

**Lund University**  
**Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies**  
**Masters Program in Asian Studies**  
**East and South-East Track**  
**Fall semester, 2006**



**LUND**  
**UNIVERSITY**

**EXPLANATIONS OF DECLINING FERTILITY IN  
JAPAN**

**Author: Yang Yang**

**Supervisor: Stefan Brehm**

## **Abstract**

This thesis provided new explanations of declining fertility in Japan since 1990s. It could be seen as an extension of previous researches in this field, since it took a look at males' changes of lifestyles since economic recession era concerning fertility issue which was ignored by previous researches in this field.

In this research, I combined qualitative and quantitative analysis to picture the whole situation of declining fertility in Japan since economic recession era. And hence I found the embarrassment of young males induced by the weakened life-time employment system became one of main reasons of declining fertility in Japan since 1990s.

### **Key words**

Declining fertility, Economic recession, Life-time employment, Traditional gender divisions.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Part I Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1 Research Background.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Purpose and research question.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3 Methodology and Analytical Framework.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Part II Persistence of the traditional family context.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.1 Delayed marriages induced by traditional family ideologies.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.2 Official data of fertility in Japan.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Part III Explanations of declining fertility in Japan from women’s perspective.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3.1 The shifting social role of women in Japan.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3.2 Family policy in Japan---addressing the new social role of women.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Part IV Attitudes of young people towards marriage and childbearing---evidence from interviews.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.1 Marriage remains the first choice of situation to have children.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.1.1 the will of having children.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.1.2 the will to marry regards to childbearing.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.2 Desirable marriage.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.2.1 Desirable age of marriage.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.2.2 Determinants of delayed marriage.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.3 Determinants of childbearing.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Part V Explanations of declining fertility during 1990s from men’s perspective.....</b>	<b>29</b>

<b>5.1 Traditional gender divisions of Japan.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5.2 The collapse of patriarchal economy depended on traditional gender divisions.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>5.3 Embarrassment induced by weakened life-time employment emerged....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>5.3.1 Embarrassment compare to father generation.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>5.3.2 Embarrassment compared to improved social status of young women.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>5.3.3 New social behaviors prevail among young generation.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Part VI Conclusion.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>42</b>

# **Part I. Introduction**

## **1.1 Research background**

Since 1970s, the fertility of Japan began to fall down below the replacement level and has been keeping declining since then. As it is shown in the research of Atoh's, by the middle of the 1990s, the statistics of fertility in Japan "came to be closer to among the lowest levels in the world" (Makoto Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p1). It has dropped to 1.29 children pre women, which is called by academics as "lowest-low" record of fertility in Japan (Chapple 2004). However, it is estimated that "the level needed for maintenance of the population is 2.1" (MHLW2 2005; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p7). As some researchers claimed, "Japan's fertility decline was both the earliest to occur in the postwar period and the greatest in magnitude, while its longevity is at the highest level in the contemporary world" (Mason and Ogawa 2001; Ogawa and Retherford 1997).

In the mean time, it is noticeable that the mean ages of first marriage have been increasing dramatically. Furthermore, Japan's synthetic celibacy rate grew up to 19.3 percent in 2000, which increased nearly five-fold during post-war decades. As Retherford argued, "this massive shift in the synthetic celibacy rate suggests that Japan is no longer a universal marriage society" (Retherford et al. 2001; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p24). Therefore, quite many researchers attributed the main reason of declining fertility in Japan to fewer marriages to promote births (Dales 2005).

The declining fertility in Japan has been accelerating its process of population ageing. To some extent, the combination of declining fertility and rapid population ageing will bring Japan significant social problems in the years to come.

As it is well known, Japanese social welfares are run by contribution of present labour force, which is called pay-as-you-go system. According to statistics, there used

to be over twelve working people for each aged person while 5.7 left in 1990, and is expected only 2.4 in 2025 (Goodman2002: p14). Noticeably, the situation in Japan that not enough new labour force born and increasing retired old people, will induce its social welfare untenable someday. As Orenstein pointed out, “the shrinking labour force will make pension taxes and health care costs untenable, not to mention that there will not be enough workers to provide basic services for the elderly” (Orenstein 2001: p1).

Before long, the macro economy will be shocked. As Chapple (2004) claimed, “with Japan’s labor force expected to decrease by 10% in the next 25 years, the economic outlook is far from bright” (Chapple 2004). It could be seen that more and more wealth of the working people is already used to sustain the whole social welfares well-functioned currently. To count on this temporary solution for running social welfares would undermine the accumulation of capital. Oyama supposed current socialy security system will completely be in bankruptcy in the year of 2050 (Masako Oyama 2001: p5). In other words, the declining fertility is a significant problem of Japanese society, undermining its sustainable economic development in the long run.

Hence, how to prevent fertility declining has become a main topic concerning social sustainable development in Japan.

## **1.2 Purpose and research question**

The decade of 1990s seems an important and special period for Japan. Suffering from economic recession, the fertility of Japan experienced the lowest-low record of whole history. Although Japanese government has adopted a serious of policies to promote fertility, it seemed not as effective as it is supposed to. Why did those measures to prevent fertility declining fail? Before to answer this question, however, we should find out the answer to the question why the fertility kept declining even more severely during 1990s.

It could be seen that a vast body of researchers tried to explain low fertility in Japan from the perspectives of changes happened on females since 1980s, such as their changing lifestyles. Accordingly, the measures taken by Japanese government during 1990s did correspond to those explanations from women's perspective. Ironically, it was proved not of a big help to stop the process of declining fertility in Japan.

In fact, Japanese young males have also experienced changes regards to ideologies accompany with the development of society. Because of the very Japanese traditional gender concepts, the collapse of life-time employment system during economic recession era brought Japanese young males significant brain-waves. Although quite a few researchers have paid attention on these changes to examine the new features of young generation, not many of them associated these changes with the declining fertility of Japan since 1990s.

It is undeniable that childbearing is the issue associated with both women and men. By this sense, paying attention to changes on males which induced their changed ideologies of childbearing seems necessary to find out the effective solutions to prevent fertility declining in future. Thus, I try to make an extension to previous researches on the reasons of declining fertility in cotemporary Japan to see what happened since 1990s on Japanese young males regards to fertility issue.

### **1.3 Methodology and Analytical Framework**

Generally speaking, there are two ways of doing a research: one is top-down and the other is down-up. The former is started with analysis on macro level, while the latter begins on micro level. Since it is hard for me to get first-hand comments of government officials' and researchers' concerning the general picture of fertility in Japan, I prefer to start my research with the interviews of grass-rooted young people to see what happened on their life. Other than that, I also reviewed previous literatures to get associated information I need to compensate the weak of my thesis on macro level, since my interviews are not comprehensive to explain the whole situation of

fertility of Japan.

Since my research is about to uncover the true reasons of declining fertility hidden behind the fact of delayed marriages in Japan, I combined qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. On the one hand, I analyzed standpoints of other researchers and also opinions from my own interviewees. This method makes me understand better what exactly is on people's mind concerning the very issue I am interested. On the other hand, I quote some official data to test my findings from quantitative perspective.

This thesis is composed by four parts: Persistence of the traditional family context, Explanations of declining fertility in Japan from women's perspective, Attitudes of young people towards marriage and childbearing---evidence from interviews, and Explanations of declining fertility during 1990s from men's perspective.

## **Part II. Persistence of the traditional family context**

Since quite many researches have shown that the Japanese traditional family norm has endowed people's very unique Japanese behaviors, the pattern of fertility is also associated with the traditional ideologies. In this part, I will picture how the traditions work on declining fertility of Japan based on previous researches and official data.

