

Women in the Corporate World
Career Paths: Choices and Alternatives for Women

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“You should choose your own path.”

Angela Davis¹

For International Women’s Day 2000

I. WORKING WOMEN IN JAPAN

At the Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995, Japanese women probably constituted the largest percentage of participants, on a nationality basis. They saw women from all over the world empowered, as they were themselves. Since then, working women as a social identity in Japan have been empowered as never before to survive in a place that used to be male-dominated. The conditions of working women became a central issue to solve for a better future.

The United Nations (UN) Decade for Women (1975 – 85) has led to Japan’s establishment of its first rule on equal employment for women and men. In the very last year of the Decade, 1985, the Japanese government passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL). Since its implementation in 1986, working patterns of women have gradually changed in Japan.

In 1980, in the middle of the Decade, the Japanese government signed the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. For the ratification of the convention, there were both domestic and foreign pressures toward the Japanese government to establish new regulation eliminating discrimination in the workplace. The EEOL was just in time to meet the demand, and it was a product of compromise among the businesses, labor unions, government bureaucracies, and women’s organizations. Changing a social rule often requires people to undergo conceptual changes to fit it. It was not easy, as had been anticipated, and putting EEOL into effect has required time and pain.

Women in the corporate world may seem isolated from women’s issues such as health and education. However, in the workplace, they struggle for basic rights: the right to work and equal treatment. Working women are smart enough to avoid becoming a target of sexual harassment or lay-off, careful of being nice, effective and efficient, sometimes aggressive to prove their competency. But, also naturally, they seek the betterment of their professional lives as their male counterparts do.

In the United States, the barriers women encounter in the working environment is known as the “glass ceiling.” In Japan, working women would joke that “glass is even better since at least you can see what’s going on in the office.” The barriers for many Japanese working women would be “cement or mortar ceiling.” Women who try to break it run the risk of getting hurt.

¹ UC San Diego, Building New Societies: Women In Asia and Latin America, Key Note Speech on March 9, 2000.

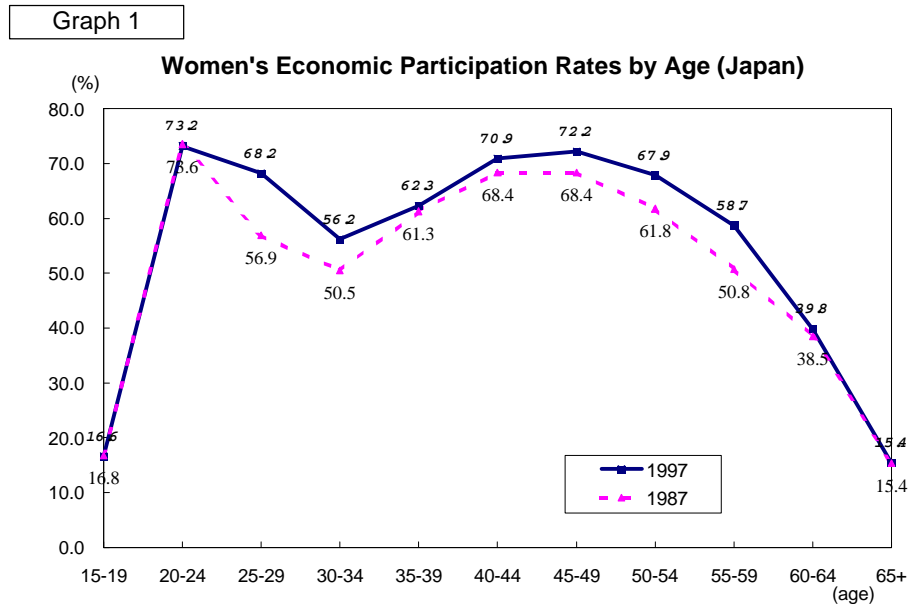
The EEOL has changed Japan's working women's career track and working patterns. A stereotype might say that Japanese working women resign when they marry. And there were times that this was true. But less women quit their jobs once they marry these days and this fact did make the office environment change. Managers (dominantly male) now consider that women work longer and may have their own career paths. This attitudinal change itself is a rather considerable change in Japanese society.

This paper aims to explain Japanese women's choices and alternatives in their professional lives to see how the changes toward the "solid ceiling" can be made, from the perspectives of employment situation and public policy. And for the purpose of the Pacific Rim Program, this paper compares a portion of the women's working environment with other Program countries, Korea and Chile.

1. Economic Participation of Japanese Women

Japanese women's economic participation rates reflect their "life cycles" including marriage, pregnancy, and child rearing. Graph 1 below reflects the ratio of women's economic participation by age range.

White Paper on Women and Employment 1999 by Ministry of Labor



In Japan, because more than 95% of women go to high school, the participation ratio for the age category 15 – 19 is not very high. Women of age 20 – 24 have the highest, 73%. In this age category, most of them finish their education and take up employment. Then, age 25 through 34, the line drops down. This means more women in this age range than others are out of the labor market.

Then between 35 and 50, women re-enter the job market because they need to earn money to feed their children, spend extra educational expenses, or fund for the payment of their mortgage. Many of these women work part time (35.9% in 1997, among total working women. Ministry of Labor 1999). Then, above 55 years of age, women leave their work. (Japan's typical retirement age is around 60 years old.)

Comparing the ratio of 1997 and 1987 (a year after the EEOL was enacted) in Graph 1, women's participation ratio increased for more than 10 (age 25 – 29) and five percentage points (age 30 – 34) respectively. This suggests that a higher proportion of women did not drop out of the workforce in 1997, though the graph doesn't show the working status, such as full-time, part-time, or self-employed.

Despite the fact that more women between 25 and 34 work than ten years ago, this

doesn't mean the working status is satisfactory for them. The trend of increasing the ratio between 25 – 34 for the past decade in Graph 1 shows that more women don't leave their work when they get married or become pregnant, don't get married at all, or do not have a child and keep working. Many working women today realize that once they give up their career, it is very difficult to get the same or better work in Japan's job market. The longer the length of education is, the more selective women want to be for their jobs. University graduates want full-time instructor, specialist, or management positions where women with high school diploma tend to look for part-time work. (Rodosho 1999, 56)

Historically, the reason for the lower participation in this age range is due to marriage, child bearing, child rearing, and some seek further education after several years' work. The line on the graph is generally called the "M-shape."

There are women who want to become full-time housewives. And there are others who want to keep the same jobs but had to resign mainly because of family and personal reasons. In this paper, I would like to focus on the particular *drop* (ratio of age 25 – 34), which constitutes the M-shape. I myself did not understand before why women quit working even though they received university degrees or higher and survived in the corporate world. Then, even though it seems they chose to quit, some women were frustrated being a full time housewife.

