother's brother, there was no question of him seeking it from his daughter or her husband's family. The patrilineage (sub-clan) was a property-holding descent group, and land could not be alienated from it; if a man without sons tried to pass on his land to his daughter's son, this would be challenged as appropriation of ancestral property.

The lineages (subclans) were well-placed to control their members, because of their territorial compactness. And the lineage members had a shared interest in the furthering of their lineage's prestige and power:

*Like the clan, the thoks [sub-clans] of a village each have a compact area, both residential and agricultural...the rules of inheritance maintain this spatial compactness, since land cannot be sold outside the thok. The nexus between the ties of kinship and local contiguity enables the various headmen to exercise social control with the respective kinship segments. This is done through the political councils of these segments. The greatest part of a person's life is lived within his own thok.*

(Pradhan 1966, p. 60, parentheses mine)

*In the village and in the wider area of the clan, a person derives his political status by virtue of his thok affiliation...Politically a person is of no consequence unless he has the support of his thok. The power and political*

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<sup>15</sup> This section draws on Pradhan (1966), and the author's dissertation fieldwork in a Jat village.

20 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

*prestige of a thok depend upon its depth span, numerical strength and economic resources.*

(Pradhan 1966, p. 69)

Ancestor worship rituals boosted kinship ties, though as Pradhan noted, this practice runs counter to the mainstream Hindu ideology of reincarnation.<sup>16</sup>

*The worship of ancestors constitutes a religious charter for the lineage and clan organization of the Jats.*

(Pradhan 1966, p. 70)

*The spirits of all ancestors are believed to look after the welfare of their descendants...The spirits are the guardians and must be propitiated so that their benevolence may be ensured. Failure to propitiate may enrage the spirits, who may become malevolent and bring down misfortune in the shape of illness, economic or other kinds of loss, or physical harm. But they are also propitiated because of the sentiment of filial piety and to endure their peace in another world.*

(Pradhan 1966, p. 70)

Jat clans and lineages were more formally organised for administrative and military purposes than indicated by the descriptions of the Chinese and Korean systems. Clans and lineages were organised into a formal hierarchy, which was exercised for administrative and military mobilisation. Each level had its headman and formal representative. The levels of aggregation were clearly specified. For example, the village of Rampur was the head of a group of four villages, and that in turn belonged to a cluster of 20 villages, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

Based on extensive records, Pradhan (1966, pp. 102–110) gave a rich description of the administrative, judicial and military functioning of this system over centuries, which was done at various levels, depending on the nature of the issue. At the lowest level was the village, which resolved most of its internal affairs

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<sup>16</sup> The Hindu Jats' religious beliefs are loosely linked to mainstream Hinduism; a significant number of Jats converted to Sikhism and Islam but maintained their Jat identity.

<sup>17</sup> Author's fieldwork. This system of mobilisation is also described by Fortescue (1911), writing in the first half of the nineteenth century.

through lineage and village councils. Above that were the successively higher levels of aggregation of villages—the *thamba*, the *khap* and the *sarv-khap* councils—each able to exert more social and political pressure than the lower levels. The council meetings had rules and procedures, and the ability to impose sanctions on offenders.

The functions of *khap* leaders included administrating the *khap* area, calling the council for defence of the area, organising military campaigns, collecting land revenue, managing and running the *khap* army, and holding council meetings for adjudicative purposes:

*The thamba council...had administrative, adjudicative and executive powers. It was responsible for the defence and political stability of the villages under its jurisdiction, it decided inter-caste and inter-village disputes, and in certain cases it had police powers to arrest the culprits and bring them before the council...The khap council was also an administrative, adjudicative and executive body with police and military powers. Inter-khap and sarv-khap councils had only adjudicative and military powers. Adjudicative power was used to decide and settle disputes between the khaps. Military power was only used against foreign invaders in joint military operations of the khaps.*

(Pradhan 1966, pp. 102–103)

*The khaps were powerfully organised for military purposes: Each khap had a standing army of its own. At a time of foreign invasion their armies fought side by side against the invaders. The decision to defend the sarv-khap areas was taken in a sarv-khap council meeting and was communicated to various khaps which acted upon it...*

(Pradhan 1966, p. 106)

Under the Mughal Empire, the Jat clan system held its own. The *khaps* would negotiate with the Mughal court for certain privileges, or protest against certain taxes or regulations. The success of their negotiations depended on the relative strength of the *khaps* and of the Mughal Emperor at that time. Sometimes, the rulers would ask the *khap* to provide them with military support against another group, and this would be provided subject to approval by the *khap* council, including a decision on what conditions to stipulate for the help. As Pradhan (1966, p. 107)

noted, '[p]olitical or military weakness at Delhi was exploited to gain concessions from the rulers'.

#### VARIATIONS WITHIN THE THREE SETTINGS

These three settings show significant variation in the details of kinship organisation, and these variations are reflected in the extent of son preference. India and China are very large countries, and there is significant regional heterogeneity in their kinship systems. This regional variation in kinship systems is mirrored in the geographic differences in child sex ratios across these countries. Korea offers a different example of variation on the patrilineal theme.

In India, only a small proportion of the population live in the northwestern region, which is strongly patrilineal with a strong son preference. There are pockets of matrilineal kinship systems in Northeast India and Kerala. Although most of South India is formally 'patrilineal', women do not necessarily move out of the village when they marry (Dyson & Moore 1983). More generally, women can have considerable interaction with their parental family after marriage, and can return to stay with their parents if necessary. Many studies have emphasised how different kinship rules are in South India.<sup>18</sup> Women can function as independent social and legal entities in ways virtually unthinkable in the north. In much of the rest of the country, patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residence dominate, but are not underpinned by political systems; they are under kingdoms run by regular bureaucracies.

In China, the Han, with their rigid patrilineages, constitute the overwhelming majority of the population. Some of the non-Han minorities have yet to adopt the Han kinship systems. For example, the southern provinces bordering Myanmar and Laos have minorities such as the Na who practice matrilineal kinship, the Lahu who practice bilateral kinship, and the Zhuang whose traditional Tai kinship systems are more bilateral in nature (Du 2002; Hua 2001; Luo et al. 2007). In West Chinese provinces, such as Xinjiang, the Uyghurs prefer to marry within their own village and cooperate economically with both maternal and paternal kin, so daughters are not lost to their parents (Rudelson 1997). Anderson & Silver (1995, Table 7) have found the 1990 census data showing clear ethnic

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<sup>18</sup> Karve (1953); Kolenda (1987); Trautmann (1981).

differentials in the sex ratios at birth in Xinjiang province; the Uyghurs had a normal ratio of 105, while the Han had an elevated ratio of 109.

West Chinese provinces, such as Tibet and Qinghai, have large Tibetan populations who traditionally practice fraternal polyandry (Childs 2003; Levine 1988). A 1958 census of one of these areas showed high proportions of adult women being unmarried (Childs 2003, Table 5). These women live either within the household or in an 'adjunct house', and may have children.<sup>19</sup> They receive financial and other support from their natal family, and remained available to help their family in turn. This is radically different from the Han system, in which there is little scope for grown daughters to be supported by their natal household, not to mention raise illegitimate children there.

Amongst the Han Chinese, too, there are differences in the extent to which patrilineages formed propertied corporate structures. In North China, lineages are typically weaker and have less corporate property than in the southeastern region (Duara 1988, pp. 86–88). Siu and Faure (1995, p. 210, citing Freedman 1965) argued that this is related to the rich commercial possibilities in this region. Yet, even in the north, the imperial bureaucracy vigorously promoted lineages 'as keepers of the moral and social order' (Duara 1988, p. 101), and lineages play an important role in the lives of the villagers in terms of social and economic cooperation, and organised public life. As Duara (1988, p. 101) noted, 'lineages or their segments formed the basic political divisions...In other words, kinship space overlapped with 'political space''.

Another variation on patrilineal kinship organisation is in Korea, where the lineage is continued through the line of the eldest son in each generation, and the other sons would start their own sub-lineages (Lee 2003, p. 93). This means that the eldest son would carry the burden of caring for all the preceding generations of male ancestors (Janelli & Janelli 1982, pp. 179–180), and it is especially important for him to bear a son to continue the family line. In China, the responsibilities of ancestor worship are shared by

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<sup>19</sup> According to Childs (2003), '[a]n unmarried woman often resided within an 'adjunct house' (zur-khang), a small structure that was economically and sometimes physically linked with her parents' or brothers' household'.

all the brothers and their sons, but in Korea, other sons only take on the task if the eldest son fails at his task (Janelli & Yim 2004, p. 138). This inflexibility heightens the urgency for eldest sons to have a son of their own, and data does show that eldest sons' wives report the strongest son preference and are more likely to continue childbearing till they bear a son (Chung & Das Gupta 2007; Larsen *et al.* 1998).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER DIFFERENTIALS IN MORTALITY

These rigidly patrilineal kinship systems are highly effective at marginalising daughters and reducing parents' incentives to invest their resources in raising girls. It is not only men, but also women, who prefer to raise sons, since that is the way to insure their own future. These incentives underlie the excess mortality of girls, which is widely documented to take place in these settings through antenatal sex selection, female infanticide, and greater alacrity at seeking medical services for sons than for daughters. As the technology of sex selection becomes more accessible physically and financially, there is some shift from postnatal to prenatal sex selection (Goodkind 1996). The improved ease of sex selection, however, also generates a spike in the manifestation of son preference such that the total proportion of 'missing girls' rose in all these settings.

The aversion to raising daughters is driven by the fact that girls are seen as a drain on household resources. This is why the proportions 'missing' rise when households face a resource crunch, such as the privations of war, a famine, or fertility decline in which total family size drops more rapidly than the number of sons desired (Das Gupta & Li 1999). It is also why excess female child mortality rises with birth order, as parents trying to reach their desired number of sons are faced with the daunting prospect of raising multiple girls.

If significant dowries need to be paid at a girl's marriage, this aggravates the situation, but the issue of dowry does not explain underlying son preference. In China and South Korea, the net expenses of a son's marriage are estimated to be 3–4 times higher than that of a daughter's marriage (Das Gupta *et al.* 2003). The parents of the groom have to buy or construct new housing for the couple, and bear the larger part of the other costs of marriage,



including feasts. Traditionally, it has been the norm to pay some bride-price as well. In the northwestern states of Punjab and Haryana, bride-price was the norm in the past, until reductions in child mortality created a situation where, given that men marry women younger than themselves, there was a surplus of marriageable women for each cohort of men. There are reports that bride-price is once again being resorted to in these states, as fertility decline has ended the 'marriage squeeze' against women (Kaur 2004).

Darling (1947) noted that bride-price was still the norm in Punjab and Haryana in the 1920s, due to the shortage of women, but nevertheless, the costs of raising a girl was resented as encroaching on the sons' inheritance. Outlays on sons are seen as household investment, while outlays on girls are seen as net drains. Regional differentials within India suggest that the kinship system plays an important role in mediating the effect of dowry payments on the treatment of daughters. Although dowries have imposed a heavy burden across India in recent years, levels of discrimination against girls continue to be far higher in Northwest than in South India, where there is much more scope for give and take between a married woman and her family of birth.

## THE ROLE OF THE MODERN STATE IN UNRAVELING PATRILINEAL FAMILY SYSTEMS

A great deal has been written on 'modernisation', and its impact on social organisation and norms. Early theorists focused on the profound cultural and behavioural implications of the shift from pre-industrial to industrial economic organisations.<sup>20</sup> Essentially, this involved a shift from face-to-face communities, bound by religious and other traditions, to more impersonal social groupings, characterised by contractual associations. Accompanying this was a shift whereby people's social status derive less from 'ascription', based on characteristics such as their family of birth, and more from their individual achievements. Later theorists argued that

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Toennies discussed a shift from *Gemeinschaft* (community) to *Gesellschaft* (purposive association), Maine, a shift from status to contract, Durkheim, a shift from mechanical to organic solidarity, Weber, a shift from behaviour motivated by tradition, affect or values to a goal-oriented rationality, and Parsons, a shift from ascribed to achieved status.

'modern' societies and individuals are motivated by the pursuit of innovation and rationality, rather than adherence to traditions.<sup>21</sup>

These processes have certainly been at work in East and South Asia, as discussed below, in the context of the role of urbanisation and industrialisation in reducing the power of family and lineages. However, equally fundamental changes have been wrought by the advent of the modern state, which removed the political underpinnings of patrilineal kinship systems. This has had a powerful impact, unraveling the pre-modern states' reinforcement of these kinship systems in China, South Korea and Northwest India.

#### MODERN STATES HAVE POWERFUL TOOLS FOR INCORPORATING CITIZENS WITHOUT RESORT TO KINSHIP

The tools available to the modern state obviate the administrative and political need for patrilineages. The modern state has many highly-effective administrative tools for incorporating citizens and ensuring their compliance with the states' imperatives. It has little need for lineages to implement edicts and maintain social stability, and modern transport and communications bring the reach of the state everywhere. As Duara (1988, p. 217) said of China,

*[t]he modernizing drive of the 20th-century state forced local leaders to dissociate their political vocation from the traditional cultural nexus and rearticulate it through more formal administrative arrangements with the state.*

Pradhan (1966) described how politically and militarily active the Northwest Indian Jat clans were from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, but that with the consolidation of British rule,

*[t]he introduction of a new system of administration and the institution of law courts...reduced [the clans'] political effectiveness.*

(Pradhan 1966, p. 109)

Modern commercial practices also offer a powerful alternative to the commercial functions of the lineage, which had been especially prominent in China. From the early twentieth century, lineages

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<sup>21</sup> See for example, McClelland (1961), and Inkeles and Smith (1974).

*...came to be looked upon as sources of backwardness by the rising intelligentsia, nurtured on Western ideas imported via the city. The new institution of favor that gathered capital for financial investment was the business company. In any case, after the Qing dynasty was overthrown in 1911, ancestor without emperor was no longer a viable formula for the integration of local society into the state, and the intelligentsia's inclination to law rather than ritual as a basis for modernization coincided with the new statist view that leaned towards commerce and industry, rather than land, as the sources of growth for a strong China. The sequel to the rise of the lineage, therefore, would be the history of the replacement of ritual by a legal basis for incorporation.*

Faure (2007, p. 14)

Indeed, modern states seek to bring all citizens directly under their rule, and to be the sole source of formal power, including power for policing and military defence. This makes them likely to want to undermine traditional organisations with these powers, and clans and lineages are prime examples of independent power bases with considerable potential strength.

A radical effort to destroy lineages, to remove their potential for challenging the local government, was undertaken in Mao's China. Genealogies and ancestral halls were destroyed, and ancestor worship rituals banned along with the assembling of large clans or lineages. This was a sea-change from pre-modern efforts to promote these practices, to administer the country and unify it politically and culturally (Ikels 2004, pp. 89–92). Lineage control was replaced with commune control, and the old system of leaving lineages in charge of their members was replaced by one in which the state used its local cadres to intervene directly in citizens' personal lives and family affairs. Local cadres were expected to mediate in family disputes, raise consciousness of how women were oppressed in households, address issues like husbands drinking too much, ensure that women participated in the community's political life (Das Gupta *et al.* 2004), and resolve familial disputes about caring for old parents (Zhang 2004).

Similar, if less dramatic, efforts were made to undercut the power of lineages and clans in Northwest India since the late nineteenth century, first by the colonial administration and then by

the Indian government. A fundamental aspect of this was to use modern administrative institutions to force changes upon the clans' traditional way of controlling access to land (Chakravarty-Kaul 1996). The Jats tried to fight back, but it was a losing battle. As late as 1978, the Jats mobilised, in their traditional way, to pressure the Indian government to abandon its efforts to distribute common land to landless residents of the Kanjhawla village. They succeeded in mobilising Jats from across Haryana and Punjab for the cause, but were unable to hold out against the power of the state.<sup>22</sup> Kasturi (2002) also documented the colonial administration's efforts to undermine the considerable military and economic power of Rajput lineages in North India.

## MODERN STATES CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL HIERARCHIES AND INEQUALITIES

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Modern states draw heavily on the ideas of the Enlightenment, with its notion of the equality of citizens, at least in principle, and its 'refusing to accept that there is any God-ordained social hierarchy' (Israel 2001, p. 11; Pierson 1996, ch. 5). These ideas are radically opposed to Confucian social engineering, and to the strict age and gender hierarchies of patrilineages. The Indian state incorporated the idea of equality of citizens under the law directly into its Constitution, and backed it up with policies to reduce social and gender hierarchies. In China, both the Nationalists and the Communists were deeply influenced by ideas derived from the Enlightenment (Schwarcz 1986), and committed to breaking traditional age and gender hierarchies. South Korea sought to maintain an authoritarian government and traditional gender hierarchies for a long time (see below), but these broke down eventually under strong pressure from civil society. As Lee (2003) pointed out, modern ideas of individualism, freedom and equality gradually swept away Confucian morality in South Korea.

Social reform movements in China and India, from the nineteenth century, questioned and challenged gender hierarchies (Das Gupta *et al.* 2004). This was reflected in efforts to ban practices iniquitous to women, and in the writings of major literary

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<sup>22</sup> Author's fieldwork in a village near Kanjhawla, which included observing this fight.

figures, such as Tagore and Lu Xun, who explored gender inequities in the family and society. The independence movement in India, and both the Nationalists and the Communists in China, helped popularise these radical social messages, firmly establishing the concept of gender equality in civil discourse and laying the ground for women's movements.

In India and China, active efforts were made to incorporate women into public life. Women were encouraged to play prominent roles in India's independence movement, and efforts were made to expand their participation in public life, for example through a law requiring that women hold a third of local elected government positions. In China, women's labour force contribution was formally recognised with the award of work points to women along with men. Communist cadres made persistent efforts to bring young women out of their homes to participate in political meetings, breaking them out of the traditional shackles of their marital home.<sup>23</sup> Modest efforts were also made in South Korea, for example, to include women in the rural development movement (*Saemaul Undong*), and women participated actively in programmes for savings, income generation, agricultural extension and family planning (Whang, 1981).

Elsewhere, too, modernising states reduced the traditional constraints that patriarchal systems imposed on women. For example, many Middle Eastern governments 'passed legal and other reforms favorable to women', and encouraged the expansion of women's education and employment (Keddie 2006, p. 103). The expansion of women's rights and participation in public life in the Western world during the twentieth century has also been well-documented.

Modern communication technology offers powerful tools for social engineering, vastly increasing the state's ability to disseminate new ideas to its citizens. In both China and India, the state used this actively to spread ideas of gender equality.<sup>24</sup> Both countries have used their state-run radio and television stations, as well as billboards and other media, to raise awareness of the problems and constraints facing women, and to project images of

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<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Das Gupta *et al.* (2004).

<sup>24</sup> For details of these efforts in China and India, see Croll (2000) and Das Gupta *et al.* (2004). See also Naqvi (2006) for a description of recent media efforts in India.

women who are able to take charge of their lives at home and at work. They have also sought to use the media to disseminate information about women's legal rights and how to try to enforce them. Some studies on the impact of the media have been done in India, and these studies have found that the media is powerful in altering attitudes about gender equality and family size (Bhat 1998; Jensen & Oster 2009).

#### LEGAL REFORMS

Legal reforms have been powerful tools for disseminating new ideas about gender equality. Some of these reforms have faced stiff popular opposition, making it difficult to implement them widely. However, the very promulgation of more gender-equal laws represents an ideological sea-change. In both China and India, a series of laws were passed from the nineteenth century onwards, including an 1870 law for banning female infanticide in India. The most sweeping legal changes started from the mid-twentieth century. In both China and India, laws were passed, in the early 1950s, to give rights of equal inheritance to women, ban child marriage, and strengthen the economic rights of divorced and widowed women.<sup>25</sup>

These laws met deep-seated and violent resistance in China, and resulted in an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 suicides and murders of women between 1950 and 1953 (Davin 1976, p. 87). Widespread peasant opposition threatened social and political instability, and the state backed off from implementing these controversial aspects of the law (Andors 1983). Further efforts to protect divorced women's rights were made in the 1980 New Marriage Law, and the 1985 Inheritance Law sought to counter gender discrimination in inheritance. In reality though, land is allocated on the basis of village residence, and residence continues, with few exceptions, to be determined patrilineally (Gao 1994, p. 95). In the allocation of village land, a daughter's share is deleted on her marriage and a new share is granted for her in her husband's village. Similar peasant resistance to equal inheritance was seen in Northwest India, with anecdotal accounts of brothers murdering sisters who sought to claim a share of their parent's

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<sup>25</sup> Das Gupta *et al.* (2004); Parashar (1992). Indian Muslims maintained their own separate family laws.

land, but over time, women have become increasingly emboldened to seek their inheritance, especially if they have no brothers (Chowdhry 1994, pp. 348–349).

In South Korea, the 1948 Constitution made all citizens equal under the law, at least in principle. Women's legal persona was asserted, i.e. they were no longer formally debarred from credit or property transactions, mediating disputes, initiating lawsuits or making donations (Kim 1993). However, much of the traditional kinship system was enshrined in the 1958 Civil Code. Only in 1990 was this revised, to provide for equal inheritance to sons and daughters in the absence of a will, and to give divorced women the right to half the property acquired during marriage as well as the possibility of obtaining child custody. In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that women could remain members of their natal household after marriage, and that women and men have equal rights and responsibilities to care for their ancestors. Also in 2005, the government abolished male family headship and allowed parents, who so wished, to register their children under the mother's family name with effect from 2008.

The conditions of urban life have made it easier to implement laws supporting greater gender equity in inheritance. Customary rules of inheritance are the most inflexible with regard to immovable lineage assets such as land, hence, giving these to a daughter would involve the deeply radical action of passing land out of the lineage. It is far easier, though, to give daughters a share of assets acquired on one's own, and non-farm occupations offer a huge potential for acquiring such assets. It is also far easier for women to demand their rightful inheritance in urban areas, where legal resources are close at hand, in contrast to rural areas, where such amenities are distant and instead, women are surrounded by lineage members hostile to the idea of property passing out of their lineage.

#### THE EFFECTS OF URBANISATION AND INDUSTRIALISATION ON HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

Urbanisation and industrialisation have altered the capacity of the lineage to regulate the lives of its members. As described above, in pre-industrial China, Korea and Northwest India, a person's access to power, social status and economic opportunities depended heavily on their gender, lineage, and even their position within

their lineage. Industrialisation has offered people the opportunity to earn a living independent of these factors, through jobs acquired on the basis of their own education and skills. Modern education has, besides, exposed people to new ways of thinking.

The organisation of urban life has also helped reduce the pressure to conform to traditional expectations of filial duty. The reach of the lineage is weak in urban areas, where people live and work amongst non-kin in apartments and offices. This contrasts sharply with rural areas, where people live and work in an environment surrounded by lineage members. Access to social support networks has also changed with urbanisation; in rural areas, women are isolated while men are surrounded by kin, but this does not hold in urban areas.

The greater physical mobility of urban, industrialised life means that whether or not people live near their parents is determined by their jobs and personal circumstances, not by their gender. Sons may live elsewhere, and married daughters may live near their parents. Daughters' ability to visit their parents is enhanced by improved transportation and women's greater role in deciding which social ties to maintain (see below). Whether or not parents derive support from a child often depends more on the nature of their relationship with the child, than on the sex of the child. This has reduced the gap between the value of daughters and sons to their parents.

These changes have been documented most extensively in the literature on South Korea. Women are increasingly entering the labour force and as such, gaining autonomy. However, there are also dramatic changes in the position of women in families where men continue to be the primary breadwinner and the woman manages the home. Urban women's roles in household management has expanded greatly, to cover not only the management of the home and the children's education, but also non-traditional roles, such as managing the family income and investments, and negotiating with administrative offices and other external agencies (Janelli & Yim 2004, p. 141; Lee 2003, pp. 107–109; Sorensen & Kim 2004, pp. 170–171).

Women have also become freer to maintain connections with their own families. As Janelli and Yim (2004, p. 133, p. 143) described:



*Because married women's new responsibilities included maintaining the social relations of the family...many of these women have chosen to maintain relationships not only with their husband's natal kin, but also with their own. With the massive migration of younger men and women to major cities, moreover, a young couple may live closer to the wife's than the husband's kin, resulting in the family's choosing to spend all or a portion of their holidays with the former.*

Janelli and Yim (2004) found that by the 1990s, even in rural Korea, daughters '...came to visit parents or siblings and to help with weekend or fulltime farmwork'. Citing a 1998 survey, they also claimed that elderly women who live apart from their children have more frequent contact with their eldest daughter than with their eldest son.

## CONCLUSION

Kinship systems matter given that the more kinship rules exclude adult daughters from contributing to their parents' household, the lower the incentives for parents to raise girls. Girls and boys are equally likely to help their parents in bilateral and matrilineal kinship systems. Patrilineal systems vary in the extent to which they allow some flexibility for adult daughters to remain close to their parents, and these differences in kinship rules are reflected in differences in sex ratios.

The correspondence between kinship rules and son preference is striking. Within the same country, different levels of permissible contact between daughters and their parents—as documented in ethnographic studies—are mirrored in regional differences in child sex ratios in India, and in regional and ethnic differentials in China. Even within the same culture, variations in kinship system matter; in South Korea, the eldest son is primarily responsible for continuing the family line, and this is reflected in the stronger son preference expressed by the wife of the eldest son compared to the wives of other sons.

What explains, though, the fact that China, South Korea and Northwest India manifest such extreme son preference compared with other patrilineal societies? Why are they organised into such tight units defined through the male line alone, leaving so little flexibility for women to play a part in their household of birth? I

have argued that what makes these societies unique is that their pre-modern political and administrative systems used patrilineages to organise and administer their citizens. The interplay of culture, state and political processes have shaped gender roles and the relative value of boys and girls to their parents, underpinning a rigidly patrilineal kinship system.

I have also argued that the advent of the modern state in these settings has unraveled the underpinnings of the rigid patrilineal rules. The administrative and other tools of modern state have removed the need to use clans and lineages for administration. Indeed, such traditional powerbases are not only at odds with the modern state's approach to managing its citizens, but can be potentially threatening to the power of the state. Both the Indian and Chinese states have sought to undermine these traditional modes of organisation. In addition, the modern state in all three settings have brought in political, social and legal reforms that challenge traditional social hierarchies, including the age and gender hierarchies of the kinship system. Further, industrialisation and urbanisation have ushered in new modes of social organisation, which reduce the hold of clans and lineages.

These processes have unleashed a variety of forces that reduce son preference. Their effects were temporarily offset by the advent of new technology that greatly facilitated sex selection, resulting in sharp rises in child sex ratios from the 1980s. The South Korean data offer an interesting insight into this process; while the 'manifestation' of son preference rose with the advent of the new technology, the reported 'intensity' of son preference was falling (Chung & Das Gupta 2007). From the mid-1990s, the effect of reduced son preference prevailed, and the sex ratio at birth dropped sharply. Similar processes seemed to be at work in China and India (Das Gupta *et al.* 2009). The modern state undermined the power of the clans and lineages, enabling individuals to value their children regardless of their gender.

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42 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

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NOTES ON DISCUSSION FOLLOWING  
MONICA DAS GUPTA'S PAPER

*Family Systems, Political Systems and Asia's  
'Missing Girls': The Construction of Son  
Preference and Its Unraveling*

MEASUREMENT ISSUES

Discussion focused on two things: the accuracy of sex ratio measurements, e.g. the extent to which people accurately register births; and use of the child sex ratio to capture son preference, e.g. whether values of societies, such as those to do with infanticide, use of ultra-sound, *etc.*, are captured in this definition. On the question of whether people accurately register female births, which has implications for the accuracy of sex ratio measurements, Dr Das Gupta noted that the Coale-Bannister study in China shows that when one follows the same cohorts as they grow from birth through childhood into adulthood, the sex ratios are quite consistent, so there probably is not that much under-reporting of female births.

A point was made that it would be good to have chronological data on sex ratio trends. which could then be matched against trends towards small family size, in recognition that son preference tends to manifest itself in high sex ratios when the fertility rate falls to very low levels. Chronological data on sex ratio trends could also be matched against socio-economic and socio-political indicators. This would enable a study of changes linked to the evolution of small family sizes. During fertility transition, strong son preference may be reflected in couples' behaviour. Thus, framing son preference in terms of fertility transitions, e.g. people's contraceptive behaviour, could add another dimension to the paper. One aspect of this could be the study of sex ratio of births by parity, because sex ratios in societies with strong son preference tend to rise sharply for births beyond the first parity. In response to this, Dr Das Gupta noted that in China, the sex ratio of young

children had increased in the 1920s and 1930s, and after Mao brought in the communes and the ideology of gender equality, the sex ratio returned nearly to normal. Then in the 1970s, after fertility decline set in, but before the one-child policy, sex ratios were rising again, and they continued to rise markedly from the 1980s.

It was noted further that the sex ratio is affected by a combination of different forces. Rather than simply one thing affecting another, it is the result of a series of forces. For example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, China had high sex ratios among young children because of infanticide and a range of other socio-institutional forces. More recently, abortion based on ultra-sound and other techniques has played an increasing role. Other than China, the sex ratio in Vietnam can be influenced by state control over the use of ultra-sound to determine a child's sex and strong sanctions against abortion, which are lacking at present. Hence, if the trend in child sex ratios is also on the rise in Vietnam, this begs a further question about the degree of state control. There may also be cultural differences between countries/regions in the use of infanticide, withholding of food from young girls, use of ultra-sound, *etc.*, and these need to be studied. While recognising this, Dr Das Gupta commented that in her paper, she just abandoned the complexity and put the whole lot of factors—infanticide, prenatal sex selection, *etc.*—under child sex ratio as an indicator. This is not ideal, but it does give one a sense of the bottom line, i.e. the sex ratio after prenatal selection, postnatal infanticide and early childhood excess mortality have played their roles.