### **2.1 Delayed marriages induced by traditional family ideologies**

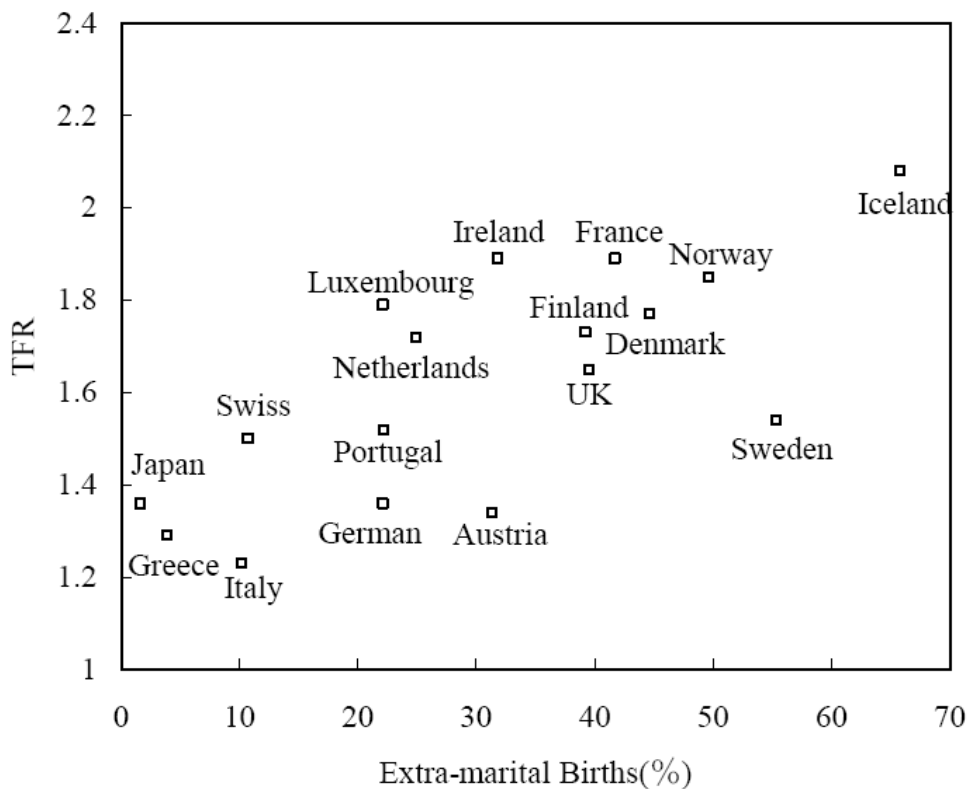
As it is known, fertility decline since 1970s not only happened in Japan, but also spread to other developed countries, especially European countries. According to some researchers' standpoints, the trend of fertility decline has been attributed to the postponement of childbearing (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi p3: Lesthaeghe et al, 2000). For example, Atoh found out that "the mean age at first birth increased by 2.3 years in



Japan between 1975 and 2000” (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p3).

In the research of fertility decline among developed countries, however, researchers claimed that later childbearing are somewhat offset by increasing proportion of cohabiting couples and that of extra-marital birth (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p3). In other words, more and more young couples in developed countries prefer premarital cohabitation until their first childbearings. In addition, there are also quite a few children born in the non-marital families. As Atoh’s research showed in the figure 5, “the proportion of extra-marital births and fertility levels are strongly and positively correlated among developed countries” (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p4).

**Figure 5. The Relationship between the Proportion of Extra-marital Births and the Total Fertility Rate(2000)**



Source: Council of Europe, Recent Demographic Developments in Europe, 2001.

However, it can be seen from figure 5 that extra-marital births are very low in Japan compared to other European developed countries. As some researchers (Miho

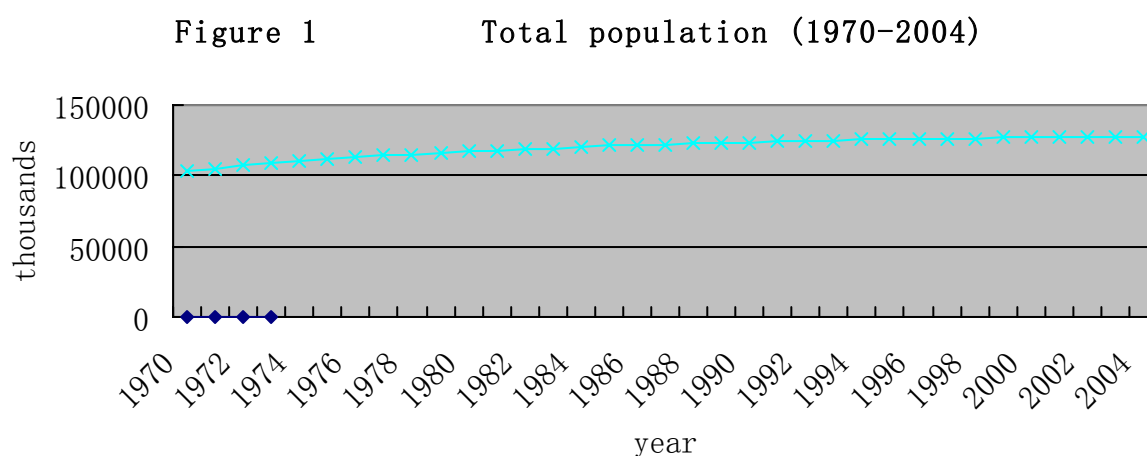
Iwasawa, James M. Raymo and Larry Bumpass 2005) pointed out, “one of the most striking differences between Japan and most other low-fertility, late-marriage societies is the fact that cohabiting unions have not emerged to offset the trend toward later and less marriage” (Miho Iwasawa, James M. Raymo, Larry Bumpass 2005: p3). To a large extent, the prevalence of premarital cohabitation in Japan is somehow restricted by its traditional reserved family norm. On the one hand, it is illegal to have childbearing without marriage in Japan. On the other hand, as Atoh (2001) claimed, couples are supposed to obey the traditional family gender roles the so-called breadwinner-homemaker model even during the cohabitating relationship. Atoh (2001) pointed out that the one of main reasons why premarital cohabitation is popular nowadays is due to its nature of equal partnership. By this sense, however, Japanese young couples cannot enjoy any advantage which their European counterparts get from cohabiting relationship. The statistics of National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2004 show that the proportion of unmarried women who have ever cohabited is quite low, ranging from 3% in 1987 to about 7% in 2002 (Miho Iwasawa, James M. Raymo, Larry Bumpass 2005: p3-4). Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect declining fertility in Japan would be moderated by slightly increasing extra-marital births in foreseeable future. Similarly, non-marital childbearing also remains extremely rare in Japan (Miho Iwasawa, James M. Raymo, Larry Bumpass 2005: p3).

Several studies (Atoh 1995; Tsuya and Mason 1995; Miho Iwasawa, James M. Raymo, Larry Bumpass 2005; Raymo J 2000) have shown that the reason for later childbearing in Japan since the mid-1970s is directly associated with postponement of marriage or less marriages. What is more, the interval between marriage and first birth is also increasing in recent years, thereby “has been contributing to the increase in the next birth interval” (Marcus Rebeck and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p28).

## **2.2 Official data of fertility in Japan**

Compared to its economic miracles, the total population in Japan, as it is shown in the

figure 1, just slightly increased from 1970 to 2004. Noticeably, the annual number of increase population (table 1) kept declining since the middle of 1970s, from 8,220 thousands in 1975 to 1,356 thousands in 2000. Accordingly, the other detail shown in the table indicates that the average annual rate of population growth peaked at 1.54% in 1975, which was followed by a steady declining to 0.21% in 2000.



source: statistics bureau

**Table 1      Population Growth (1970-2000)**

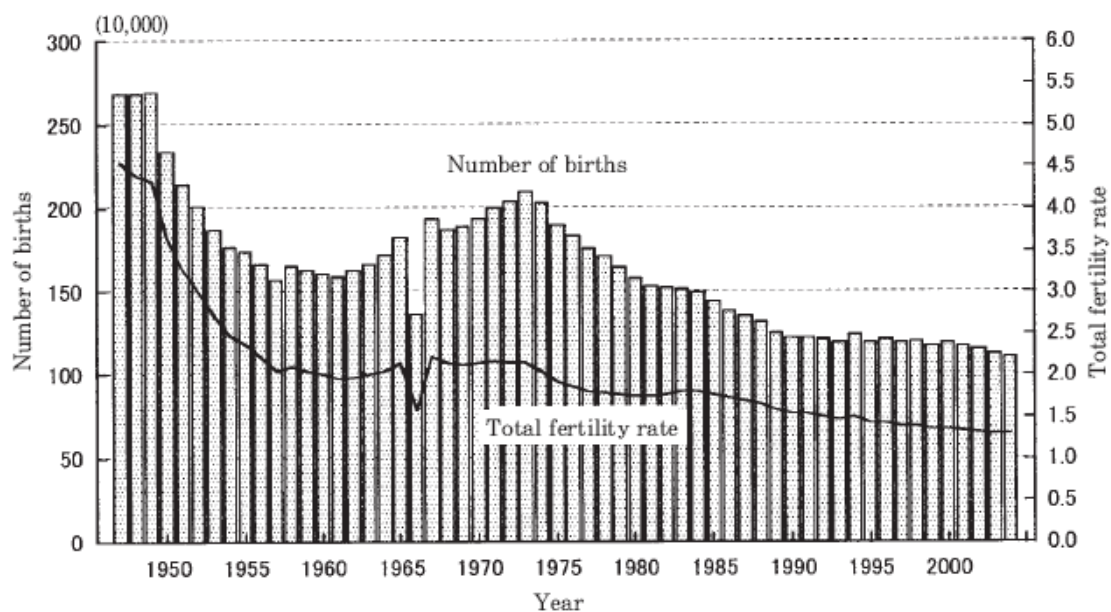
year	Population growth	
	Number (thousands)	Average annual rate of growth (%)
1970	5,445	1.08
1975	8,220	1.54
1980	5,121	0.90

1985	3,989	0.67
1990	2,562	0.42
1995	1,959	0.31
2000	1,356	0.21

Source: statistics bureau

To a large extent, the declining average annual population growth rate is attributed to the declining fertility rate, as it is shown in Figure 3. The annual total fertility rate fell down steadily since 1970s.