Concurrent economic, demographic, and social trends have quietly created dramatically different lives for Japanese women, as they live longer, marry later, have fewer children, and spend longer periods of their lives alone or at least without a husband. Technology and longer lives free women to consider expanded options, with new choices, possibilities, and problems. The changes in women's life cycles also stimulate changes in the roles they choose and are required to take in society, with important ramifications for family life, education, and the world of work. Japanese women have valid reasons to prepare themselves for long lives with a greater degree of independence, whether by necessity or choice. (Ranshaw 1999, 36)

People, both women and men, should have choices in their own life: personal and professional lives. If these women who constitute the drop of the labor force participation (age 25 – 34 in the "M-shape"), gave up their work due to any kinds of reluctant choices, it is disadvantageous for both employees and employers, as they miss the chance of utilizing the human resources.

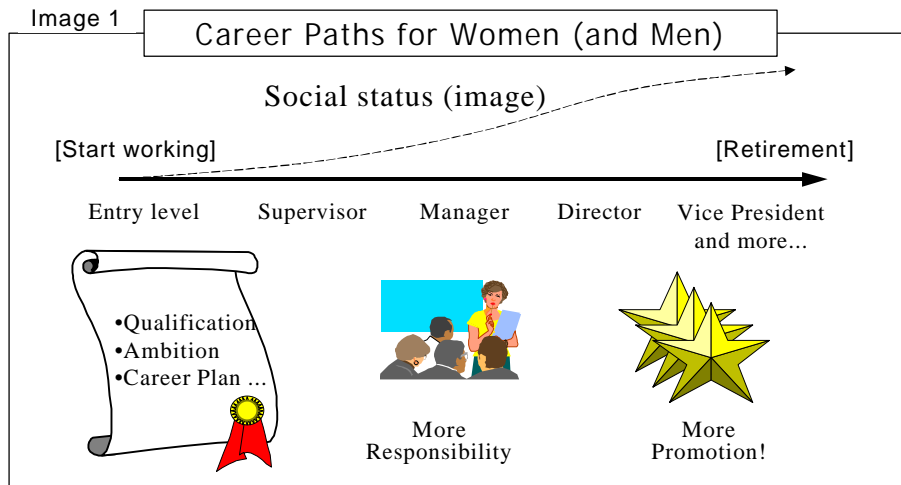
2. Career and Choices for Women

What makes the M-shape for Japanese women's life cycle? In this section, I would like to discuss the career pattern and consideration of the life events of working women.

1) Career Paths

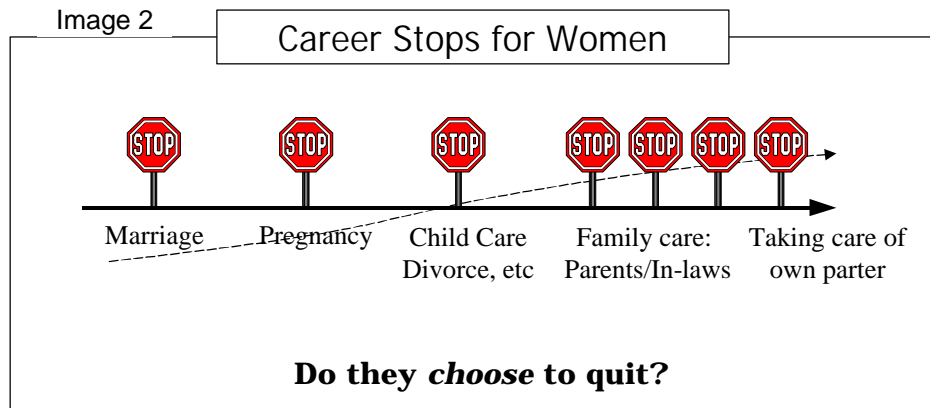
Let us assume that you start working full-time and you are supposed to work throughout your life. Image 1 shows the typical major events in your career life in the corporate world. Many start working as entry-level employees. You work hard, get more responsibility, and eventually, you are promoted. You may work for one company or

more than one, or become an entrepreneur in some stages of your life. But life is not only for the professional side. You have your own personal life and quite often you consider your social status and your own values when making your career plans. Especially if you are a woman on a management track, you may think about it even more because there are lots of opportunities and obstacles ahead of you.



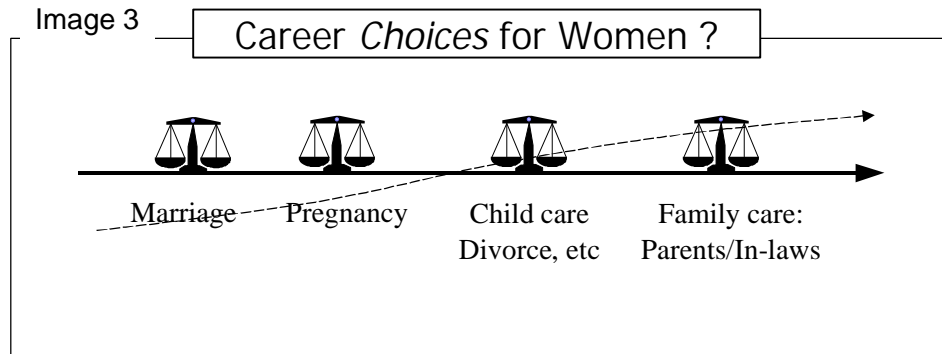
2) Career Stops for Women

The typical life events for Japanese women along their career paths are described in Image 2. There are stages that may terminate women's careers. A few years after you start working you may get married, get pregnant, involve yourself with child care, or you may have to deal with a divorce. Then, as time goes by, you may have to take care of your aging parents, or if no one else assumes the responsibility, you may even have to take care of your aging parents-in-law. In Japan, a wife of the eldest son in the family is expected to take good care of her parents-in-law. Whenever working women face the career stops, they have to think about their work and their personal life.



3) Career Choices for Women?

Working women always try to balance their family life and professional life. (Image 3)



If a woman wants to keep her job and develop her career path, she should stay on track, otherwise it will be difficult for her to return to the same position once she resigns because someone else may fill the position immediately after she leaves. Not many companies in Japan have a system in place yet for women and men after childcare leave to return to the same or equivalent positions. Therefore women and some men are still uncomfortable requesting the leaves.