## CHINA-INDIA COMPARISONS

The discussion following Dr Das Gupta's paper focused particularly on aspects of the Chinese situation, and the differences between China and India.

One of the noted differences between India and China is that China has implemented a one-child policy for 30 years. The policy is very rigid for the Han Chinese, but for the ethnic minority population in the west of China, it is never implemented. It was argued thus that this is one reason why sex ratios are lower for these minority populations, although they are even more

patriarchal than the Han; where only one or two children are allowed, there is a lot of stress on getting a son.

It was also argued that more generally, son preference manifests itself when fertility declines to low levels. On the other hand, child sex ratios did not rise during the period of rapid fertility decline in Iran. Studies in other countries experiencing rapid fertility declines would be useful. Perhaps the lack of change in sex ratios in Iran could be due to the influence of religion. Related to this, it was noted that a study by Mari Bhat showed that although the child sex ratio for Muslims in India is highly related to the regions in which they live, controlling for this, they have an overall lower son preference than adherents of other religions. The Sikhs have the highest son preference, followed by the Hindus, then the Muslims.

The point was made as well that based on the more diverse cultural and linguistic differences within India than among Han Chinese, one would have expected more diversity in child sex ratio within India than within China, but in fact, the reverse is true. On a map presented in Dr Das Gupta's paper, there were many more dark areas in China than in India, but also great diversity. And the strong concentration of high sex ratios in India in just one region, i.e. Punjab-Haryana, is further underlined when it is noted that the darker circle on the map in one area of Gujarat, representing higher sex ratios, is a community (Jats) that originally came from Haryana. They have very different social status and kinship systems, but they eventually became Gujaratis.

Explaining the underlying causes of sex preferences was noted to be no easy task. The China-Taiwan comparison makes it clear that it is not just the patriarchal system that can explain high sex ratios. Further, if one were to look within any particular region in India, the higher-educated and higher-caste do have greater son preference, which seems to work against the argument that industrialisation lowers son preference.

Further, a question was raised on how is it that son preference came back with such 'vengeance' after Mao, if Mao did a good job of doing away with the lineage kinship system. In response, it was pointed out that while Mao smashed lineages, ancestor worship, etc., he did not change the system of land allocation. He kept the original linear kinship system of land allocation, and with China

abandoning the commune system later, this means that people eventually had to again depend on sons for old-age support.

A participant commented that if one were to look at variation in sex ratios across different regions of China and if one were to say that this is influenced by the modern state, it implies that the power of the central state in China is considerably less evident in certain regions. Another participant also raised the question of whether China is a monolithic state. If the answer is no, it was noted, there are likely to be a lot of people in China who do not follow state policies slavishly. Since China is not a monolithic culture or society as well, the focus on how the state works in shaping preferences makes son preference a very slippery concept.

### EXAMINING CHILD SEX RATIO FROM OTHER VECTORS

A theme that emerged from the discussion following Dr Das Gupta's paper is that although preference for sons is a socially-constructed preference, and the state plays a role in constructing this preference, child sex ratio should be examined from other vectors as well. In China, for example, the one-child policy may be influencing sex ratios in one direction, while educational reform and efforts to change attitudes about gender may be pressing in the opposite direction. It is easy to be pessimistic in concluding that in China, education, modernisation, *etc.* do not seem to have had much influence in altering son preference, but it might also be concluded, from trends in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, that over time, all sorts of factors can gradually reduce the pressure to have sons. As noted by a participant, there is still a preference for sons in a normative way in Japan, but in practice, people actually talk about it being better to have daughters because daughters will offer more care. Thus, there seems to be some incongruence between normative preferences and realistic preferences.

### SEX RATIO PATTERNS AND THE STATE

Some discussion also emerged about how much bearing the modern nation-state has on changes in cultural patterns. For example, a question was raised on whether legal or educational reform has greater purchase in influencing sex ratios.

It was noted that before 1953, in China, girls died at higher rates at every age than boys. The fifth census in China at the end of 2007 shows that the sex ratio is still very high and parents without sons are most likely to abort by sex-selection. As these most commonly take place in urban areas, urbanisation will not then solve the problem of high child sex ratios. On the contrary, in the poorer areas of China, sex ratio at birth is not particularly high. China has launched an energetic 'care-for-girls' campaign in both rural and urban areas, and a preferential policy for couples with daughters instead of sons. Nevertheless, even more efforts will be needed to empower women, and to change Han Chinese perspectives. In response to this, it was argued that sometimes, reforms happen not because of the state's will, but because of community movements. For example, the women's movement in Taiwan has pushed a lot to make legal reform happen.

## ON KINSHIP SYSTEMS

It was recognised, in the discussion, that the bilateral kinship systems characterising most of Southeast Asia tend to be associated with limited son preference. In many of these societies, the husband tends to move into his mother-in-law's family upon marriage. However, it was noted by another participant that in the Middle East, despite its patrilineal systems, sex ratios are lower than in China or India. In response to this, Dr Das Gupta argued that patrilinearity has to be understood in the form of a continuum.

On kinship systems, a question was also raised on whether with modernisation, traditional kinship systems would be set aside.

## OTHER COMMENTS

One participant recounted an anecdote from a colleague in Beijing who predicted that in the future, son preference will fall. This is because girls are being raised like princesses as they are the only child, so when these girls grow up, they are assertive and will be closer to their mothers than to their mothers-in-law. Modern women therefore realise that if they have sons, they would not get to see their grandchildren very much, but if they have daughters, they will.

48 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

Other questions raised included: why when one can only have one child, the desire is to have a son?. Recent studies in the USA have shown that married couples seem to be spending more on sons, and that men with sons are less likely to divorce. Another question was whether with increasingly fewer children, parents tend to invest more in their daughters' education.

Finally, how does the community, state and/or individual family respond to the effects of skewed sex ratio at birth, and how they cope with long-term sex ratio differentials? Adjustments of various kinds, probably including long-term changes in sex preference, can be expected.



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GENDER RELATIONS & FAMILY FORMS:  
JAPAN AS AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE

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This paper seeks to provide materials for discussions on gender relations and family forms in Asia, bringing together diverse strands of research on Japan. The paper first looks at the trends of changes in the labour market and intra-familial relations, focusing on gender differences in education and employment, nuptiality and fertility changes, and the gender division of household labour. Within the rapidly changing demographic and socio-economic context, the paper then seeks to paint, with a broad brush, the picture of gender relations and family forms in contemporary Japan. For this, it presents four sets of multivariate analyses, drawing mainly on my recent studies of families and labour-market activities in Japan. First, we look at the life-course effects of education and first employment on career development and earning power, comparing young women and men. Second, we analyse the effects of education and first employment on partnership formation, focusing on cohabitation and first marriage. Third, we examine the effects of education and employment on the division of labour on household tasks among couples of reproductive ages. Finally, we look at the effects of the gender division of household labour on marital happiness. To the extent that the perceived quality of marital relationship predicts the likelihood of subsequent divorce, it is important to examine the effects of gender relations at home on marital happiness. The paper concludes with a summary of the findings and a discussion of their implications for other Asian countries.

## INTRODUCTION

Dramatic changes are occurring in families in Japan and elsewhere in Asia, changes that appear to an Asian version of the 'Second Demographic Transition'. Marriage and childbearing are markedly delayed in many Asian countries, with increasing proportions likely to never marry and have children. Whatever the forces behind these demographic changes, one central aspect is the increasing legitimacy of individual choice in decision-making as opposed to obligatory compliance with social expectations. Rapid increases in women's educational attainment and economic autonomy, occurring in a number of Asian countries, facilitate such individual choice. A central factor in the context of these changes is the persistence of the traditional rigid division of labour in Asian marriages, which places heavy obligations on women for household maintenance and childrearing—now likely to be combined with high levels of wives' employment (e.g. Tsuya & Bumpass 1998, 2004b; Tsuya *et al.* 2005). In Japan, men contribute through long labour-market hours, but are likely to provide very little assistance at home. Most of men's employment experience seems to change little whether or not they are married or have children, whereas women's lives change greatly once they become wives and mothers. Although empirical evidence on other Asian countries is rather limited with the exception of South Korea, gender relations at home are thought to be similarly unequal in those countries.<sup>26</sup>

In an analysis of gender relations, it is critical to keep in mind that forces appearing to lead to similar outcomes in various societies are filtered through the unique cultures of those societies. Japan shares, with many countries and areas in East and Southeast Asia, the Confucian cultural heritage, which places heavy emphasis on obligations to family and society, leaving little room for self-interest (Tsuya & Choe 1991). Japan is the first non-Western

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<sup>26</sup> International coordination efforts to conduct comparable national time-use surveys in Asian countries have been undertaken. Organised jointly by the Central Statistical Organization of India and the Statistics Division of ESCAP, the International Seminar on Time Use Studies was held in Ahmedabad, India, in December 1999. Despite these initiatives, however, nationally-representative data on the gender patterns of time use in Asian countries do not seem to become available, except for Japan and South Korea. Details of the seminar can be obtained from: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/timeuse/timeuse.asp>.

country to enter the post-industrial stage of economic development. Like Japan, there are now an increasing number of countries in Asia that are going through or have gone through rapid economic development and industrialisation. As such, Japan provides an important case study, offering insights into the current experiences and future prospects of family changes in other Asian countries.

This paper seeks to provide materials for discussions on gender relations and family forms in Asia, bringing together diverse strands of research on Japan. Specifically, the paper first looks at the trends of changes in the labour market and intra-familial relations, focusing on gender differences in education and employment, nuptiality and fertility changes, and the gender division of household labour. Within the changing demographic and socio-economic context, the paper then seeks to examine gender relations and family forms in contemporary Japan. For this, it presents four sets of multivariate analyses, drawing mainly on my recent studies of families and labour-market activities in Japan. First, we look at the life-course effects of education and first employment on career development and earning power, comparing men and women. Second, we analyse the effects of education and first employment on partnership formation, focusing on cohabitation and first marriage. Third, we examine the effects of education and current employment on the division of household tasks among couples of reproductive ages. Finally, we look at the effects of the gender division of household labour on marital happiness. To the extent that the perceived quality of marital relationship predicts the likelihood of subsequent divorce (Bumpass 2001), it is important to examine the effects of gender relations at home on marital happiness. The paper concludes with a summary of the findings and a discussion of their implications for other Asian countries.

## TRENDS OF THE LABOUR-MARKET & FAMILY CHANGES

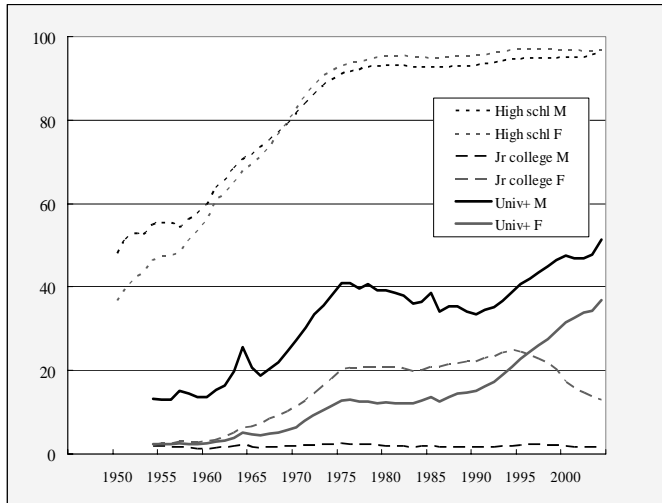
### TRENDS IN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Concomitant with the rapid economic growth in post-war Japan, educational levels and paid employment have increased dramatically, and such gains have been especially dramatic for women. Figure 1 shows changes, by gender, in the percentages of

graduates advancing from junior high school to high school, of high-school graduates advancing to junior college, and high-school graduates advancing to four-year college (university). As Japan's formal education system is competitive and tracked with strong age barriers, people rarely have the luxury of alternating their commitments between education and other activities, such as employment. Economic and social disadvantages accrue for those who do not succeed in a series of structured 'contests' at specific time-points in their educational careers or even at the entrance to the labour market (Brinton 1988; Tsuya & Choe 2004). As a result, in Japan, advancement to higher education and entry to the workforce tend to occur mostly within a narrow span of life course, in one's late teens and early twenties.

From Figure 1, we can see that the rate of educational advancement beyond high school started to increase precipitously for women between 1965 and 1975, with the tempo of increase in the advancement rate to university accelerating in the mid-1980s. In the same period, high school education also became virtually universal. A bigger leap in the advancement rate from high school to university is seen for males from 1965 to 1975, thus widening the gender gap in the entry to the highest-level educational institution during this period. However, the male advancement rate to university then stagnated after 1975 to the early 1990s, while the female rate stabilised and then resumed moderate increases, shrinking the gender gap considerably. Since the early 1990s, the advancement rates to university are on the rise for both genders although the rate for females is quicker than for males. Consequently, the advancement rate to higher educational institutions has reached around 55 per cent for both genders in 2007 (Monbu-kagaku-sho 2007, pp. 38–39).

FIGURE 1. Percentage of Graduates Advancing to Higher-level Schools by Gender: Japan, 1950–2007.



Accordingly, the proportion of young women and men with higher education increased rapidly in Japan, with the gain for women in the 1970s and 1980s being especially dramatic (see Table 1). The proportion of women aged 20–24 with higher education increased from six per cent in 1960, to 17 per cent in 1970, and to 40 per cent in 1980, reaching 58 per cent in 2000. The corresponding proportion for women aged 25–29 increased from a mere four per cent in 1960 to 26 per cent in 1980, reaching 51 per cent in 2000. On the other hand, the proportion of men in their early twenties with higher education rose from 16 per cent in 1960 to 45 per cent in 1980, reaching 51 per cent in 2000, while the corresponding rate for men aged 25–29 increased from 15 per cent in 1960, to 34 per cent in 1980, and then to 44 per cent in 2000.

TABLE 1. Percentages Enrolled in/Graduated from Junior College or Four-year College, by Gender and Age: Japan, 1960–2000.

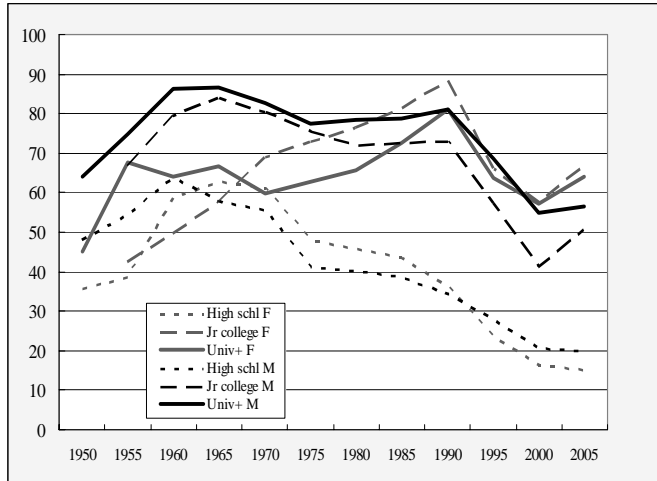
Year	20–24	25–29	30–34
FEMALE			
1960	6	4	4
1970	17	10	7
1980	40	26	17
1990	47	43	40
2000	58	51	44
MALE			
1960	16	15	15
1970	27	21	17
1980	45	34	27
1990	47	44	43
2000	51	45	44

Sources: Sorifu Tokeikyoku (1964, 1973, 1984);

National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2008, p. 175).

How are these gains in educational attainment among young Japanese women and men related to their employment patterns? Figure 2, which shows the percentages from 1950 to 2007 of women and men obtaining 'regular' employment, i.e. full-time employment with job security and fringe benefits, within one year after graduation according to their educational level, reveals strikingly different trends for the two lower as opposed to the two higher levels of education. For junior high school and high school graduates, the rate of obtaining regular employment declined precipitously in the 1970s and reached low levels in the 1980s to 1990s, presumably because of the rapid spread of higher education. In contrast, the rate for female graduates from junior college and university increased steadily from 1970 to 1990, with a wide gender gap among university graduates disappearing completely by 1990. The rate of obtaining regular employment upon graduation in that year was 81 per cent for both genders.

FIGURE 2: Percentage Obtaining Regular Employment upon Graduation by Gender and Education: Japan, 1950–2007.



The rate of obtaining regular employment upon graduation decreased drastically, however, for both genders in all educational strata in the 1990s. This is due presumably to the burst of the 'bubble economy', which fundamentally altered the nature of the Japanese labour market and the types of jobs available to young people. In an attempt to increase their competitiveness and profitability in the face of economic globalisation, employers began, in the early 1990s, to move away from lifetime employment—a long prevalent and distinguishing feature of the Japanese labour market. This resulted in the rise of employees working in temporary jobs such as *keiyaku*, i.e. employment under a fixed-term contract with limited provisions of fringe benefits, or *haken*, i.e. contract work whereby an agency sends workers to a corporation for a specified period (Somusho Tokeikyoku 2001). These non-regular workers tend to be young: 61 per cent of those employed as *keiyaku* or *haken* in 2005 were aged 15–34 (Japan Statistics Bureau 2005). Another emerging phenomenon in the Japanese labour market is an increase of so-called *fretta*, i.e. young people who do not hold a stable job and hop from one temporary job to another.

The proliferation of these types of non-regular employment among young adults not only harms their subsequent job prospects and career developments, but also poses profound implications for marriage and family building (Oppenheimer 1994; Oppenheimer *et al.* 1997; Tsuya 2009). Since 2000, the Japanese economy has shown some signs of recovery, as reflected in the moderate rise in the rate of obtaining regular employment among graduates from higher educational institutions.

To assess how young women and men fare once they enter the labour force, and not just immediately after graduating from school, we next examine changes in age-specific labour force participation rates by gender from 1970–2005. Figure 3 shows that the labour force participation rate for women aged 25–34 increased dramatically since the mid-1970s. Although a precipitous drop is still seen for women of this age group sustaining the well-known M-shaped age pattern of women's employment, it has become much less notable. This suggests that while there is still a tendency for a Japanese woman to exit the labour force upon marriage or the birth of her first child and re-enter once her last child enters school (Brinton 1988; Choe *et al.* 2004), such a tendency is weakening considerably in recent years. Furthermore, although not as dramatically so as for women aged 25–34, the labour force participation rate for women in their late thirties and forties also rose substantially during the same period, indicating that employment of married women at reproductive ages has also been increasing.

On the other hand, the age pattern of labour force participation for young men shows the influences of both increasing educational attainment and declining employment (see Figure 4). The labour force participation rates for men aged 15–24 decreased notably from 1970 to 1980, due primarily to the rising rate of advancing to higher level schools. The labour force participation rates for men aged 25 and above declined further in the 1990s and early 2000s, owing presumably to increasing scarcity of jobs caused by the economic downturn.



FIGURE 3. Female Labour Force Participation Rate by Age: Japan, 1970–2005.

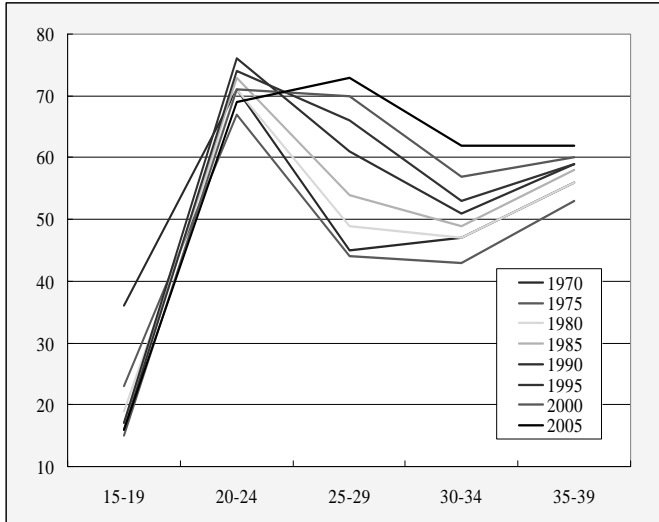
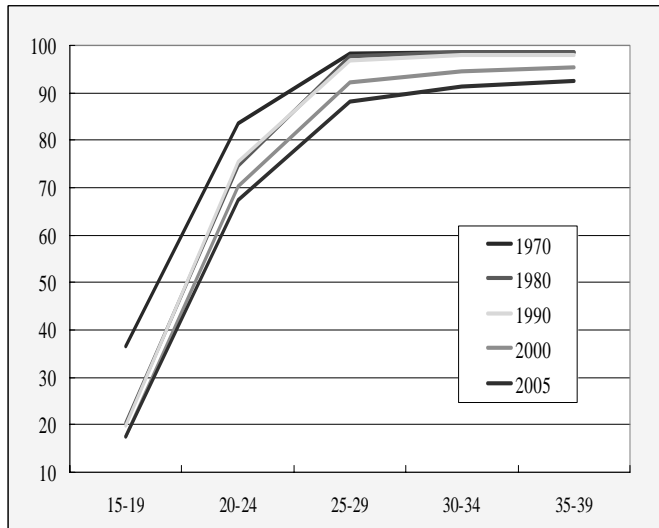


FIGURE 4. Male Labour Force Participation Rate by Age: Japan, 1970–2005.



Altogether, the aggregate trends that we have seen in this section suggest improved educational opportunities for the young Japanese, especially for young women, after 1960, with the tempo of improvement accelerating since the 1990s. Labour market opportunities for young women also improved dramatically—in both absolute and relative terms—in the 1970s and 1980s. Employment opportunities of the young Japanese deteriorated since the 1990s, however, due mainly to the burst of the bubble economy and economic globalisation, although young women seem to have been faring better than young men.

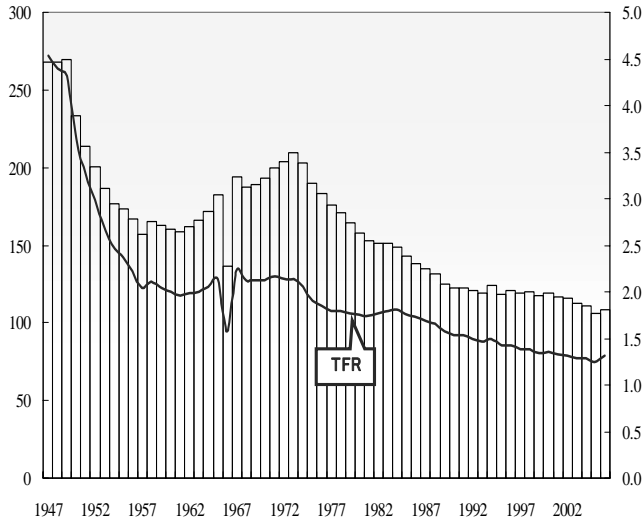
#### *TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF FERTILITY AND NUPTIALITY*

From shortly after World War II to the late 1950s, Japan experienced a sharp downturn in its fertility. In a span of a little over one decade, the birth rate was cut by more than one-half from the TFR of 4.5 children per woman in 1947 to 2.0 in 1957 (see Figure 5). After this dramatic decline, Japan's fertility stabilised at a level of 2.0 to 2.2 children per woman until 1974, when it began to decline again. Since the mid-1970s, fertility has been declining to well below replacement, reaching 1.50 per woman in 1992. Since then, the TFR has never recovered to the 1.50 level. Rather, it continued to decrease further to 1.26 in 2005—the lowest level ever recorded in its history. This suggests the relevance of the 'low fertility trap hypothesis' (Lutz *et al.* 2006), i.e. reinforcing mechanisms resulting, if unchecked, in a continued decline in fertility, to Japan since 1990. Although the pace of this continuous decline to below-replacement levels was slower than that of the earlier post-war decline, its demographic and socio-economic consequences are much more serious because it has been the primary cause of Japan's rapid ageing and population decline.

These two fertility transitions in post-war Japan are different in character and are associated with different demographic determinants. The earlier fertility decline occurred not only among women in their prime reproductive years (aged 20–34), but also among those aged 35 and above, thereby suggesting a shift from a pattern of prolonged childbearing to one of deliberate stopping of childbearing well before the onset of natural sterility (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2009, pp. 57–58). In contrast, although the fertility decline to below-replacement levels involved marked decreases in fertility of women in their

twenties, it also involved increases in fertility of women in their thirties, suggesting the increasing delay of marriage and childbearing.

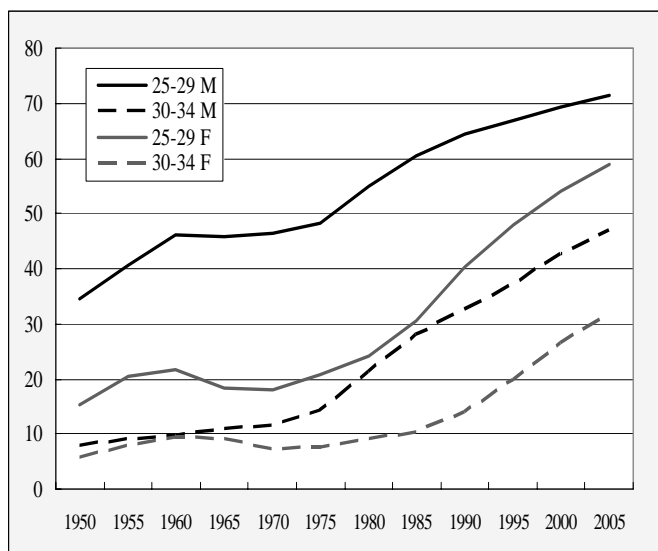
FIGURE 5. Total Fertility Rate and Number of Births (in Ten Thousands): Japan, 1947–2006.



These two fertility transitions in post-war Japan are different in character and are associated with different demographic determinants. The earlier fertility decline occurred not only among women in their prime reproductive years (aged 20–34), but also among those aged 35 and above, thereby suggesting a shift from a pattern of prolonged childbearing to one of deliberate stopping of childbearing well before the onset of natural sterility (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2009, pp. 57–58). In contrast, although the fertility decline to below-replacement levels involved marked decreases in fertility of women in their twenties, it also involved increases in fertility of women in their thirties, suggesting the increasing delay of marriage and childbearing.

An examination of changes in the age-specific proportions never-married among young women and men provides further evidence that decreasing marriage has played a major role in Japan's fertility decline to below-replacement levels. As shown in Figure 6, the proportions never-married among women aged 25–34 were relatively stable until the mid-1970s, when they started to increase precipitously. The proportion for women aged 25–29 increased from 18 per cent in 1975 to 59 per cent in 2005. The corresponding rate of increase for women aged 30–34 was even more dramatic—from eight to 32 per cent. Further, the celibacy rate, indicated by proportion never-married at age 50, also showed a sign of increase in recent years; while it was less than two per cent in the early post-war years, it was seven per cent in 2005 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2009, p. 108).

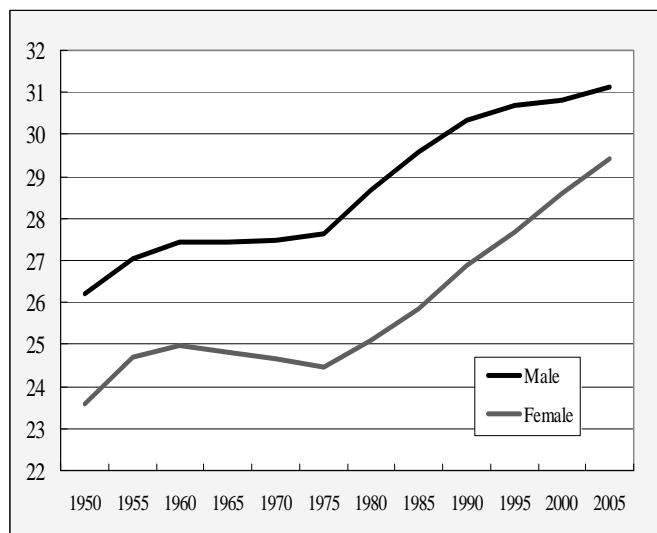
FIGURE 6. Percentage Never-married at Ages 25–29 and 30–34 by Gender: Japan, 1950–2005.



The tendencies of delayed marriage and increasing non-marriage are even more pronounced among men. As shown in Figure 6, the proportion never-married rose from 48 per cent in 1975 to 71 per cent among men aged 25–29. The corresponding proportion for men aged 30–34 increased more dramatically from 14 to 47 per cent. Celibacy also increased much more dramatically among men, from a mere two per cent in 1975 to 16 per cent in 2005. This dramatic increase of single middle-aged men and, in the near future, women, has profound implications not only for Japan's fertility and population, but also for its economy and society as a whole. Given a very low level of out-of-wedlock childbearing in Japan, people are likely to have no children/family to depend on in their old age. As Japan's social security and welfare schemes are designed with family as the building block, a proliferation of single childless elderly will pose serious challenges to the country's social systems.

The decline in marriages is also suggested by precipitous increases in the singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) for both genders after the mid-1970s. As shown in Figure 7, the SMAM was relatively stable at the level of approximately 25 for women, and 27–28 for men, until 1975. It started to show notable increases thereafter, however, rising from 24.5 in 1975 to 29.4 in 2005 for women, and from 28.7 to 31.3 for men. Although several northern European countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, have comparably high or even higher SMAMs, the mean age at first marriage among Japanese women and men are among the highest in the world today (Council of Europe 2004; National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2009, p. 108).

FIGURE 7. Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM)  
by Gender: Japan, 1950–2005.