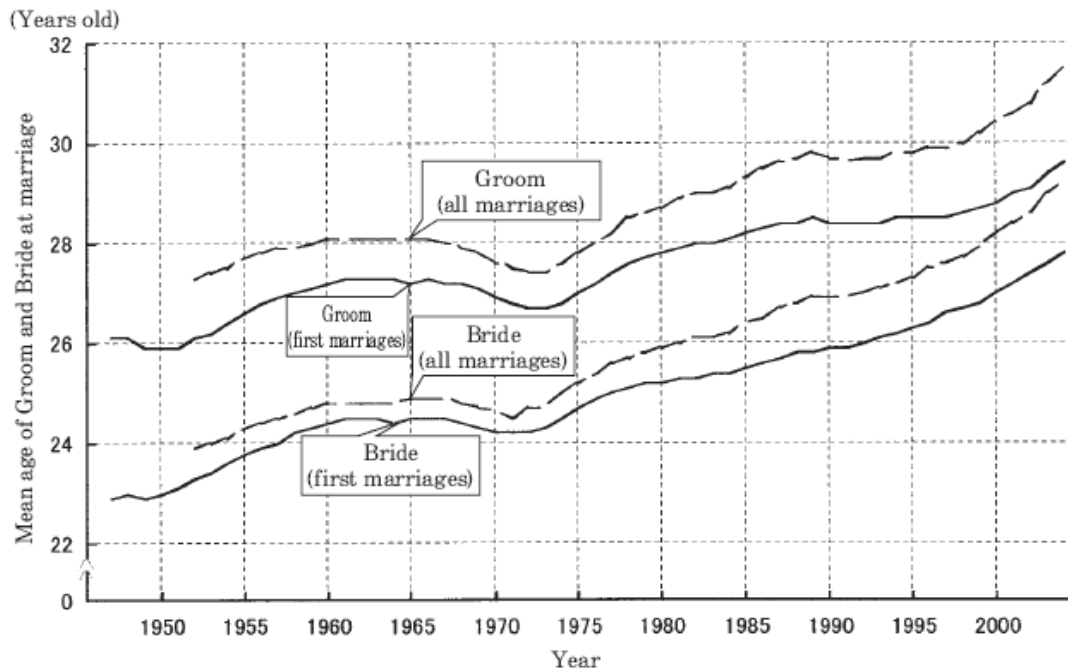
**Figure 3 Annual number of births and total fertility rates (1947-2004)**



Source: national institute of population and social security research

Some previous researches showed that the declining fertility of Japan is caused by delaying marriages and childbearing which are related to the changes on the lifestyles of females'. As Jolivet pointed out, there is a tendency that women prefer to marry at a later age (and therefore to have children at a later age – or not at all) or not to marry at all (Jolivet 1997; Julian Chapple 2004). This view is somewhat proved in the figure 4 and figure 5. It could be seen in the figure 4 that the mean ages of both all marriages and first marriages of females rose steadily since 1970s.

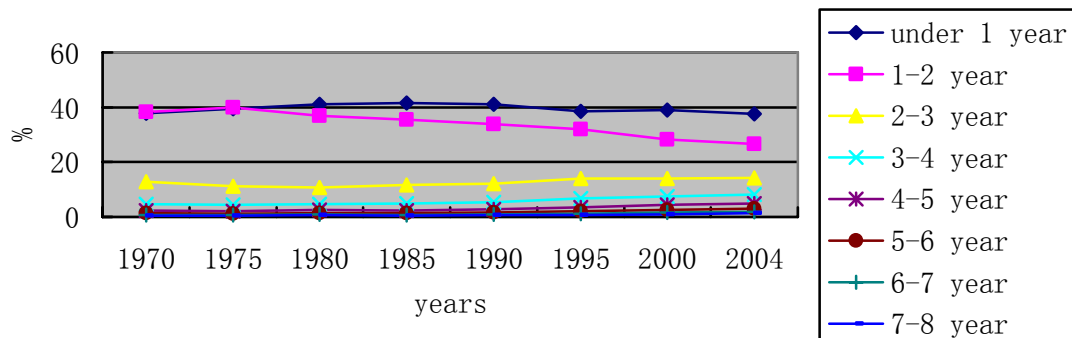
**Figure 4 Mean age of grooms and brides at marriage (all marriages and first marriages): 1947-2004**



source: statistics and information department, ministry of health, labour and welfare, vital statistics of Japan

Figure 5 shows the changes of interval between marriage and first birth from 1970 to 2004. According to the graph, although most couples have first childbearing within one year after their marriages, there has been a trend emerged that more and more couples have inclined to delay their first childbearing until at least 3 years after marriage since 1985. In other words, the trend of childbearing delay does exist nowadays in Japan.

Figure 5 interval between marriage and first birth (1970-2004)



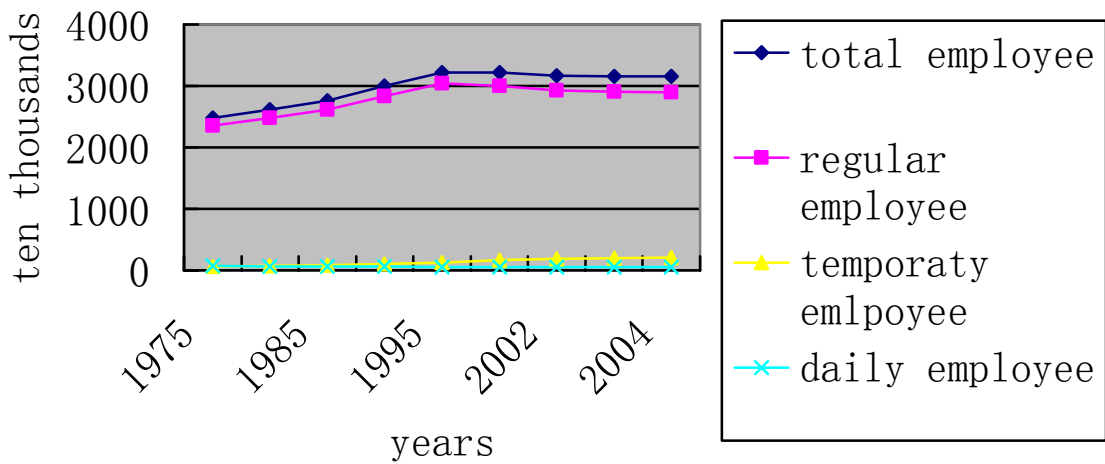
source: statistics and information department.

Since the age of childbearing also has something to do with fathers, the reason why both ages of marriage and childbearing have been delayed as analyzed above could be somewhat explained from male perspective.