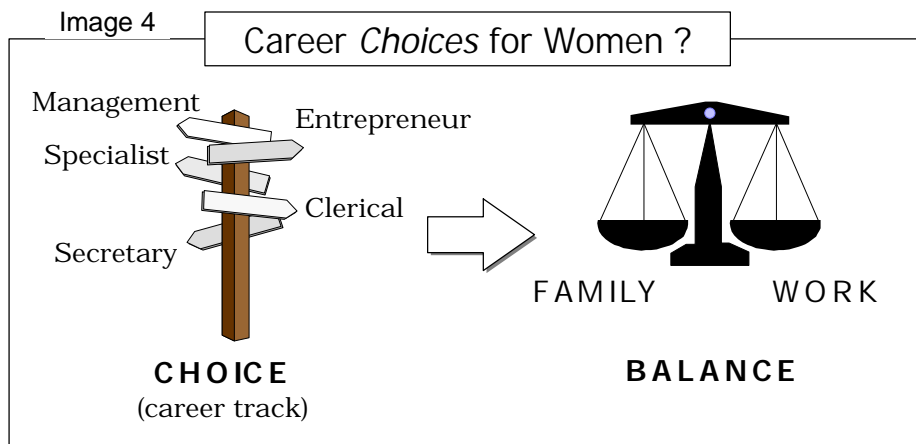
Likewise, even at the entry level, working women have to consider how they are going to design their career paths. In each career stage, they have to balance well and balance wise between their family life, and work life. (Image 4)

Whenever a working woman faces the career stops, she has to think and choose what she wants and has to do, but she still tends to prioritize what her family wants her to.

4) Impact of EEOL

EEOL's passage itself was a political matter among three parties: Japanese government which had ratified the Convention, businesses, and women's organizations. It was not a result of changes in prevailing social values and perceptions regarding women's roles in the work force.

For over a decade, companies have created career tracks in hiring women and men. Because of the EEOL, at least officially, companies cannot put classified ads separating the position by sex. Instead of just following the guideline by Ministry of Labor, they created management track (*sogo shoku*) and clerical track (*ippan shoku*). Most of men are automatically assigned to management track, where women choose a course when they apply to the company.



The separate personnel management scheme, management track and clerical track, succeeded in showing that women, not the employers, were to *choose* the career path either management or clerical, when they applied. Female university graduates choose either clerical or management because the management track did not look attractive in devoting one's life to a company that includes transfers all over Japan or sometimes including international transfers. But, the clerical track is not attractive either, for some feel this is not the position for inspired working women. There will be low pay, no promotion, with low expectation from employers. (Fujimura-Fanselow, 1999) Therefore "equal opportunity" itself may not be very attractive to many of the female students. If they are on management track, women tend to work under pressure with long hours like their male counterparts. The professional career path and equal "opportunity" were well blended to bring any equal or equitable results.

For the past two decades, no more women than expected wanted to continue to work because the working environment for women had not improved, and because more women noticed that balancing family and work is only based on the women's even harder devotion to work and housework. Working mothers in Japan are, in most cases, expected to perform all housework (which is now regarded as "unpaid work"), other than their own paid work.

The EEOL has created class disparity among working women. Those who are on the management track, to compete in a way with male counterparts, consist of the small portion of working women ready to move up the office ladder. On the other hand, those who are on the clerical track have been gradually marginalized. Once they quit the first job, it is quite often the case for them to work as part-time, contract, work at home, or re-employment job seekers.

Yet the downturn in the Japanese economy in the 1990s has served to diminish once again employment opportunities for university-educated women, as they have fallen victim to efforts by companies to cut back on new hiring. In addition, the obstacles that women confront in the workplace are still such that many or even most young women continue to feel – and rightfully so – a great deal of uncertainty and apprehension about planning for long-term careers. (Fujimura-Fanselow 1999, 133)

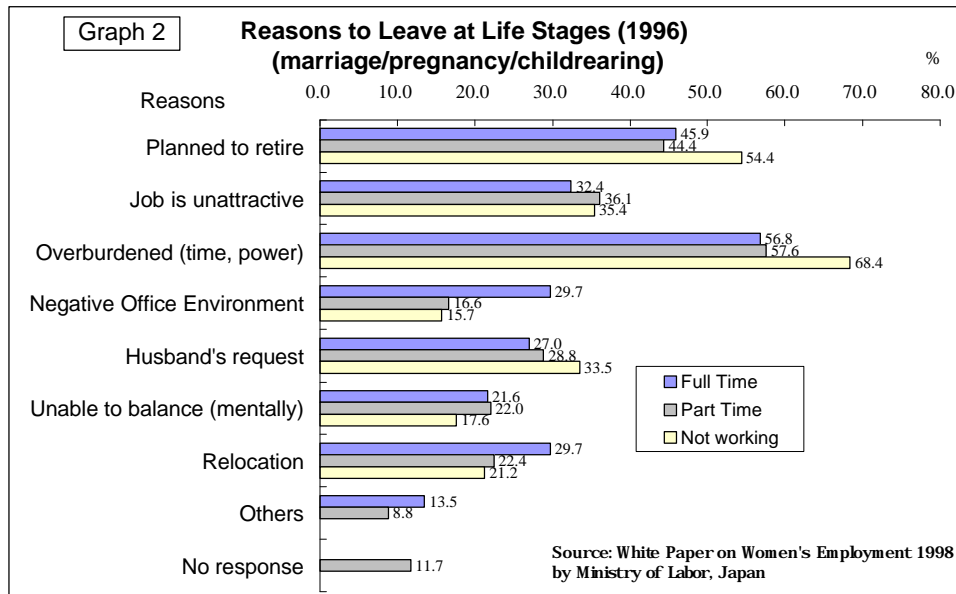
5) Factors for Decision and the Vicious Circle in Japan

Life course (career plan) options and the reasons Japanese women have used when making decisions have varied for the past twenty years. What makes women choose how to live, regarding their career paths? Ueno states that there are two stages that women experience in their life course (Ueno 1994, 49-52). The first scene would be when they get married or become pregnant. Working women consider and decide if they keep the job or leave. The second scene would be when mothers have more time as children are grown up. They again consider if they re-enter the labor market or stay home. There are several variables for the decision; educational attainment, needs for self-independence, and family relationship. But the final and most important factor, she declares is, husband's income. Those women who don't have to work have the household income of higher category. The reason for re-entering as part-time employees is mainly "to support family income." If there's no need, women won't return to work again. Ueno also suggests that university degrees earned by women doesn't always relate to their economic participation. Japan has a strong trend that women marry *up* to men with the same or higher educational background. Men with high education tend to have higher income. Therefore, this resulted in the situation that women with university degrees may end up with lower economic participation to work once they retire from full-time employment.