Altogether, these figures clearly indicate the increasing delay of first marriage and rising non-marriage among Japanese women and men at reproductive ages since the mid-1970s. In the Asian context, where marriage has traditionally been universal and most women have typically married by their mid- to late twenties (Smith 1980), the increasing postponement or avoidance of marriage among Japanese women and men is indeed remarkable, and exerts profound demographic and socio-economic impacts. Like many other Asian countries, out-of-wedlock fertility has been very low in Japan, at around one to two per cent since 1960 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2009, p. 67). Under a regime with little childbearing outside of marriage, delayed marriage and increasing non-marriage exert strong negative effects on fertility, because declining marriage directly results in delayed and less childbearing. A demographic decomposition of changes in the TFR confirms that Japan's low fertility since the mid-1970s is indeed caused almost entirely by declining marriage. While about 90 per cent of the decline in the TFR between 1950 and 1960 was accounted for by the decline in fertility among married couples, the fertility decline from 1975 to 2005 is due solely to decreases in the

proportions of women currently-married, with period marital fertility showing moderate increases (Tsuya 2008).

Although period marital fertility rates rose somewhat since the mid-1970s, the mean completed family size of wives at reproductive ages shows signs of reduction in recent years. Marital fertility rate has also started to show signs of decline in the 1990s (Hiroshima 2000; Iwasawa 2002).<sup>27</sup> As is shown in the top panel of Table 2, the average number of children ever-born began to decline moderately but steadily in the late 1980s among wives married for 5–9 years, and in the early 1990s, among those married for 10–14 years. However, among wives married for 10 or more years, i.e. couples considered to have mostly completed their family building, the average family size generally corresponds to the average intended number of children. This suggests that while completed family size of Japanese couples has been decreasing since the late 1980s to the early 1990s, people tend to achieve their targeted family size. Yet, Table 2 also shows that while ideal family size tends to be smaller among more recently married couples, the mean ideal family size is considerably larger than the average number of children couples actually have, even among those married for more than 10 years. This, in turn, implies that many Japanese couples do not have as many children as they want.

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<sup>27</sup> Iwasawa (2002) conducted a demographic decomposition of cohort fertility (cumulative total fertility rates by women's birth cohort), and found that around 70 per cent of the decline in cohort TFR between women born in 1935 and those born in 1960 were due to delayed marriage and increasing non-marriage.

TABLE 2. Average Number of Children Ever-born, Intended Number of Children, and Ideal Number of Children by Duration of Marriage: Currently-married Women under Age 50 in Japan, 1977–2005.

	Marital Duration				
	0–4 years	5–9 years	10–14 years	15–19 years	20+ years
<b>Children ever-born</b>					
1977	0.93	1.93	2.17	2.19	2.30
1982	0.80	1.95	2.16	2.23	2.24
1987	0.93	1.97	2.16	2.19	2.30
1992	0.80	1.84	2.19	2.21	2.21
1997	0.71	1.75	2.10	2.21	2.24
2002	0.75	1.71	2.04	2.23	2.32
2005	0.80	1.63	1.98	2.09	2.30
<b>Intended number of children</b>					
1977	2.08	2.17	2.18	2.13	2.30
1982	2.22	2.21	2.18	2.21	2.20
1987	2.28	2.26	2.20	2.18	2.24
1992	2.14	2.19	2.25	2.18	2.18
1997	2.12	2.12	2.18	2.23	2.19
2002	1.99	2.07	2.10	2.22	2.28
2005	2.05	2.05	2.06	2.11	2.30
<b>Ideal number of children<sup>a</sup></b>					
1977	2.42	2.56	2.68	2.67	2.79
1982	2.49	2.63	2.67	2.66	2.63
1987	2.51	2.65	2.73	2.70	2.73
1992	2.40	2.61	2.76	2.71	2.69
1997	2.33	2.47	2.58	2.60	2.65
2002	2.31	2.48	2.60	2.69	2.76
2005	2.30	2.41	2.51	2.56	2.62

Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2007a, pp. 28–40).

*Note:*

a—Ideal number of children that a currently-married female respondent reported for her husband and herself.



*TRENDS OF THE GENDER DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOUR*

As we saw above, Japanese women's education has reached levels comparable to men's, making possible an array of previously unavailable life options and, at the same time, providing a window on values that compete with women's domestic roles. Views supporting traditional gender roles have indeed been eroding rapidly in Japan, especially among young women (Bumpass & Choe 2004; Retherford *et al.* 1996; Tsuya & Mason 1995), resulting in a widening gap between young women and men in their expectations about marriage. Furthermore, like many Western countries and other industrialised countries in Asia, there has been a rapid increase in paid employment of married women in Japan since the 1970s, evidence of which we saw earlier in this section.

The rapid expansion of women's economic roles, however, does not seem to have been accompanied by notable increases in men's contributions to household tasks. As shown in Table 3, although rising somewhat in recent years, Japanese men's contributions to domestic labour have remained very low in absolute terms and much lower than their Western counterparts. The gender imbalance in the division of household tasks is still very clear. The average household-task hours of Japanese men aged 15 and above is merely 4–5 hours per *week* (only 33–39 minutes per day) although their share in domestic labour doubled from seven per cent in 1986 to 15 per cent in 2006, owing not only to increases in men's hours but also to decreases in women's hours.

TABLE 3. Average Hours Spent on Housework and Childcare per Week by Gender and Men's Share in Domestic Labour: Selected OECD Countries.

Country & Year	Housework & Childcare Hours		Men's Share (%)	
	Women	Men		
Japan <sup>a</sup>	1976	23.1	0.9	4
	1981	23.7	0.9	4
	1986	28.0	2.1	7
	1991	27.1	2.8	9
	1996	26.4	3.2	11
	2001	26.3	3.9	13
	2006	26.1	4.6	15
South Korea	1987	19.0	2.3	11
	1990	17.6	2.1	11
	2004	23.7	4.1	15
Norway	1972	37.2	6.9	16
	1980–1981	29.8	9.2	24
	1990	30.6	18.3	37
	2000–2001	26.5	16.6	39
Denmark	1987	22.5	11.2	33
Sweden	2000–01	26.1	17.9	41
Finland	1979	25.6	11.7	31
	1987	24.4	12.6	34
	1999–2000	24.7	14.6	37
Netherlands	1975	32.4	8.7	21
	1980	33.4	8.8	21
	1985	33.2	10.3	24
	1988	34.2	17.9	34
Australia	1987	33.0	15.3	32
	1992	34.0	17.5	34
	1997	35.2	17.7	33
United Kingdom	1961	33.9	4.8	12
	1975	29.5	5.5	16
	1986	30.0	11.4	28
	2000–01	29.8	16.1	35
Germany	1965 <sup>c</sup>	44.2	11.1	20
	1991–	30.0	12.3	29
	1992 <sup>c</sup>	29.3	16.4	36
	2001–2002			
United States <sup>b</sup>	1965	49.5	11.9	19
	1975	37.9	12.3	25
	1985	36.2	17.8	33
	1995	36.0	18.7	34
	2000	39.8	21.9	35
	2003	39.4	21.7	36
	2006	27.3	16.1	37

Country & Year	Housework & Childcare Hours		Men's Share (%)	
	Women	Men		
Canada	1971	35.7	10.4	23
	1981	27.3	12.5	31
	1986	28.9	13.5	32
	1992	28.9	15.6	35
	2005	26.6	16.1	38
Belgium	1966	38.4	6.9	15
	1998–2000	31.7	18.4	37
France	1965	42.6	11.3	21
	1998–1999	31.5	16.6	35
Austria	1981	36.5	10.6	23
	1992	34.3	13.3	28
Italy	1988–1989	32.8	7.6	19
	2002–2003	37.3	11.1	23
Spain	1991	52.4	11.2	18
	2002–2003	34.4	11.3	25

Sources: United Nations (1991, pp. 101–103); United Nations (1995, pp. 132–134); Christel (2006); Eurostat (2005); Bianchi (2005); United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007); Statistics Canada (2006); Japan Statistics Bureau (2007, pp. 16–17).

Notes:

a—Due to differences in the definition of domestic labour, the data for 1976 and 1981 are not exactly comparable to those for 1986 and thereafter; figures are based on persons aged 15 and above.

b—Figures for 1965–2003 are based on parents who have children under age 13; those for 2006 are based on persons aged 15 and above.

c—West Germany.

In contrast, although it may not have been enough to make up for the reduction of wives' time in household tasks, men's contribution to domestic roles has increased considerably since the early 1970s in many Western countries (see Table 3). Although the absolute level and relative share of husbands' contribution vary depending on the measurement criterion and the range of tasks defined as housework—and there are some inter-country differences in the level and pace of change—this trend is clearly seen in many Western countries. Consequently, the gender gap in household task allocation has narrowed considerably, although the degree of such progresses in gender relations at home seems to be more limited in southern European countries, such as Italy and Spain, compared to their western and northern Europe

counterparts, as well as countries with Anglo-Saxon cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that South Korea, which shares the Confucian cultural heritage with Japan (Tsuya & Choe 1991), also shows similarly low contributions of men to domestic tasks. The average time spent by Korean men on housework and childcare was about four hours per week in 2004, and their share in domestic labour was 15 percent, which is exactly the same as Japan in 2006. This implies the strong influences of familial cultural backgrounds on gender relations at home, with traditional gender roles prevailing in the face of rapidly changing economic roles of women in East Asian societies.

## LIFE-COURSE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF EDUCATION AND FIRST EMPLOYMENT

In the previous section, we saw that the educational opportunity structure for young Japanese, especially women in higher education, has shifted dramatically in Japan since the 1970s, leading to the prevalence of college-level education among young women and men in the 1990s to the 2000s. On the other hand, due to the burst of the 'bubble economy' and increasing economic globalisation, employment opportunities for young men and women took a dramatic downturn in the 1990s, following steady improvements for women and stability for men in the 1970s to 1980s. This implies that the sudden deterioration of regular employment prospects may hurt the chances and desires of young adults, especially young men, to marry and have children.

In this section, we examine, separately for each gender, the long-term economic impacts of education and first employment, estimating the effects of education and first employment on current employment and current income. The analysis draws on the data from the 2004 National Survey on Marriage and the Family and its follow-up in 2007, referred to respectively as JGGS-1 and JGGS-2 hereafter. Conducted in February–March 2004, the JGGS-1 is a national two-stage stratified probability sample of Japanese women and men aged 18–69, for which the author is the director. Similar to many other large-scale surveys conducted in Japan (Yamada & Shynodinos 1994), the JGGS-1 collected information through self-administered questionnaires that were distributed and

later picked up by field workers. A total of 9,074 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 61 per cent. The JGGS-2 was conducted in February–May 2007, following up on the respondents of both genders who were aged 18–49 at the time of the JGGS-1. Information was again collected through self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to those respondents of the JGGS-1 by field workers and then later picked up. A total of 3,083 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 68 per cent (for more details of the surveys, see Tsuya 2009).

The JGGS-1 and JGGS-2 collected information on various aspects of family relations (both conjugal and inter-generational relations), but the information collected on labour-market activities pertains mostly to the 'current' situations as at the times of the surveys, except that the JGGS-2 asked for the type of first employment after completion of schooling and the date (year and month) of obtaining the employment. Using this information from the JGGS-2, we analysed how education and the first employment respondents landed after graduating from school—regardless of whether it was regular employment (full-time employment with job security and fringe benefit)—is related to the type of employment at the time of the 2007 survey, and also to current income, as measured by the yearly income in 2006. The descriptive statistics of all the covariates used in these analyses are presented in Table A1 in Appendix.

The columns of 'current regular employment' in Table 4 present the effects (odds ratios) of education and first employment on current employment of men and women, controlling for birth cohort, as estimated by the binary logistic regression model.<sup>28</sup> We can see that high-level education significantly increases the probability of holding regular employment in 2007, and that such a positive effect is more salient for women than for men. Relative to men with a high-school education, men with a university degree or higher are 71 per cent more likely to hold regular employment with high job security and fringe benefits in 2007. Compared to high-school-educated women, women who have post-high school

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<sup>28</sup> The analysis excludes those who are still in school. A large majority of men and women, who are not in school, obtained their first employment within two years after graduation.

70 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

education are 2.1 to 2.2 times more likely to have regular employment in 2007.

TABLE 4. Estimated Effects of Education and First Employment on Current Employment and Current Income: Respondents Aged 18–49 of JGGS–1 in 2004 Who Are Successfully Followed Up by JGGS–2 in 2007.

Covariates	Men		Women	
	Current regular employment <sup>b</sup>	Current income <sup>c</sup>	Current regular employment <sup>b</sup>	Current income <sup>c</sup>
Education <sup>a</sup>				
Less than high school	0.92	–99.9*	1.14	–9.2
High school†	1.00	(ref)	1.00	(ref)
Post-HS prof. school	0.67#	14.3	2.16**	61.3**
Jr college or equivalent	0.57	40.2	2.07**	48.6**
4-year college or higher	1.71**	138.5**	2.24**	116.0**
First job = regular employment	8.88**	91.0**	6.49**	37.4**
Log likelihood	–569.0	--	–1013.5	--
LR chi-square (d.f.)	200.2 (11)	--	224.8 (11)	--
F-statistics	--	40.1 (11, 1180)	--	9.6 (11, 1634)
Adjusted R-squared	--	0.265	--	0.054
Prob. > chi-square (Number of cases)	0.000 (1,216)	0.000 (1,192)	0.000 (1,636)	0.000 (1,646)

\*\*Significant at 1%; \*Significant at 5%; # Significant at 10%.

Notes: Effects (odds ratios) on first/current employment are estimated by the binary logistic regression model, and the effects (coefficients) on current income are estimated by the OLS multiple regression model, controlling for birth cohort and excluding those who are still enrolled in schools. Dagger sign (†) indicates the reference category.

a—Educational attainment as of 2007.

b—Dichotomous variable indicating whether first/current (as of 2007) employment was/is regular employment or otherwise.

c—Continuous variable indicating total yearly income of 2006 in 10,000 yen.

The type of first employment is also associated very strongly with the type of current employment, although the effect is somewhat stronger for men than for women. As we can see from Table 4, men whose first job after graduating from school was regular employment are almost nine times more likely to have regular employment in 2007. Similarly, women whose first job was regular employment are 6.5 times more likely to hold regular

employment in 2007. These findings suggest that men and women who hold regular employment are likely to have landed this type of employment upon or soon after completion of schooling, as regular employment tends to be, by definition, much more stable and secure than temporary employment. Put differently, it tends to be very difficult for those whose first job was temporary to land regular employment thereafter.

Turning to the effects of education and first employment on current income, we can see from Table 4 that education is, in general, positively associated with yearly income in 2006 for both genders.<sup>29</sup> Compared to men with a high school education, men whose education is less than high school earned, on average, almost one million yen less (around US \$10,000 less, using 100 yen per US dollar as the exchange rate) in 2006, whereas men who have a university education or higher earned around 1.4 million yen more. While there is no significant income difference between women with a high school education and those with less than a high school education, women with a post-high school education have significantly higher income in 2006. The income enhancing effect of a four-year college education is particularly strong; women with a university education or higher earned 1.16 million yen more than their high-school-educated counterparts.

Altogether, these results suggest that similar to Western countries (Raymo & Vogelsang 2009), higher education is highly likely to be associated with regular employment with job security and higher earning power later in the life course in Japan. Although this positive link is salient for both genders, educational attainment seems to be a stronger predictor of subsequent labour-market attainments for women than for men. In the context of improvements in women's, and to a lesser extent men's, educational opportunities in Japan in recent years, these findings imply that the long-term economic effects of high educational attainment are likely to increase in the years to come.

First employment after graduation also exerts strong influences on subsequent occupational attainment for both women and men, in the sense that those who obtained regular

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<sup>29</sup> The analysis includes all respondents, i.e. not only those who were employed, but also those who were not working, at the time of the 2007 JGGS-2.

employment as their first job are highly likely to be holding regular employment in 2007. Owing to the strong association between first and later regular employment, first employment also has strong long-term impacts on earning power later in life. As it is unlikely for those whose first employment was temporary to subsequently switch to regular employment, occupational and financial advantages/disadvantages tend to accumulate, resulting in cumulative stratification of the life course. Given the rapid increases of temporary employment in recent years, occupational and financial prospects seem to be indeed deteriorating for many young Japanese men and women, especially those without higher education.

## EFFECTS OF EDUCATION AND FIRST EMPLOYMENT ON PARTNERSHIP FORMATION

The proliferation of temporary employment arrangements among young adults not only harms their career prospects, but also poses profound implications for their partnership formation and family building (Oppenheimer 1994; Oppenheimer *et al.* 1997; Tsuya 2009). In this section, we examine the effects of education and first employment after the completion of schooling on the likelihoods of cohabitation and first marriage, using the data drawn from the JGGS-1 and JGGS-2.

In contrast to Western countries in which cohabitation spread rapidly since the 1960s to 1970s (Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Kiernan 1999, 2001), it is widely believed that cohabitation among the never-married young adults remains low in Japan. For example, according to the survey of the never-married, which is part of Japan's National Fertility Survey in 2005, the proportion ever-cohabited among the never-married aged 18–34 is seven to eight per cent (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2007b, pp. 36–37). As far as we measure the prevalence, or lack thereof, of cohabitation based on cross-sectional data of never-married persons, however, it is likely to be underestimated, because cohabitation tends to last only for a short period (Iwasawa 2005; Rindfuss & VandenHeuvel 1990). This is especially the case in a country like Japan where cohabitation is not widely recognised as an alternative form of stable partnership.



The JGGS-1 asked not only never-married respondents whether they were cohabiting or had ever cohabited before, but also asked ever-married respondents whether they had ever cohabited before marriage. In the JGGS-2, both never-married and ever-married respondents were again asked whether they have cohabited during the three-year period between the JGGS-1 and its follow-up. Putting together these pieces of information on experiences of cohabitation while never-married, the percentages ever-cohabited by age and gender are computed. As shown in Table 5, the average proportion ever-cohabited is 13 to 14 per cent for women and men aged 21–53 in 2007,<sup>30</sup> which is almost twice as high as the level indicated by the above national fertility survey in 2005. Excluding those under age 25, the proportion who experienced cohabitation while single tends to decline with an increase in age for both genders, peaking at 17 per cent for men aged 30–39 and 20 per cent for women aged 30–34, in 2007. To the extent that the age differentials in the proportion ever-cohabited index the cohort changes in experiences of cohabitation, this suggests increases in cohabitation among the young never-married Japanese in recent years.

TABLE 5. Percentage Ever-cohabited by Gender and Age: Respondents Aged 18–49 of JGGS-1 in 2004 Who Are Successfully Followed Up by JGGS-2 in 2007.

Age in 2007 <sup>a</sup>	Men	Women
21–24	7	11
25–29	16	18
30–34	17	20
35–39	17	14
40–44	15	14
45–49	15	11
50–53	9	7
All ages	14	13
(Number of cases)	(1,258)	(1,719)

*Notes:* Computed percentages above exclude those who are still in school in 2007. Percentages are weighted; the numbers of cases are unweighted.

Turning to the relationship between education and first employment and the likelihood of cohabitation, Table 6 presents

<sup>30</sup> The percentages are based on respondents aged 18–49 of the JGGS-1 in 2004 who are successfully followed up by the JGGS-2 in 2007, and excludes those who are still enrolled in school.

the effects (odds ratios) of these covariates, estimated by the binary logistic regression model.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to West European countries (Kiernan 1999, 2001), but similar to the U.S. (Bumpass & Sweet 1989; Bumpass *et al.* 1989), education is significantly and negatively associated with the likelihood of cohabitation in Japan for both genders. Compared to men with a high school education, men with less than a high school are 2.5 times more likely to cohabit, while men with a university education or higher are 33 per cent less likely to experience cohabitation. Relative to women with a high school education, women with a higher education are also less likely to experience cohabitation. Furthermore, women whose first job was one of regular employment are much less, i.e. 54 per cent less, likely to cohabit, compared to women whose first employment was temporary. These results suggest that educational attainment, and occupational attainment for women, tend to reduce the probability of cohabitation among young Japanese women and men.

TABLE 6. Estimated Coefficients (Odds Ratios) of Education and First Employment on Experience of Cohabitation by Gender: Respondents Aged 18–49 of JGGS–1 in 2004 Who Are Successfully Followed Up by JGGS–2 in 2007.

Covariates	Men	Women
Education <sup>a</sup>		
Less than high school	2.47**	1.91#
High school†	1.00	1.00
Post-HS professional school	0.61#	1.14
Junior college or equivalent	1.32	0.47**
4-year college or higher	0.67*	0.30**
First job = regular employment	1.05	0.46**
Log likelihood	–476.6	–608.5
LR chi-square (d.f.)	26.1 (11)	85.7 (11)
Prob. > chi-square	0.000	0.000
(Number of cases)	(1,212)	(1,674)

\*\*Significant at 1%; \*Significant at 5%; # Significant at 10%.

Notes: Effects (odds ratios) are estimated by the binary logistic regression model, controlling for birth cohort, and excluding those who are still enrolled in schools. Dagger sign (†) indicates the reference category.

a—Educational attainment as of 2007.

<sup>31</sup> The means and standard deviations of the covariates used in this analysis are shown in Table A1 in the Appendix. The model controls for birth cohort, and excludes those who are still enrolled in schools at the time of the JGGS–2.

Higher education is also likely to reduce the likelihood of first marriage for women while it does not significantly affect men's first marriage. From Table 7, which presents the effects (relative risks) of education and first employment on the age-specific probability of first marriage estimated by the Cox proportional hazard model,<sup>32</sup> we can see that women's education is negatively associated with the probability of first marriage. Women with some college education are 26 per cent less likely to marry, and women with a university education or higher are 43 per cent less likely to do so, relative to women with a high school education. Unlike its effects on cohabitation, regular employment after graduation strongly enhances the likelihood of men's first marriage. Although the effect is not as strong and not statistically significant at the conventional level of five per cent, attainment of regular employment as a first job also increases the likelihood of women's first marriage.

TABLE 7. Estimated Coefficients (Relative Risks) of Education and First Employment on First Marriage Timing by Gender: Respondents Aged 18–49 of JGGS–1 in 2004 Who Are Successfully Followed Up by JGGS–2 in 2007.

Covariates	Men	Women
Education <sup>a</sup>		
Less than high school	1.04	1.63*
High school†	1.00	1.00
Post-HS professional school	0.98	0.90
Junior college or equivalent	0.83	0.74**
4-year college or higher	0.91	0.57**
First job = regular employment	1.36**	1.15#
Log likelihood	-5521.4	-8321.8
LR chi-square (d.f.)	41.5 (6)	197.0 (6)
Prob. > chi-square	0.000	0.000
(Number of cases)	(1,180)	(1,622)

\*\*Significant at 1%; \*Significant at 5%; # Significant at 10%.

Notes: Effects (relative risks) are estimated by the Cox proportional hazard model, controlling for birth cohort, and excluding those who are still enrolled in schools. Dagger sign (†) indicates the reference category.

a—Educational attainment as of 2007.

<sup>32</sup> The model controls for birth cohort, and excludes those who are enrolled in schools at the time of the JGGS–2 in 2007.

Altogether, the findings in this section suggest that higher education strongly reduces the likelihood of partnership formation—both cohabitation and first marriage—of never-married young Japanese women. Although not as strongly as in the case of women, higher education also lowers the likelihood of men's partnership formation, as it is negatively associated with the probability of experiencing cohabitation, but does not affect the probability of first marriage. In the context of improvements—both in relative and absolute terms—of women's educational opportunities in recent years, the results in turn imply that Japan's fertility may decline even further. While childbearing in Japan is still highly likely to occur within marriage, the country has witnessed notable increases in marriages preceded by pregnancy in recent years (Iwasawa & Raymo 2005). And a previous study by the author found that cohabitation increases the probability of premarital pregnancy (Tsuya 2006). As far as childbearing is bounded by marriage, these findings suggest that increasing opportunities of higher education for young women will likely reduce fertility to even lower levels.

On the other hand, regular employment following completion of schooling strongly increases the likelihood of men's first marriage. As regular employment upon graduation from schools strongly enhances subsequent career and financial prospects, obtaining regular employment at the beginning of their working life is extremely important for men's marriage prospect and, by implication, their prospect of family building.

#### EFFECTS OF EDUCATION AND CURRENT EMPLOYMENT ON GENDER RELATIONS AT HOME

A central feature of post-adolescence and pre-retirement life in contemporary industrial and post-industrial societies is the balancing of time requirements for work and family. For married couples at reproductive ages, this balancing is likely to be harder than for those who are not married, as the balancing involves not only their own needs, but also their spouses' and their children's. If one spouse has a job that requires long hours, the other is likely to spend fewer hours in the labour market and more hours to meet family needs. If the husband or wife is highly educated, he/she is

more likely to be in a career-type job, which typically requires longer work hours.

In this section, we analyse the relationships between education and current employment and the division of household labour among Japanese couples of reproductive ages, drawing on the data from two national family surveys, both of which the author was the director of: the 1994 National Survey on Work and Family Life (NSWFL) and the 2000 National Survey on Family Economic Conditions (NSFEC). Conducted in January–February 1994, the NSWFL is a national two-stage stratified probability sample of Japanese women and men aged 20–59. Like the JGGS–1 and the JGGS–2, this 1994 survey collected information through self-administered questionnaires that were distributed and later picked up by field workers. A total of 2,447 usable questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 70 per cent. More details of the survey can be found in Tsuya and Bumpass (2004a).

Conducted in November 2000, the NSFEC is also a national two-stage stratified probability sample of Japanese men and women aged 20–49 of all marital statuses. As one of the major objectives of the survey was to collect information on the early life course, individuals aged 20–39 were selected at twice the rate of those aged 40–49. Information was again collected through self-administered questionnaires that were distributed to selected individuals by field workers and then subsequently picked up. A total of 4,482 usable questionnaires were returned—a response rate of 64 per cent. Intending to collect nationally representative information on family, work, and life course, the 2000 NSFEC was also designed to replicate several questions asked in the 1994 NSWFL. More details on the survey are given in Rindfuss *et al.* (2004).

As shown in the upper panel of Table 8, Japanese wives at reproductive ages spent less time on housework in 2000 than in 1994 (down from around 33 hours to 29 hours per week on average), and husbands spent a little more time on it.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, husbands' share of housework increased from seven

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<sup>33</sup> The hours spent on housework were computed by adding the time devoted to cleaning house, doing laundry, cooking, cleaning after meals and grocery shopping. Housework time excludes time spent on childcare.

per cent in 1994 to 10 per cent in 2000, but it was due primarily to wives cutting their housework time. Nonetheless, the most notable change seen in the table is probably the increased proportion of husbands who reported doing any housework at all: from 58 to 70 per cent over this six-year period. Those husbands who do participate in housework contribute, on average, very few hours, but the fact that a sizable majority has crossed the gender barrier to do 'women's work' at least suggests a potential for future increases in men's contribution to household tasks. Yet, despite the small increase in husbands' share of couples' housework time, and some increases in the proportion of husbands who participate in housework, an overwhelming gender imbalance in household task allocation still remains in the Japanese home today.<sup>34</sup>

TABLE 8. Mean Hours Spent on Housework by Wives and Husbands, Husbands' Share in Housework, Percentage of Husbands Who Do Any Housework, and Combined Workload (Mean Hours Spent on Housework and Employment Combined) of Wives and Husbands: Currently-married Women and Men Aged 20–49 and Their Spouses in Japan, 1994 and 2000.

	1994		2000	
	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)
Housework Hours <sup>a</sup> :				
Wives	33.3	(1,210)	29.0	(2,417)
Husbands	2.5	(1,224)	2.8	(2,384)
Husbands' share (%)	7.2	(1,202)	9.5	(2,366)
<hr/>				
Husbands who do any housework (%)	58.1	(1,210)	69.6	(2,384)
<hr/>				
Combined Workload <sup>b</sup>				
Wives	53.4	(1,211)	49.6	(2,354)
Husbands	54.2	(1,206)	52.1	(2,366)
Husbands' share (%)	50.6	(1,186)	52.6	(2,297)

Notes: Mean hours and percentages are weighted for 2000, but unweighted for 1994; the numbers of cases are unweighted for both years.

a—Hours spent on housework were computed by adding the time devoted to cleaning house, doing laundry, cooking, cleaning after meals and grocery shopping. Housework time excludes time spent on childcare.

b—Combined workload was computed by adding the number of hours spent on housework and on employment.

<sup>34</sup> Fuwa (2004) shows that the effect of individuals' and couples' characteristics on the gendered division of housework is weaker in countries with low levels of gender equality measured at the country level, and that Japan is low on the UNDP measure of gender equality.

Traditional gender-role expectations assign the breadwinning role to husbands and, in reality, virtually all Japanese husbands of reproductive ages are employed, with little change between 1994 to 2000 (Tsuya *et al.* 2005). If the wife is in the paid labour force, she devotes fewer hours to housework compared to those who are not in it. Husbands, on the other hand, do not appear to increase their housework hours much in response to their wives' employment. Consequently, when employment hours are added to housework hours, the combined workload of both spouses is almost equal (see the lower panel of Table 8).

If we consider wives' combined workload by their hours in the labour force, however, it rises dramatically as their work hours increase; this is indicative of the 'double burden' that has been described for other developed countries (e.g. Hochschild 1991; Tsuya & Bumpass 1998, 2004b). As shown in Table 9, while the combined workload of Japanese wives who do not work or work only a small number of hours in the labour market is considerably lesser than that of their husbands',<sup>35</sup> wives' combined workload increases steeply in accordance with rises in their labour-market hours. In 1994, the average combined workload of wives more than doubled from 38 to 86 hours per week when we compare full-time homemakers to wives who worked 49 or more hours a week in the marketplace. In 2000, the combined workload again more than doubled from 34 hours to 81 hours per week when we compare wives at the two ends of the continuum. Husbands' combined workload also increases somewhat when their wives are working in the labour market for 49 hours or more per week (see the right panel of Table 9). However, the association between husbands' combined workload and wives' employment hours is much weaker, compared to the strong positive relationship between wives' employment hours and their combined workload.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The combined workload of full-time homemakers tends to underestimate their total contributions to maintenance of household and familial relations as the measure of housework time excludes time spent on childcare.

