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# Changes in Family Life Resulting from the Unemployment of the Husband\*

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This paper clarifies how families cope with the unemployment of the husband. The following things have become clear as a result of the annual Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers carried out on a nationwide scale since 1993. (1) There is a relationship between the socioeconomic status of the husband and unemployment. (2) The husband's income decreases as a result of unemployment, but there is no major change in the monthly expenditure on living costs. There is less leeway in the household budget, so the family copes by reducing the amount put aside as savings each month, or by reaching into its savings. (3) There are wives who get a job outside the home or increase their working hours, but the amount of time that the husband spends on housework or childcare does not increase a great deal. There is no major change in the division of labor by gender role between husband and wife as a result of the husband's unemployment. Family life is maintained in the short term with the wife shouldering the burden of paid employment, housework and childcare, but in the long term there is a possibility that it can lead to conflict between husband and wife.

## I. Defining the Problem

The employment environment in Japan is deteriorating. According to the Labour Force Survey published by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the number of unemployed persons in 2010 was 3.34 million, with the figure demonstrating a decline for the first time in three years. However, this was due to a fall in the number of female unemployed persons, and the number of male unemployed persons increased by 40,000 to 2.07 million. The unemployment rate has been fluctuating around the 5% mark for several years. Although it is a low figure compared with those seen in countries such as the USA, Germany, Italy and France, it is feared that it will increase further in the future, as a result of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the worldwide economic downturn.

According to Beck, the increase in the number of unemployed will be common to many societies. Beck is of the view that the traditional groupings of class and social stratum will cease as a result of further advances in modernization, and that social inequality will become individualized. Beck states that, in a society in which unemployment has increased,

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there will no longer be a relationship between unemployment and class, so it will become difficult to see unemployment as a social problem.<sup>1</sup> Hitherto, families functioned as the traditional system for overcoming the anxiety and uncertainty arising from risks such as unemployment. However, as a result of the development of the welfare state in Western industrialized societies since the end of the Second World War, families have been absolved of their duty of support. Individuals now have to accept unemployment as the fate of the individual and endure it alone (Beck 1998).

However, in a society like Japan, where the family bears the main responsibility for welfare (Esping-Andersen 2000), families must come under pressure to cope in some way with unemployment. This is because there is a major impact on family life as a result of the unemployment of one family member. Economic problems emerge as a result of unemployment. There is also the possibility that the children's progression to a higher level of schooling will be affected. There can even be situations in which it results in the dissolution of the family, through separation or divorce. Unemployment is one of the most important life events for understanding the relationship between socioeconomic disparities and families in modern society. Accordingly, it is meaningful to research unemployment in terms of the family aspects. Despite this fact, the impact of unemployment on family life tends not to become apparent in most surveys.

This paper uses panel survey data that tracks the same individuals over the long term to elucidate the impact on family life of the unemployment of the husband. As will be stated in the second section, there is a considerable amount of research relating to the unemployment of husbands and the labor supply of wives, but there is little research into changes in the household budget and the division of roles between husband and wife. The characteristics of this paper are the fact that it considers that the coping mechanisms adopted by families in response to the unemployment of the husband have an impact on family life, and its focus on changes in the household budget and the division of roles between husband and wife. There are previous studies that have verified the impact of the husband's unemployment in a narrow sense by means of statistical tests using analysis of panel data that incorporate many variables (Kohara 2007; Yamaguchi 2007), but I would like to point out from the outset that this paper is confined to descriptive analysis.

The second section summarizes previous studies. The third section describes data and variables used in the analysis. The fourth section presents the results of the analysis, and these results are discussed in the fifth section.

## **II. Previous Studies**

Perhaps because the occurrence of unemployment itself was rare from the 1970s to

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<sup>1</sup> However, Beck does acknowledge that unemployment is prone to occur amongst specific classes or people who are disadvantaged. Even in Japan, there is a tendency for people with a low level of education and blue-collar workers to become unemployed (Higuchi 2001; Ohta 2007).

the 1980s, there is little research into unemployment in Japanese family studies. Except for the realm of social welfare, there were also few studies concerning poverty. Even if one looks at family studies in the USA, one can see that rather than research that directly analyzed the relationship between unemployment and family life, most studies discussed decreases in income. Unemployment generally involves a reduction in income, but a reduction in income does not necessarily mean unemployment. However, both have aspects in common, in the sense that they have an impact on family life. See papers such as Voydanoff (1990) for the results of studies carried out to date.