Women who have to work do work but many of them do so as part-time employees because there are not many full-time positions available. Other reasons for becoming part-time workers are, spouse allowance limitation (for spouses' income) and prioritizing of the housework, including taking care of a child's education. In general in Japan's job market, the prospect of getting hired differs at age 35. This is the cap and it will be difficult for women above the age even to find part-time employment opportunity.

The practice among employers has been to hire young women straight out of school for various jobs, based on the assumption that they will work up until they get married or, at most, until they have a child. Women have been excluded from the traditional systems of lifetime employment and of promotion and wages based on length of consecutive service within a particular company until the late 1980s. Most employers have been reluctant to hire these women to perform tasks comparable to those assigned to male university graduates. Many companies have had a policy of not recruiting female university graduates, and for this reason, until very recently, employment rates among female university graduates have been lower than those among junior college graduates (Fujimura-Fanselow 1999, 133).

Even after the EEOL, those who did re-enter the job market had a difficult time balancing their work and housework. Women's house workload has never been reduced and the part-time employment condition has never been fair enough compared to full-time working women (though there's a regulation now on part-time employees). The dual burden is apparently laid on working women and mothers.



Graph 2 shows the government's survey result of "Reasons to Leave" (multiple choice) by women who married or became pregnant. The highest response was "overburdened." Women were not able to balance the family and work life, exhausted and resigned. This suggests that the dual roles of women – work and housework – be not well taken care of. "Husbands' Request": 30% of the women who resigned claim that their husbands asked them or told them to stay at home.

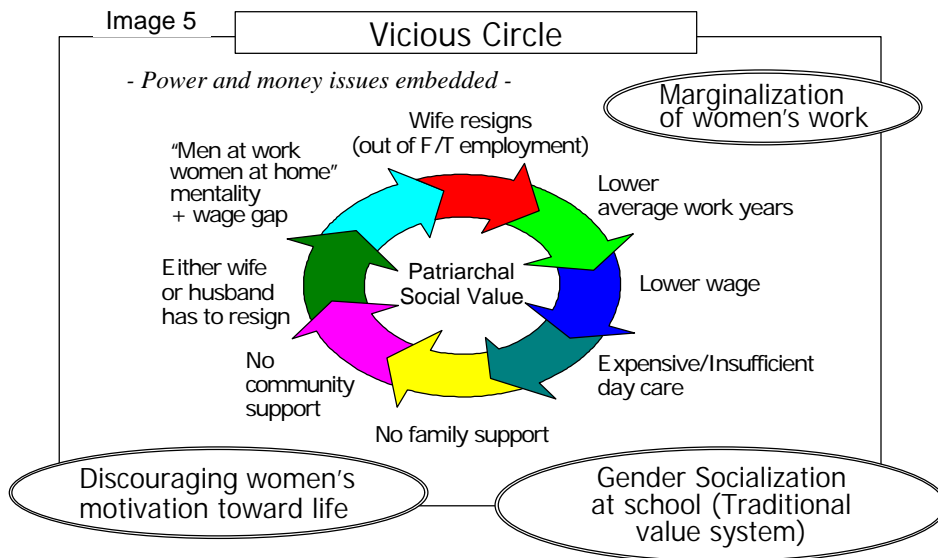
Based on the social and family value system explained above, and women's working situation and "class" disparity, women's work life and family life in Japan are deeply entangled into a rigid vicious circle. (Image 5)

In the center of the circle, the patriarchal value system is deeply embedded. This means, the way of thinking and value judgment among women and men are based on how the family is consisted and how the roles of women and men are divided; women are to be at home, they are not expected to compete with men in the workplace. Even though Japan ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) treaty, "equal pay for equal work," because women are regarded to retire soon, they are not assigned to the position applicable to the equal pay. Then, because women tend to resign shortly, there are not enough candidates for promotion even though they are in the management track. That leads to a lower wage. The wage gap among women and men in the management track have been reduced in Japan but because most women are part-time workers, the average wage are remained low. (Please see the section 6, p.13 of this paper.)

There are external factors to keep women from working.

- Expensive/insufficient day care services and baby sitters. (Nearly equal to wife's monthly income)
- No family support/community support expected especially in urban area.

Due to these expensive outside services and no family support, either the wife or husband has to resign to become a full time housemakers and child caretaker. Then,



practically, it should be better if women resigns and stay home because of their lower wage, lower motivation, and unstable work status. Moreover, it will fit into the “Men at work, women at home” mentality.

Likewise, the wife resigns rather than her husband and she is out of the career track. Though she may believe she’ll work again eventually, she knows it is very likely to be a part-time work. This “choice,” again reduced average work years of women, and the wages as well. Though the statistics of average length of employment and salary gap are both in fact diminishing, this is because women had realized well enough not to quit very easy.

The three key concepts here are generated from the vicious circle.

- (1) **Marginalization of women’s work:** Part-time work is often the case for re-entering working women. But it can be said that part-time employees can be fired more easily than full-time employees. Thus, a company can control the quantity of human power. More women work part-time with lower pay, with few fringe benefits. Some of them believe they intentionally choose to do so because they don’t want to work long hours so that they can be home in the mornings and evenings while their children are at home. Then they carefully calculate the hidden “external factor,” tax exemption for spouse allowance.

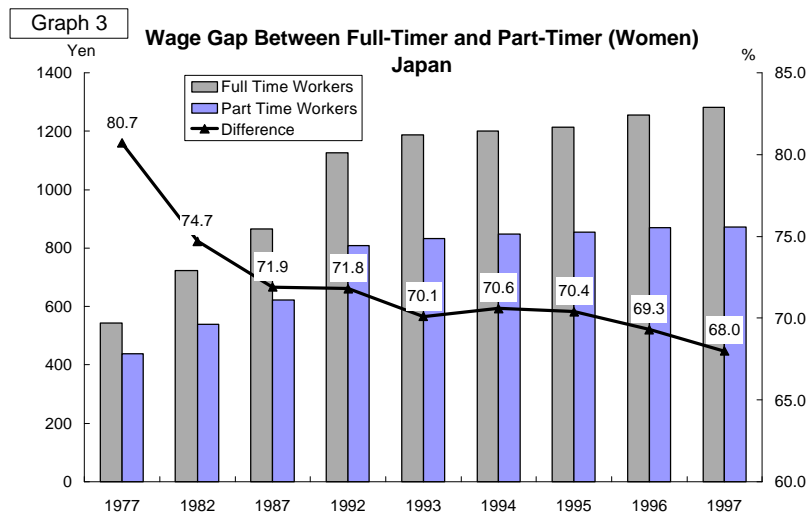
Fujimura-Fanselow explains that in terms of sustaining this pattern of employment among many married women, key issues are: 1) current policies pertaining to taxation and social welfare; and 2) company policies regarding pay and the provision of dependency allowances for spouses and children and other benefits, (which are premised on a social arrangement whereby the wife basically stays home and is supported by the husband).