Since the burst of bubble economy in the beginning of 1990s, the whole Japanese

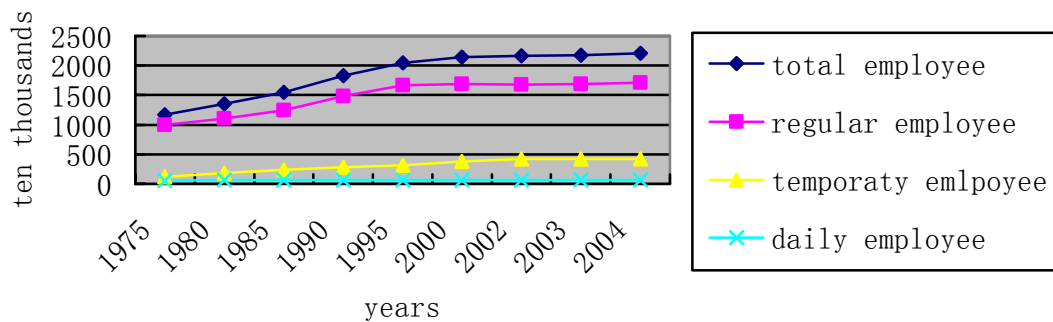
society is experiencing great changes. The change of Japanese young people is this case. As it is shown in figure 6, the trend of total number of male employees rose sharply between 1975 and 2000, which was followed by a slight decline since then. The number of male regular employees follows the same trend. By contrast, the uniform trends of every data of female counterparts' are all upward between 1975 and 2004, as it is shown in figure 7.

figure 6 employed males by employment status (1975-2004)



source: statistical survey department, statistics bureau, ministry of internal affairs and communications.

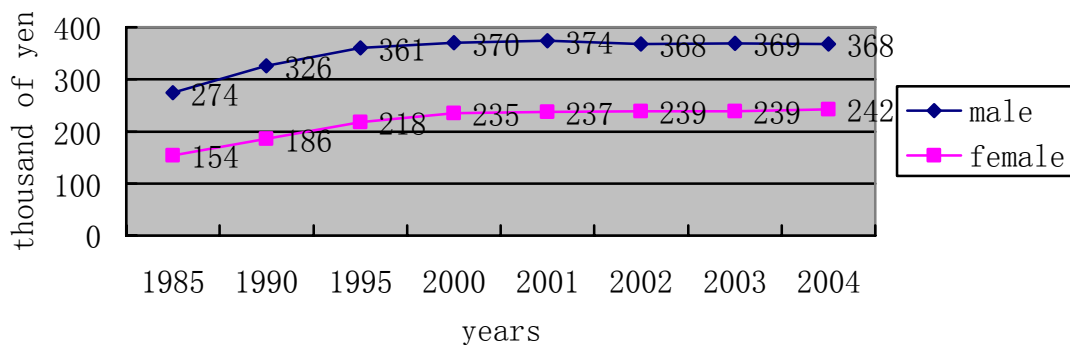
figure 7 employed females by employment status (1975-2004)



source: statistical survey department, statistics bureau, ministry of internal affairs and communications.

In addition, figure 8 monthly contract earnings of regular employees' exhibits the similar situation as mentioned above by sex comparison. The monthly earnings of male regular employees' rose significantly between 1985 and 2001; however, it began to fall down since then. Nonetheless, the data of female's kept increasing since 1985.

Figure 8 monthly contract earnings of regular employees by sex (1985-2004)



source: statistics and information department, minister's secretariat, ministry of health, labour and welfare.

In a word, it can be seen that males have suffered more in working place in which men had exclusive superior positions before economic recession, whereas, more and more females have been positively involved in. Therefore, women have more and more independent economic power not only in the working place but also in their families. It could be supposed that this inconsistency from the traditional family ideology might affect males' considering about marriage and childbearing. In other words, if the reason of the declining fertility could be mainly attributed to the fact that more and more female preferred works rather than establishing families before economic recession, then the hesitation to step into marriage and have children induced by deteriorate economic positions of males' worsen the situation of declining



fertility during the economic recession era.

As it is shown in this part, both women and men are likely to delay their marriages, and hence having children. However, this trend seems more obvious on young males than females. As it is shown in the figure 4, grooms' significant increases of marriage delaying emerged in Japan. Similarly, Rebick and Takemaka pointed out that the proportion of never marrying men was only 2.1 percent in 1975, but increased to 12.6 percent in 2000. By contrast, the proportion of women grew slightly from 4.3 to 5.8 percent during the corresponding period (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p26).

### **Part III. Explanations of declining fertility in Japan from women's perspective**

As I mentioned in the last chapter, the traditional family ideologies have been affecting Japanese people's behaviors of marriage and childbearing. However, the new emerged ideologies of lifestyles among young generation have crashed on their traditional ideologies. And it is the very point that previous researches explained the reason of declining fertility in Japan. Hence, in this chapter, I am going to examine how the contradictions between the changes on young females in the new era and old traditions work on the pattern of fertility in Japan.

#### **3.1 The shifting social role of women in Japan**

Evidently, quite many researchers pointed out those changes happened on Japanese young women have been directly contributing to the large scale of postponement of marriages and childbearing. Accompany with declining fertility since 1970s, it could be easily found that the proportion of never married women in reproductive ages has been rising sharply in Japan. As Atoh (2001) claimed, "the younger the birth cohort,

the longer the period of singlehood” (Makoto Atoh 2001: p2).

Why do these changes happen in Japan? Researchers, like Rebick, Takemaka, Retherford, Raymo J and Atoh, pointed out that the contradictions between traditional gender roles and women’s improved involvement in working place today is the direct reason for young women’s delayed timing of marriages, hence delayed timing of first-childbearing, or else not ever marry. According to official statistics in 1996, “between 1975 and 1995, the labor force participation rates for women aged between 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 rose from 66% to 74% and from 43% to 65% respectively” (Makoto Atoh 2001: p4). And Harada (1998) found that “the fertility rate for working women in the late 1990s was 0.60 against 2.96 for those not working” (Goodman 2002: p13).

According to Japanese tradition, women are supposed to be inferior to men in every social realm. Therefore, how to improve the gender equity has been one of the most important social topics today in Japan. Accompany with social development after the II World War, a series of policies which aimed to enhance women’s status in society have been issued, such as the Treaty on the Abolition of Discrimination against Women (1980), the ratification of that treaty (1985), the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (1985), and etc. Combined with improved social consciousness about gender equity, female young generation has enlarged their social participation and also has gained more social resources for personal development. Thereby, traditional gender values and behaviors which used to confine women’s development have been somehow challenged and crashed with the new life choice of young women. Although it became much easier for young women to get jobs nowadays, women who are supposed to be homemakers according to tradition have to face the choice of either continuing their careers or go back to families when they consider marriages. According to statistics, “the labour force participation rate of women age 15-64 has risen from 50 per cent in 1975 to 60 per cent in 2004” (MHLW3 2005; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p11). It is self-evident. As Goodman (2002) point out, a

large number of working women prefer to concentrate on their professional careers rather than getting married at early ages and hence having children early. Compared with Japanese traditional gender norm of which wife is supposed to spend most of their time on house works rather than anything else, females of young generation prefer their career pursuits.

However, it is somehow attributed to the stressed working style of Japan, which does not allow married women to balance the family responsibilities and works well. Even though Japanese government has applied some policies on companies, trying to relieve the conflict between family responsibilities and work for women, it seems not effective to encourage more marriages. If a working woman keeps staying in work after marriage, it would be very difficult to spare enough time to fulfill her supposed family responsibilities. However, choosing quitting jobs temporarily might mean that cannot go back to the old positions in working places forever, because age and gender discrimination in working place, especially to women, is still unavoidable in Japan. As Rebeck claimed, “it remains difficult to enter career-track employment after the age of thirty-five” (Ono and Rebeck 2003). Thereby, once women get jobs in early ages, they have to sacrifice their most of the period of bringing up kids for continuing their works. Otherwise, they would lose the chances to realize career pursuits in the future. From the economic perspective, as G. Becker and H. Leibenstein pointed out, “as women’s employment opportunities were widened, and as their wage level rose, helped by their higher educational attainment, hourly cost for child-rearing (opportunity cost) would also rise and women would prefer employed labor to childcare” (Makoto Atoh 2001: p2). Hence, more and more young working women prefer to put off marriages or the first childbirth. Even if some of them could get married at relatively early ages, they are likely to refuse to marry into the old style of family in which wife takes care of domestic affairs while only husband works outside (Sakai 2003).

What is more, the trend that women do not see marriage as necessary as used to be

has emerged under the situation of contradiction between work and family caring. Career pursuits became more attractive to young women rather than establishing families. In addition, higher educational attainment makes those young women could get stable employment opportunities with high wages, creating better life as singles. Some researches (Ermisch and Ogawa 1994; Ogawa and Retherford 1993; Retherford et al. 2001) demonstrated that there are more and more women who work full-time keeping being singles for longer period, especially in urban areas (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p26-27). It is found that the concept of happiness is somehow re-defined gradually since 1980s by new generation in Japan. As Atoh (1994) claimed, the increased proportion of never married working women in reproductive years has been one of determinant reasons of low fertility in Japan. According to the statistics in the research taken by Ogawa (1996), “the proportion of working women aged 25-34 who are never married are very high in 2000, 78% for women aged 25-29 and 47% for women aged 30-34” (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p6). Although it is partly attributed to a large number of working women would choose quite jobs at the time of marriage, it could be also seen that those who choose to continue their careers are likely to put off marriages or not ever get married. Rebick and Takemaka claimed that “many women now increasingly view marriage, even with a financially secure partner, as an unattractive prospect” (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p8).