<sup>36</sup> The average combined workload of husbands by their employment hours more than quadrupled from 15 hours to 68 hours per week in both 1994 and 2000. However, the absolute level of husbands' combined workload is much lower than that of their wives', and a large part of husbands' combined workload is their employment time.

TABLE 9. Average Combined Workload (Mean Hours Spent on Employment and Housework Combined) per Week of Wives and Husbands by Their Weekly Employment Hours: Japan, 1994 and 2000.

Hours per week	Wives		Husbands	
	1994	2000	1994	2000
Wives' employment hours				
Zero (not working)	37.6	33.6	52.6	52.9
1–15	41.8	37.8	44.8	46.2
16–34	59.8	54.0	52.8	51.9
35–41	66.7	63.3	53.4	50.1
42–48	73.1	68.1	53.9	53.3
49 or more	86.3	81.1	63.4	62.9
Husbands' employment hours				
Less than 35	38.5	39.6	14.7	14.6
35–41	52.8	49.1	41.5	42.2
42–48	52.3	49.6	48.6	48.8
49–59	55.4	49.6	57.5	57.8
60 or more	58.7	52.3	68.3	68.5

Notes: Averages are weighted for 2000; they are unweighted for 1994.

We next look at the mean number of hours spent per week on household tasks by wives, and the percentage of husbands who do any housework by education and employment hours of each spouse, comparing 1994 and 2000. The descriptive analyses presented here show the observed relationships as a context for the multivariate analyses presented later in this section. As the absolute level of time that Japanese husbands spend on household tasks is very low while the percentage of husbands doing any housework shows a substantial increase in the late 1990s, we examine, in this section, the situation of husbands doing any housework, instead of their housework hours. Whether or not husbands are doing any housework traditionally gender-typed as female have important theoretical implications, as it signals that husbands have crossed the gender role barrier that has been tenacious in the Japanese home.

As shown in the top panel of Table 10, wives' higher education, especially at the university level or higher, is associated positively with their husbands' performance of any housework in both 1994 and 2000, although there is no discernable relationship with wives' own housework hours. Similar to wives' education, husbands' higher education is also associated positively with the percentage of husbands doing any housework in both years, whereas there



does not appear to be any relationship between husbands' education and their wife's housework time. These findings suggest that highly-educated wives are more likely to succeed in enlisting their husbands' contribution to household tasks, and that husbands who have higher education may also be more inclined to do some housework.

TABLE 10. Wives' Mean Housework Hours per Week and Percentage of Husbands Who Do Any Housework by Spouses' Education & Employment Hours: Currently-married Women and Men Age 20–49 and Their Spouses in Japan, 1994 and 2000.

	Wives' housework hours		% husbands who do any housework	
	1994	2000	1994	2000
<i>Wives' education</i>				
Less than high school	32.1	27.8	51	57
High school	33.6	28.9	58	65
Junior college or equivalent <sup>a</sup>	33.5	29.6	57	74
4-year college or higher	33.4	28.3	72	80
<i>Husbands' education</i>				
Less than high school	35.9	28.5	50	60
High school	33.1	29.0	56	66
Junior college or equivalent	32.0	28.4	57	78
4-year college or higher	33.5	29.4	65	74
<i>Wives' employment hours</i>				
Zero (not working)	37.6	33.7	59	71
1–15 hours	33.8	29.8	44	64
16–34 hours	34.9	29.0	57	66
35–41 hours	27.8	24.3	62	70
42–48 hours	27.2	22.1	64	75
49 hours or more	26.6	22.7	57	73
<i>Husbands' employment hours</i>				
Less than 35 hours	32.2	26.9	49	66
35–41 hours	32.9	28.5	63	71
42–48 hours	32.1	28.2	65	69
49–59 hours	34.2	29.4	55	72
60 hours or more	34.0	30.6	53	66
(Number of cases)	(1,224)	(2,417)	(1,205)	(2,369)

*Notes:* Mean hours and percentages are weighted for 2000, but unweighted for 1994; the numbers of cases are unweighted for both years.

As expected, there is a sharp reduction in wives' household task hours as their labour-market time increases, and the pattern is similar in both years. As wives' employment time increases from zero to 49 hours or more per week, their housework time declines

by 10 to 11 hours per week. On the other hand, the percentage of husbands who do any housework does not show any notable increases in accordance with increases in their wives' employment hours. When husbands' employment hours increase, however, their wives' housework hours tend to increase as well, and the positive association appears to become stronger from 1994 to 2000. As their own labour-market time increases, the percentage of husbands doing any housework tends to decrease somewhat in 1994, except for a small proportion of husbands who work less than 35 hours per week. In 2000, however, we cannot see any discernable patterns. These findings suggest that while Japanese couples accommodate each other by juggling employment and household-task hours, wives seem to be doing much more accommodation and adjustment than their husbands.

How are education and employment hours of both spouses related to wives' housework hours and to the likelihood of husbands doing any housework? We next examine these relationships in the multivariate context, controlling for other important household and socio-economic characteristics that are thought to affect couple's household task allocation, such as couples' age, age of youngest child, co-residence with parents/parents-in-law, and husband's income. As the relationship of couples' education and employment hours to their household task allocation seem to have changed over time, the data from the surveys in 1994 and 2000 are pooled and an interaction of the survey year (2000 or not) to each of the covariates was tested sequentially in nested models. We found that there was only one significant interaction with year that significantly affected couples' gender division of labour at home—wives' education on husbands' performance of any housework. We therefore estimate the model including this interaction. Table 11 presents the effects of spouses' education and employment hours on wives' housework hours estimated by the OLS multiple regression model, and the effects on the likelihood of husbands doing any housework estimated by the binary logistic regression model. Means and standard deviations of the covariates used in these two sets of regression analyses are presented in Table A2 in the Appendix.

TABLE 11. Estimated Effects (OLS Regression Coefficients and Odds Ratios) of the Covariates of Wives' Housework Hours and Husbands Who Do Any Housework: Japan, 1994 and 2000 Pooled.

Covariates	Wives' housework hours	Husbands who do any housework
Wives' employment hours		
(ref: not working)	-3.82**	0.84#
Part-time	-10.27**	1.40**
Full-time		
Husbands' employment hours		
(ref: 35-41 hours)	-2.80*	0.73
Less than 35 hours	-0.47	0.99
42-48 hours	0.77	0.88
49-59 hours	1.58*	0.67**
60 hours or more		
Wives' education		
(ref: high school)	-1.34	0.91
Less than high school	0.29	0.82
Junior college or equivalent	-0.73	1.42
4-year college or higher		
Year = 2000	-4.51**	1.49**
Wives' education x Year = 2000		
Less than high school	--	0.87
Junior college or equivalent	--	1.64**
4-year college or higher	--	1.22
Husbands' education		
(ref: high school)	1.84#	0.91
Less than high school	-1.31	1.46**
Junior college or equivalent	-0.82	1.37**
4-year college or higher		
Adjusted R-squared	0.1254	--
F-statistics	19.97	--
Prob > F	0.0000	--
LR chi-square	--	242.53
Prob > chi-square	--	0.0000
(Number of cases)	(3,309)	(3,274)

\*\*Significant at 1%; \*Significant at 5%; #Significant at 10%

Notes: Coefficients on wives' housework hours are estimated by OLS multiple regression model, and the coefficients on whether husbands do any housework are estimated by the binary logistic regression model, both controlling for wives' age, husbands' income, age of youngest child, co-residence with parents/parents-in-law, and gender of respondent.

As shown in the middle column of Table 11, net of the other covariates in the model, wives significantly reduce their own time on housework as their employment time increases. Compared to full-time homemakers, wives who work part-time (1–34 hours per week) spend on average 3.8 hours less per week on household tasks, and wives who work full-time (35 hours or more per week) spend 10 hours less on those tasks. Since there is no significant interaction of wives' employment hours with year, this suggests that Japanese wives cut down their household tasks as their time in the labour market increases, and that this pattern was unchanged during the late 1990s. As shown in the right column of Table 11, relative to husbands of full-time homemakers, the proportion of husbands doing any housework is considerably higher when wives are employed full-time, but the proportion is lower when wives are employed part-time. This suggests that Japanese husbands respond to their wives' employment when wives work long hours, and probably under a strict work schedule, in the labour market, but they do not contribute when wives work part-time. It may be the case that wives work part-time, or can only work part-time, in order to accommodate their (heavy) domestic responsibilities because their husbands do not help at home.

On the other hand, husbands' employment hours are, in general, negatively related to wives' employment hours although the effect is rather modest. Compared to wives whose husbands usually work 35–41 hours per week in the labour market, wives whose husbands work less than 35 hours per week spend 2.8 hours less on household tasks, while wives whose husbands spend 60 or more hours per week on employment spend 1.6 more hours on housework. A more notable finding is the effect of husbands' very long employment hours on their participation in housework. Husbands who work 60 or more hours per week in the labour market are significantly less, i.e. 33 per cent less, likely to do any housework.

Wives' household task hours are not generally influenced by education, but the likelihood of husbands doing any housework is influenced strongly by their own education as well as by their wife's education. Whereas wives' education does not influence their own housework hours, husbands whose wife has some college education (34 per cent of all husbands) are more likely to do some

housework compared to husbands whose wife has high school education, and this is so in 2000 but not in 1994. Husbands' higher education is also associated with the higher likelihood of their doing some housework in both years. Compared to high-school-educated husbands, husbands with higher education are significantly more likely to do some housework, and this remains to be the case both in 1994 and 2000. Taken together, couples' higher education tilts gender relations at home toward a more equal direction by enhancing husbands' participation in household tasks.

## EFFECTS OF GENDER RELATIONS AT HOME ON MARITAL HAPPINESS

In this section, we turn to an analysis of marital happiness of Japanese couples of reproductive ages, and tie it to gender relations at home.<sup>37</sup> Marital happiness can be an important predictor of the likelihood of subsequent divorce, as was the case in the U.S. (Bumpass 2002). The crude divorce rate in Japan began to rise in the 1960s and increased more rapidly after 1990, rising by two-thirds from 1.3 per thousand population in 1990 to 2.3 per thousand population in 2002 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2009, p. 96), and synthetic cohort estimates indicate that about one-third of Japanese marriages are likely to end in divorce (Raymo *et al.* 2004). The increasing divorce rate provides evidence that an increasing number of Japanese couples are examining what they personally get out of their marriage, and finding it wanting. Like we did in the analysis of gender patterns of household task allocation in the previous section, the analysis presented in this section draws on the data from the 1994 NSWFL and the 2000 NSFEC. While we pool the two surveys for the multivariate analysis, we begin with a simple comparison of the distributions of responses on marital happiness, as reported by husbands and wives in each of the two years.

As shown in Table 12, slightly over one half of both husbands and wives reported the happiness of their marriage as 'so-so' in 1994. It seems unlikely that this is simply a culturally patterned response of avoiding expressing an opinion, as a previous study of

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<sup>37</sup> The results presented in this section draw on my ongoing collaborative research with Larry Bumpass, Minja Kim Choe and Ronald Rindfuss.

attitudinal items and knowledge of innovative family behaviour using the 2000 NSFEC found that even though substantial proportions responded in the middle category on any given attitudinal item, there was little repetition of this response across items (Rindfuss *et al.* 2004). When marriage is defined largely in terms of functional relationships, both women and men may take their marital relationship for granted. Although the middle category is still modal in 2000 for both genders, it is noteworthy that the 'so-so' response decreased between 1994 and 2000, and did so more among husbands than among wives. This suggests a movement away from a simple acceptance of marriage as a necessary institutional role to an evaluation of it in terms of personal rewards, i.e. 'happiness'. If so, it is possible that in this cross-sectional analysis, many of the least happy of each marriage cohort are no longer represented in the currently-married sample—somewhat more so in 2000 than in 1994. These changes over a short six-year period reflect the context in which divorced rates have increased notably (Raymo *et al.* 2004).

Furthermore, in 1994, there was virtually no difference between genders in how happy they reported their marriages to be. The proportion of wives reporting their marriage as happy also remained relatively constant at about two-fifths. However, husbands were much more likely to say that their marriage was happy in 2000 than they were in 1994 (57 per cent compared to 42 per cent). On the other hand, among wives, the most notable change was in the increased proportions reporting that they were unhappy with their marriage. The level is still low, but 'unhappy' increased from three to 10 per cent among wives, while there was essentially no change among husbands who were 'unhappy'.<sup>38</sup> As marriage is increasingly examined in terms of what an individual is getting out of it, men may have begun to recognise the good deal they are getting in the bargain.

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<sup>38</sup> Overall, this measure of marital happiness does not change significantly among women over these two surveys while the change among men was significant at the 0.1-per cent level.

TABLE 12. Percentage Distribution of Overall Marital Happiness by Sex and Age Group: Currently-married Women and Men Aged 20–49 in Japan, 1994 and 2000.

	Very happy	Some what happy	So-so	Somewhat unhappy	Very unhappy	(N)
1994						
Wives–Total	13	29	54	3	0	(632)
20–34	16	34	50	1	0	(211)
35–49	11	27	57	4	1	(421)
Husbands–Total	13	29	55	1	2	(604)
20–34	21	34	42	1	1	(142)
35–49	10	28	59	1	2	(462)
2000						
Wives–Total	16	28	46	7	3	(1,374)
20–34	22	29	41	5	3	(527)
35–49	13	27	49	9	3	(847)
Husbands–Total	26	31	39	3	1	(1,060)
20–34	34	35	28	2	1	(378)
35–49	23	29	44	4	1	(682)

Notes: Percentages are weighted; the numbers of cases are unweighted.

We next turn to the multivariate analysis of reported marital happiness of wives and husbands. The analysis uses ordered logit regression of the five-point scale of marital happiness, which pools the 1994 and 2000 data, estimating the model separately for women and men. Like we did in the multivariate analysis of gender relations at home, an interaction term of each covariate with year was tested sequentially in nested models to examine the possibility of differential change. The final model was estimated by including three significant interactions—wife's education, wife's housework hours and wife's age—with year. Table 13 presents the effects of spouses' contribution to household tasks (wives' housework hours and whether or not husbands do any housework), their education, and their employment hours on marital happiness of each spouse, controlling for age of youngest child, co-residence with parents/parents-in-law, husbands' income, and wives' age and its interaction with year. Means and standard deviations of the covariates used in these regression analyses are presented in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Since there are multiple interactions with year, the estimated coefficients from these ordered logit regressions are extremely difficult to interpret. For ease of interpretation, we look at the predicted distributions of marital happiness by couples' contribution to housework, education and employment hours, based on the coefficients from the full model.<sup>39</sup> To simplify presentation, while the five-point scale was used in the ordered logit regressions, the predicted percentage distributions shown in Table 14 combine the categories into 'unhappy', 'so-so' and 'happy'.

Wives' education has a significant effect on wives' marital happiness with a significant interaction with year. As shown in the top panel of Table 14, while the percentage of wives reporting marital happiness decreased somewhat as their educational level increased in 1994, the association between wives' education and their reported marital happiness is strongly positive in 2000. While the contrast between a negative and a positive relationship is striking, we can see that the negative relationship observed for 1994 results primarily from the estimated high level of happiness among wives who had less than a high school education. In 2000, as wives' education level rises, the percentage of wives who report happiness increases sharply from 36 to 53 per cent, and the percentage of them expressing ambivalence ('so-so') decreases as well, from 53 to 41 per cent. Wives' education also affects husbands' marital happiness, but there is no significant interaction effect of wives' education with year. The percentage of husbands who report happiness increases sharply in accordance with wives' education—from 45 to 62 per cent—while the percentage of husbands choosing the middle category decreases as wives' education increases.

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<sup>39</sup> We present only the variables and their interaction with year that are significant at the five-per cent level.



TABLE 13. Estimated Effects (Ordered Logit Coefficients) of the Covariates on Overall Marital Quality: Currently-married Women and Men Aged 20–49 in Japan, 1994 and 2000 Pooled.

Covariates	Women	Men
Wives' education (ref: high school)		
Less than high school	0.56#	–0.26
Junior college or equivalent	–0.20	0.16
4-year college or higher	–0.17	0.49*
Wives' education x Year 2000		
Less than high school x year	–0.78#	--
Junior college x year	0.51*	--
4-year college x year	0.70*	--
Husbands' education (ref: high school)		
Less than high school	–0.14	–0.37#
Junior college or equivalent	0.12	0.32*
4-year college or higher	0.23#	0.36**
Wives' employment hours (ref: not working)		
Part-time (1–34 hours)	–0.10	–0.33*
Full-time (35+ hours)	–0.27*	0.05
Husbands' employment hours (ref: 35–41 hours)		
< 35 hours	–0.05	–0.13
42–48 hours	0.02	–0.03
49–59 hours	–0.13	0.06
60 hours or more		
Husbands' no housework	–0.42**	–0.22#
Wives' housework hours	–0.01	0.03
Wives' housework hours squared	--	–0.0004
Wives' housework hours x Year = 2000	--	–0.05*
Wives' housework hours sq x Year = 2000	--	0.001*
Survey year = 2000	–0.21	0.49
/cut 1	–4.372	–3.937
/cut 2	–2.832	–2.899
/cut 3	–0.038	0.517
/cut 4	1.558	2.007
LR chi-square	152.12	186.44
Prob. > chi-square	0.0000	0.0000
(Number of cases)	(1,758)	(1,491)

\*\*Significant at .01; \*Significant at .05; #Significant at .10

Notes: Coefficients are estimated, controlling for wives' age and its interaction with year, husbands' income, age of youngest child, and co-residence with parents/parents-in-law.

90 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

TABLE 14. Predicted Percentage Distribution of Overall Marital Quality from Estimated Ordered Logit Models: Currently-married Women and Men Aged 20–49 in Japan, 1994 and 2000.

Covariates	Women			Men		
	Happy	So-so	Unhappy	Happy	So-so	Unhappy
Wives' education	Year 1994			Pooled		
Less than high school	59	37	4	45	50	5
High school	46	47	8	51	45	3
Jr college or equivalent	41	50	9	54	42	3
4-year college or higher	42	49	9	62	36	2
Wives' education	Year 2000			Not significant		
Less than high school	36	53	11			
High school	41	50	9			
Jr college or equivalent	48	45	7			
4-year college or higher	53	41	5			
Husbands' education						
Less than high school	40	51	9	42	54	5
High school	43	49	9	50	47	3
Jr college or equivalent	46	47	8	57	40	3
4-year college or higher	48	45	7	58	39	3
Wives' employment hours						
Not working	48	46	8	55	42	3
Part-time (1–34 hours)	45	47	8	47	49	4
Full-time (35+ hours)	41	50	9	55	41	3
Husbands' housework						
None	39	52	10	49	47	4
Some	48	45	7	54	43	3
Wives' housework hours	Not significant			Year 1994		
10 hours				51	45	3
20 hours				55	42	3
30 hours				56	41	3
40 hours				55	42	3
50 hours				53	44	3
60 hours				49	47	5
Wives' housework hours	Not significant			Year 2000		
10 hours				52	44	3
20 hours				49	46	3
30 hours				49	46	4
40 hours				52	45	3
50 hours				56	41	3
60 hours				63	35	2

There seems to be two possible interpretations of these results. There is a significant interaction between wives' education and year in which the increase is greatest among couples with a college-educated wife. Perhaps a wife's education provides greater resources for negotiation in marriage, and Japanese husbands may be starting to get the message. Second, if the changed marriage environment allows women to be more selective with respect to their future husband's attributes, and requires men to adjust their own expectations if they wish to marry, then women's education may be increasing the selectivity of 'good' relationships. It is important, in this regard, that delayed marriage has occurred more among better-educated women (Raymo 2003; Tsuya & Mason 1995), although a partial explanation for this has to do with the decreasing relative opportunity of hypergamy with respect to education (Raymo & Iwasawa 2004).

Turning to the effects of husbands' education on marital happiness of both spouses, we can see from the second panel of Table 14 that happiness increases with the level of husbands' education among both wives and husbands. The pattern is linearly positive among wives. Among husbands, however, those who are least happy are husbands who have less than a high school education, whereas those who are happiest are husbands who have a college education. The positive relationship between husbands' education and wives' marital happiness is consistent with what we might expect on the basis of higher earning power and prestige associated with men's higher education, and perhaps the extent to which men with a high level of education have least traditional expectations of their wife's gender roles. Among husbands as well, their education may reflect differing expectations of marriage that make a good marital relationship, and how they relate with their wife, more important for these highly-educated men.

It is likely that employment provides many rewards for wives including involvement in a world outside the home, as well as additional income for themselves and their family. Nonetheless, the addition of employment hours to their already heavy domestic workload likely puts pressure on their marriage. It is not surprising then that wives who work 35 hours or more in the labour market report lower happiness with their marriage than those who stay at

home (see the third panel of Table 14). The pattern among men is more puzzling as it is those whose wives work part-time who report the lowest marital happiness. Wives' income is not included in the models because of its high multicollinearity with their employment hours. It is thus plausible that the higher income from a wife's full-time employment may offset the negative impact of her employment on other aspects of her family role.

We have just seen above some signs that Japanese husbands may be starting to understand the pressures that wives face and to make adjustments that may affect the nature of marital relationships. As we saw in the previous section, there was also a significant change, between 1994 and 2000, in the proportion of men who help at all with housework. While the average time contributed to housework is very small, this change can nonetheless be important because it signifies a crossing of the symbolic line dividing traditional gender roles in marriage. From the fourth panel of Table 14, we can see that wives apparently do appreciate their husband's participation in housework. The percentage reporting marital happiness is 39 per cent among wives whose husbands do not help at all at home, while the corresponding percentage jumps to 48 per cent among wives whose husbands do some housework.

There is also a positive relationship between husbands' assistance with the housework and their own evaluation of the happiness of their marriage, but the association is weaker. This implies a possible simultaneity between these variables in which husbands in better relationships are more likely to help out at home. Nonetheless, these findings suggest that men's participation in housework betters the quality of marital relationships. And the fact that the effect of husbands' housework is greater for wives' evaluation of marital happiness implies that in the context of persistent unequal gender relations in the Japanese home, and probably the continued low expectations among wives toward their husband's contribution to housework, wives are highly appreciative of their husband's helping out at home, even if the absolute level of contribution is low.

We would expect that a heavy household burden would make women less happy with their marriage, but there is no significant relationship between wives' housework hours and their own marital happiness. It is probably the case that just as long as employment hours are unrelated to marital happiness among men, housework is simply part of wives' expected role in marriage. With regard to the relationship between wives' employment hours and husbands' evaluation of marital happiness, however, the story is more complicated, as the effect of wives' housework hours significantly interacts with year (see the last two panels of Table 14). In 1994, husbands' evaluation of marital happiness did not depend on the housework hours of their wife. However, the results for 2000 show that while there is little variation in men's marital happiness when their wife's contribution is below the mean (around 30 hours per week), additional efforts on her part are appreciated and reflected in increases in husbands' marital happiness as wives' hours in household tasks increase above the mean. It may be that in 1994, husbands did not pay much attention to their wife's often heavy burden of household tasks, but in 2000, men began to recognise and appreciate their wife's domestic contribution when wives spent very long hours on it.

Altogether, many of the associations of couples' education, wives' employment hours, husbands' participation in housework and wives' housework hours with their respective marital happiness reflect changing expectations of wives and husbands toward marriage in Japan. Wives are happier when husbands do some housework, and husbands became more appreciative when their wife spend a lot of time on housework, thus making the home better maintained and more comfortable. Couples' marital happiness also increase as their own and their spouse's education increase. To the extent that higher education makes men and women more attentive toward their relationships, this implies that the quality of Japanese marriage may improve in the future although the institution of marriage may become more brittle at the same time. Yet, wives' long hours in the labour market dampens their marital happiness. This implies that employed wives continue to juggle their domestic and labour-market responsibilities, both of which are often heavy, and this juggling puts a lot of pressure on wives.

## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Educational attainments have increased rapidly in Japan since the 1970s, and such gains have been especially dramatic for women's higher education. The rate of female college graduates obtaining regular employment as their first job also increased rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, making it on par with the rate of male college graduates in 1990. Although Japanese women still tend to withdraw from the workforce upon marriage or first childbirth, like it was the case in the past in many Western countries and more recently in South Korea (Brinton 2001; Choe *et al.* 2004), such a tendency has been weakening, with increases in the labour force participation rate of women at peak marriage and reproductive ages (25–34 years) being especially notable.

Since 1990, however, regular employment, which had long been a feature of the Japanese employment system, started to decrease and temporary employment started to proliferate among young adults. As we saw in this paper, it tends to be very difficult for young men and women who started their labour-market career as temporary employees to switch later to regular employment. Without the occupational and financial securities that regular employment entails, increasing temporary employment of young never-married Japanese poses a potential obstacle for marriage and family building. As shown in this paper, attainment of regular employment as a first job upon completion of schooling strongly enhances the likelihood of men's first marriage and, to a lesser extent, women's first marriage. If first employment was temporary, it greatly reduces the likelihood of men's marriage and it also decreases women's marriage prospects somewhat.

We also saw that higher education is strongly associated with holding regular employment and higher earning power over the life course, while higher education reduces the likelihood of first marriage and, for women, that of cohabitation. As such, higher education, especially women's higher education, has strong long-term family implications: while markedly improving their labour-market prospects, women's higher education tends to lower partnership formation and, consequently, fertility. Life course is 'cumulative contingency' (Raymo & Vogelsang 2009) and, being such a strong predictor of subsequent occupational attainment,

earnings and family formation, implications of increasing educational attainment are profound.

This paper also shows that Japanese wives continue to shoulder the lion's share of housework. When employment and housework hours are considered jointly, the mean combined workload of spouses becomes similar and the gender inequality in housework alone disappears. However, this gender equality covers wide differentials in the combined workload of wives by their own employment hours. Wives' combined workload increases dramatically as their work hours increase, and the 'double burden' of unpaid housework for employed wives remains evident.

In the multivariate context, we also saw the importance of time availability of each spouse as measured by her/his employment hours in determining the gender division of household labour. Under the constraints of time, Japanese couples, especially wives, adjust their labour-market and housework efforts relative to those of their spouse. The multivariate results also shows that higher education, especially men's higher education, pushes the gender division of household labour towards a more egalitarian direction, implying the effect of higher education in molding gender role attitudes and gender-typed behaviour.

In this paper, we also found that the proportions of Japanese wives and husbands who reported that their marital quality was 'so-so' decreased in the late 1990s. This suggests that personal happiness is becoming an increasingly important aspect of married life in Japan. Our finding that wives are more likely to report that their marriages are unhappy than husbands is consistent with Japan's judicial statistics reports, according to which approximately 70 per cent of divorces were initiated by wives in 2006 (General Secretariat, Supreme Court of Japan 2008, p. 34).<sup>40</sup>

The patterns of association, with marital happiness, of couples' education, wives' employment and husbands' participation in housework reflect changing expectations of wives and husbands toward marriage and the family in Japan. Possibly reflecting an endorsement of 'new' gender roles, wives are much happier when

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<sup>40</sup> These judicial statistics are based on divorces officiated by arbitration at family courts (*chotei reikon*) and therefore exclude divorces by informal consent of spouses (*kyogi rikon*), which constitute a large majority of divorces in Japan.

their husbands do some housework, and husbands of full-time workers are happier than those of part-time workers. Wives' higher education came to be associated strongly with their own marital happiness over time, and it also continues to be associated strongly with husbands' marital happiness. To the extent that wives' education provides greater resources for negotiations in marriage, Japanese husbands are starting to respond to their wife's expectations. High levels of education may also have made women more selective toward their marital relationships, elevating their expectations toward marriage. Highly-educated husbands are also happier with their marriage than their less educated counterparts. This implies that men with a high level of education may have less traditional expectations toward wives' gender roles.

At the same time, however, we saw some evidence of the persistence of traditional gender roles in Japanese marriages. Wives of men with higher education are happier than women whose husbands do not have a college education. To the extent that men's education indexes their earning power and prestige that their wife can then share, wives seem to appreciate the economic benefits of marriage. As expected under traditional gender roles, husbands of full-time housewives are also happier than those of wives who work part-time.

Given the trend in the past few decades, educational attainment of young Japanese women is likely to continue to rise further. Entry of young women into career-oriented employment is also expected to increase (Retherford *et al.* 2001), as the demands for young labour of high quality will increase as the population continues to age and shrink. Changing normative environments have also eroded, both economically and socially, the imperativeness of women's marriage (Bumpass & Choe 2004; Retherford *et al.* 1996; Tsuya & Mason 1995). And most importantly, the gender division of labour remains central to the marriage 'package' in Japan (Rindfuss 2004) as it has been slow to change.

The persistence of unequal gender relations at home, on one hand, and increasing economic opportunities and rapidly changing expectations toward marriage and gender roles, on the other, make the traditional marriage package particularly unattractive for many young Japanese women, and seriously affects the quality of



marital relationships. This conflict likely makes young women reluctant to marry and may also lower union stability by discouraging wives from continuing unhappy marriage. Young men too may find the discrepancy between their expectations and those of potential spouses a cause for apprehension about marrying. Altogether, these behavioural and attitudinal forces will keep Japan's fertility at very low levels for some time to come. This, in turn, will expedite the pace of Japan's already rapid population ageing and future population decline.<sup>41</sup> Making gender relations at home more equal is therefore critical not only to Japanese marriage and home, but also to its fertility and population in the future.