- (2) **Gender socialization:** People recognize gender difference as they grow up. Thus the traditional “women-at-home” value system are gradually penetrated into children’s body and mind. It will affect a woman’s decision-making process throughout most of her life.
- (3) **Motivation (or de-motivation) toward life:** This vicious circle continues to discourage women’s motivation toward life. As more women enter the labor force,

the traditional division of work by sex – “women at home and men at work” – has been eroding.

Nevertheless, women’s primary task is still considered to be housekeeping and child rearing. Employers view women as secondary, or supplementary, workers in the workplace and as secondary breadwinners in the household and, accordingly, pay them low wages. Women tend to accept low wages because they themselves often view their wages as supplementary to the household income (Fujimura-Fanselow, 1999)

6) Wage Gap: Among women, the “class” disparity appears.



Source: White Paper on Women’s Employment 1998 by Ministry of Labor, Japan

Graph 3 above shows the wage variance among women. Because full-time working women keep on working, their wages increase. On the other hand, the pay for the part-time working women does not usually increase. The wage gap between full-time working women and that for their part-time counterparts has been increasing. In 1997, part-time employees earned only 68% of that of full-time employees. This suggests, if women give up their career track, they lose the ticket to the management level promotion. Then later in life, though they return to the labor market, as part-time workers, the salaries are lower than that of full-time career track working women. They have to think about the choices and alternatives to come; to stay or to leave for a while.

3. Conclusion

Are Japanese working women happy to work? Are they happy to quit? Are there any motivations to work and keep working in the same office? These were my questions when I started writing this paper. However I am not sure if I was able to find answers to these questions. The statistics and references I have presented call into question the presence of a “glass ceiling,” or a transparent system in Japan’s working environment, especially for women who started in the managerial track. However, women have to struggle with patriarchal system of beliefs in the office. The question emerges, how to break through?

However, the society is changing. More women work longer, though the speed is so low. And this fact will make the paradigm change eventually as well as the working situation for women.

II. PACIFIC RIM COMPARISON

For the comparison among Pacific Rim Program countries, I used the indexes developed by the United Nations to observe women's status and economic participation.

1. Indexes

To see overall differences among the fellow countries, I used the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Among the indicators, I used three of them; HDI, Gender Development Index (GDI), and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Table 1 shows the definition and indicators used for the calculation. The indicators are part of the few available and suitable ones widely used in the classrooms and by researchers to refer to; ranking the status of living of the peoples of the world. I used them as the evaluation tool of the comparison of women of each country.

Table 1 : Definition and Indicators of the three Indexes		
Indexes	Definition	Indicators Used
HDI: Human Development Index	Evaluate standard of living including human-side aspects	1. Life Expectancy 2. Educational Attainment 3. Real GDP per capita
GDI : Gender Development Index	Same as HDI adjusting in accordance with disparity in achievement by women and men	1. Life Expectancy(W/M) 2. Educational Attainment(W/M) 3. Real GDP per capita(W/M)
GEM : Gender Empowerment Measure	Measuring relative empowerment of women and men in political and economic spheres of activity	1.Seats in parliament held by women 2.Female administrators and managers 3.Female professional/technical workers

Source: Human Development Report 1999
W/M: separate statistics of women and men

I found that Japan's HDI is relatively high, the fourth among other Western and North European countries which were well-known for higher HDI for a long time. Korea's HDI rank was 30th, and for Chile, it was 34th. The three HDIs were above the medium HDI.

The GEM rankings showed gaps with HDIs. Before I started this research, I knew Japan was doing poorly in GEM. Women in Japan simply had little power, according to the UN definition. Table 2 below is the list of the indexes in 1999 for the eight Program Fellow countries.

As indicated above, Japan’s GEM is 38th, Korea’s GEM is 78th, and for Chile, it is 54th.

Table 2 Pacific Rim Program 2000
HDI, GDI, and GEM Ranking

	<u>HDI</u>	<u>GDI</u>	<u>GEM</u>
Japan	4	8	38
Korea	30	30	78
Chile	34	33	54
<Medium HDI>			
Mexico	50	48	33
Thailand	67	58	64
Brazil	79	67	70
Peru	80	71	63
China	98	79	40

Source: Human Development Report 1999 by UNDP

All three countries with relatively higher HDI rankings actually had lower GEM rankings.

Then, the other five countries, Mexico, Thailand, Brazil, Peru, and China, have their GEM rankings somewhat or apparently better than their HDI rankings. This suggests that even though some countries are doing well in HDI, this doesn’t mean their GEMs are high as well. Likewise, instead of picking up either Korea or Chile for comparison, I decided to look at the three “poor GEM” countries, Japan, Korea, and Chile. GEM is, and will be, one of the major resources that make invisible women (not oppressed but out of economic survey or statistics) become visible.

2. Comparison

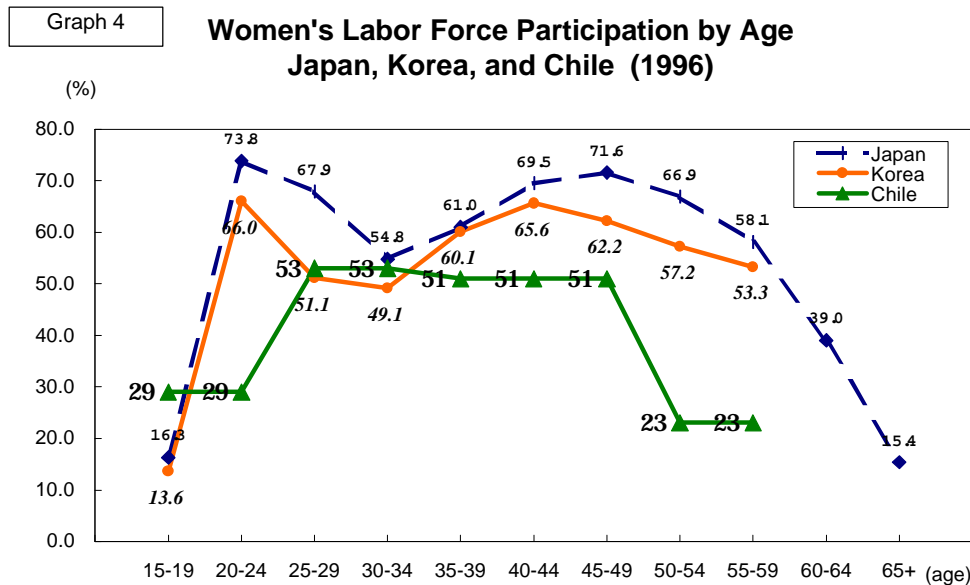
This section explains the women’s economic participation pattern, the Indicators, and public policies of the three countries, Japan, Korea, and Chile.