Some researchers attributed this situation mentioned above to the traditional gender division of labour has been challenged by improved social status of young women. Some researches have found that women with higher education and hence better jobs living in urban areas are likely to keep single for longer period than those who live in undeveloped areas without these social resources. Enhanced economic ability make working young women have more choices of lifestyle. And improved educational attainments drive them to pursue freedom rather than reserved ethic ideology. It is shown in the 1997 survey taken by the Cabinet Office that “women consider ‘loss of freedom’ as the major opportunity cost associate with marriage” (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p8). With growing opportunities to enjoy private life among

unmarried men and women, therefore marriage is viewed by young generation as “an increasingly unattractive option at young ages” (Yamada 1996; Ogawa, Retherford, and Matsukura 1999; Raymo J 2000: p95). Therefore, the so-called parasite singles have become a popular life choice accompany with the prevalence of self-centered ideology. “Among single women aged 22 and over, excluding students, the proportion living with parents was fairly steady during the 1990s, at 95 per cent in 1990 and 94 per cent in 1998” (Population Problems Research Council of the Mainichi Newspapers 1998; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p27). Although they are grown children and even have their own jobs, they still live with parents. To a large extent, this kind of lifestyle can save their large sum of life expenditures, which is especially very important for those young women with low education and poor economic income. However, some researchers (Yamada 1999 and Miyamoto et al. 1997) would rather attribute the reason to subjective factors. They believe that young generation prefers to enjoy high standard of life. During the economic recession, coresidence with parents might be one of the best ways which could still insure young generation’s luxury life, because parents could serve the free daily life expenditures to their children.

From the above analysis, “the improvements in women’s socioeconomic status are of central importance” seems an explanation to the declining fertility in Japan (Raymo J 2000: p241).

### **3.2 Family policy in Japan---addressing the new social role of women**

Led by the ideology that declining fertility is mainly attributed by changes happened on Japanese females, a series of government prenatal measures have been put into practice since 1990s. As Raymo argued, “this fundamental link between marriage and population age structure reflects the fact that the pace of population aging is determined largely by trends in period fertility which, in turn, are determined primarily by trends in marriage timing” (Raymo J 2000: p4). Hence, those policies issued try to bring marriage timing forward. Some significant policies include

childcare leave law, child welfare law, the angel plan, child allowance, and tax relief.

Since some researchers attributed the declining fertility in Japan to the difficulties in bringing up children by working mothers, Japanese Government has been trying to improve their childcare environment. Therefore, Angle Plan with several revisions in the following years was launched since 1994. As Suzuki (2006) claimed, Angel Plan aimed to improve the working mothers' situation to raise children. The government asked local governments to provide more relatively low-cost childcare facilities and encouraged companies to provide convenient and equal working conditions for working mothers. With the adoption of Angel Plan, national and local governments are supposed to subsidize the establishments of childcare centers in local areas. By 2003, the subsidies from governments have covered 75 per cent of the cost of childcare at those government-licensed childcare centers (see CAO 2003; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p88). Nevertheless, it puts financial burden on local governments. To relieve the difficulties in taking care of old people induced by population ageing, local governments have spent a large sum of budget on the adoption of Gold Plan. Hence, not all of them can support another similar program in budget. As Roberts argued, "less wealthy areas are suffering a 'tremendous financial strain' under the mandates to finance both Gold and Angel Plans" (Glenda S. Roberts 2002 :p58). As a result, Angel Plan encountered an abortion due to inadequate financial support.

Accompany with the implementation of Angel Plan, a large number of childcare services have been founded, including the increase of the capacity of public nursery schools, the expansion of services of nursery schools, such as infant care, extended hours of childcare, temporary or part-time childcare and community childcare support, the introduction of after-school care services for elementary school children, encouraging kindergartens to render part-time childcare services and the establishment of family support centers (MHW, 1998; Makoto Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2006: p7). However, high costs of childcare in these centers make it can not be an

option for most parents without high income.

In addition, parental leave acts were also put into practice during 1990s, which associate with the challenge of traditional gender roles both in working place and family. According to the results of the survey taken by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in 1999, the rate of taking parental leave acts among working mothers is only 56.4 percent, which is due to the negative attitude of employers. On the one hand, as Japanese employees, female working mothers are also supposed to work as hard as other employees. They might need to work until late evening everyday, and are also likely to be transferred to different divisions, which can not insure their convenience of child caring. On the other hand, the gender inequity in working place limits the magnitude of implementation of parental leave by female employees. As I mentioned before, it is stressful for working females to keep working after marriage, because they would likely be replaced by someone else even after their temporary resigns. By this sense, it is reasonable to consider that working mothers are somehow risking demission when they take parental leave, because most of them are not life-time employees. Other than that, some researchers argued that the financial compensate of parent leave is 40 percent of a man's salary, which is "not very attractive to families unless the mother continues to work and is the top earner" (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p88). However, the possibility to balance work and child caring for working mothers did increase somewhat by the implementation of parental leave acts.

However, the situation of taking parental leave acts by fathers is not optimistic. Among countries which adopt parental leave acts, the proportion of taking it by males is only 2.4% in 1999 (MHLW, 2002b; Makoto Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001:p9). Compared with female employees, working fathers have less flexibility of responding to family needs due to very Japanese working style. As salary man, pursuing achievements on career is considered much more worthy than involving in family caring. What is more, companies seemed not to encourage male employees to change those traditional mindsets. According to statistics, "the time spent by husbands for

family matters” in Japan is “less than twenty minutes on average on weekdays” at least for these twenty years (Atoh, 2000a; Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p6). By contrast, some researchers (Atoh and Mayuko Akachi 2001 etc.) pointed out that husbands share more family works in those countries with higher fertility. Therefore, some in-company programs which encouraged fathers to participate in more family works and child caring were introduced, such as Support Project for Fathers to Participate in Home Education launched in 1994. However, these programs seem not effective in increasing the magnitude of participation in household by husbands. It could be seen that the traditional gender norms still affect Japanese people’s behaviors. As a manager of the Japan Institute for Workers’ Evolution claimed, “given less demanding jobs, men might still choose to spend their leisure time away from home and family” (Glenda S. Roberts 2002 :p65).

As a result, the overall situation of declining fertility did not improve. Hence, the governmental efforts during 1990s are considered as failures in raising fertility in Japan.

Noticeably, all of those measures adopted by Japanese government to prevent low fertility aimed to alleviate the tension of the compatibility between mothers’ works and childbearing. Those policies which encouraged fathers’ participation in household were also based on the considering about mothers rather than fathers. By this sense, those policies somehow reinforce the traditional ideology of gender-based labour division in Japan, making “women’s domestic responsibilities more onerous” (Patricia Boling 1998:p178).

In this chapter, it could be seen that changes happened on females did induce the declining fertility in Japan. However, it is noticeable that the corresponding ideology changes of males have been also somehow affecting the tendency of fertility. As Roberts found, 48 percent of women aged 25-29 were unmarried, as were 66.9% of



their male counterparts by 1995 (Koseisho 1998:24; Glenda S. Roberts2002: p55). Facing the significant social changes during economic recession era, paying more attention on the changes of young males which could work on the pattern of fertility since 1990s seems more necessary than before.

## **Part IV. Attitudes of young people towards marriage and childbearing---evidence from interviews**

To understand how young people's attitudes towards marriage and childbearing changed since 1990s, I carried out my interviews in Tokyo.

Since it is hard to do a big survey by myself, I interviewed 12 young people (nine unmarried males, one married male and two unmarried females) who age 24 to 26. They are all full-time working people with life-time or short-term contract employments in Tokyo. However, they have different educational background and have different hometowns.

My interviews were carried out by asking interviewees to answer some of my prepared questions in advance, combined with open talking in the end. I preferred to carry out interviews in the evenings after they got off work. And to accommodate to their different working time, I had to date them one by one. Since all of my interviewees are introduced by one of my Japanese friends Hashimoto who can speak English, he became the interpreter during every interview of mine.