What do these findings on Japan imply for the future of gender relations in other Asian countries? As mentioned above, Japan shares its Confucian familial-cultural heritage with many countries and areas in East and Southeast Asia, such as Singapore, South Korea, China and Taiwan. These countries/areas have also been undergoing similar socio-economic changes at a much quicker pace in recent decades. The mean age at marriage and the proportion never-married are also increasing rapidly in these East and Southeast Asian economies (e.g. Jones 1997, 2004; Leete 1994). These Asian countries/areas are also experiencing rapid declines of fertility to well below replacement levels in recent years (e.g. Chang & Lee 2006; Jones *et al.* 2009; Mason *et al.* 1998; Peng 1991; Thornton & Lin 1994; Yap 2009). Considering these similarities, there seems to be a good chance for these countries to experience the persistence of traditional gender relations at home. Nonetheless, tension with the traditional family institution does not always predict the timing, pace or nature of changes that may result. As we saw in this paper, the strength of traditional gender relations has created a dynamic tension akin to tectonic forces: change is resisted, but very rapid transformations may result if slippage occurs.

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<sup>41</sup> According to the medium variant of the latest official population projection, Japan's population is estimated to decrease to around 95 million by 2055 with roughly 40 per cent of it being age 65 and above (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2007c).

Given the persistence of unequal gender relations at home, and because it is impossible and inappropriate to reverse the trend of increasing educational attainment and paid employment among women, the most viable way—at least in the short term—to reverse the downward trends in marriage and fertility is probably through helping couples balance work and family responsibilities via public policy. Concerned gravely about fertility and population declines, the Japanese government has formulated various policies and programmes especially since the early 1990s (Tsuya 2005, 2008). Aiming to halt the sliding of fertility to very low levels, the government launched a series of policies and programmes—the Angel Plan of 1994, the New Angel Plan of 1999, the Plus-One Plan of 2002 and the Support Plan of 2004—that were designed to help couples/parents accommodate their work and domestic responsibilities by providing more childcare services and encouraging the workplace to become more family friendly. The government also enacted the Maternity and Childcare Leave Law in 1992 and revised it in 1995 and 2005. Launched originally in 1972, the child allowance scheme has been expanded notably since 2000 (Tsuya 2005). In part in response to the widespread recognition of the social and demographic consequences of unequal domestic gender relations, the government, in 1999, also enacted the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society to promote gender equality not only in the workplace, but also at home.

These policy actions and programmes appear to have, thus far, not been very effective, in the sense that the strains and pressures on couples, especially on working mothers, do not seem to have been alleviated and Japan's fertility has remained very low. Comparing 18 member countries, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001, chapter 4) ranked Japan as the second from the bottom in terms of the effectiveness of its policies for 'work-family reconciliation' and family-friendly work arrangements.<sup>42</sup> Given the serious, long-term demographic and socio-economic consequences of the persistence of very low fertility, however, we have no choice but to strengthen policy and

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<sup>42</sup> Using the relative measures of the contents of government policies for childcare services, maternity and childcare leave, and flexible work arrangements, it specifically points out Japan's childcare coverage for children over the age of two and voluntary parental leave offered by firms as particularly insufficient.

society-wide efforts to help women and couples make work and family life more compatible. If Japan's experiences can offer a lesson to be learned, it is that traditional gender relations are resilient as they are deeply rooted in familial culture. To change the gender division of labour, strong, comprehensive and long-term policy efforts are therefore essential. Given the shared familial cultural backgrounds, and demographic and socio-economic transformations, Japan's experiences hopefully offer useful clues and implications for future policy and societal efforts in other Asian countries.

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## APPENDIX

TABLE A1. Descriptive Statistics of the Covariates Used in the Multivariate Analyses of Current Employment and Income, Cohabitation, and First Marriage, by Gender: Respondents Aged 18–49 of JGGS–1 in 2004 Who Are Successfully Followed-up by JGGS–2 in 2007.

Covariates	Men		Women	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
First job = regular employment	0.798	0.402	0.790	0.408
Education <sup>a</sup> :				
Less than high school	0.044	0.205	0.022	0.147
High school†	0.399	--	0.402	--
Post-HS professional school	0.133	0.340	0.170	0.376
Junior college or equivalent	0.032	0.177	0.232	0.422
4-year college or higher	0.392	0.488	0.174	0.379
Age <sup>a</sup> :				
Under 25†	0.079	--	0.092	--
25–29	0.083	0.277	0.095	0.294
30–34	0.135	0.342	0.131	0.337
35–39	0.174	0.380	0.172	0.378
40–44	0.186	0.389	0.187	0.390
45–49	0.211	0.408	0.195	0.396
50 and above	0.132	0.338	0.128	0.335
Birth cohort <sup>b</sup>	66.933	8.826	67.473	8.923

## Notes:

†—Reference category.

a—As of JGGS–2 in 2007.

b—Birth year—1900.

TABLE A2. Descriptive Statistics of the Covariates Used in the Multivariate Analyses of Gender Division of Household Tasks: Currently-married Women and Men Aged 20–49 in Japan, 1994 and 2000 Pooled.

Covariates	Mean	S.D.
Wives' employment hours (ref: not working)		
Not working†	0.392	--
Part-time (1–34 hours per week)	0.276	0.447
Full-time (35 hours or more)	0.332	0.471
Husbands' employment hours per week		
Less than 35 hours	0.053	0.225
35–41 hours†	0.157	--
42–48 hours	0.301	0.459
49–59 hours	0.284	0.451
60 hours or more	0.205	0.404
Age of youngest child		
0–6 years old	0.389	0.488
7–17 years old	0.388	0.487
No child under age 18†	0.223	--
Co-residence with parents/in-laws	0.324	0.468
Wives' education		
Less than high school	0.063	0.243
High school†	0.494	--
Junior college or equivalent	0.343	0.475
4-year college or higher	0.100	0.300
Husbands' education		
Less than high school	0.090	0.287
High school†	0.455	--
Junior college or equivalent	0.124	0.329
4-year college or higher	0.331	0.471
Wives' age		
Less than 25	0.076	0.266
25–29	0.132	0.339
30–34	0.196	0.397
35–39	0.216	0.412
40–44	0.232	0.422
45–49†	0.148	--
Husbands' income last year <sup>a</sup>		
Level 1†	0.299	--
Level 2	0.365	0.481
Level 3	0.198	0.399
Level 4	0.138	0.345
Respondent = female	0.516	0.500
Survey year = 2000	0.666	0.472

Notes: Means are weighted, assigning the weight of 1.00 for the 1994 data.

Dagger sign (†) indicates the reference category.

a—Levels 1 to 4 are as follows: less than 4 million yen, 4–5.99 million yen, 6–7.99 million yen, and 8 million yen or higher.

TABLE A3. Descriptive Statistics of the Covariates Used in the Ordered Logit Analyses of Overall Marital Happiness: Currently-married Women and Men Aged 20–49 in Japan, 1994 and 2000 Pooled.

Covariates	Women		Men	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Husbands' no housework	0.397	0.489	0.276	0.447
Wives' housework hours	30.40	14.11	30.58	15.37
Wives' education (ref: high school)				
Less than high school	0.059	0.235	0.066	0.248
Junior college or equivalent	0.346	0.476	0.347	0.476
4-year college or higher	0.101	0.302	0.092	0.289
Husbands' education (ref: high school)				
Less than high school	0.085	0.279	0.094	0.292
Junior college or equivalent	0.118	0.322	0.133	0.340
4-year college or higher	0.339	0.473	0.316	0.465
Wives' employment hours (ref: not working)	0.279	0.448	0.253	0.435
Part-time (1–34 hours)	0.318	0.466	0.337	0.473
Full-time (35+ hours)				
Husbands' employment hours (ref: 35–41 hrs)	0.057	0.232	0.048	0.214
< 35 hours	0.307	0.461	0.292	0.455
42–48 hours	0.276	0.447	0.297	0.457
49–59 hours	0.357	0.479	0.206	0.405
60 hours or more				
Survey year = 2000	0.685	0.465	0.636	0.481
Age of youngest child (ref: no kid < 18)				
Age 0–6	0.408	0.492	0.454	0.498
Age 7–17	0.359	0.480	0.361	0.480
Co-residence with parents/parents-in-law	0.344	0.475	0.310	0.463
Husband's income (ref: level 1) <sup>a</sup>				
Level 2	0.357	0.479	0.387	0.487
Level 3	0.186	0.389	0.200	0.400
Level 4	0.137	0.344	0.114	0.319
Wives' age (ref: 45+)				
< 30	0.177	0.382	0.194	0.396
30–34	0.191	0.393	0.230	0.421
35–39	0.259	0.438	0.245	0.430
40–44	0.187	0.390	0.219	0.413

Notes: Means are weighted, assigning the weight of 1.00 for the 1994 data.

a—Levels 1 to 4 are as follows: less than 4 million yen, 4–5.99 million yen, 6–7.99 million yen, and 8 million yen or higher.

## NOTES ON DISCUSSION FOLLOWING NORIKO TSUYA'S PAPER

### *Gender Relations and Family Forms: Japan as an Illustrative Case*

#### MEASURING TIME USE

Several questions and comments on measuring time use were raised, one of which was whether husband and wife were asked separately about time spent on household work. Dr Tsuya clarified that time use in the survey was reported by the primary respondent, who could either be the wife or the husband. The survey was a national probability survey that included both men and women. On the question of whether time spent by parents in ferrying children from cram schools and other extra-curricular activities was included in the survey, Dr Tsuya noted that it was not asked in the survey. She mentioned that the survey had details about commuting time to work, but not time spent on taking children to school etc. As Japan has a good public transport system, many children use it to commute to cram schools. Unlike in the USA, parents in Japan do not generally chauffeur their children around.

Dr Tsuya also noted that the survey did not measure time spent by mothers on supervising homework of children, which is difficult to measure. In Japan, a large number of students beyond the fourth grade go to cram schools, and the regular schools often assume that the children go there with their teaching being based on that assumption. Beyond junior high school, i.e. middle school, the number of children going to such schools declines.

A participant observed that since the survey was cross-sectional, it would not have captured seasonal work. For instance, teachers do not work in the summer. If the survey was conducted in summer, it would not accurately capture the working time of teachers. Thus, the cross-sectional average working time measured may be different from the average working time measured across

seasons. In response, Dr Tsuya noted that there is not much seasonal work in Japan, given that those in agriculture, which involves seasonal work, constitutes only about three per cent of the labour force, and teachers often work even during the summer vacation. Hence, seasonal work is unlikely to have a big influence on national estimates.

On a query regarding how questions about household work were framed in the survey, since it was observed that some work husbands do might not be considered as work and hence not reported by respondents, Dr Tsuya noted that the questionnaire had specific questions on each household activity. For example, the survey asked the respondent how many hours they spent on cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, *etc.* Top coding was used to clean the collected data.

A participant further observed that the current time-use surveys are carried out from a feminist point of view and thus, do not accurately capture men's contribution to household work. For example, such surveys ask questions about time spent on household work that is generally done by women, but not household work like paying bills, taking the garbage out, mowing the lawn *etc.*, which are typically done by men. Survey data from Vietnam besides show that the respondents tend to over-report their own contribution to household work and under-report the contribution of their spouse. Dr Tsuya noted that this might be true in Japan., but she also added that it is often the wife who pays the bills in Japan, and men may spend no more than 10 seconds in taking out the garbage.

It was noted as well, by a participant, that it would be interesting to ask women questions on specific tasks like 'would you like your husband to do the dishes'? The participant hypothesised that many women would respond 'no' to such questions, as women have different standards when it comes to housework and they do not want men to do certain household activities.

On the Japanese data that show a considerable change in happiness, a participant observed that since many other factors, e.g. training, logistics, *etc.*, go into implementing a survey, we should be cautious in accepting findings that show dramatic changes. On a related note, another participant asked if the

measure of happiness was validated by gender. In response, Dr Tsuya noted that it was not validated, and that the measure of happiness was not a psychological or clinical measure. She also mentioned the need to have a good measure of marital quality, and further noted that women whose husbands do housework are happier than women whose husbands do not do any housework. One explanation offered was that when men do housework, women feel appreciated and this makes them happy. It could also be true that men who do housework are more open (or liberal) in other aspects, and this could be the reason for their wife being happy.

### CHILDCARE

Studies from the UK and the USA show that while time spent by men on household work has not increased, time spent by men on childcare has increased. Dr Tsuya noted that this might not be the case in Japan; even if the time spent by fathers on childcare is added to the total time spent on housework, the picture does not change very much. She further noted that it is difficult to measure time spent on childcare, even with the use of diary-type surveys. Parents can be involved in childcare while they are doing other activities. Parents may be paying attention to their children all the time. Should this time then be counted as spent on childcare? Besides, it is difficult to separate the time spent with children for fun from the time spent taking care of them. In response to this, a participant noted that the activities could be separated into primary and secondary activities.

The point was made that in Japan, mothers often stay at home for the first three years after childbirth. All this time is essentially for childcare. Labour force participation of women with children under age three goes down dramatically, but it bounces back rapidly once children reach schooling age. In Korea, there is a distinct drop in labour force participation of women with young children. Due to rigid labour-market conditions and a lack of part-time employment opportunities, it is difficult for married women, especially mothers of school-aged children, to return to full-time or part-time work. The desired number of hours a woman wants to work is quite high for all categories of women, including full-time homemakers in Japan. If the desired number of working hours is compared with the actual number of working hours, however, the

desired number tends to be less. This indicates that women want to balance both work and family in Japan. In Korea, employed women spent, on average, one hour more at work than Japanese men, i.e. 51 hours per week versus 50 hours, in the mid-1990s.

## GENDER RELATIONS

Discussants raised two questions on gender relations. First, are aspects of gender relations that existed a hundred years ago still present in Japan? And secondly, is the Japanese experience in gender relationships transferable to other East and Southeast Asian countries? In response, it was noted that despite major changes in industrial and educational spheres, gender roles have persisted with inequity and inequality. It appears that the persistence of this inequity is due to rigid workplaces and rigid social institutions.

The impact of government policies on changing gender relationships is difficult to gauge. Though it seems that government policies have not been very effective, it is difficult to know what the counterfactual would have been if the government had not intervened. In the recent Japanese elections, both parties promised hefty increases in child allowances. However, the municipal governments are not willing to expand the number of childcare centres. The policy on paid maternity leave, while better in Japan than in other Asian countries, is operated under the national employment insurance scheme. Therefore, it is applicable only to full-time workers, i.e. workers with regular employment status. Paternity leave is rarely taken by men, and the government policy is to encourage at least 10 per cent of eligible fathers to take paternity leave. Further, while in Singapore, the burden of housework has been shifted to foreign domestic workers, this is not in Japan. Foreign domestic labour is not available in Japan, and the government is not supportive of importing low-level, unskilled labour.

## OTHER COMMENTS

Other comments noted in the discussion include the view that while cohabitation in Japan is probably going to increase, it is unlikely to replace marriage. This is because cohabitation tends to be concentrated in the lower educational strata and the



educational level is going up. Premarital pregnancy is also associated with cohabitation.

Another comment made is that despite many demographic and social transformations, family remains very important in Japan.



## THE 'QUEER' FAMILY IN ASIA

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### INTRODUCTION

Across much of the globe, the heterosexual nuclear family, premised upon an ideal of the husband/wife and non-adult dependent children as a unit, has increasingly become the blueprint for imaginings of the concept of 'family'.<sup>1</sup> More so than was/is the case with other family arrangements, the discourse built up around the nuclear family first and foremost privileges the sexual/emotional/financial obligations and responsibilities between the female partner (the wife) and the male partner (the husband). Indeed, as Jo VanEvery highlights, this model of family embodied in and through legally-sanctioned heterosexual marriage has become the hegemonic form of heterosexuality in Western societies (VanEvery 1996, p. 40); I would argue that the same increasingly applies across much of Asia.<sup>2</sup> The hegemonic hold of this model of family is disseminated and reinforced through all the various instruments of state and society, ranging from popular culture through to the legal code and social policy (Carabine 1996). Other relationships, whether they are between siblings, between grandparents and grandchildren, or same-sex or cross-sex

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<sup>1</sup> The 'family', as Vera Mackie reminds us, is one of the key building blocks of most societies and nation-states. Among other functions, it is a prime mediator between the individual and society, the site for the physical and ideological reproduction of the labour force and citizenry, and an integral component of the political economy of a nation (Mackie 2009, p. 61).

<sup>2</sup> VanEvery draws upon Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell's application of the Gramscian concept of 'hegemony' in the context of gender. Hegemony, as VanEvery, quoting Connell, notes, refers to 'a social ascendance achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes' (Connell in VanEvery 1996, p. 40; see also Connell 1987, p. 184; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

friendships, are invested with less cultural and legal privileges and power.

Yet, the reality is that this particular model of 'family', despite its apparent contemporary pervasiveness, is historically a relatively recent construct, both in Asia and in the West. In the West, the contours of a family unit centred around an emotional, as much as an economic, rationale, started to take shape from around the time of the Industrial Revolution. In his influential essay, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', John D'Emilio, for instance, makes the point that the heteronormative husband-wife-based family started to become the hegemonic ideal (as an affective unit) in the West, at precisely that point in history when the family unit, as an autonomous production unit, started to lose its economic rationale for existence (Adam 1996; D'Emilio 1997).<sup>3</sup>

In much of the non-West as well, including Asia, the emergence of the nuclear family as an 'ideal', and increasingly, as a reality, is far more recent, and it is usually tied to colonial and post-colonial discourses of gender and modernity (see, for instance, Chakrabarty 1994; Tipton 2009). In actual fact, there has always been far more diversity and variation in family arrangements than the nuclear family model would suggest. Childless couples, extended families, shared households and single-parent households, whether out of choice or necessity, are just some examples of 'non-conventional', non-normative family arrangements that have existed historically, and continue to exist into the present.

An alternative configuration of 'family' is households and arrangements involving same-sex members. My paper, drawing upon examples from a range of societies in East, Southeast and South Asia, will focus on the relationship between the notion of 'family' and such non-normative, same-sex subjectivities. I hesitate to apply the label 'lesbian/gay', given the ideologically loaded implications of these terms. Despite their widespread contemporary diffusion across the globe, and their latching on to

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<sup>3</sup> D'Emilio notes that as the economic imperative to remain as a unit declined with changes to the industrial and employment structure following the Industrial Revolution, 'the family took on new significance as an affective unit, an institution that produced not goods but emotional satisfaction and happiness' (D'Emilio 1997, p. 171).

local socio-cultural conditions, the terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' are still grounded within a historically and socio-culturally specific discourse emanating out of the conditions of post-Stonewall Gay Liberation North America, and to an extent, West Europe and Australia/New Zealand. Notwithstanding the varied contemporary connotations of these labels,<sup>4</sup> the common denominator is the assumption of a self-acknowledged and articulated subjectivity defined by sexual orientation—in other words, identity defined by sexual object choice. Integral to this discourse around a lesbian/gay identity have been certain assumptions, such as the stress on 'coming out' and public visibility—as manifested through universalising symbols such as Pride Parades and the rainbow flag—and broadly speaking, a socio-politically activist, civil-rights-based agenda.

This discourse hinging on an articulated awareness of 'gay', 'lesbian' or lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) identity has increasingly been adopted by a variety of emerging activist organisations throughout the non-West. Across much of Asia too, there has been a significant growth in gay identity and activism since the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> As in the West, much of this visibility has been tied to growing calls for official recognition of the legal and social rights of LGBT citizens across Asia, ranging from a push in many former British colonies to abolish the colonial era legal proscriptions against male-male sex, to calls in some countries for the official/legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. The legacy has been mixed. In some countries and jurisdictions, such as Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, India and Nepal, for instance,

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance Evelyn Blackwood's discussion of the usages of the term, *lesbi*, and Tom Boellstorff's discussion of 'gay' in the Indonesian context (Blackwood 2008; Boellstorff 2005). See also Jackson (2009, pp. 357–359) for a summary on some of the discussion of the more nuanced complexities of the global diffusion of 'gay' and 'lesbian'.

<sup>5</sup> The conditions underlying this public visibility are complex, involving a combination of internal socio-cultural and economic shifts in many parts of Asia over the 1980s and 1990s, and the undeniable influence of transnational flows of capital, technology, information, ideologies and people in the post-Cold War era. In particular, the role played by the diffusion of the internet from the mid-1990s onwards, as well as the emergence of urban, middle-class civil societies in countries that previously had been authoritarian and/or largely non-urban societies, played a significant role in shaping the emergence of 'gay' visibility (see, for instance, Altman 2000; Berry *et al.* 2003; Drucker 2000).

there have been positive changes.<sup>6</sup> In other places, progress has been slower, or has actually gone backwards (Ho 2008, pp. 457–458). In Singapore, for instance, despite support for reform among some sectors of the population, efforts to repeal Article 377 in recent years have failed, partly as a consequence of a vocal backlash from some quarters of society (see Goh 2008). Similarly, an effort in Sri Lanka to challenge the legal proscription on male homosexuality backfired, with the code being revised to also include female-female sex as a criminal offence, supposedly in the name of ‘gender equity’ (International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) 2005).

Thus, at one level, it would be difficult to deny that across much of the globe, labels like ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ and ‘LGBT’ have become taken-for-granted categories of identity. However, as signalled above, these categories also exclude large numbers of individuals—both in the West and the non-West—who, while engaging in sexual/erotic/physical/emotional behaviour patterns linked to same-sex attraction, may not define their identity as being premised on same-sex sexual object choice (see Wilson 2006). In this regard, the terms ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’, with their narrower assumptions, may not be appropriate to describe the non-

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<sup>6</sup> In Japan, for instance, the Tokyo High Court in 1997 upheld a landmark anti-discrimination lawsuit brought against the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education by an activist group, thereby setting a precedent for the future (Taniguchi 2006). Japan also saw the election of a publicly ‘out’ lesbian politician a few years ago (Mackie 2009, p. 69), and earlier this year, moved towards the legal recognition of Japanese partners in same-sex couples where the partner’s country recognises same-sex marriage (Japan Times 2009). Both Taiwan and South Korea have moved towards more open and inclusive policies, and there have even been shifts at the official level in China, for instance, homosexuality was de-classified as a psychiatric disorder a few years ago. In Hong Kong, colonial era laws criminalising male same-sex behaviour were abolished prior to its reversion to China. In India, the Delhi High Court recently upheld the validity of a challenge to Article 377, the section of the Penal Code applied against male-male sex. The most positive, and indeed, most surprising, changes, however, have occurred in Nepal in the wake of the overthrow of the monarchy, with Supreme Court rulings abolishing discriminatory laws, and even a move towards the legal recognition of same-sex couples and non-normative gender identities. For an overview of some of the major milestones of LGBT activism across Asia, see Utopia (1995) and Globalgayz (2009).

normative configurations I discuss.<sup>7</sup> Rather, a more appropriate framework to discuss these non-normative, same-sex configurations would be 'queer'. This is a term which, re-appropriated from its earlier pejorative connotations, emerged in the 1990s, in the wake of post-structural and post-colonial critiques of the ethnic/racial, cultural and classist biases of the terms, and discourses surrounding, 'gay' and 'lesbian' (see, for instance, Jagose 1996, chs. 6–7). My use of the term 'queer' in this paper echoes anthropologist Evelyn Blackwood's rationale in deploying the term when discussing female same-sex loving relationships in West Sumatra, which defy easy categorisation into labels like 'lesbian', 'transgender' or 'LGBT'. As Blackwood notes, the value of queer 'lies in its nonspecificity...[it] refers not to one way of being but to a range of transgressive possibilities that encompass and surpass LGBT, thus opening up the global gay ecumene to multiple and disparate subjectivities' (Blackwood 2008, p. 483). Thus, queer can encompass, within its fold, subjectivities like 'gay', 'lesbian', 'transgender/transsexual', 'LGBT', 'MSM', 'WSW', 'sexual minority' *etc.*, but at the same time, it is fluid and rubbery enough to also extend to other non-heterosexual, non-normative subjectivities and articulations, some of which may not even have identifying 'labels' to name them, or may be very specific localised arrangements.

It is in this regard that while I deploy the term 'queer' as a broad framework for discussion in this paper, I recognise, at the same time, the cultural and linguistic problematics of the term. However, I will also, where applicable, use 'gay', 'lesbian', 'transgender', 'LGBT' and other more specific terms. My paper will look at the expression of some of these 'queer' family configurations, both in a historical context and in contemporary times. I suggest, without necessarily discounting the importance of activism working towards public visibility and legal and social recognition, that queer subjectivities and relationships can, and

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as the South Asian-American scholar, Gayatri Gopinath, points out, there is something inherently problematic about such a linear, developmentalist notion of alternative sexualities, whereby 'lesbian and gay organizations in the West tend to see the naming of alternative sexualities under the rubric of "gay" or "lesbian" as the marker of modernity, and the adoption of such identities as the relative evolution of non-Western locations' (Gopinath 2005, p. 159).

indeed, do, find expression within sometimes quite surprising spaces, such as within the confines of 'traditional' family structures. Indeed, in some circumstances, in the face of very real threats of legal persecution and physical and emotional violence, which continue to exist in many societies, including across Asia, working quietly from within the structures of patriarchy may actually be a safer option for many non-heterosexual individuals.

I start off by further teasing out this notion of queer people existing within traditional/conventional family structures, and the ways in which some of the core ideological pillars of the patriarchal family—for instance, the institution of marriage or practices of adoption to ensure lineage continuity—have, both historically and presently, been strategically deployed by queer individuals to carve out spaces that serve to simultaneously challenge both 'Western'-inflected understandings of non-heterosexual subjectivity and assumptions about the seamless heterosexuality of the 'family' in Asia. I then draw upon specific examples from visual culture to illustrate this complexity. This may appear as a strange choice of methodology in the context of a roundtable focusing on sociological approaches to the family in Asia. However, given the nuanced and often 'un-voiced' nature of the subjectivities and relationships I explore, conventional social-science methodologies may not be particularly insightful. It is unlikely that the kind of relationships I discuss—often 'hidden' or un-named—would be adequately captured through questionnaires, surveys or interviews.<sup>8</sup> Rather, it is often textual sources, and more

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to discount the importance of conventional social science-based methodologies using tools like surveys, focus groups and individual interviews, or ethnographic fieldwork. For instance, Jeremy Seabrook's interview-based ethnographic study of men 'cruising' a New Delhi park brought out the extent to which the 'traditional' family was implicated as being a space where queer desire is shaped and expressed. A number of Seabrook's informants mentioned that their entry into queer sexuality occurred not outside of the family, but within the context of kinship networks, and during ritual family celebrations of heteronormativity like marriages, which increased the chances of sexual encounters with cousins and other non-immediate family (Seabrook 1999). Also, some of the initial challenges to 'Western'-inflected understandings of sexual orientation based on a gay/'straight' binary came about as a consequence of work done by researchers, public health specialists and NGO activists involved in the area of HIV-AIDS prevention, using standard social and health science-based approaches. It was the on-the-ground work done by such researchers and HIV/sexual minority activist groups, for instance, *PT Foundation* in Malaysia, *Naz*



specifically, popular culture textual sources, which can give us insights into the ways in which these identities and relationships get engaged with, in the context of dynamics within/about the family. This is an approach which South Asian-American scholar, Gayatri Gopinath, in her work tracing normally 'invisible' queer diasporic South Asian formations, refers to as a 'scavenger methodology that finds evidence of queer...lives and cultures, and the oppositional strategies they enact in the most unlikely of places' (Gopinath 2005, p. 22). One such 'unlikely' site highlighted in Gopinath's work is the traditional, patriarchal 'home'.

### QUEER IN THE FAMILY

As signalled in the previous section, the relationship between 'family' (and what and who is incorporated within the ideological and discursive orbit of the construct) and 'queer' is a complicated and tangled one. This is even more the case today, as notions of what constitutes 'family' have become something of a battleground in debates around the issue of 'gay marriage' in many Western countries—the most recent example being the ruling Australian Labour Party's decision not to endorse the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, as opposed to partnerships, the latter of which permits access to legal and social welfare recognition.<sup>9</sup> Julianne Pidduck, in a paper discussing the treatment of family/kinship in the auto-ethnographic films of independent queer filmmakers, Richard Fung and Jean Carlomusto, makes the point that 'the relationship between kinship and lesbian, gay, and queer experience, politics, thought, and cultural production is an anguished and contested one' (Pidduck 2009, p. 441; Weston 1997, pp. 21–29). The basis of this anguish/contestation is the reality that 'for subjects frequently marginalized, or excluded from its fold, "family" carries a tremendous allure of love and belonging—even as heteronormative political, legal, and theoretical discourses

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*Foundation* or *Humsafar* in India, *Blue Diamond Society* in Nepal, and *GAYANusantara* in Indonesia, that brought to attention the existence of localised subjectivities and understandings of sexuality which did not fit comfortably within the category of 'gay', or even 'LGBT' or 'MSM'. See, for instance, Khan & Khan (2006), and Kavi (2007) for a discussion of some of these issues in the context of South Asia.

<sup>9</sup> See Butler (2002) for an engaging discussion on the complexity of discourses revolving around the issue of same-sex marriage and civil unions in the West.

circumscribe kinship to normative, exclusive, and universalising structures and composition' (p. 441). Pidduck argues that 'ambivalence'—a concept that 'usefully captures the collision of the terms *queer* and *kinship*' (p. 442)—underpins the relationship between 'queer' and 'family', or kinship. It is this ambivalence, i.e. the collisions and juxtapositions of contradictory emotions, discourses and strategies, that frames the ways in which queer individuals have carved out spaces, both historically and into the present, within and in relation to the 'family' in Asia, and indeed, globally.