1) Women’s Economic Participation

Japan and Korea had the similar trend on women’s economic participation while Chile’s was different. As for overall participation ratio, Japan was 50.4% (Ministry of Labor (Rodosh) 1999), Korea was 43.9% (ILO Year Book of Statistics 1996), and Chile was 34.5% (National Employment Survey, Chile 1996). In average ratio, Japan and Korea had relatively higher economic participation ratio but Chile’s rate was low. There are reasons for this difference.

Graph 4 describes the economic participation statistics for the three countries in 1996. Because the statistics available for Chile were categorized with broader age range, the line is somewhat flatter. This indicates that Japan and Korea have the same trends in

women’s economic participation, as I explained, which is referred to as an “M-shape.” But it should also be noted that the lines do not indicate working status, either full time, part time, or contract, dispatch, or entrepreneurs.



Source: White Paper on Women's Employment 1999 Ministry of Labor, Japan, SEGÚN TRAMOS DE EDAD, ZONAS URBANAS

Korea

A survey to see the reasons for desiring part-time employment was done in Korea. 30.1% of the economically nonactive population said it was because of children’s education, 29.7% because of domestic chores, and 16.8% because of attending school. In the same survey, 91.4% of married women desired part-time employment because of domestic chores, child rearing, and children’s education.

The job involvement rate increases after 15 years of age, reaching the peak at 20 years of age, and decreases there after. The job involvement rate reaches the lowest point around 28 years of age, increases gradually afterwards over 50%.

The survey’s results summarized (Kim, 1998) the following five points. The first is that most working women exit the labor market upon marriage, and relatively few women exit at the time of the first or the last childbirth. The next is that the period of women’s active return to the labor market is between the last childbirth and the last child’s elementary school entrance and graduation. The third point is that most of the regular employees among women paid workers exited the labor market with marriage, and the rest of the regular employees who continued to be employed even after marriage mostly exited the labor market with the first or the last childbirth. Such regular female employees return before and after the last child’s elementary school entrance, but the

rate is meager. The temporary workers are relatively less influenced by the changes in life stages such as marriage. The fourth summary was that the number of women increases dramatically who newly enter or return to the labor market as unpaid family workers after marriage. And the fifth point was that the proportion of women who are self-employed or employers tends to continuously increase with age rather than being influenced by women's life events in Korea.

Chile

The massive and growing influx of women into the labor market in Chile is occurring under precarious conditions. Women now represent 35% of the work force (1998), chiefly in the service sector, and their participation in the finance and trade sector is increasing. The structure of employment in Chile shows a trend toward increased participation in the informal sector. The participation of women in this sector has consequences for their families. They often begin such work with the help of their children, who work as assistants. One consequence of this practice is that such children abandon school (Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, 1998).

Despite the considerable increase in the women's participation rate, it is still low compared to men, and even compared to women in other Latin American countries. The lowest participation rates correspond to women in the lowest income quintile (19%) and to women with the fewest years of formal education (22% for women who have had between 1 and 6 years of study). The participation of women in the fifth income quintile reaches 52%. Of women whose formal education has lasted between 16 and 18 years, it reaches 72.5%, and for more than 19 years, it reaches 85.2% (Todaro 1999, 2).

As Todaro explains above, Chile is unique among the three countries, mainly due to the differences in class and education. This relates to the country's higher unemployment ratio; not many young women work though they are out of school and looking for a job. However, after age 25, the rate increases, to more than 50%. Women in Chile seem to keep working until age 50 and above. Marriage, pregnancy, or child care are not reasons to resign in this country. This is mostly due to the issue of class, rather than social value or beliefs. If you are a working woman in the middle or upper class, you are likely to receive a university degree or higher. Proper education qualifies for proper work. That is why women over the age of 25 have higher economic participation ratios. Women with higher education enter into the job market and the working conditions are such that they can afford to hire paid domestic services, which is not usually the case in Japan with very expensive external services. On the other hand, if you are in the lower class or near the poverty line, without much education, you stay home. That may minimize the household expenses. After reaching the age of 50 in Chile, there is a pension to keep the amount of the latest wage.

This reminds working class household financial situation in Japan. If day care services or a baby sitter's costs exceeds the income of a wife who is a part-time or full-time employee, it is she who decides to stop working and stay home to take care of the entire housework and child care to minimize the household expenses. Though no statistical research was performed in this paper, the monetary comparison of household income

and cost for the external services may determine the women's major decision making in their career paths.

Likewise, Chile and Korea/Japan have two different lines in their employment life cycle.

2) GDI and GEM Comparison

(1) GDI

Table 3 summarizes one of the gender-related indicators; GDI. As shown in Table 2 (p.15) neither Korea nor Chile have differences between their HDIs and GDIs. However Japan has a lower rank in GDI even though the referred indicators are the same. Though I did not go further in this paper, the main reason for the decline should be caused by the gap in its real GDP per capita, because Japanese female life expectancy is the largest in the world and literacy rate of both sexes are almost 100%. So neither can be the reason to reduce the women's development index.

Chilean women's educational attainment does have a variance, but it is not as large as Korea's (3 percentage points versus 10 percentage points respectively). Women's real GDP per capita in Japan is 43% of that of men, compared to 45% of Korea and 30% for Chile, respectively. I would like to repeat that even the real GDP per capita separated by gender has its disparities among the same sex. The index is only the average of the total population of certain categories. Otherwise this result may not be able to relate to higher economic participation by certain category of Chilean women.

GDI Indicators	Japan	Korea	Chile
1. Life Expectancy	82.9 (76.8)	76.0 (68.8)	78.3 (72.3)
2. Adult Literacy (%)	99.0 (99.0)	95.5 (98.9)	94.9 (95.4)
3. Women Gross Enrollment (%)	83 (86)	84 (94)	76 (78)
4. Real GDP per capita	14,625 (33,893)	8,388 (18,708)	5,853 (19,759)
GDI Ranking	8	30	33

Source : Human Development Report 1999 by UNDP
Bracketed numbers are statistics for male population.