### **4.1 marriage remains the first choice of situation to have children- investigating the attitudes among the young towards the relationship between childbearing and marriage**

#### **4.1.1 the will of having children**

Despite the fertility declining in Japan is continuing, when I asked my interviewees whether they want kids someday, all of them gave an affirmative answer that they want to have kids someday.

However, none of them could answer the exact ages they want kids. In other words, they still have no plan when to have kids yet though all of them are at reproductive ages. Therefore, it could be seen somehow that my interviewees who are working full-time in Tokyo already delayed their childbearing. However, there is no sign to show that young people who I interviewed want to give up having children forever.

In addition, when I asked the ideal number of children they want, everyone claimed two is their ideal number of kids. This number is approximate to the results of previous national surveys.

#### **4.1.2 the will to marry regards to childbearing**

Because I am going to improve the standpoint of previous researches that low fertility in Japan has been induced by delayed marriage rather than decreased number of childbearing, so I asked the question “do you think it is necessary to have children within marriage?” Again, my interviewees got the same answer “Yes”. Although all of them admit that they had sexual intercourse, they still think marriage is the best way to have kids. By this sense, all of my interviewees claimed that they would get married eventually. This statement is in line with the result from the research carried out by Inoue and Ebara that “majority of Japanese do eventually get married, and most women (88 per cent) and men (87 per cent) do intend, and aspire, to get married ‘some day’” (Inoue and Ebara 2005; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka2006: p14).

It could be seen from their answers that births out of wedlock still could not be accepted morally by majority of Japanese people, even if the ideologies of young

generation today have become more open than before. Therefore, it could somehow prove the previous researches which claimed marriage has been being very closely associated with childbearing. As some researchers pointed out, “throughout the post-war period, the interval between marriage and birth of the first child has been short and the proportion of childless couples very low by international standards” (e.g., Morgan, Rindfuss, and Parnell 1984; Raymo J 2000: p24).

## **4.2 Desirable marriage- what kind of marriages are Japanese young people looking for?**

### **4.2.1 Desirable age of marriage**

When I asked their desired marriageable-age, most of my interviewees could not give me an exact answer. Instead, they intend to get married when they want kids. Male interviewees suppose the age might be over 30. And my female interviewees gave me the more ambiguous reply that they would not get married until they meet their Mr. Right. To some extent, that only one married male interviewee seems an exception among young people who got married around 25 years old.

By and large, the result from my interviews is in line with the result from national survey of 1997 that “the intention to marry quickly is shrinking for the age group of 25 and over for both males and females” (NIPSSR1997: p5).

### **4.2.2 Determinants of delayed marriage**

Tracing the responses to the question why they do not want to get married quickly, I asked them what are the determinants of delayed marriage.

2 out of males and 2 females answered they have not met their desirable marriage partners. And the basic factor to be the desirable marriage partner is that

they should love each other and could get along well. The only married male interviewee told me that he got married with his girlfriend without considering any other factors, because they believe love is the most important thing regards to marriage. By this sense, the result of national survey in 1997 that “more and more males and females intend to marry for love” (NIPSSR1997: p15) could also be somehow seen in my interviews.

Even if the rest of my interviewees who have girlfriends claimed that they already got their desirable marriage partners, however, they still have no plan yet to get married quickly. “Losing freedom” and “onerous family responsibilities” seem their worries that make them not to step into marriage. Two female interviewees claimed that it is hard to balance their works and family caring, because husbands would not share many household chores. As it is shown in national survey, “even among the husbands of married women with full-time jobs, as much as 30 percent did not do their share of household chores” (DPSR 1998: p15). By contrast, male interviewees consider economic factors more than female counterparts. Other than worrying restrictions by marriage, male interviewees also intend to worry whether they could get stable income to make wives and kids happy in future. As one of my male interviewee (26 years old) said, “at any rate, I should get salary not less than my wife in future”. In fact, it can be found that traditional gender labour division in family still affect young people aged around 25 regards to their marriage considering.

All of my interviewees prefer pre-marital cohabitation rather than get married at early ages. With this form, they could get relatively independent life from partners. The more important advantage is that they do not have kids; hence they do not suffer from heavy family financial burden. At the same time, they could still enjoy their love with partners. It could be not said that cohabitation is prevalent today, because my interviews can not represent the majority of Japanese young people. However, it can be seen that cohabitation is accepted by more and

more young people as one choice to live with partners.

### **4.3 Determinants of childbearing**

By now, it could be seen that economic factors remain important in marriage considering. Then, a question came into my mind that why the married male interviewee could be an exception who did not consider economic factors as much as others, and whether he can represent the majority of young males. Before long, I got my answers.

Except this married male, all of my male interviewees combined the concept of marriage with the concept of childbearing. In other words, once they decide to get married, they are likely to have kids before long. To bring up children and to give them good education, every my interviewee considers affluence should be important for their marriages. The difference is that females intend to look for a man with stable income, while males claimed that they would share much financial burden of families themselves. This result is similar to the national survey in 1997 that economic stability ranked second among standards of being good husbands for females (NIPSSR1997: p16). By this sense, economic ability is more important for males than females in Japan.

From my interviews, it could be seen that the traditional family concept indeed has been prevailing among Japanese people, since young men, however, consider income as an important precondition for child bearing. Furthermore, women have changed attitudes towards their prospect husbands due to their more independent roles in society nowadays. Thereby, the declining fertility rate has to be addressed within the context of increased pressures on men as “bread earners” in crisis shaken Japan.

## **Part V. Explanations of declining fertility during 1990s from men's perspective**

According to what I get from my interviews, it could be seen that income is one of the most important determinants for Japanese males regarding to childbearing.

To some extent, the gaps of income could be reflected on different occupations. Compared to full-time regular employees, part-time or short-term contract employees' incomes are much lower and likely unstable. Thus, the pattern of marriage and childbearing of males is associated closely with their occupations. The higher status of occupation is, the older marriage age the male has. As it is shown in Raymo's research, "relative to white-collar employees, the odds of marriage are 32% lower for blue-collar employees, 26% lower for men in self-employment, and 75% lower for those without stable employment" (Raymo J 2000: p68).

As it is known, the life-time employment system has been weakened during economic recession era. In other words, there are fewer male employees than before who can get permanent employment contracts with good and secure income through whole life. Therefore, to behave a bread-winner in family seems difficult today for most young males without stable jobs. What is more, enlarged women's participation in social activities is also challenging the traditional gender-based labour divisions. By and large, every factor mentioned above seems question the traditional superior social status of males.

Naturally, to accommodate to the changed objective environment, people's subjective ideologies would change accordingly. Japanese young generation is this case. Nowadays, some new lifestyles emerged among young males, such as parasites and feminized males. Then it came to a full circle. The changed ideologies would re-act their social behaviors, including their choices of marriage and child bearing.

In this chapter, I am going to picture how this process going among Japanese young

males, which has been contributing to the declining fertility of Japan since 1990s.

### **5.1 Traditional gender divisions of Japan**

As I mentioned above, quite many researchers have attributed the declining fertility in Japan to the general social situation that a high proportion of reproductive-aged women being single nowadays. Behind it, it could be found that Japanese working women can not balance well their household and careers, which force most of those working women put off their marriages and hence childbearing. As Atoh argued, “the difficulty of balancing work and childcare has been aggravated by the persistent traditional gender role system which is reflected in extremely low levels of men’s involvement in household chores and childcare” (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p11).

What is traditional gender role system in Japan? In short, women are supposed to be inferior to men in every social realm. Based on this gender norm, family labour division and very Japanese working style are formed.

In traditional family norm, wives are supposed to take in charge of housework in family. They need to clean home, cook meals, look after kids and husbands’ parents, shopping and all of other chores in family. To a large extent, women spend nearly all of their time on taking caring of family. What is more, coresidence with parents-in-law restricts wives’ private freedom. As it is shown in previous studies (Hodge and Ogawa 1991; Ogawa and Retherford 1993), “for young Japanese women, postnuptial coresidence has been an increasingly serious hindrance to committing to marriage, which is in turn likely to contribute to delaying the timing of marriage” (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p20). From this standpoint, it is quite clear that women are suffering much traditional gender roles in families.