In considering these dynamics, I refer to Gayatri Gopinath's monograph *Impossible Desires*, mapping the articulations of female queer desire in South Asian and diasporic popular culture formations (Gopinath 2005). Gopinath, in tracing the contours of this desire, explores and unpacks a range of popular/public culture texts and practices, including music, film and literature. However, her uncovering of this queer desire does not necessarily follow the contours generally associated with conventional studies of alternative sexualities. Rather than spotlighting spaces where (specifically female) same-sex desire, as channelled, for instance, through a 'lesbian' subjectivity, would be expected to find expression, Gopinath explores those spaces where initial impression would suggest the impossibility of the existence of such same-sex desires. One such space is within the confines of the traditional South Asian joint family, where, precisely because of its supposed 'impossibility', queer desire and even queer relationships can and do find expression. Gopinath refutes the widely-held perception, and one promoted by both heteronormative and LGBT-identity-based discourse, that queer desire can only exist when it 'comes out' and is exilic to the heteronormative family. She highlights this through specific texts where the existence of this queer desire overturns these dominant assumptions. For instance, in discussing a particular scene in diasporic South Asian-Canadian filmmaker Ian Rashid's film, *Surviving Sabu*, she notes that 'Rashid overturns hegemonic queer and diasporic [South Asian heteronormative] discourses. The immigrant home and family function...not as the prehistory of the queer subject, or as anterior to it, but rather as that which lays the very grounds for queer pleasure and subjectivity' (Gopinath 2005, p. 74).

This is brought out in other texts Gopinath discusses in her monograph. These include the 1940s Urdu short-story, *The Quilt*, by Ismat Chughtai, which revolves around the un-named female same-sex relationship in a traditional Muslim household in pre-Partition India, and Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta's controversy-generating 1990s film, *Fire*, about the growing same-sex attraction between two sisters-in-law in a middle-class Hindu 'joint family' in Delhi in the 1990s, which in many respects echoed Chughtai's earlier depiction of 'queer female desire emerging at the interstices of rigidly heterosexual structures, detailing the ways in which desire is routed and rooted within the space of the middle-class home' (Gopinath 2005, p. 153). Both texts, and the others Gopinath discusses, suggest that it is not necessarily the case that 'proper manifestations of same-sex eroticism' need to be 'within a politics of visibility and identity' (p. 155). Rather what may constitute 'lesbian', or more widely, same-sex, desire in a South Asian context could well 'look and function differently than it does within Euro-American social and historical formations'. Accordingly, Gopinath argues that 'not all female same-sex desire culminates in an autonomous "lesbianism", and not all "lesbianism" is at odds with domestic marital arrangements' (Gopinath 2005, p. 155). And this is precisely the point I argue in this paper, i.e. the relationship between the heteronormative (and patriarchal) 'family' and non-heterosexual ('queer') subjectivity is, and has always been, a lot more tangled and intermeshed, than dominant societal discourse would suggest.

Despite claims to the contrary by 'moral gate-keepers' and politicians in many Asian countries in the 1980s and 1990s, there is now ample evidence of a rich heritage of alternative genders and sexualities across pre-colonial Asia to refute such claims. Researchers, both in Asia and scholars in the West working on Asia, have uncovered historical evidence of same-sex love and alternative gender identities in varied locations, including Japan, China, Korea, Southeast Asia and South Asia. For instance, work by scholars like Gary Leupp, Paul Schalow and Gregory Pflugfelder have drawn attention to the rich tradition of *nanshoku* male same-sex love in Tokugawa Japan prior to the establishment of the modernising Meiji nation-state in the mid-nineteenth century (see Hiratsuka 1983; Leupp 1995; Pflugfelder 1999; Schalow 1990). Importantly, this tradition co-existed and intersected

unproblematically with the institution of heterosexual marriage. As Gary Leupp notes, it was not that 'most men in Tokugawa society lacked sexual interest in women; rather . . . heterosexual relationships, including marriage, were widely viewed as compatible, even complementary, with male-male sexual activity' (Leupp 1995, pp. 3–4). However, what needs to be stressed is that while these subjectivities and practices could possibly be included within the umbrella of 'queer', by no means can they be described as gay. In a similar vein, numerous pre-twentieth century Chinese texts make reference to romantic and sexual attachments and relationships in the Imperial Court, and among the scholar-bureaucrat elites (Chou 2000; Hinsch 1990; Wu 2004). Southern China, and subsequently, the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, also had a tradition of all-female communities or 'sisterhoods', where members eschewed heterosexual marriage, maintaining, instead, close emotional relationships—occasionally spilling over to physical/sexual relationships—with other community members (Chou 2000, pp. 40–41).<sup>10</sup> Research on South Asia by scholars like Giti Thadani, Saleem Kidwai and Ruth Vanita have brought to light the existence of non-normative genders and sexualities dating back several millennia, extending from the early Vedic period right through to the centuries of rule by Muslim dynasties in the middle ages, and extending into the colonial period (Thadani 1996; Vanita 2005; Vanita & Kidwai 2000). Similarly, scholars like Peter Jackson, Tom Boellstorff, and Sharyn Graham have drawn attention to the rich tradition of alternative genders and sexualities in Thailand and Indonesia (Boellstorff 2005; Graham 2004; Jackson 1989, 1995).

A couple of interlinked aspects of these pre-colonial non-normative gender and sexuality patterns are worth considering. The first is the fact that in some instances, they were organised into communities which often had some form of institutionalised family-like structure. Examples of such arrangements would include same-sex Buddhist and Hindu religious orders where sexual/physical and/or emotional bonds attraction between members could not be precluded, the marriage-renouncing 'sisterhoods' of southern China discussed above, the strictly

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<sup>10</sup> The *samsui* women who worked as domestic workers in colonial Malaya and post-colonial Malaysia and Singapore through much of the twentieth century are one such example of a mutually-supportive sisterhood of unmarried women.

delineated and hierarchical family-like structures of 'alternative gender' communities like the *bisu* and *calabai/calalai* of southern Sulawesi, and the *hijra* of South Asia (see Graham 2004; Nanda 1990).

Second, as noted in a couple of points in the preceding discussion, the concept of a separate identity hinging on sexual preference needs to be re-considered. In this regard, Ruth Vanita's observation in introducing the historical survey of same-sex desire in South Asia, referred to above, is worth quoting at length:

*Many societies have viewed romantic attachments between men and between women as perfectly compatible with marriage and procreation, that is, a person may be a responsible spouse and parent, but his or her primary emotional attachment may be to a friend of his or her own gender. It is only relatively recently in human history that the heterosexual monogamous relationship has come to be viewed as necessarily a married person's chief emotional outlet. Although this view is dominant today, in many parts of the world, including many parts of India, the earlier view still coexists with it.*

(Vanita & Kidwai 2000, p. xiii)

Third, following on from the above, this lack of clear-cut identity markers means that there was often a degree of flexibility in accommodating non-normative sexual and gender behaviour within the institutional structures of culture and society, including the family, often either through silent acknowledgement or in the guise of ritualised arrangements, such as friendship vows or adoption. For instance, Ruth Vanita discusses the tradition of female-female love among courtesans in pre-twentieth century India, depicted in a form of Urdu poetry known as *Rekti*.<sup>11</sup> According to Vanita, in *Rekti*, 'the term *dogana* was used to refer to and address a woman's intimate companion' (Vanita 2005, p. 250). Significantly, in this form of poetry, the *dogana* was referred to not

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<sup>11</sup> Vanita explains *Rekti* in the following way: '*Rekti* represents love between women with complexity in several registers. The tone is often humorous, even camp. *Rekti* poems sometimes explicitly describe sexual intimacy between female lovers; more often, the speaker praises her lover's beauty and expresses feelings of love and fulfilment or longing for union and anguish at separation' (Vanita 2005, pp. 247–248).

just as a lover or spouse, but also as a sister. This practice tapped into the tradition, in South Asia and also other parts of Asia, of establishing fictive kinship bonds as a means of incorporating a non-family friend/lover, into the folds of the family (Vanita, 2005, p. 254). Vanita provides numerous instances of the ways in which traditional institutions and practices—the institutionalised practice in some parts of India of co-wives for instance, or the practice of adoption of poor children by transgender *hijra* households—could be a channel through which non-normative gender and sexual subjectivities were integrated into the framework of the family. Moreover, at least in the context of South Asia, there were numerous powerful symbolic cultural/religious same-sex narratives that could be tapped into. Examples include accounts in Hindu scriptures of ‘miraculous births’ out of the union of same-sex Gods (Vanita 2005, pp. 193–217),<sup>12</sup> and the tradition—continuing into the present day—of pilgrimages and celebrations at the burial site of sixteenth-century Sufi mystic, Shah Hussayn, and his male companion and lover, Madho Lal (Vanita & Kidwai 2000, pp. 145–156).

Despite the influence of colonial and nationalist/post-colonial discourses of ‘civilised morality’, and the concomitant privileging of the heteronormative nuclear family blueprint through the twentieth century, some of these earlier traditions and strategies of incorporating non-normative subjectivities have continued to exist as an undercurrent in many contemporary Asian settings. This has allowed both queer/LGBT self-identifying individuals, and those who do not necessarily define themselves by sexual/romantic object choice, to tap into and deploy these in their day-to-day engagements with family and society. Two specific examples are the practice of adoption and negotiations with the institution of marriage.

Adoption, particularly in countries like the US, UK, Australia and many parts of Asia such as Singapore, is strongly associated with the practice of a married, usually opposite-sex, couple adopting a child/children. However, as Taimie Bryant (1990) notes,

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<sup>12</sup> Examples provided by Vanita include an account, in fourteenth century scriptures from Bengal, of the birth of Bhagiratha out of the sexual union (sanctioned by the family priest) of the widows of the childless King Dilipa, and the male Gods, Shiva and Vishnu, giving birth to Lord Ayappa (Vanita 2005, pp. 194–197, p. 215).

in many societies, including Europe and parts of East Asia, adoption is a practice associated more with bringing adults into kinship networks. An example would be the practice of adopting a son-in-law to ensure continuity of the family lineage. In Japan, for instance, according to Bryant, something like two-thirds of all legal adoptions involve adults (Bryant 1990, p. 300). Moreover, Japanese adoption laws are such that any adult person who has reached the age of majority may adopt, and there only need be a minimal age difference of at least one day between the individual adopting and the adoptee (Mackie 2009, p. 68). This is a strategy that has, both in the past and into the present, been employed by same-sex couples, whereby the older partner 'adopts' the younger partner as legal family, essentially as a 'child'.<sup>13</sup> As Claire Maree points out, this allows for such potentially tricky issues as inheritance and medical decision-making to be dealt with (Maree 2004, p. 543). One of the issues with using adoption as a strategy of same-sex couples, however, is the fact that it brings the complex Japanese *koseki* (family registration) system into the picture, since the adopted partner would technically enter into the *koseki* as a registered child of the adopting partner (Maree 2004, p. 544). Consequently, some individuals may prefer not to take the adoption option. Maree discusses some of the other strategies considered by non-heterosexual individuals. One such option, which she and her partner made use of, is the registration of a 'joint living agreement' (*kyôdô seikatsu sengen*) as a legal notary deed. This protects the same-sex partner with regard to such matters as inheritance and medical decisions without implicating the *koseki* system (Maree 2004, pp. 545–546).

The other issue worth exploring is the relationship between (the concept of) 'marriage' and non-heterosexual subjectivities in Asia. As indicated in the quote from Ruth Vanita above, the concept of marriage being premised solely on sexual/romantic attraction between husband and wife is a relatively new concept in many Asian societies. This, for many non-heterosexual individuals, has allowed a degree of flexibility in negotiations with the institution of (heterosexual) marriage, which might not be possible in an Anglo-

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, the same-sex adoption of a younger lover as a strategy is depicted in Mishima Yukio's novel, *Kinjiki (Forbidden Colours)*, dealing with the gay scene in Tokyo in the 1940s and early 1950s (Mishima 1964)

American cultural framework.<sup>14</sup> This is brought out in some of the research on non-normative sexualities in a range of different settings across Asia. Ruth Vanita, for example, discusses situations where (heterosexually-) married men and women continue long-term same-sex relationships, often under the rubric of ‘close friendships’. She draws attention to a documentary film, *Terhi Lakeer (Crooked Line)*, in 2002, which depicted the long-term relationship between two married middle-aged men, whose wives, and subsequently, children, also developed close ‘kinship’-like bonds; as Vanita notes, when the son of one of the men got married, all the arrangements were made by his male lover and his wife (Vanita 2005, pp. 221–222).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, many of the men Jeremy Seabrook interviewed, in his ethnographic study referred to earlier, were married; moreover, these men did not really see any inherent contradiction in being married, which they regarded as an inevitable social obligation, and having relationships with men (Seabrook 1999).

Tom Boellstorff, in his research on non-heterosexual subjectivities in Indonesia, also highlights this lack of a discursive disconnect between the institution of heterosexual marriage and non-heterosexual identity. Boellstorff uses the term ‘gay’, but in italics, to describe his informants—these men, and women, had taken these originally ‘Western’ labels and had transformed them ‘until they saw them as authentically Indonesian’ (Boellstorff 1999, p. 481). One aspect of this ‘transformation’ into an ‘Indonesian

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<sup>14</sup> However, as the discussion of John D’Emilio’s work in the opening paragraphs of this paper underscores, even in the West, the notion of sexual/romantic attraction between two individuals being the premise for marriage is historically a relatively recent assumption.

<sup>15</sup> This kind of easy acceptance of same-sex relationships into the framework of a husband-wife relationship is also brought out in the documentary, *Performing the Goddess*, based on the life of Chapal Bhaduri, an actor in the Bengali *jatra* folk theatre who specialised in cross-dressing female roles. In the film, Bhaduri talks quite openly about his relationship with a married man, whose wife had no trouble accepting their relationship. Indeed, as Anuradha Ghosh notes in her discussion of the gender and sexuality aspects of Bhaduri’s performances and life, ‘his relationship with his male friend is not condemned as transgressive by the norms of marital *loyalty*....his friend’s wife felt violated and heartbroken after her husband entered into an affair with another woman but had absolutely no qualms regarding his involvement with her husband—she had known about this relationship all along and had no objection to it’ (Ghosh 2007, pp. 480–481).



authenticity' was these 'gay' men's attitudes towards marriage. Unlike Boellstorff, for whom, as a 'proudly out' gay man, the notion of marriage (to a woman) was inconceivable, for his Indonesian informants, there was no contradiction whatsoever between their 'gay' subjectivity and heterosexual marriage. Indeed, his informants believed that gay men everywhere got married, and Boellstorff's assertion that he had no intention of getting married was met 'with disbelief and pity' (Boellstorff 1999, p. 490). Accounts from other locations in Asia support Boellstorff's and Vanita's observations. For instance, the diaries of the respected scholar of Japanese film, Donald Richie, reveals the succession of 'relationships' Richie had, over the course of his life in Japan from the late 1940s until the present, with men who subsequently married but continued to maintain their relationships with Richie, either continuing as lovers or shifting into close platonic friendships (Richie 2004).

The point that needs to be stressed is that such individuals should not, by any chance, be regarded as dysfunctional 'closeted' victims, unable to come to terms with their sexuality. Rather, as the accounts of Boellstorff's informants reveal, there is often no sense of their subjectivities being contradictory or hypocritical.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, there can be a surprising degree of agency involved in choices and strategies undertaken, which appear to be completely contrary to the logic of the 'gay liberation'/'coming out' discourse of identity. Importantly, this agency in the negotiations with 'family' is an aspect of the 'ambivalence', touched upon previously, that Julianne Pidduck refers to (Pidduck 2009). This is brought out in research by John Cho on 'contract marriages', i.e. 'marriages of convenience', undertaken between gay men and lesbians in South Korea (Cho 2009). These 'contract marriages', as Cho informs, are different from the (more common) phenomenon of gay men and lesbians entering into heterosexual marriages in order to 'pass' (Cho 2009, p. 405). Rather, in the case of the former, there is more of an

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<sup>16</sup> This was brought home to me quite decisively in a recent interview I conducted in Japan for a project on gay salarymen. This informant, in his early thirties, while completely acknowledging his identity as 'gay', nevertheless felt that for him, heterosexual marriage was the most appropriate path. Being of a generation for whom the discourse of 'coming out' has become influential, he is regarded by his gay friends, who know of his married status, with some derision and pity. However, he did not, in any way, see himself as a 'victim' of societal prejudices preventing him from 'coming out' and living openly.

element of strategically negotiating with the system. As Cho (2009) argues, such ‘gay’ marriages, ‘disclose not principally the “closeted” nature of Korean gay men and lesbians, but their efforts to negotiate South Korea’s heteronormative system anchored in the patriarchal family’ (p. 402). Such marriages, he continues, ‘deflect the pressure to marry, but paradoxically only by conforming to it’ (p. 402). Importantly, by ‘trying to be gay and lesbian without exiting the family, contract marriage couples also challenge the Westernized model of the “out and proud” gay man and lesbian’ (p. 402).<sup>17</sup>

### ENGAGING WITH THE ‘QUEER FAMILY IN ASIA’ THROUGH FILM

It is against the above backdrop of negotiations with and ‘within’ family that I discuss specific popular culture texts from the region. For the purposes of this paper, I limit the discussion to film and television texts. There are examples of queer film texts from countries like Japan, dating back to at least the 1960s (see Grossman 2000). For instance, as Grossman notes, some film texts situated within the Japanese alternative/independent left-wing ‘new wave’ cinema of the late 1950s to early 1970s, such as the 1969 film *Bara no Sôretsu* (*Funeral Procession of Roses*), did engage with themes of alternative sexuality (p. 2).<sup>18</sup> In a different sense,

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<sup>17</sup> This kind of arrangement, i.e. marriage between gay men and lesbians, is not confined to South Korea. Ruth Vanita discusses similar (arranged) ‘marriages of convenience’ between gay men and lesbians in India, and in the South Asian diaspora (Vanita 2005, pp. 223–233).

<sup>18</sup> Japan, in fact, has a history of gender and sexual ambiguity dating back several centuries. Examples include the *onnagata*, i.e. male actors playing female roles, of the *kabuki* theatre from the seventeenth and eighteenth century onwards, and the all-female Takarazuka theatre-revue dating back to the early twentieth century and continuing into the present. There are even examples of queer elements in films dating back to the pre-World War Two period. Donald Roden, for instance, discusses the effeminate *nimaimé* male actors counterpoised against domineering female characters in films from the 1920s and 1930s (Roden 1990, pp. 47–49). The recent 2009 Tokyo International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival featured a silent film from 1935, *Fukujusô* (*Pheasant’s Eyes*), which revolves around the attraction between two sisters-in-law (The 18th Tokyo International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival 2009). Interestingly, this seems to foreshadow the issues raised in Deepa Mehta’s 1996 Indian-Canadian film, *Fire*, which also revolves around the attraction between sisters-in-law living in the same household.

many 'mainstream' Asian cinematic traditions also produced texts with themes of same-sex emotional and/or erotic attraction, often under the rubric of friendship or bonding—some of the Bollywood classics of the 1960s and 1970s, like *Dosti* (*Friendship* 1964), *Sholay* (*Embers* 1975), and *Yaraana* (*Friendship* 1981) had strong undercurrents of same-sex attraction, under the guise of male bonding (see Ghosh 2002, pp. 207–210; Gopinath 2000, pp. 289–291; Kavi 2000). However, it has really been since the 1990s that an identifiable body of queer or queer-themed cinema has emerged across Asia. While it is outside the scope of this paper to go into a detailed discussion of the various films, a quick overview of some of the titles will serve to underscore the richness and geographic scope of a genre, which has emerged only in the past two decades. While Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have led the way, there have also been films from China, Thailand, India, South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia. I discuss some of the works produced in Japan below, but a sample of representative titles from other regions in Asia would include *Happy Together* (1997), *A Queer Story* (1997), *Bishōnen* (1998), *Hold You Tight* (1998), *Lan Yu* (2001), *Butterfly* (2004), *Innocent* (2005) from Hong Kong; *The Outcasts* (1986), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993), *Fleeing by Night* (2000), *Blue Gate Crossing* (2002), *Crystal Boys* (2003), *Formula 17* (2004), *Eternal Summer* (2006), *Spider Lilies* (2007) from Taiwan, *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), *East Palace, West Palace* (1996), *Men and Women* (2000), *Fish and Elephant* (2001) from China; *Broken Branches* (1995), *King and Clown* (2005), *No Regret* (2006) from South Korea; *Iron Ladies* (2000), *Beautiful Boxer* (2003), *Down the River* (2004), *Bangkok Love Story* (2007), *Love of Siam* (2007) from Thailand; *My Father, My Mother* (1978), *Midnight Dancers* (1994), *Doubt* (2005), *Manay Po* (2006), *The Man in the Lighthouse* (2007), *Daybreak* (2008) from the Philippines, *Arisan* (2003) and *Detik Terakhir* (2005) from Indonesia. From India, or the Indian diaspora, we had *Fire* (1996), *BOMgAY* (1996), *Daarya* (*The Square Circle* 1996), *Bombay Boys* (1998), *Chutney Popcorn* (1999), *Performing the Goddess* (1999), *Split Wide Open* (1999), *Summer in My Veins* (1999), *Mango Souffle* (2002), *Gulabi Aaina* (*The Pink Mirror* 2003), *Girlfriend* (2004), *A Touch of Pink* (2004), *My Brother Nikhil* (2005), *Yours Emotionally* (2005), *The Journey* (2006), and most recently,

*Dostana* (*Friendship* 2008), the last of which is Bollywood's take on a pair of heterosexual male friends pretending to be a gay couple.<sup>19</sup> This random list includes films that are consciously queer texts—often the product of queer identifying filmmakers—and also mainstream texts that may be open to queer readings,<sup>20</sup> or those incorporating a queer character or sub-text sometimes just for the resultant sensational, and box-office, value.

Importantly, many of the above films engage with varying 'imaginings' of 'family', and their impact on the lives of non-heterosexual individuals, bringing out, in the process, the problematics of ambivalence that Pidduck refers to. For instance, the Korean film, *Broken Branches*, treats the issue of non-heterosexual sexuality within the framework of the traditional patriarchal Confucian family.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, *The Wedding Banquet*—a 1993 Ang Lee production and one of the first Asian queer films to receive global attention—engages with issues of negotiating non-heterosexual subjectivity with the pressures of marriage, filial responsibility and the imperative to continue the family lineage (see Berry 2001). The Philippines film, *Manay Po*, centres around an endearing matriarch and her three sons, who are all living under her roof and variously negotiating with issues of non-normative sexuality. Nish Saran's *Summer in My Veins* is an auto-ethnographic study of a trip the filmmaker/narrator makes with his mother, during the course of which he 'comes out' on camera to his (ultimately accepting) mother, whereas *My Brother Nikhil* traces the turbulent relationship of a swimming champion with his family after his HIV positive status becomes public. Deepa Mehta's *Fire*, as previously noted, revolves around the budding sexual relationship between two sisters-in-law in a traditional household in India.

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<sup>19</sup> Despite the strict censorship in operation, there has been some treatment of queer issues in film in Singapore, the most recent being *Tanjong Rhu*—a short film based around the police entrapment of gay men in the early 1990s. This film was featured at the Tokyo International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in July 2009.

<sup>20</sup> One such film not mentioned in the list above is the otherwise completely 'mainstream' South Korean film, *A Bungee Jump of their Own* (2001), whose treatment of the relationship between internal gender identity and external bodily appearance opens the way for alternative/queer readings (see Grossman & Lee 2005; Park 2005).

<sup>21</sup> See Lee (2000, pp. 276–278).

The common though not necessarily stated element running through these films is the reality that notwithstanding pronouncements to the contrary by moral and religious guardians, rather than being outside of it, non-heterosexuality is as much a part of the institution of 'family' as is heterosexuality. As Gayatri Gopinath argues in relation to *Fire*, 'it is precisely within the cracks and fissures of rigidly heteronormative arrangements that queer...desire can emerge' (Gopinath 2005, p. 153). The two texts from Japan that I will focus on in the remainder of this paper—the television drama serial, *Dôsôkai*, and the feature film, *Hush!*—bring to the fore these varied engagements with issues of 'family'.

### ENGAGING WITH THE 'QUEER FAMILY' IN DÔSÔKAI AND HUSH!

These two texts may be considered products of what writers like Mark McLelland have dubbed 'Japan's Gay Boom' of the 1990s and early 2000s (McLelland 2003, pp. 60–64). This was a boom generated by and targeting young heterosexual female consumers, for whom 'gay identity' and 'gay culture' became something of a commodified brand-name not dissimilar to other trendy designer products and accessories they consumed and defined their identities by. One fallout of this commodification and mainstreaming of 'gay' identity was a succession of books, magazines, *manga* comics, television dramas, movies and other popular culture media focusing on (usually male) same-sex love. Apart from the two texts I will be discussing here, other films and television dramas produced over these years included the films, *Okoge* (*Fag Hag* 1992), *Kira Kira Hikaru* (*Twinkle* 1992), *Hatachi no Binetsu* (*Slight Fever of a Twenty-year-old* 1993), *Nagisa no Sinbad* (*Sinbad by the Shore/Like Grains of Sand* 1995), *Hush!* (2002), *Maison de Himiko* (2005), *Boys Love* (2006), *Hatsu-koi* (*First Love* 2007), and the television mini-series, *Dôsôkai* (*School Reunion* 1993) and *Romansu* (*Romance* 1999).

At one level, most of these texts, produced with a mainstream audience in mind, could not be regarded as particularly cutting-edge or even progressive. Indeed, many of them, *Okoge*, *Dôsôkai* and *Twinkle*, for instance, despite their seemingly explicit treatment of non-normative sexual desire, appear simultaneously to reinscribe patriarchal assumptions about family and gender

roles. In particular, the portrayal of the female characters in many of these texts as dysfunctional, 'failed' heterosexual women, e.g. in *Fag Hag*, is problematic (see Matsushita 2009; McLelland 2003, pp. 62–64). However, I argue that despite the apparent concessions to patriarchal ideology, not only do these texts bring to light strategies used by non-heterosexual individuals to negotiate with hegemonic expectations of gender and sexuality, they also work to interrogate some of these assumptions.

This is especially the case with *Dôsôkai* (*Class Reunion*)—a 10-week television mini-series aired during prime-time by a major television network, Nippon Television Network Corporation (NTV). Given its theme of homosexuality and the sometimes quite explicit depiction of male same-sex desire, NTV was probably taking a gamble in screening it during mainstream viewing hours. However, the gamble paid off, with the series enjoying considerable popularity ratings. According to Stephen Miller, it reached an audience viewership of almost 20 per cent during its sixth week of screening, surpassing the popularity of a regular nightly news programme on the network (Miller 2000, p. 87).<sup>22</sup> At one level, the unconventionality of the subject matter notwithstanding, there was nothing particularly critical or progressive about *Dôsôkai*. Rather, if anything, its approach and 'politics' can even be read as inherently conservative and regressive. The drama bore all the hallmarks of a soap-opera combined with melodrama, with an incredibly convoluted plot, descending, at times, into the realms of incredulity and 'cheesiness'. Yet, it is this very everyday 'cheesiness' and 'B-grade' quality of the text which allows it to insidiously problematise and destabilise comfortable assumptions about 'family'.

The story revolved around a group of young 20-something former schoolmates from a coastal fishing town, but who are now living and working in Tokyo. The main character, Fûma, has been secretly in love with his best friend from school, Atari, who, to all appearances, appears to be unambiguously heterosexual. Realising the futility of his infatuation for Atari, Fûma proposes marriage to

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<sup>22</sup> *Dôsôkai* was quite clearly tapping on the female consumer-driven 'gay boom'. An indication of this was the fact that many of the commercials by the official advertising sponsors aired during breaks were for products targeting female consumers, e.g. household products and childcare products like disposable nappies.

Natsuki, a fellow former classmate and Atari's ex-girlfriend, perhaps as a means of shifting his desire for the seemingly unattainable Atari to someone he (Fûma) had been involved in a romantic/sexual relationship with. At the same time, Fûma also meets Arashi, a young man barely verging on adulthood, at a bar in Shinjuku Ni-chôme—the major gay commercial precinct in Tokyo. Arashi is instantly attracted to Fûma, and the two of them have a one-night stand, depicted quite explicitly on screen.

Fûma and Natsuki got married, and start living together as a couple with Fûma's parents in the family home. However, Fûma is unable to consummate the marriage. At the same time, he re-encounters Arashi, and the two start their liaisons again, with Arashi becoming increasingly attached to his older boyfriend. Natsuki begins having suspicions about her husband's lack of sexual interest in her, a suspicion that gets accidentally confirmed. After an initial reaction to the revelation of almost visceral shock, during the course of which she pays a young male hustler to have sex with in an empty building site, Natsuki settles into a sort of equilibrium in her sex-less marriage with her husband. Fûma, in the meantime, continues to be infatuated with Atari, his friend from high school. Despite his explicit heterosexuality, upon discovering Fûma's feelings and devotion towards him, Atari does have sex with Fûma as a gesture towards their friendship. However, after a weekend sexual escapade together, both return to their relationship of a platonic friendship.

In a twist to the plot, it emerges that Natsuki's 'one-night stand' sexual encounter with the hustler had resulted in her becoming pregnant. Moreover, unbeknownst to her at the time of the encounter, the hustler Natsuki had paid to have sex with was actually Arashi, her husband's male lover, who had been trying to make some extra money to pay for his dates with Fûma! However, by the time Natsuki realises that she is pregnant, Arashi has been accepted into the 'family' by her. In one particularly 'domestic' scene, the whole family, including Fûma's parents, are gathered round the dining table, with Arashi included among the family members; the parents' ignorance of the 'real' relationship between Natsuki, Fûma and Arashi becomes something of a humorous secret between the three. After some initial uncertainty, Natsuki and Fûma decide not to terminate the pregnancy, and to inform

Arashi that he is the father. In a revealing scene, Natsuki reflects that through the yet-to-be-born child, the triangle between the three of them will become an undestructible circle. Fûma, for his part, observes that despite not being the biological father, he would be mother, father and friend to the child. Arashi, however, is tragically killed, just prior to hearing Fûma's revelation about Natsuki's pregnancy.