(2) GEM

Among the three indexes I referred to, GEM is the indicator currently available to see women's decision-making power, both in public policy and the business world. Unless we have certain spaces to keep women in, like quota systems that exist in some countries, it is difficult for women to get a space at a decision making table. Women's empowerment is important to modify the traditional way of thinking (=patriarchy) affecting every stage of social life.

As for GEM indicator, percentages of administrators and managers, Japan does have

female managers, though only around 10 percent. Korea does not have many for either parliamentarians or female managers. In Chile, there are more women professionals than men. However, it should be noted that the statistics suggests that as long as women are qualified for the job, they get it and they work, but it does not usually show the higher status of professional women. (Table 4)

GDI Indicators	Japan	Korea	Chile
1. % Seats in Parliament (Feb 99)	8.9	3.7	9.0
2. % Administrators/Managers	9.3	4.2	18.5
3. % Professionals/Tech Workers	44.1	45.0	51.6
GEM Ranking	38	78	54

Source : Human Development Report 1999 by UNDP

	Japan	Korea	Chile
% Gap Women/Men	63%	61%	70%

Source: White Paper on Women and Employment 1998, Ministry of Labor, Japan
And Women's Rights in Chile – A Shadow Report

Todaro examines the income for women in Chile in managerial and administrative positions and concludes that it is way below the average in comparison to men in the same occupational group. Though the wage gap between women and men in Chile is 70% overall (Table 5), it varies among occupational groups. Between 1990 and 1995, in all fields except sales and related fields, the wage gap had been minimized. The wage gap for sales and related fields in 1990 was 67.1 and declined to 63.5 in 1995. Managers and Directors was 47.2 in 1990 and improved up to 60.3 in 1995. The least gap is in office employees group where women's wage was 74.9% in 1995 (National Employment Survey in Women Executive in Chile (Todaro, 1999)).

This is explained by the fact that women generally work in managerial positions of lower rank and reach those positions in smaller firms belonging to sectors exhibiting lower returns. Professionals and technicians are the occupational group with the worst salary gap mainly because women tend to be concentrated in careers not highly valued in income terms, especially professors and teachers (Todaro, 4).

3) Public Policy on Working Women

I looked at public policy in the three countries, including the institutions supporting working women. (Table 6) All three countries have the designated functions inside the government, which are responsible for the advancement of the status of women. All three countries have labor-related laws and regulations for the women's employment, though I did not go further the validity of these laws in each country. They all have maternity leave. Japan and Chile have childcare leave. In Japan, they have recently introduced family care leave for both female and male employees to take care of their aging parents, parents-in-laws, and/or very sick family members.

Table 6 : Comparisons on Public Policy for Women			
Function/ Policy	Japan	Korea	Chile
Institution	PM's Office	President's Office	SERNAM
Laws and Regulations	EEOL (86) Revise (99)	EEL(87) Revise (89,95)	Labor Code 97
Maternity Leave	Pre – 6 wks Post – 8 wks No overtime	60 days paid no overtime Night Labor allowed No subsidy	Pre – 6wks Post – 12 wks
Child Care Leave	1 year for W&M unpaid	1 year parental. Leave, unpaid?	3 months sick leave unpaid
Family Care Leave	3 months for W&M, unpaid	NA	NA

In reality, it is still embarrassing especially for male employees who are entitled and applicable to take child or family care leave, to claim for it. Thus, law was changed, now the changes in the office environment are the issues to solve.

Korea

Korea's Equal Employment Law was first enacted in 1987, and went through revisions. The most serious weakness of the present law is the lack of provisions to impose sanctions against and prevent indirect discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. Though women's organizations and unions pressed for this, it was not included. Some points included were the prohibition of qualification criteria in personnel recruitment (appearances, height, weight, and other physical characteristics) irrelevant to job performance, the inclusion of men workers to be eligible for parental leave, and the prohibition of discrimination in welfare opportunities, such as housing grants. Still no punishments of violations were incorporated in 1995 revision (Korea Shadow Report 1998, 11).

The government's labor policy for women is focused on labor market flexibility and based on the division of the role of men (to work socially) and women (to take care of domestic labor and childrearing). Thus, Korean women workers are more and more becoming part-time and casual workers, thus remaining as marginalized labor force (Ibid. 7).

Chile

Women workers are protected by legislation and the Labor Code on the following issues; Principle of equality: the Labor Code states that no person may be discriminated against on the basis of race, creed, sex or other reasons. The Constitution was recently reformed to change the word "men" for "persons" and to assure that men and women are equal before the law. Protection of maternity: women may not be fired from their

employment until a year after they have given birth. And pregnant women may not perform heavy tasks nor work night shifts and may ask to be changed to different job position if there is any hazard to their health. Child care and protection: employers are obliged to give an hour a day to the female worker for child feeding until the child is a year old. They have to provide child care facilities in the premises (or subsidize the cost of private service) until the child is 2 years old. One of the parents is entitled to take leave in the case of serious illness affecting any child under 12 months old. However, these rights are not subject to negotiation between workers and employers. The Superintendent of Work regularly checks that these regulations are maintained.

Another problematic issue is related to childcare. As it was mentioned, employers are only obliged to cover childcare until children are 2 years old, while enrollment in the school system begins at 5. This leaves a 3 year period without coverage, leaving female workers on their own to find solutions (Rios and Gonzales, 1999).

A discriminatory situation can arise even in newspaper employment opportunities' announcements. In Chile, there is no legislation that prevents employers from specifying sex, age, or family situation required for the job (Todaro, 6).

Japan's Public Policy toward Gender Equality 2000

Table 7 shows the planned action themes in public policy in Japan. These programs begin in April 2000. For example, Gender Socialization from Age Zero clearly emphasizes the gender discrimination in society. And the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Angel Plan is established for the purpose of increasing birth rates. Japan's average birth rate for a woman is now 1.38. Japan has great longevity. Therefore with less children, we will be surrounded by senior citizens very soon.

Table 7 : Japan's Public Policy toward Gender Equality 2000	
Action Plan, Promotion, DV Case Studies	Prime Minister's Office
Equality, Balance, Diversity	Ministry of Labor
Governmental Subsidy based on gender policy	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Gender Socialization from Age Zero	Ministry of Education
New Angel Plan(More Daycare centers)	Ministry of Health and Welfare

There are several factors, however, which might bring about important changes. Among them, the passage in 1991 of the Child Care Leave Law is noteworthy. The law requires firms to allow workers with children less than a year old to take an unpaid child care leave of up to one year. Workers with preschool children may demand reduced work hours in place of a leave. Since 1976 female teachers, nurses, and childcare workers in public institutions have been given child care leave. The new law covers workers, both male and female, in the private sector. This is an important step forward in a society in which child rearing has been viewed as a woman's primary occupation. The weakness of the law is that the leave is unpaid. Consequently, the wife is the one likely to take the leave in most households because the husband's income – and, therefore, opportunity

cost – is greater than the wife's. Also, current corporate culture discourages men from using the system. The introduction of a paid-leave system will be necessary, as will the diffusion of a new attitude that fathers should take on an equal share in the care of children. In fact, some men, particularly among the younger generation, are now demanding a new corporate culture, shorter work hours, and more time for family life (Fujimura-Fanselow).