To be husband based on the traditional gender divisions, the situation of males is not optimistic either. Although they do not need to spend much time on household, they have to take the responsibilities of feeding family. As it is known in Japan, “a

man's place is work and a women's place is the home" (Economic Planning Agency 1992, 1993; Meguro 19998; IPSSR 1999: p90; Raymo J 2000: p29-30). Japanese patriarchal employment system is right based on this very gender roles division. Accompany with advent of modernization, lifetime employment has been established in Japan, which became the pursuit of salary men all of their life. Through lifetime employment, regular male employees are endowed with special privileges. Other than lifetime employment, they enjoyed all kinds of social welfares and company benefits, such as health insurance, unemployment insurance and workmen's accident compensation insurance, voluntary fringe benefits, housing subsidies, loans. In fact, some of these benefits are supposed to support husbands to feed their families. Therefore, this patriarchal employment system help establish male employees' loyalty to companies, and, as Helvoort pointed out, "the privileges they enjoyed were in line with those of the former samurai" (Ernestvan Helvoort 1979: p21). In other words, Japanese companies are somehow like independent empires, and hence male regular employees devote themselves to their companies like samurais devoted to empire. By this sense, men need to continue several hours everyday over their working hours. Most likely, they have to socialize with colleagues and bosses before going back home. Therefore, they seldom have much time to share with family members.

It is noticeable that women used to be excluded by lifetime employment. Nowadays, female employees still work in positions with limited-responsibilities, though some of them could get the so-called lifetime employment. Thus, the majority of female employees quite jobs after marriage or childbearing, "either motivated by a personal desire to concentrate efforts on homemaking and childcare or compelled by social pressures and/or the structural difficulties of combining work and childcare" (Raymo J 2000: p130). By this sense, the success of the Japanese employment system is just based on the consciousness of women to accept their primary role in families and secondary role in the working place. What is more, the concept that men should behave strong in front of women is also popular in Japan. In other words, being a husband means that the man should have capabilities to feed his wife and kids through



his whole life.

## **5.2 The collapse of patriarchal economy depended on traditional gender divisions**

After several decades of rapid development, Japanese economy stepped into recession around 1990s. “Between 1975 and 1991, the economy had grown in real terms at an average annual rate of just over 4 per cent. Between 1992 and 2003, the average growth rate was a mere 1.2 per cent” (Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p76). In the mean time, Japanese lowest-low fertility emerged in this lost decade. From economic perspective, some economists (Leibenstein,1957; Becker,1960) associated the determinants of fertility to the changing of social economic situation: a rise in the direct and indirect cost of childrearing, and a decline in income levels of parents (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi 2001: p4). Taking a look at social changes happened during 1990s, it would be easy to see that Japan’s declining fertility falls into this case.

As it is known, the expenses of rearing children are increasing dramatically all around the world. Japan is not an exception either. In the recent survey carried by NIPPSSR (2003) indicated that the most frequent answer for having fewer kids is too much money needed in childbearing and education. Some researches have shown that expensive education and housing expenses somewhat limit the size of modern family in Japan. However, subsidies from government seem not enough to compensate the huge financial burden on young parents. As Atoh and Akachi pointed out, “the level of economic support for childcare in Japan is among the lowest in developed countries”, however, the “educational cost and housing cost for Japanese parents are extremely high compared with many European counterparts” (Atoh, Mayuko Akachi2001: p12). It is reasonable to believe that big financial burden brought by increasing life expenses would affect young people’s considering of marriage and childbearing.

What is more, economic recession, to a large degree, weakened the lifetime employment system which used to be the foundation of Japanese patriarchal economy.

Since the basic concept of lifetime employment did not change, regular employees who have got permanent employments still enjoy fringe benefits endowed by lifetime contract. Therefore, companies have to suffer dramatic personnel cost to maintain their lifetime employments. In addition, employers reluctant to fire these senior regular employees because of invested training cost. Hence, not to hire numerous new lifetime employees seems to be the most practical way to cut off personnel cost for employers. Thereby, unemployment rate increased dramatically, “which climbed from an average of 2.5 per cent in the 1980s to a fifty-year high of 5.4 per cent in 2002” (Rebick 2005; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p76). Among these unemployment, young graduates account for a large proportion, since large companies which could provide lifetime employment with high wage and good welfares reluctant to hire new graduates who have no working experience yet. As Rebick (2005) argued, “the system of guaranteed employment will likely survive in Japan, especially in the more successful firms and industries, but the proportion of employees who are covered by these guarantees will fall” (Rebick 2005; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka2006: p76). Then, those young people who did not get stable employments flowed into part-time works, contract works and even casual works. According to statistics, the rate of new graduates who could get full-time jobs by the date of graduation has dropped by at least 20 percentage points since 1992 (MOE 2004; Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takemaka2006: p81).

Young males are affected by deteriorate economic situation severely during 1990s, since the majority of them will not get the life-time employment with secure income as their father generation used to.

### **5.3 Embarrassment induced by weakened life-time employment emerged**

As Osawa notes, “no amount of well-meaning policy statements on gender can offset the impact of dwindling income and mounting job insecurity on people’s willingness to have bigger families” (Osawa 2000:18; Glenda S. Roberts 2002:p87). Although having two kids has been being the ideal number of children for Japanese young

couples, it has become not easy to sustain as before economic recession. To some extent, lack the confidence of economic future embarrassed Japanese young males to have bigger families. This embarrassment is induced by the pressures compared with father generation and young females who got improved social status nowadays. And this embarrassment even prevents young males stepping into marriage and hence having kids at early ages.

### **5.3.1 Embarrassment compare to father generation**

As it is shown in the Overview of the Result of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Opinion Survey on Population Issues in Japan taken in 1995, “With or without the females’ financial strength, young males consider that own financial strength is the factor to affect the marriage” (DPSR 1998: p11).

During the rapid economic development era, it is quite common that the income of men in the age of 30 could overcome that of their fathers, motivating women to marry them. However, young generation encountered economic recession in 1990s, which decreased the number of young life-time regular employees. Hence, most of young people could not get stable income and social benefits related to life-time employment by short-term contract or part-time jobs. By and large, they are not likely to overcome their fathers’ income at the corresponding ages as old generations used to. Low income of those young males discouraged their desire to get married at early ages, also, make them less attractive as spouses to young females (Suziki 2006: p7). In addition, it can not be denied that young generation need to pay much more to form new families following traditional gender concepts nowadays, which should be insured by stable income. Thereby, the embarrassment compared to father generation has an effect on the birth rate not only through the realized income level itself but also through the expected income in the future.

### **5.3.2 Embarrassment compared to improved social status of young women**

While young males suffer from decreased permanent employment contracts during economic recession, females are enjoying their improved social and economic environment.

They became more independent from spouses and have much more choices of lifestyle than the old generation. It is attributed to the fact that more and more young females have entered labour market, making them have relatively independent income. And encouraged by the new concept of gender equity, the gaps of income between working males and females are narrowing. As it is shown in the survey carried by Ministry of Labor, “the wage gap between men and women in the 20–29 age bracket has been gradually narrowing, and by 1994 women’s wages reached almost 90% of men’s” (Makoto Atoh 2001: p4). And the proportion of working females holding the managerial positions tripled between 1982 and 2003 ( Rebeck, Chapter 5; Marcus Rebeck and Ayumi Takemaka 2006: p7).

The improved social status induced a large number of young females to select spouses more strictly. As some researchers found, “Women expect of men not only three ‘highs’ (high income, high level of education and tall height), but also three ‘goods’ (good looking, good natured and good background)” (Marcus Rebeck and Ayumi Takemaka2006: p9). In addition, traditional concept of gender roles did not fade away. To improve own socioeconomic status by marriage is still one of most important determinants when females consider marriage. Facing the economic uncertainties since the 1990s, it became more important for some young females to get marriage partners who can definitely support families in the future.

However, it has been worsening the situation for young males, especially those without stable employments at the moment, to be ideal marriage partners. Therefore, “a longer period of time may be required to search for a spouse among the relatively small pool of men whose economic potential is high enough to prevent a decline in women’s standard of living after they leave the labor force” (e.g., Yashiro 1993a; Ymada 19994, 1996; Ueno 1998; Raymo J 2000: p30-31).

### **5.3.3 New social behaviors prevail among young generation**

Without stable income, it would be hard for young males to form families followed the traditional concept of gender roles division. Thereby, the ideologies of young males have been changing corresponding to the changed social environment in Japan.