The final scenes of the drama take the viewer several months into the future. A baby boy has been born to Natsuki, and to all appearances, she and Fûma embody the archetypal urban middle-class Japanese nuclear family unit—mother, father and baby. They are shown attending Atari's wedding, held in a church complete with an officiating Christian priest and bride in a white wedding gown. It would thus appear that Atari, despite his brief foray into non-heterosexuality, has returned back to within the parameters of the heteronormative family. Yet, there is a twist—one which allows *Dôsôkai*, despite its many shortcomings, to be situated within the theoretical framework of Gopinath's *Impossible Desires*. Atari is indeed getting married; however, his 'bride' is actually a biological male—a cross-dressing effeminate gay male friend of Fûma's murdered boyfriend, Arashi, who undergoes sex-change surgery after realising that although Atari does love him, the fact that he (Atari) is intrinsically heterosexual would come in the way of a physical relationship. Hence, the perfect solution to this quandary was to undergo gender reassignment and 'marry' Atari.

The series closes with a scene of Fûma and Natsuki wheeling their baby son in his pram through a nondescript suburban neighbourhood—a portrait of the quintessential middle-class heteronormative and heterosexual 'family'. They come across a noisy construction site, which they fear might upset the baby. However, just as they are about to turn the pram around, both Fûma and Natsuki spot a young construction worker, who is the exact image of the dead Arashi. The viewer is left with a picture of Natsuki going up to the young man, whom she declares is Fûma's 'type', presumably to 'pick him up' for her husband.

Thus, at the end of *Dôsôkai*, the viewer is left with a curious 'two-way-mirror', feeling like nothing has changed in relation to the drama's representation of 'family', and yet everything has. On the one hand, both Fûma's family and Atari's family embody all the



assumptions about the archetypal nuclear family. Thus, on the surface, there appears to be no challenge to or questioning of the ideology framing heteronormative patriarchy. However, on the other hand, by the end of the series, all the viewer's assumptions and preconceptions also seem to be completely overturned. The 'ostensibly' gay male character (Fûma) now appears as the proud, married, 'heterosexual' family man, whereas the assertively heterosexual Atari is now in a 'queer' relationship with a transgender male. And all of this 'queering' of 'family' seems to be happening without quite happening.

The other text that also engages with reflections on the relationship between non-normative sexuality and 'family' that I discuss here is the 2002 comedy, *Hush!*, directed by Hashiguchi Ryosuke—the creator of other queer-themed works like *Hatachi no Binetsu* and *Nagisa no Sinbad*. Like *Dôsôkai*, the significance of *Hush!* was its popular reception with mainstream, rather than just niche, audiences. The film focuses on a young gay male couple, Naoya and Katsuhiro, living in Tokyo.<sup>23</sup> Naoya is a young pet groomer who is quite open about his sexuality. His older partner, Katsuhiro—a 'salaryman' engineer working for a research outfit—is more reticent about publicly acknowledging his 'gay' identity; in one scene, for instance, he insists on meeting Naoya for lunch at a location where there would not be any likelihood of the two of them being spotted by any of his colleagues. Nevertheless, the two seem to be leading a fairly typical urban, middle-class 'gay' life. The rhythm of this life is interrupted by Asako—a rather quirky young woman with a turbulent personal history of aborted pregnancies and suicide attempts. Asako wants to have a baby before it is too late, and, despite being aware of his sexuality and his relationship with Naoya, decides that Katsuhiro would make the perfect father. Her rationale, when making the proposal to Katsuhiro, is the fact that he has 'the eyes of a father'. However, she is neither interested in any further commitment from Katsuhiro nor does she want to break up his relationship with Naoya.

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<sup>23</sup> My use of 'gay' to describe Naoya and Katsuhiro, instead of 'queer' or 'non-heterosexual', is deliberate; in the film, they are portrayed as a couple who construct their self-identity around the category, 'gay'.

Naoya is initially completely opposed to the suggestion, but Katsuhiko is shown as being ambivalent with a part of him starting to question the hegemonic expectation that a 'gay' man cannot be a father. In the end, Naoya, too, starts coming around to the idea, and for a while, the three of them are depicted as not dissimilar to a happy, contented three-member 'family', no different from any other conventional heterosexual couple on the verge of starting a family. Significantly, the warmth and closeness of the three members of this non-legal, 'pseudo' family are contrasted with the lack of feeling between members of the 'traditional' blood-based, culturally-sanctioned family of Katsuhiko's elder brother, who, after the death of their parents, continues to live in the family home in the country (see Kawaguchi 2005, pp. 233–234).

However, this sense of comfortable optimism is abruptly disrupted when Katsuhiko's relationship with Naoya and Asako is revealed to Katsuhiko's brother and sister-in-law, and to Naoya's mother, by a suspicious, and jealous, female colleague who is in love with Katsuhiko. This act of spiteful 'outing' results in the three being confronted by Katsuhiko's brother and his wife, and Naoya's mother. This emotionally-charged scene in the film brings to the surface many of the issues underpinning the concept of 'family' and 'kinship' not normally discussed in the open. For instance, the opposition to the arrangement from Katsuhiko's sister-in-law, who, earlier in the film, had been depicted as quite ambivalent and almost hostile towards the family she had married into, stems less from Katsuhiko's sexuality and his relationship with another man than the thought of the 'blood' of her husband's family being tainted by the blood of an 'unclean woman' (*yogoreta onna*) like Asako, who had had multiple sexual partners in the past and a history of suicide attempts. Asako, for her part, raises questions about what underpins notions of 'family' and assumptions about who has or does not have the 'qualifications' for parenthood. The outcome of this showdown is the splintering of 'family'—both the conventional family of Katsuhiko's brother, and the 'family' Katsuhiko, Naoya and Asako had been trying to craft.

However, in the end, the three of them are reunited, after the sudden death of Katsuhiko's brother. His brother's death further brings to the surface the fragility, despite its apparent ideological pervasiveness, of the hegemonic heteronormative family.

Katsuhiro's sister-in-law, despite her earlier defence of 'family' and 'blood ties', has no qualms in selling off the family home in which the two brothers were raised, and moving away to start a new life in the city. The site of the physical and symbolic 'home', which had embodied 'family' for at least two generations, has now become merely an empty, desolate, weed-strewn plot of land.

In contrast, the 'fake' family that Katsuhiro, Naoya and Asako seem to be performing suggest far more positive possibilities. The final scene of the film has the three of them sitting down to a home-cooked dinner in a very domestic setting, with Asako proposing she have a baby with 'both' the men. Despite Hashiguchi's claim in an interview that he did not set out to present the 'three characters' unusual relationship as an example of a new kind of family' (Mes 2007), the depiction of the contrasting notions of 'family' does echo Tom Mes's observation in the online Japanese cinema journal, *Midnight Eye*, that 'this film is [Hashiguchi's] statement on the bankruptcy of the traditional family unit', and that 'there is a definite sense of providing alternative options' (Mes 2002; Kawaguchi 2005).

## CONCLUSION

While the two texts discussed above are quite different in their content, style and approach, there are also similarities cutting across both which are worth reflecting on in the context of the underlying argument of my paper. At one level, both texts appear to be more about entertainment than about getting the viewer to reflect on deeper socio-cultural issues. *Dôshôkai* has all the elements of a hard-to-conceptualise-in-real-life melodrama, and *Hush!* may initially come across as a light-hearted comedy along the lines of such Hollywood films as *The Birdcage* or *Three Men and a Baby*. However, it is precisely this accessibility to mainstream audiences that allows both texts to engage with issues of the 'ambivalence' between queer and 'family', in an almost insidious way. This sneaky/insidious way of raising questions about the hegemonic 'core', i.e. heteronormative patriarchy, points to Gayatri Gopinath's assertion that 'what often looks like a capitulation to dominant ideologies...may in fact have effects that dislodge these ideologies' (Gopinath 2005, p. 22). This is the point I have tried to draw attention to in this paper, i.e. the fact that the relationship between 'queer' and the 'family' in Asia need not be, and indeed is

not, one of binary opposition. While there is no disputing that it may often be a complex, ambivalent relationship, the reality is, as I have stressed earlier in the paper, that non-normative sexualities, rather than being exilic to the family, are part of it, and in the end, stem from the institution of the family.

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142 *Gender Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asian Family*

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NOTES ON DISCUSSION FOLLOWING  
ROMIT DASGUPTA'S PAPER

*The 'Queer' Family in Asia*

TERMINOLOGY ISSUES

In response to questions on why the term, 'queer', was used in the paper instead of more specific or rainbow terms, such as gay/lesbian/LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) or various other local terminologies, Dr Dasgupta pointed out at least two main reasons. Firstly, as the paper is written for English-speaking audiences and people everywhere, the term, 'queer', is probably more appropriate than various other local terminologies. Secondly, the term, 'queer', with non-heterosexual being probably the alternative personal preference, when deployed as a broad theoretical framework for the discussion in this paper, seems to be fluid enough to capture all the non-normative, same-sex configurations that the paper examines. Specific terms, such as 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'LGBT', may exclude a large number of individuals who engage in sexual/erotic/physical/emotional behavioural patterns linked to same-sex attraction but who do not define their identity as being premised on same-sex sexual object choice. The term, 'queer', however, can refer to multiple, non-normative, same-sex configurations of a range of transgressive possibilities, which encompass and surpass LGBT. It therefore captures each of these categories, and the fluidity across these categories, as well as those relationships that are not included in any of these categories, e.g. those unnamed friendships discussed in the paper.

Nevertheless, Dr Dasgupta noted the importance of recognising local particularities, especially in the contexts of the practices of and influences from pre-colonial configurations. For example, when talking about the transgender configurations in Southeast Asia, in some cases, he would change to the term, 'transgender', due to the specific local conditions. Also, terms such as 'gay', 'lesbian', 'LGBT' and other more specific terms are used in the paper, where applicable.

On the question of whether by using the phrase, 'queer in the Asian family', he refers to Asian contexts or is still talking about a universal term, Dr Dasgupta noted that although there is no denying that discourses surrounding gay identity in the Western sense have considerable impact throughout the world, there are also interactions between Western discourses and the existing local patterns throughout the world. To give a good example, Tom Boellstorff explores the notions of gay subjectivity in Indonesia as a national identity, and as an interface between global influences and the local conditions there.

It was noted that the term, 'queer', does have its limitations, for instance, it is very much grounded within a historically- and socio-culturally-specific discourse of North American academia in the 1990s. However, it is possible to use this term to challenge some middle-class discourses that have emerged from a strong visible gay identity, such as the gold standard for non-heterosexual individuals, i.e. telling the family, finding a partner and living in the inner-city. It is possible, though, in some contexts, that the term, 'queer', would constitute negative connotations for the non-heterosexual community.

## METHODOLOGY ISSUES

Dr Dasgupta noted that given the nuanced and often 'un-voiced' nature of the subjectivities and relationships it explores, the paper draws upon specific examples from popular culture textual sources, and adopts an approach which South Asian-American scholar, Gayatri Gopinath, refers to as the 'scavenger methodology'. This is because conventional social-science methodologies may not be particularly insightful for looking at the relationship between the notions of 'family' and non-normative, same-sex subjectivities. There are a lot of difficulties in capturing 'queer' relationships on the bases of same-sex relationships, because while gay sexual relationships are non-normative, same-sex configurations, they are not the only ones. For example, there are older, non-heterosexual men in Australia, who have been in same-sex relationships, but for various reasons, refer to their partners as their good friends, as they do not really see them as lovers or partners.

The point was made that it may be difficult to capture the sociological construct of the family and non-normative, same-sex subjectivities solely on the basis of popular culture textual sources. One participant commented that there are a large number of people in many societies who are in gay relationships, or in various kinds of self-identities about their homosexuality, and it would be problematic if they are not allowed to be recorded as they have chosen to be. Dr Dasgupta agreed, but he also noted that there are situations, within the contexts of traditional family structures, in which a lot of non-normative, same-sex relationships are not officially recorded. He further questioned whether or not these non-normative, same-sex relationships are based purely on sexual relationships, and pointed out that there are other types of relationships based on close bonds, emotional bonds or the duty of care, and many of them would not be captured or acknowledged through conventional methodologies.

It was also noted that it is important to combine cultural studies with other conventional social-science-based methodologies, using tools like surveys, focus groups, individual interviews or ethnographic fieldwork. In particular, it was noted that legal documents are useful, especially in countries where male-homosexuality is criminalised.

In response to the question on how the audiences have responded to the two popular Japanese screen and TV dramas examined in the paper, Dr Dasgupta noted that he was not particularly interested in audience studies in the context of the present research. However, he argued that as the targets of these dramas are not necessarily gay individuals, and these dramas appear to be produced more for entertainment purposes, they are able to raise questions on the 'ambivalence' between queer and 'family' in a sneaky/insidious way. In response to the question on how these dramas should be interpreted, Dr Dasgupta noted that they should not be interpreted as a reflection of reality; in fact they have looked at the relationships between the reality and the shifts in a progressive sense. One participant commented that although Dr Dasgupta seems to have avoided over-interpreting the films as a reflection of reality, the films have raised various questions, such as why these dramas appealed to young generations of Japanese women but not to Japanese men. This may be taken a long way in

terms of the current discussions on gender and family. Dr Dasgupta noted that the films might both reflect and in turn, shape contemporary female attitudes towards marriage, gender roles and family, because these films were mainly targeted at female audiences and possibly, have insidiously affected their ideology. Also, he noted that a factor explaining why a certain percentage of individuals in all Asian countries do not get married could be the greater self-acknowledgement and expression of same-sex preference, which is not captured in the census.

There was some discussion about the reasons why information about gay relationships and same-sex households are not recorded in the census. One participant commented that there is no basis for different sexual identities or non-normative families in the census. While the interviewees can say they are living together, they may not have the option of saying they have a relationship that is anything like a marriage. It was suggested that the construct of household relationships in the census be changed, and the thinking of the census-takers 'liberalised' to be less prescriptive, so that those who want to be recorded as being partners or domestic households of the same sex can be accepted in the census.

### ISSUES ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT OF NON-NORMATIVE, SAME-SEX SUBJECTIVITIES AND THE FAMILY

One participant commented that it is striking that there can be considerable flexibility for individuals to be involved in various non-normative relationships within traditional family structures. For instance, it was noted that there may be great possibilities for same-sex people to be involved in emotional, physical, and sometimes, sexual relationships within the joint family arrangements in India.

In response to a question on the positions and subjectivities of wives whose husbands are involved in non-normative, same-sex relationships, Dr Dasgupta suggested that wives may easily accept their husband's same-sex relationships as their position in the family, i.e. that of 'a wife', is not threatened by these same-sex relationships.

On the reactions of key members of the family, particularly parents, and the impact of their reactions on people in non-normative, same-sex relationships, it was noted that some work has been done on the ways in which parents, and also teachers in the Japanese context, affect people's same-sex relationships.

A participant pointed out that some same-sex couples consider their relationship as that of companionship rather than familial, and asked a question on whether this type of relationship, as such, can then be reflected as 'family'. In response to this, Dr Dasgupta argued that there is no reason why this type of companionship relationship cannot be considered as familial. He noted that there has always been far more diversity and variation in family arrangements than the nuclear family model would suggest. The normative notions of the heterosexual family, built on specific gender roles, seem problematic and should be opened up for questioning.

On the question of whether the segmentation of roles in same-sex relationships can be shaped by the traditional family, Dr Dasgupta noted that some non-normative, same-sex relationships are role-based, in particular, in many cases of the so-called transgender ones. The segmentation of roles in same-sex relationships might be influenced by the institution of the family in the past. Nevertheless, gender roles within normative families have blurred in recent decades, let alone the segmentation of roles in same-sex relationships.

In response to the question on whether 'queer' individuals in other societies also adopt strategies similar to those discussed in the paper, such as the practices of marriage and adoption, it was noted that 'queer' individuals in South Asia have adopted strategies like adoption, which although it may not necessarily be legally recognised, is still culturally functional. It was also noted that marriage between gay men and lesbians may be adopted as a strategy, an example of this practice having been discussed in the context of Korea. It was suggested that adoption may also have been used in the past in some European countries that have flexible adoption laws and arrangements.

## OTHER COMMENTS

In response to a question on why the homosexuality theme in the national symbols of Indonesia is not acknowledged, it was noted that un-naming is a very important part of non-normative, same-sex relationships in Indonesia, and probably in other societies as well.

Other questions raised in the discussion included the question of whether expressions of affection vary between the two sexes and between different classes. It was noted that there are differences in expressions of affection between the two sexes and between different classes, but the differences depend on particular cultural settings. It was also noted that the force of globalisation, especially communication through the internet, has a huge impact on expressions of affection.

It was noted as well that not a lot of work has been done on non-normative, same-sex relationships over the life course, such as research on non-heterosexual ageing, sexual relationships between premarital young men, and the fluid sexual behaviour of Indian truck drivers.

In response to the comment that the paper seems to suggest people in non-normative, same-sex relationships should not come out, Dr Dasgupta noted that the paper is not discounting the importance of activism that works towards public visibility, and legal and social recognition, but he also noted that although activism claims to represent everyone, this is not always true.



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## SUMMARY OF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

### *Marriage*

The introductory remarks for this session focused on the generally rising age at marriage throughout Asia, and the enormous differences between countries. For example, mean age at marriage for females in Bangladesh, i.e. age 18, is more than 10 years younger than in Japan, i.e. age 29. Arranged marriage has declined drastically in East and Southeast Asia, but the arranged marriage system remains resilient in South Asia. International marriages are besides becoming increasingly common.

### ON DEFINITION(S) OF ARRANGED MARRIAGE

It was noted by one participant that choice in relationships is complex, and care must be taken in using the term 'arranged marriage'. One thing to keep in mind about choice in relationships is the difference between arranged marriage, arranged wedding and arranged choice of partner. Increasingly, in urban areas of Indonesia, parents have given up searching a partner for their children, and are getting involved only at the stage of marriage preparation, after the children bring home a potential spouse. In some cases, the wedding tends to be completely 'taken over' by the parents. In villages still though, parents are arranging marriage for young girls. The kinds of marriages involving very young girls in Java, for instance, are arranged, and at times, involve the trafficking of daughters.

Another participant argued that we do not have to define 'arranged marriage', and the meaning is flexible. In pre-war patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal Japanese society, for instance, 'arranged marriage' meant that the marriage partners had no say, and in stating this, the participant gave the example of how her grandparents had never met before the wedding. In post-war Japanese society, however, marriages to potential partners introduced by bosses and senior/co-workers tend to be considered 'arranged', while potential partners introduced by friends are not

considered 'arranged'. In any case, fewer than five per cent of those marrying these days consider their marriage to be 'arranged'.

The element of choice was, nevertheless, reiterated and brought back into the discussion by another participant, who argued that while it is difficult to define 'arranged marriage', how much of a choice there is in arrangement is very important. In rural India, there is still not much of a choice for the young people entering a marriage whereas in urban India, parents are consulting relatives, friends, *etc.*, and there is an element of choice.

It was noted as well that it is not only arranged marriage, but marriage *per se*, that needs to be defined. An important question to ask, in relation to this, is whose definition are we talking about. For example, there are gay men and women living together and seeing themselves as a couple, and gay men and women having arranged marriage with a non-gay partner and being gay at the same time.

#### RELATION BETWEEN KINSHIP SYSTEM AND ELEMENT OF CHOICE IN ARRANGED MARRIAGE

The discussion starter claimed that half a century ago, most marriages were arranged by parents. This was indeed true in most parts of Asia, but not in Thailand. One would have expected Cambodia to be very similar to Thailand in this respect, as Cambodia is very similar culturally to Thailand, e.g. it is mainly matrilineal. However, a recent article based on data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), showed that most marriages in Cambodia were arranged. For example, in Cambodia, in the 2000 survey, 51 per cent of married females respondents aged 15–49 said the wife's family chose the spouse while over 20 per cent said the husband's family chose the spouse, i.e. three-fourths said the marriage was arranged. And a further 43 per cent said they only met their husband on the wedding day. In the 2005 survey, the percentage of arranged marriages had fallen to less than 50 per cent, and the proportion who had only met their husband on the day of the wedding had declined to 27 per cent. This tells us two things: (1) even the best of surveys are not very reliable, since the changes recorded were largely unreal because basically, the same population was being sampled; and (2) arranged marriage remains very common in Cambodia, unlike in Thailand. So clearly, there is a similarity between Cambodia and Thailand in

terms of matrilocality, but differences between them in other cultural aspects.

## DYNAMICS OF ARRANGED MARRIAGE

It was noted that in India, a marriage partner is typically not proposed by the family but by brokers. If a match occurs, both the bride's and groom's family pay something in-kind/cash to the brokers, and this practice still prevails in India in arranged marriages. Brokers, on their part, keep track of who the eligible boys and girls are. Caste is often an important consideration; each community or sub-caste group in India maintains a list of eligible boys and girls, which will be printed/revised every year, e.g. those who have married will be dropped from the list. A development over the past 25 years is that gatherings will occur about once a year in smaller towns, and even in metropolitan areas, where the names of the eligibles will be announced, matching levels of education and other things. These meetings will be attended by parents, and also by the eligible boys and girls. The role of brokers was noted to be dwindling in urban areas though, and in response to this, a question was raised on the dynamics between brokers and families, and how these work. It appears that if a marriage does not work, a broker is often blamed and his business dwindles. Apart from the use of brokers, websites are also becoming increasingly important in Indian marriages, e.g. Shari.com. Personal details specified in these websites include caste.

It was noted that in Singapore, too, even individuals from the upper classes use the internet a lot for marriage search. Friends would introduce potential partners, if not brokers. Based on anecdotal evidence, for singles from very small families, colleagues come to play a part. The observation of some singles in Singapore adopting a god-child because they think that marriage is not coming/going to work suggests that singles are adopting an alternative form of family support and alternative meanings of life.

Another kind of brokering takes place in marriages in Malaysia as well. There are many cases of Malay students becoming pregnant before marriage and as a result, arranged marriage takes place. If the boy is not Muslim, then another kind of arrangement takes place, i.e. an arrangement will be made for the girl to take refuge in some place, with the baby put up for adoption later.

## CONSTRAINTS/IMPETUS FOR (ARRANGED) MARRIAGE

Based on the discussions, whether or not arranged marriages take place seem to vary across time, space and gender. On the question of the prevalence of arranged marriage these days, a Chinese participant noted that arranged marriage is still widely practiced in rural China, and dating is not common. She also noted in an Inner Mongolian village she studied, almost all marriages during the time of the collective economy were arranged by parents. However, in the last 20 years, choice is increasing, and migration has greatly improved chances of marriage; a man can just bring back a wife from outside the village, and she would be accepted by the community. It was also noted that there are gender differences on what is acceptable for migrant women and men in China. For example, while it is fine for migrant men to bring back a girl, it is not fine for migrant women to bring back a boy. Migrant women have to have their marriage arranged by their parents.

On constraints of marriage, social expectations lie at the heart of arguments raised. Questions raised include whether parents still play an active role in the approval of marriage or whether their role has changed to a 'residual' one. They also include questions of what would happen if the girl, for instance, does not 'match up' to the boy's background, and whether young people would go ahead with their plans for marriage in the face of parental disapproval. One participant even claimed that the concept of having a choice is an illusion. Parents and those planning to enter a marriage have to grapple with social requirements. Building on this, a story was related of an associate professor falling in love with the university driver, but after a few months, she ended their relationship due to comments from others on their 'mismatch'. Thus, there is clearly a social requirement factor, and this brings us back to the definition of what is meant by 'arranged'. In response to this, it was argued that it is important to distinguish between 'arranged' marriage and social expectations 'governing' marriage. In some societies, there are more sanctions imposed by social expectations and in others, less. In Asia, there is, increasingly, the idea of romantic love and equality.

A participant also raised the question of whether marriage confined to restricted social circles helps to explain low marriage rates. A story was recounted, for instance, of how a male demographer from Taiwan commented on female Masters students having a lower chance of getting married because of their education. In response to this, it was claimed that educated single women, as a result of being 'squeezed' by the hypergamy norm, then go and find Western men as potential partners. However, it was noted that there will always be adjustments made, and rigid social expectations may be changing. Data in Malaysia show, for instance, an increasing tendency for well-educated Malay women to 'marry down', but a lesser tendency for Chinese women to do so.

Adding to these arguments on the social constraints of marriage, another participant noted that in China, women are marrying up in terms of social status, *etc.* We find 'high-class' women ending up single in urban areas, but men only end up in circumstances of delayed marriage; marriage remains a possibility for men. In rural areas, those who stay single are 'low-class males', *i.e.* those with low income and who are poorly educated. This gives rise then to social issues like trafficking.

Social constraints of marriage are further reiterated based on the Japanese situation. It was noted that in Japan, for women at least, what is driving low marriage is educational attainment and with it, the increasing perception that they can choose. It was noted as well that many people are registering for commercial agencies although these cost between US\$2000–US\$3000. Hence, men who cannot find wives find international wives. Most of the men who go into the international market are farmers.

Returning to the Indian situation, it was noted that social barriers restrict the field of 'eligibles'. Shari.com has consolidated its list of eligibles by caste system widely in different parts of India, with links to the outside world. It was also noted that caste is important in India, definitely so in rural areas, but perhaps not so much in urban areas. International marriages notwithstanding, most Indian marriages are between two Indians in India, and if you try to understand it in that context, adherence to (social) norms is still important.

Another constraint to marriage noted by participants in the roundtable is the logistical constraint. According to one participant, in Japan, men say they are too busy, and have no time to meet potential partners. Another participant also noted that although the choice is there, meeting opportunities are still limited. For example, in a migration context, there are marriages among migrant workers in East and Southeast Asia, such as 'mail-order brides'. The point is: choice is possible, but the opportunities to meet up are not there!

On the other hand, an impetus for marriage may be that women still receive lower wages than men in most countries, so single women still face financial difficulties.

Returning to the figures on rising singlehood in most Asian countries, one participant questioned whether there are indeed structural barriers to meeting someone, and whether it would be more appropriate to question the meaning of marriage as an ideal state. Perhaps one should also question whether the meaning of marriage has changed, and the type of selection/options/choices open to singles.

## INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGES AND MATCHMAKING

The social- and state-perceived problem of delayed marriages and increases in divorce has led the state to come to play a greater role in marriage, e.g. through the sorts of migrants they bring in, their policies, etc. The state facilitates certain kinds of international marriages and restricts others. In other words, there is, seemingly, a politics of regulated marriage.

It was noted as well, based on a participant's research project on brokered international marriages, that wide-ranging differences can be seen between the ways in which people meet each other and the models that are expected. For example, when it was thought that it was commercialised matchmaking that was studied, it was found that many matches were becoming less 'arranged' and more about social networking or meeting people, and this would then eventually lead people to 'arrange' their own marriage. For example, there is a difference between the 'arranged' marriage of Indians here in Singapore and those back home in India. What interviewees define as 'arranged' are, in reality, not 'arranged'. Interviewees like to think of marriage as 'arranged' when it is not,

which is interesting because normally, what is expected would be *vice versa*. Also, many Malaysian men who marry a bride from India say that caste is not important. This question of why this is so is interesting to explore.

The discussion on international matchmaking agencies also brought forth reasons why matchmaking agencies may be going international. It was commented that matchmaking agencies in Japan are going international because agencies focusing on single Japanese men living in Singapore note that the men are not very keen on Japanese girls in Singapore because these girls are not their ideal, submissive types. The international marriage industry, in this sense, has men being interested in women who project certain qualities of what these men see as desirable. Besides, although the marriage institution is protected in Japan, and most young people there say they want to get married, there is, nevertheless, an increasing number of 'herbivorous' males in Japan, which refers to Japanese men who are not keen on sex/marriage. It thus seems like the women are there, but the men do not want to get married.

In the case of Bangladeshi workers in Singapore and Korea, parents are worried the migrant workers will not return, so they choose a girl for the migrant workers to increase the likelihood that they will return home.

### MARRIAGE AS AN EVENT OR A STATE OF LIFE?

A point raised during the discussion was whether marriage is an event or a state of life. According to one participant, people get married because they know what they are going to get out of it as a state of life. It is a package that includes children, in-laws and housework. There is increasing individual choice in marriage as an event but declining individual choice in marriage as a state of life. Marriage is overwhelmingly a two-sex problem; there are gender differentials in what you get out of marriage. It was noted that men tend to get more out of marriage than women and as such, it is not that Japanese women do not want to get married; it is just that they do not want to get a 'bad deal'. The bottom line is that the economic and social imperative for marriage as a state of life is declining. Japanese women, once married, are drawn into

traditional gender roles, And once people realise that it becomes hard to get out of a marriage they go into, they are more careful.

It was also noted that although in Japan, young men and women say they want to get married, the economic and social imperative to get married is now less for both men and women. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, men got married due to social expectations, and women really could not afford not to get married, but this is no longer the case. Friendship networks of single people are perhaps becoming more important instead. Korean movies also show Japanese women being increasingly attracted to Korean men; Korean men are seen to be more 'macho' and romantic by Japanese women, while Japanese men are seen as more 'flaky', unwilling to make a commitment.

### ARRANGED MARRIAGE, FREE-CHOICE MARRIAGE AND HAPPINESS

A question was raised with regard to the assumption that arranged marriages are less happy than free-choice marriages. The participant who raised this asked if there were any systematic studies that examined the relationship between free-choice and arranged marriages and happiness.