Japan's Equal Employment Opportunity policy is now in the implementation stage. Many of the above mentioned ministries have policies to support working women and men to have well-balanced lives.

4) Other issues relating to Working Women: Sexual Harassment Guidelines

Based on the revised EEOL put into effect in 1999, companies in Japan are required to set up the sexual harassment guideline and function to investigate if any harassment occurs.

The official guideline is regulated only last year and the first winning court case was in 1992 in Japan (Muta 1999). This received a lot of media attention and finally the government decided to have it included in the revised law. Some Japanese corporations were accused of sexual harassment in the United States. This also affected the revise, not to mention women's movement for enactment.

On the other hand, in Chile, the attitude toward sexual harassment is not even problematized in the government and there's no regulation discussed as of yet in the national assembly.

Sexual harassment is seen as a problem that affects only women in low-level jobs who are harassed by their bosses. However, a study of 1200 women in Santiago revealed that 23% of the women surveyed who occupied managerial positions had been sexually harassed. This figure is higher than an average of 20%. In such cases sexual harassment serves as a mechanism for excluding women who compete in sectors that are considered male. "Sexual harassment has more to do with power than it does with sex; it is a way of putting women 'in their place.'" Through sexual harassment men demean the role of women in the workplace, calling attention to their sexuality (Todaro, Ibid.).

Korea has a government guideline though it is not very effective. To prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, the Korean government only recommends the development of education guidelines and its utilization in the industry. These measures are far from effective in preventing various forms of sexual harassment that are taking place in the workplace. More serious steps must be taken to secure women's right to work in a safe environment.

3. Conclusion

Japan and Korea have a close trend that women are out of the job market during certain

periods of life especially while taking care of children and education. I did not go into detail about the working status; part-time work is often the case for re-entering working mothers. As of May 1999 in Korea, only 30.8% of women workers are regular workers while 61.4% of men are regular workers (Korean Women Workers Associations United 1999).

Women's participation in economic activities shows many changes in the major life stages such as marriage, first childbirth, last childbirth, and schooling. The trends in women's job involvement by life stages show that most working women exit the labor market with marriage and return to the labor market after the last childbirth. Women's return to work becomes the most frequent before and after the last child's elementary school entrance and continues up to graduation from elementary school (Kim, Ibid.).

I would like to repeat that women's human resources are getting more and more marginalized. It is easier for employers to fire part-time employees than full-time employees. Companies can control the quantity of the humanpower they need with lower pay and lower fringe benefits, if any. Therefore, if working women want to stay somehow in the labor market, they are recommended to simply not quit, unless you have something special about yourself to sell such as skills, knowledge, or license.

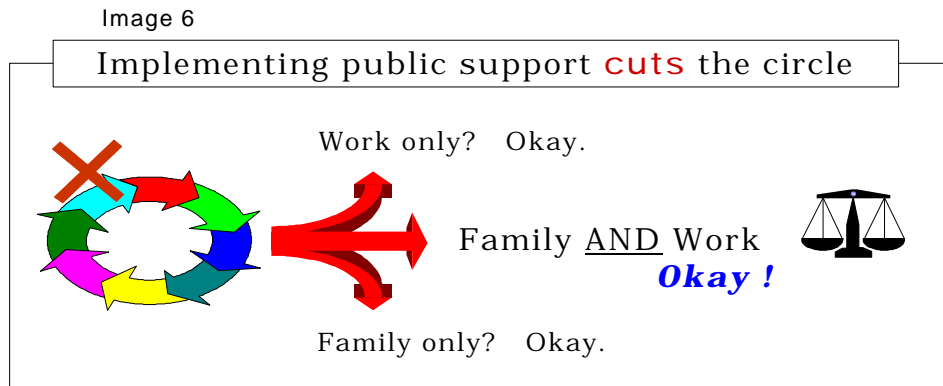
III. CONCLUSION

Women's work environment can be improved. Public policy supporting working women in Japan now proceeds to the "phase 2," taking actions after the EEOL's revision in 1999. Since its original enforcement in 1986, Japan went through the economic recess, end of the bubble economy, and now faces less and less children and more and more senior citizens in society. Women's professional resources are needed more than ever before.

Women are, as they have always been, involved in the production of goods, services and national wealth, but now they seek also to have their opinions counted, to influence events, to be involved in setting priorities, in effect to be managers and leaders. Increasingly, women are demanding that their voices be heard in decisions about their own lives and the world's resources. The desire to influence the events and circumstances of one's life is bubbling to the surface for women around the world, and Japan is no exception (Renshaw, 36).

Cutting the Vicious Circle: Implementing public support cuts the circle

I do not deny the choice of those who want to become full-time housewives. Nor do I deny the work-only life. When we consider the professional world, it is more important



to change the social scheme and belief than to be dependent on individual ability, effort, and give-up. Therefore, as Image 6 shows, if we cut the vicious circle, working women may be able to have both: the family and work. This choice should also be respected and supported. Though this may take time, the efforts have begun in both public policy and the private sector in Japan. The traditional social and family values should not be denied, but working women can change the atmosphere and support as we have changed women's history.

During the research on this agenda, I tried to locate the men, the fathers. While mothers are scared of losing jobs, exhausted by working outside and doing housework, the roles and responsibilities of men and fathers in family life have not been revised. Men should also share in child rearing.

The great visibility of women in decision-making positions encourages other women to opt for such positions, and can contribute to changing the social manifestations and images of gender (Todaro, 13), just as the visibility of men in housework may change gender stereotypes. Statistics say that the average number of “minutes” of men’s housework in Japan was less than forty a day.

Therefore an additional conclusion I would like to make here is that women should invite men and fathers to get involved. Changing systems is the most efficient way to change society and will lead to changes in the work place. At home, fathers’ behavior could be dramatically changed, resulting in an increased involvement in child and family care-taking. Of course, the changes in life patterns shows a need for change in work patterns at the same time. This leads to the discussion of men’s liberation from their devotion to the corporate life. I would like to leave this for future research.

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