Although the model of breadwinner-homemaker has not collapsed yet, quite a few researchers have noticed that young males incline to give up their supposed superior social and economic status at least on the level of attitude. In other words, gender equity became more and more popular nowadays. On the one hand, a large number of women participate in labour market and social activities, as I mentioned above. On the other hand, the proportion of young males who support women to continue their careers after marriage and childbearing increased dramatically, which is from 11 percent in 1987 to 17 percent in 1997 (IPSSR 1999: p73; Raymo J 2000: p29). From males' perspectives, to encourage wife continuing working after marriage could share much of husband's economic burden. In addition, the changes of attitudes towards working happened on young males have promoted the prevalence of gender equity among young couples. With much more freedom, a great proportion of young males like to stay in part-time or short-term contract employments rather than stable life-time employments.

Ironically, while young males hope spouses share financial burden, they still want to enjoy the full domestic services from wives. It could be seen that the gender-based labour division in family did not change much in reality. Since numerous young males fall into the case of parasite phenomenon, the coresidence with parents strengthened the traditional gender roles divisions in family. To a large extent, their mothers take care of all housework which their wives are supposed to in the traditional gender concepts. Therefore, the desire of young males to get wives who can provide domestic services like mothers clashes with the request of young females to share household with husbands nowadays. This conflict has attributed to delayed marriages of males.

As a result, the new ideology that marriage is not necessary for happiness of life has been accepted by some young people, though it is still not prevalent according to my interviews. To young generation, lifestyle has more choices than before. Instead of get married at early ages, some of young people choose pre-marital cohabitation until they want children. Also, some of them stay with parents to save more money to form new families in future. In one words, any other choice of lifestyle could help young people avoid the costly marriage and childrearing for a certain period or forever. It is noticeable that this changed ideology re-acted on the behaviors that young people postpone marriage and childbearing, continuing contributing to declining fertility in Japan.

## **Part VI. Conclusion**

Since 1970s, the fertility of Japan seemed could not stop declining as it is shown in some official data. Although quite many measures have utilized to try to encourage fertility of Japan and hence alleviate the social tensions induced by declining fertility during 1990s, most of them were not in effect. This is why I questioned whether the government has found the right determinants of declining fertility of Japan. And through my own research, I found three weak points of previous researches in this field.

Firstly, all of measures taken by Japanese government regarding to encouraging fertility since 1990s were based on the findings of previous decades. In other words, some of the findings might be out of date at that time. Other than the prevailing materialism and individualism ideologies, some new social phenomenon emerged since 1990s has thrown bigger effect on young generation's behaviors concerning fertility of Japan. For example, the weakened life-time employment system has driven young males to change their attitudes somehow towards life and marriage choices. However, no one could foretell this social phenomenon when researches were taken

before 1990s. By this sense, I focused on the period of 1990s in my research to compensate this weak point of previous researches. And hence, I found that young Japanese males take considering of childbearing more seriously than their father generation used to, because of much more financial considering in the economic recession era.

Secondly, most of previous researches pointed young women as the main factor which induced declining fertility of Japan, over looking the effects thrown by men. In my opinion, it could be somehow considered as gender-biased concepts. In my research, I proved that marriage and childbearing are the issues associated with both genders. The special era of economic recession even made men's effects more significant than women's concerning to fertility issue.

Finally, some researchers attribute the reason of declining fertility of Japan to the so-called parasite singles. In other words, they blamed the lifestyles of young generation of which grown singles live with parents to keep their easy and luxury life and hence reluctant to step into marriage. In other words, these researchers condemn the ideology of young generation today which emphasizes enjoying life. However, I found in my research that it is deteriorated socioeconomic environment that induced life ideologies of young generation to change accordingly. And the changed ideologies re-acted on the objective social environment. In the case of Japan, it could be seen that marriage seems not as attractive as it used to be, inducing declining fertility. Superficially, we could get the conclusion that young generation prefers being single with much freedom to marriage with lots of domestic responsibilities. However, most of my interviewees claimed they still want to get married and having children once they could meet their right partners. However, considering the dilemma between high cost of childrearing and unsatisfied financial situation, a large number of young couples have to put off their marriages. Here, the financial considering which brought by socioeconomic environment somehow induced the changed lifestyle of young generation. As Oyama 2001 pictured, "husband's income has positive and wife's

education has negative effects on the number of children” (Masako Oyama2001: p23). As a result, the changed life styles of young people have thrown an effect on social environment. For example, the feminine appearance of young males has challenged the traditional gender concepts, destroying the patriarchal socioeconomic structures (IIDA 2005:p14). And there are more and more young people today are enjoying the new lifestyles with much freedom, since it is difficult to follow the traditional way under the deteriorated economic situation. In other words, as it is claimed in the editorial of Nikkei Weekly, “if social conditions deteriorate, the fertility rate could continue to slide” (Glenda S. Roberts2002: p59).

In fact, all the three weak points of previous researches could be considered as ignorance of males’ effects on fertility. Thus, government policies adopted during 1990s could not make success in encouraging fertility in Japan. Since the main obstacle of childbearing to young males is financial considering, the future polices which could help them out of financial troubles might be more help for preventing declining fertility of Japan.



## References:

Dales, Laura (2005) "*Lifestyles of the rich and singles: reading agency in the "Parasite single issue"*" in the Agency of Women in Asia Lyn Parker (ed.), Marshall Cavendish Academic.

Ernestvan Helvoort (1979) *The Japanese Working Man: What Chioce? What Reward?* Paul Norbury Publications.

Genda, Yuji (2000) "*Don't blame the unmarried breed*" in Japan Echo, June, 2000, pp. 54-56.

Goodman, R. (2002) "*Anthropology, policy and the study of Japan*" in Family and Social Policy in Japan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Julian Chapple (2004) *The dilemma posted by Japan's population decline*.  
<http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/Chapple.html>

Makoto Atoh, Mayuko Akachi (2001) "*Low Fertility and Family Policy in Japan---in an Internatioanl Comparative Perspective*" in Journal of Population and Social Security (Population), Supplement to Volume 1.

Makoto Atoh (2001) "*Very Low Fertility in Japan and Value Change Hypotheses*" in Review of Population and Social Policy, No. 10, 1-21.

Miho Iwasawa, James M. Raymo, Larry Bumpass (2005) "*Unmarried Cohabitation and Family Formation in Japan*" in National Institute of Populaiton and Social Security Research, Tokyo, and University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Sociology.

Marcus Rebick, Ayumi Takenaka (2006) *The Changing Japanese Family*. Routledge.

Masako Oyama (2001) "*Fertility Decline and Female Labor Force Participation in Japan*" in Graduate School of Economics, University of Chicago, 1126E. 59th St, Chicago, IL 60637.

National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2003): Child Related Policies in Japan.

National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (1997): Attitudes Toward Marriage and the Family Among the Unmarried Japanese Youth. The Eleventh Japanese National Fertility Survey. Journal of Population and Social Security (Population) Vol.1 No.1.

National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2006): Population Statistics of Japan.

Orenstein, Peggy (2001) "*Parasites in Pret-a-Porter Are Threatening Japan's Economy*" in the New York Times Sunday Magazine, July 31.

Patricia Boling (1998) "*Family Policy in Japan*" in Jnl Soc. Pol.,27,2,173-190 Printed in the United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press.

Raymo J (2000) *Spouse Selection and Marriage Timing in Japan*. PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Retherford, Robert D., Naohiro Ogawa, and Rikiya Matsukura (2001) "*Late Marriage and Less Marriage in Japan* " in Population and Development Review 27:65-102.

Romit Dasgupta (2000) "*Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and*

*Play*” in Japanese Studies, Vol. 20, No. 2.

Roberts, G. (2002) “*Pining hopes on angels: reflections from an aging Japan’s urban Landscape*” In Goodman, Roger (2002) *Family and Social Policy in Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Toru Suzuki (2006) “*Fertility Decline and Policy Development in Japan*”. Japanese Journal of Population, Vol.4, No.1.

Tsuya, Noriko O. and Karen O. Mason. (1995) "*Changing Gender Roles and Below Replacement Fertility in Japan*". Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries, edited by Karen O. Mason and An-Magrit Jensen. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

DPSR (1998):The 2<sup>nd</sup> survey of Japanese Family Households Report. Department of Population Structure Research.

Yumiko IIDA (2005) *Beyond the Feminization of Masculinity: Transforming Patriarchy with the Feminine in Contemporary Japanese Youth Culture*. Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Vol 6, Num 1.

Yamada, Masahiro (2000) *The Growing Corp of Spoiled Singles*. Japan Echo, June, 2000, pp. 49-53.