No general answer was forthcoming, though one participant argued that happiness was not an issue before, but is increasingly an issue now! Another participant pointed out that arranged marriage is positively associated with inter-generational residence and inter-generational residence is negatively associated with happiness among women. It was also noted that arranged marriages were popular in Vietnam till the 1950s, and the belief is that arranged marriages are better because of their lower divorce rates.

### ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE MARRIED HOUSEHOLD

Moving the discussion beyond marriage itself to roles in a married household, it was noted that married women do carry a double burden. Although men help out more often, women still bear the bulk of the housework. However, it was also argued, and agreed, that women are increasingly managing household income and expenses as well. When women are working, they frequently pool



their income to help out with the family. In other words, women are increasingly playing a part in household resource-pooling, decision-making and production.

#### OTHER COMMENTS

On polygamy in Asia, it was noted that there is a lot of discussion on the conditions under which a man may take a second wife that are worth examining. For example, 'under-the-table polygamy' in Indonesia is worth examining.

It was also noted that in many countries of Asia, people are cohabiting, and the relationships involved in these cases are worth exploring. There is a need, for example, to examine the trends of cohabitation, and to see to what extent people in these relationships are protected.



## SUMMARY OF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

### *Divorce*

#### DEFINITION OF DIVORCE

A participant noted that given the diversity of marital patterns in Asia, the discussion of divorce should be expanded to include other forms of marital and union dissolution. For instance, it is common in Thailand for a couple to be in a union that is socially accepted but not legally registered. As per the 1997 Demographic Health Survey data from Thailand, recent marriages are more likely to be unregistered. Marriage registration is deferred until the need for it arises, typically until the time when children enter school. Such non-registered marriages may be recognised by the family and the society, but they are not legally recognised. In such cases, legal divorce is not possible. A reason for the non-registration of marriage in Thailand is to avoid the legal complications of divorce, if the couple decides to separate. Non-legal unions are also becoming common among the Indonesian migrant community in Malaysia. These marriages are approved by the religious leader of the community but are not legally registered.

Divorce covers only a certain proportion of separations that occur in such contexts. If marriage is not registered, legal divorce is not possible. In contrast, union dissolution encompasses the dissolution of non-registered marriages and other forms of unions like cohabitation among same-sex partners. Divorce could be subsumed within the rubric of union dissolution.

#### DATA ON DIVORCE

Data on divorce are not available for many countries in South Asia, making it difficult to study divorce in a comparative setting.

Censuses typically collect data on current marital status and this could be used to obtain the percentage divorced but not divorce rates. In Japan, data on the number of divorces by duration of marriage are available, but data on the number of marriages by duration of marriage are not available, making it impossible to get a precise estimate of divorce rates. The current data though could be

used to calculate crude divorce rates using synthetic cohort marriage life-tables. In Iran, the data on divorce comes from the registration system, and the data on marriage, from the censuses. If a couple does not register their divorce, then it is not included in the registration system; those couples who did not register their marriage cannot register their divorce. In Iran, before 1995, some marriages were not registered (“contract marriages”), and the divorces resulting from such marriages were not included in the registration system. This leads to an underestimation of divorce rates in Iran.

Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) and the earlier World Fertility Surveys (WFS) collected information on marital history in some countries. They could be used to calculate divorce rates. However, such data are limited to only a few countries, and there is a need for detailed data on marital history so that the probability of divorce could be calculated.

## DETERMINANTS OF DIVORCE

Changing expectations of marriage could be a contributing factor to increase in divorce rates. In Taiwan, for instance, women are getting out of marriage if they do not feel that staying in a marriage is a ‘good deal’. It was noted that in the case of Taiwan, educational level, though important, is not a crucial factor in influencing divorce trends. A participant observed that in Japan, in contrast to Taiwan, increasing divorce rates may be associated with changes in women’s educational levels. However, there have been no studies testing the association between education and divorce in Japan. Such an empirical investigation would require very large survey data.

Stigma attached to divorce may dissuade women from getting out of disharmonious marriages. An observer commented that the main reason for low divorce rates in Vietnam is the stigma attached to divorce. Women are often blamed for marriage failure, so they often decide to stay in a disharmonious marriage and continue to suffer. Though Vietnam has low divorce rates, the number of couples in disharmonious marriages may be high. It was noted that in Japan there is no stigma attached to divorce nowadays. In fact, single mothers gain a lot of sympathy and the attitudes towards them have changed.

A participant commented on the need to look at the institutional structures when studying divorces. Marriage and divorce/separation are systems of managing property. This means that legal and religious systems that govern property management should be considered in understanding divorce trends.

Following up on this, another participant asked whether the pension system in Japan is pushing up the divorce rate for older age groups. In response to this, it was noted that it is a common misunderstanding that women are entitled to half of the pension of their husband. This is not true and anyway, the pension amount is not that much.

In Singapore, however, it was noted that the housing policy could have an influence on the timing of a divorce. Many couples file for a divorce only to realise that they cannot sell their HDB flat.

## GETTING A DIVORCE

In Singapore, a divorce could be obtained by showing that marriage has irretrievably broken down. Such break-downs could be due to adultery, desertion or unreasonable behaviour. If none of the three conditions is satisfied, a couple could still obtain a divorce, but they must satisfy the following conditions: a separation for three years if both parties consent or a separation for four years if only one party consents. This time of separation is supposed to serve as a cooling-off period. In Singapore, mediation is widely used in family courts and in many cases, when a wife alleges adultery and the husband does not contest it.

Muslim family law in Singapore is governed by the Syariah court. Divorce for Muslims must be obtained from the Syariah court. However, if both parties consent, the case could be transferred to a civil court. Divorce and property issues of Muslims are governed by the Syariah court; but children's issues can be dealt with in either court. In Malaysia, divorces for Muslims are governed by the Syariah court. There is a complete separation of the civil and Syariah courts, and the decision of the Syariah court cannot be appealed in the civil courts in Malaysia. The high court cannot overrule the ruling of the Syariah court, and the Syariah court is the final arbiter of divorce-related matters. In Malaysia, the conversion of one partner to Islam with the other partner continuing to be a non-Muslim is ground for automatic divorce. In

such a situation, if the husband converts to Islam, he gets custody of the children, and his ex-wife, who is not Muslim, cannot claim maintenance, as she is a non-Muslim.

In India, Muslims are not governed by the civil family law. The civil family law in India provides gender protection, including equal inheritance and other benefits. There is a wide spectrum of opinion among Muslims in India on the desirability of having a separate family law. While conservative Muslim groups want to have a separate family law, many Muslim groups say it is unfair and want to change it. It was noted that in Singapore, Muslims take it for granted that they must be governed by the Syariah law.

In Japan, the most common form of divorce is divorce by mutual consent followed by registration at a family court. Grounds for divorce in Japan used to be solely based on 'fault' but there is now a movement towards 'non-fault' divorce, which happens if a marriage has broken down. Getting a divorce remains easy in Japan. In a landmark decision, the Japanese Supreme Court, in 1988–1989, granted divorce to a man who was separated from his wife for 20 years although his wife did not agree to the divorce. About 70 per cent of divorce proceedings in Japan are initiated by women.

A participant noted that while Japan had higher divorce rates during the Meiji period, divorce rates began to decline in the 1920s. Another commented, in response, that crude divorce rates in Japan are going up, and about 25 to 30 per cent of marriages end up in divorce within 20 years of marriage. It was noted that it is not appropriate to compare divorce rates during the Meiji period with current trends. Before the war, divorce was governed by the imperial civil code. Under this code, divorce was determined by one's family and elders. Even if the couple liked each other, divorce was granted if the husband's parents did not like their daughter-in-law. This is radically different from the current divorce laws.

In Iran, the bride gets the right to propose divorce at the time of marriage. If the couple gets divorced later, the husband has to pay bride price. This may have discouraged some men from marrying.

A participant questioned whether we are eventually interested in the end of a marriage or in divorce. There may be a large time gap between when a marriage ends and when a divorce takes place. In some cases, marriage may have ended, but the couple may decide not to divorce for the sake of the children. Also, in contexts where it is difficult to obtain a divorce, like in the Philippines, it is necessary to look at marital separation rather than divorce. Some couples in the Philippines opt for an annulment after 20 years of marriage.

## MIGRATION AND TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGES

How has women's international migration in Asia affected marital relationships?. Such migration was noted to raise several questions, such as who is going to manage the property, whether or not the men would be allowed to take a second wife, and how much pressure migration exerts on marriage. A participant commented that among the historically travelling groups of Asia, there are codes and norms about who is going to take care of the family during the long absence of the husband.

It was observed, also, that divorce in transnational marriage is complicated. In a transnational marriage, more than one state is involved. In Taiwan, there have been quite a few cases where the dissolution of transnational marriages have been dramatised by the media as a conflict between two countries over the custody of a child. One case involves a Taiwanese mother and a Brazilian father. When the Brazilian father died, a Brazilian court gave custody of the children to their grandparents in Brazil. After a legal battle, the mother was awarded custody of the children. It was noted that law in this matter is not fixed and the courts decide on a case-by-case basis. Many such cases may not even reach the court.

Divorce in transnational marriages could have an impact on the residency status of the spouse.

In Malaysia, beginning in the year 2000, the child is considered as illegitimate if the parents cannot produce their marriage certificate. The parents' names could be registered, but the certificate would have a Section 13 seal on it, which means that the child is illegitimate. If the mother is not a citizen, the child is stateless and these children cannot go to school. As the mother is not a citizen, they cannot take the citizenship of the father.

In Japan, if a child has one Japanese parent, then he/she is granted Japanese citizenship. It used to make a difference, in international marriages, whether it was the father or the mother who was the Japanese citizen. If the father was the citizen, then citizenship for the child was automatic. However, if the mother was the citizen and the father was not, citizenship for the child was not automatic. The Supreme Court ruled this practice as unconstitutional in a decision in 1986.

## CHILD CUSTODY AND MAINTENANCE

In Japan, during the early post-war period, courts generally gave custody of children to fathers. However, nowadays, child custody is generally given to mothers, and in some cases, joint custody is given. In Singapore, the guiding principle in the decision about child custody is the welfare of children. However, it is often difficult to decide what is in the best interests of a child. Generally, siblings are not separated. In Iran, custody is typically, but not always, given to fathers. If the reason for divorce is addiction or disease on the part of the father, then the custody is given to the mother. In Taiwan, the courts typically give custody to the father. This has to do with its patrilineal social structure, and the fact that men are more financially secure.

A question was raised on whether the gender of the child matters in custody decisions. In response to this, it was noted that in many contexts, mothers usually get custody of girls. In Iran, girls less than seven years of age or boys less than three years of age can stay with their mother even if the father has custody of them. This is subject to the condition that the mother has not remarried. In Japan, courts do not take the gender of minor children into account in custody decisions.

A participant also noted the need to look beyond parents when it comes to child custody. In many cases, divorcees may not have the economic means to support their child, so they seek help from their own parents. Some move in with their parents after divorce. There are tangible and intangible benefits flowing from the older generation to the grandchildren. When parents get a divorce, and neither parent wants to take custody of the children, grandparents step in to take care of their grandchildren, as seen in China. An important reason for parents not wanting custody is that it



dampens their chances of remarriage; the opportunity for remarriage is high for single men or women. Therefore, it is important to consider the role of other family members, especially grandparents, in childcare.

An interesting question was posed on who gets custody when a same-sex couple separate. Along similar lines, another participant noted that in Thailand, when a couple in a non-registered marriage decides to separate, the decision about the custody of the children does not depend on the court. How then do these couples work out the custody arrangements?. Hence, while the legal framework is important, it seems too narrow in some settings.

## GENDER AND DIVORCE

Feminist writing has emphasised divorce as a challenging issue. In contexts like Indonesia, where divorce is easy, women may not be economically secure and may need the support of their family. A participant observed that when talking about gender, there is a need to consider not only women, but also vulnerable and marginalised men. Some men living in isolated villages in China have little opportunity to get married. Men's status as a bachelor—locally known as 'bare sticks'—is considered shameful to the parents, who then try to get these men married. Even if the parents are impoverished, they will borrow money and get their son married. Some young women manipulate this situation to their own advantage. As a participant recounted, with reference to a Mongolian village where she had conducted fieldwork, a young woman ran away with another man, leaving behind her husband and children. She returned a year later and divorced her husband. As women enjoy a favourable position in the marriage market in China, very few remain unmarried. And with abnormal sex ratios, it is projected that there would be about 40 million bachelors in China.

## OTHER COMMENTS

Other points made during the discussion include the changing cultural meaning of divorce in Indonesia. It was noted that a quarter of a century ago, when asked about divorce, Indonesians would talk about their neighbours or family. Now, divorce is associated with celebrities. People follow the divorce proceedings

of celebrities on television, read about them in glossy magazines on a daily basis, and discuss them with friends.

The importance of communicating the reasons for a divorce to children was noted by a participant. Without this communication, children may blame themselves for their parents' divorce when in fact, the divorce has nothing to do with them. In response, it was mentioned that children may not want to know the reasons for the divorce of their parents. In addition, it would be impossible to have a law, or cultural prescription, which forces parents to explain to their children the reasons for a divorce. The important thing is to take care of the children, and how this is carried out may vary from child to child.

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## SUMMARY OF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

### *Inter-generational Relations*

The introductory remarks for this session focused on the rapid demographic transformations in terms of greater longevity, falling fertility rate, rising dependency ratio of the aged and changing family structure, all of which have posed considerable challenges for care arrangements for young children and elderly people. While the idea of providing care for the younger generation is still valid in Asian societies, the idea of providing care for the older generation has undergone some changes over the years in some regions. For instance, there are concerns about the weakening inter-generational obligations in Singapore and with that, the need to review the 'Aged Care and Maintenance of Parents Act', to ensure that children do play their roles in caring for and providing for their elderly parents.

#### WHAT DOES GRANDPARENTHOOD MEAN TODAY?

A point was made that with an increasing number of parents migrating to urban areas in many Asian societies, many parents are relying on grandparents to care for their children.

One participant argued, with reference to Malaysia, that the phenomenon of grandparents caring for their grandchildren is nothing new. What is new, in recent years, is that many grandparents have to leave their villages and move to the cities in order to look after their grandchildren, resulting in many of these grandparents being overworked and feeling isolated in the cities.

Another participant argued that in the case of Thailand, it is true that grandparental care often results from the migration of adult children to the cities. Children of the children are then left behind with their grandparents. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that it is misleading to portray grandparental care as a burden in Thailand. A series of nationally-representative surveys of old people suggests that grandchildren often help grandparents and give them emotional satisfaction. It was also noted that although increased

migration of adult children would give rise to more grandparental care, the falling fertility rate may work as a counteracting force. Therefore, although the number of 'skip-generation' households has been increasing, it is doubtful whether or not the trend towards more grandparental care is necessarily continuing in the long run.

Building on this, one participant commented that some studies in the Philippines also show that grandparental care is not necessarily a burden, but something that grandparents look forward to. A Chinese participant commented that in the rural area where she studied, although it is taken for granted that grandparents should care for their grandchildren—usually their sons' children, some grandparents have, in fact, lost their chances of doing so, as the quality of grandparental care is often criticised by mothers who work flexibly and prefer to care for their children on their own.

It was further noted that there are different conceptual frameworks for analysing inter-generational relationships. There have been developments from a solidarity to a conflict model, with a current move towards an ambivalence model. It was argued that we may be looking at an ambivalent situation on whether it is a burden or joy for grandparents to care for their grandchildren, especially when grandparents are no longer economically active but still desire their own social life.

Shifting the discussion to the Singaporean context, a participant noted that in order to indicate the state's preference for grandparents as caregivers, and to recognise grandparents for their contribution to the care-giving of their grandchildren, the state has offered working mothers about \$3000 of grandparent caregiver tax relief. This seems to be an institutionalised way of promoting the use of inter-generational relationships in providing early care. However, two participants questioned the likely availability and sustainability of future grandparental care in Singapore, given a later retirement age and extended working life.

## THE POPULATION PERSPECTIVE

One participant argued that we should take a population perspective, rather than a social problem perspective, when discussing the issue of who needs care. It was noted that care

management is not exclusively for the elderly and not for all elderly. Many elderly care for themselves and for each other quite effectively. The majority of the care given to the elderly is given by elderly people through domiciliary care. Flexibility is needed when we discuss the issue of who needs care, as it is not a determinative thing that when people reach age 70, they suddenly need care. Active ageing, such as encouraging old people to exercise more to keep themselves healthy may be a better strategy. Therefore, when conceiving the whole pattern of care, institutional structures should be quickly amenable in preparation for the future, where the profile of people's needs and desires may be different. In many cultures, the Australian culture for instance, the preference of old people is to live in their own homes. Thus, in such context, what is needed is to build some sense of independence.

## THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The need to bring the gender perspective to the issue of care-giving and care-receiving is clear.

In the Japanese context of inter-generational co-residence, for instance, there are very few grandfathers who co-reside with adult children without grandmothers. There is a long-term relationship between senior female generations and younger female generations. Mothers-in-law care for their young grandchildren and do the housework, to help their daughters-in-law maintain full-time employment. When mothers-in-law become old and frail, daughters-in-law then return the favour by becoming the chief caregivers of their mother-in-law; daughters-in-law would feel very strongly about this being their duty. It is suggested that men should become more involved in this type of resource exchange and mutual help between different generations.

It was also noted that although many elderly people live with their spouse, with most spouses providing some form of care, the common sight, in most cases, is that of younger women caring for older men, as men tend to marry younger women. It was also noted that in the Japanese context, the responsibility of eldercare often falls on women, as women have, on average, a longer life expectancy of at least seven more years. The proportion of elderly-only households—in most cases, elderly-women-only households—has been increasing.

Shifting the discussion from the Japanese to the U.S. context, a participant argued that there are some changes in terms of gender differences in care for older generations in the U.S. Based on research comparing three generations in the U.S., it was found that the gender gap between the time that women and men spend on caring for their elderly parents has become narrower. The time women spend on care for elderly parents has reduced because their labour force participation has increased, while the time men spend on this has increased to some extent. Also, men tend to provide more monetary care than women. Research is needed on whether some of these trends can be observed in Asia as well.

Interesting interactions between gender and marriage status were also noted in the discussion. Based on earlier research undertaken in Thailand, one participant argued that old women who were never married were found to be reasonably well-off, while separated and divorced women were distinctly disadvantaged. The explanation may be that women who were never married maintained a relationship with their natal families, while separated and divorced women did not maintain that kind of relationship. Based on a new survey on living alone and indexes of psychological well-being in Thailand, it was argued that single elderly women were less likely to live alone and were better-off in their psychological well-being than divorced or separated elderly women. However, for men, both the single and divorced were distinctly disadvantaged in terms of psychological well-being and the state of living alone. Similar findings in Singapore were also presented. It was noted that living alone versus living with others affect Singaporean women more than men. Single Singaporean women were found to have much better overall self-rated health compared to single old men.

In India, based on two runs of national surveys conducted in the 1980s and mid-1990s, it was noted that the poorest households were women-headed landless households, where the elderly women were typically widowed and where their land had been divided by their sons. A doctoral study on an urban area in Mumbai suggested that elderly women—most often widowed and sometimes divorced—living with their adult children were the worst-off. They were poorly educated, had never been employed and suffered from psychological/emotional abuse, i.e. they felt

lonely and/or neglected. This issue may need further study with a large data set.

## THE DISCOURSES OF FILIAL PIETY

The ideology of filial piety ‘forces’ inter-generational care and connections, especially in East Asian societies. In Taiwan, the family law stipulates that children should provide economic and social support for their parents. Nevertheless, this is hard to enforce in reality. In Singapore, the parental bill is only used for the economic support of elderly people, and only a small number of cases—about 100 a year—go on trial regarding this. In most cases, this happens because the adult children involved were abused by their parents when they were young. There has besides been a lot of debate in Singapore about the parental bill because filial piety is based more on moral values than on law enforcement. The family law, in fact, stipulates that the primary responsibility of adult children is to protect, nurture and raise their minor children, rather than to provide for their elderly parents.

It was commented that popular discourses about the elderly, like declining filial responsibility, may have resulted from anecdotal evidence. In Thailand, it has been reported, in the newspapers, that the younger generation is no longer supporting the older generation. However, a comparative analysis on two runs of national surveys conducted in 1994 and 2007 suggested that there was no change across the two surveys in the proportions of old persons who relied on their children for major support. Perhaps there are countries in Asia where filial responsibilities are eroding, but there is little evidence that they are eroding in Thailand. It was also noted that forms of eldercare in Thailand are changing. For instance, the mobile phone has made an enormous difference to the ability of elderly parents to communicate with their migrant children, and to the ability of adult children in responding to the needs of their elderly parents.

Several other participants argued that forms of filial piety are also changing. For instance, based on a survey on the expectations of baby boomers in Singapore, it was noted that emotional support is the major form of support that most baby-boomers expect from their family members. The main reason for this may be because most baby-boomers foresee that they will be more financially

independent in the future, having been better prepared financially. In terms of class differences, it was noted that the higher-educated among the baby-boomers expect less financial support and more emotional support, as one would expect. In terms of ethnic differences regarding living arrangements, it was noted that there is a preference to live with sons among the Chinese and the Indians in Singapore, while the Malays prefer to live with daughters. In Iran, however, while grandmothers prefer to live with their daughters, grandfathers prefer to live with their sons. Financial support from son-in-laws is not expected in Iran.

It was argued as well that although it is expected in Japan, and in many other Asian societies, that the eldest son or his family should take care of the older generation, the trend is changing, as daughters, single sons and younger sons are increasingly involved in this. In Japan, it was noted that although co-residence with the senior generation still remains a common practice, patrilineal inter-generational co-residence is decreasing while co-residence of elderly parents with daughters is increasing.

A Chinese participant argued that although in comparison to urban China, family values remain strong in rural China, and filial piety is still the basis for the traditional institution of eldercare, dramatic changes have taken place. In particular, rural-urban migration has undermined elderly support. In 2005, there were about 115 million migrants in China, most of whom were rural-urban migrants. Half of them were women migrants and a third of them were married. The migration of women greatly affected support for the elderly. In rural China, the proportion of elderly-only households has increased substantially. In the Inner Mongolian village that the participant studied, most elderly people lived alone. Sons normally provided economic support, while daughters provided emotional support. In urban China, recent research indicates that an increasing number of elderly people prefer to live with their daughters.

It was further noted that in terms of changes in filial piety, there may now be more preconditions for adult children to care for their elderly parents, for example, involving reciprocity. Therefore, social exchange theory may be relevant here.



One participant commented that power structures exist within the family; it is not always a situation of happiness and love. Some research in Indonesia argue that when an old man—the head of the household—gets older, in many cases, he is reluctant to hand over control of the family farm to anyone else, because this is an indicator of him losing his power. In rural areas of other countries, is filial piety built into this kind of power structure and property ownership?. The relationship between the support that parents were getting from their children and whether or not they had property is surprisingly weak in Thailand, based on evidence from a study on some focus groups of elderly people about 15 years ago, and a recent study in 2007. It was further argued that support for the elderly is often a matter of altruism, as adult children in most families would feel responsible for their elderly parents, and would not let them die or be neglected.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

It was agreed that in many Asian societies, eldercare faces two challenges: the increasing migration of adult children, and the decreasing number of adult children that the new generation of elderly actually have. Therefore, the real problem will be long-term care. We need to find ways to address long-term care needs, and ways to help families provide support for old people within the household.

The increased migration of adult children has had considerable impact on eldercare. It was noted that in the highly-urbanised areas of Malaysia, old people had to relocate, with their adult children, to urban areas or other countries in order to receive care from their children. It was suggested that we should then look at things like how to create community care and provide some social services at home, to retain these old people in the villages. Issues on eldercare that come with the increased migration of adult children are seen in Iran as well. With the increasing rural-urban migration of adult children, more elderly people are left behind in rural areas, as many of them do not want to move to urban areas; however, they expect their children to visit them more regularly. Support from the state to the elderly in the rural areas of Iran is conditional on whether the adult children of these elderly can assume responsibility for care for their parents. This has, however, complicated things for

the elderly. They may lose their property and gain little support from either their adult children or the state.

A private solution for eldercare was noted to be the use of foreign domestic workers (FDWs). FDWs are widely used in some Asian societies, such as Singapore and Taiwan. In Taiwan, FDWs substitute the role of daughters-in-law in caring for their 'demanding' parents-in-law. Nevertheless, it was also noted that many of these FDWs are untrained. Hence, it is a challenge for them to provide day-to-day care for the elderly, especially for those with diseases or physical disability who need substantial patience and intense care. A study in Israel has raised concerns about elder abuse by FDWs. This is an issue which needs further discussion.

One participant argued that based on research on international marriage in Singapore, it is not uncommon for men to bring foreign brides in to care for themselves and their elderly parents. There tends to be a wide age gap between husbands and wives in international marriages. There are besides huge differences in expectations of eldercare and childcare between wives, husbands and the elderly parents within the household.

## VARIATIONS IN THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN CARE PROVISION

One of the issues raised for discussion was what role the state should play in caring for the elderly. There have been considerable changes in several more advanced societies of Asia, including Japan, Taiwan and Singapore. A Japanese participant illustrated the systematic development of eldercare provision, and the interface between the state and the family in supporting and caring for the elderly in Japan, where there is no family law to mandate adult children to care for their elderly parents.

National Health Insurance was introduced universally in 1960 in Japan, and before that, public pension insurance already covered all citizens in this country. Due to the generous health care insurance in covering hospitalisation costs, many elderly in need of care were not cared for by their family members at home, but remained in general hospitals for long periods of time. The fiscal situation of medical care insurance caused by the long-term hospitalisation of aged patients deteriorated, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, when the proportion aged started escalating.

Therefore, the state tried to bring back the tradition of filial piety and multi-generational co-residence, and to solve the problem of eldercare through the traditional approach by which women take care of elderly parents and parents-in-law at home. In 1989 and 1994, the Golden Plan and the New Golden Plan were formulated as a major shift, from long-term institutionalised care in hospitals and nursing homes, to home programmes and community-based rehabilitation facilities. In order to cover the rapidly increasing expenses of long-term care by reimbursing expenses for facility services and home-care services to older people in need of care, the Long-term Care Insurance System was implemented in 2000. This system was basically built in a PAYG way. It is difficult to convince the younger generations to support the system, as they do not believe the system will be sustainable when they get older. A Japanese participant commented that although the Japanese system has some flaws, such as the deteriorating fiscal situation, it is much better than nothing.

It was noted, by a participant from Taiwan, that there are considerable variations between different welfare regimes, such as the Taiwan system versus the U.S. system, in terms of the role played by the state in eldercare. Hence, transnational families may adopt different care practices when they encounter different care regimes. Based on her empirical study on the eldercare arrangements of middle-class emigrant Taiwanese families in California, she found that family ties seem to loosen once relocation to a country where filial piety no longer works takes place. The two care regimes are based on very different ideologies. While the Taiwan system reflects the basic belief that adult children should care for their elderly parents, the U.S. system is completely based on an individualised ideology rather than a familial ideology. Many of these Taiwanese elderly immigrants were entitled to means-tested provision, including cash grants and living subsidies, as they had no property or income in the U.S. In many cases, these elderly immigrants actually had some property,, but they would transfer their property to their children in order to be entitled to the American welfare programmes. Many of the middle-class immigrant Taiwanese adult children did not actually live with their elderly parents, but they could claim that they rented a room for their elderly parents in order to receive housing subsidies funded by the American government. The Taiwanese elderly immigrants

actually called the American government an 'American filial son', who sent them monthly allowances without any complaints.

The role which the state plays in eldercare in many developing countries of Asia seems to be very different from the more advanced societies discussed above. For instance, a participant from the Philippines commented that the Philippines is still a very emotional, informal and family-oriented country. Care-giving in the Philippines is far from formalised. Most of the care for the elderly is provided by family members. There are dynamics within the family. Family members with higher levels of education tend to contribute more. If all members are lowly-educated, then women will probably provide more care. If adult children have migrated to urban areas or other countries, then neighbours may be considered as part of the clan or as relatives and provide some care for the elderly, while migrant children provide monetary support to the family, including the elderly people. It was noted that in Iran, a commission, under the name of a religious leader, usually provides some financial support for elderly people without children. However, for those with children, the responsibility of financial support goes to their children. A participant from Iran argued that the state should be more involved in monitoring the support given to the elderly, rather than to just leave the elderly on their own, or to leave adult children to shoulder all the responsibility of caring for the elderly.

## OTHERS

An interesting question raised during the discussion was whether family caregivers ought to be paid. It was noted that when the Japanese model first started, it was against paying family members for care. Instead, the Japanese model pays for all types of services and facilities. It was also noted that the Taiwanese government plans to provide home-care subsidies. However, there is a big debate around the issue of whether family caregivers should be paid for their services. On the one hand, it is argued that this is a progressive policy, as it recognises the value of family members', especially women's, care labour. On the other hand, some women's groups argue that one of the potential negative consequences may be that women may be 'pushed back home'. It was noted that in Singapore, some research has started estimating the burden of care workers, including the direct and indirect costs.

Researchers are looking at women's opportunity costs, in particular, when women reduce working hours, from full- to part-time work, to care for the elderly. In light of increasing rates of non-marriage, this means that more single women will stop working or reduce their working hours, which will affect their future pensions.

Another interesting question raised during the discussion was whether the definition of family should be extended in the context of rising singlehood. It was noted that as there will be more single adult families in the future, the Singapore government has changed the definition of family, so that more extended family members can be eligible for some welfare provision. For instance, in the past, the medical savings account could only be used to pay one's own medical bills and the medical bills of immediate family members; now, it can be used more widely. Also, single adults can now claim more income tax deductions for extended family members.

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