What was important to family studies in the 1970s was Elder (1997), which analyzed data concerning family life during the Great Depression of the 1930s. This study is an important work of life course research that comprehensively elucidated the impact of a decline in the father's income on the household budget and family relationships. The study was based on a panel survey of 167 men and women whose childhood coincided with the Great Depression of the 1930s. There were families which fell into crisis, as they were unable to maintain the standard of living that they had hitherto. How did they adapt to this? What Elder focused on as coping mechanisms was (1) the degree to which families persisted with their previous standard of living; (2) whether the roles and relationships changed flexibly; and (3) whether there were any previous experiences of having successfully weathered a crisis. (1) and (2) are important in relation to this paper. If the family abandons its efforts to maintain the standard of living that it had hitherto, those around it will know that the father's status has declined. Even so, there were families which had opted to reduce their expenditure. There were also families which eschewed social interaction. However, amongst them were families which went as far as repainting the outer walls of their homes in order to prevent others discovering the decline in their status. Other coping mechanisms include receiving support from relatives and receiving unemployment benefit. During the Great Depression, wives and sons began to go out to work in search of an income. There were also families in which the division of roles changed, with daughters taking charge of the housework.

It is not only life course theory that uses a theoretical framework focused on the processes by which the family mobilizes its resources to cope and adapt to crises occurring within the family. Family stress theory also has the same perspective (see McCubbin and Patterson 1982, amongst others, for more about family stress theory). Family stress theory has a focus on the family as a group, while life course theory tends to focus on individuals, but both theories consider the processes associated with changes in the times, in the form of coping and adapting to the occurrence of life events (stressors) in families, so panel data are appropriate for analysis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the constraints of space, this will not be described in detail here, but research based on the life course approach includes the follow-up studies conducted by Masaoka and others, relating to unemployment resulting from the closure of a mine and the subsequent reshaping of the careers of the workers.

In economics, a considerable amount of research has been built up in regard to household budgets and the labor supply of wives. It has been ascertained from the National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure that amongst the households in which the head of the household or the spouse of the head of the household is unemployed are households in which expenditure is curtailed (Ichino 2003). The attraction of the National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure carried out by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is that the sample size is large, but unfortunately, one cannot tell if there are changes in the budget of the same household following unemployment.

In response to this, Horioka, Murakami and Kohara (2002) used the Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers conducted by the Institute for Research on Household Economics to confirm that the consumption expenditure of families is not curbed even after unemployment. This has been interpreted as being because the impact of unemployment is mild or that expenditure actually increases. Alternatively, in many cases there is the possibility that consumption was not curtailed because even though a member of the family had become unemployed, they had found another job immediately. Finding another job is one effective means of averting the danger that the leeway in the household budget will disappear as a result of the husband's unemployment (Moen 1982). There were also families which reached into their savings, received unemployment benefit, or received support from parents or siblings.<sup>3</sup>

The wife going out to work is another effective means of increasing income. It has been ascertained from panel data that one can see an additional worker effect amongst wives, with wives who had not been in employment finding non-regular employment or beginning to look for work after the unemployment of their husbands (Sato 2009); in households in which the husband voluntarily left his job, the working hours of the wife increase, and this is particularly conspicuous in the budgets of households that have few financial assets (Kohara 2007).

One can say that wives starting to go out to work or joining the workforce anew as a result of the unemployment of their husbands changes conventional role relationships based on the division of labor by gender role, namely "men go out to work, women do housework and care for children." Changing role relationships flexibly in the event of a crisis might

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<sup>3</sup> In addition, the wording for question on the questionnaire might also be a contributing factor. The question asks whether the family has experienced unemployment or mandatory retirement within the last year. The range of families is broad, and it is unclear which family members have experienced unemployment or mandatory retirement. If the husband of the woman being surveyed has become unemployed or has retired at the mandatory retirement age, there is likely to be an impact on consumption expenditure. However, if it is someone from the original family of the survey subject (such as her father) who has experienced unemployment or mandatory retirement, it can be anticipated that there will be no major impact on the consumption expenditure of the household of the survey subject. However, even in the analysis in this paper, which is limited to the unemployment of husbands, unemployment had no impact on consumption expenditure.

also be an effective coping mechanism, but it can, conversely, cause stress to the couple (Voydanoff 1990; Nunoshiba 2009).

This paper develops the analysis in Horioka, Murakami and Kohara (2002), and analyzes changes in family life resulting from the unemployment of the husband, from the perspective of the household budget and role relationships between husbands and wives.

### **III. Analysis**

By looking at changes in the household budget following unemployment and role relationships between husbands and wives, this paper provides an understanding of what kind of coping mechanisms families adopt in order to try to adapt. More specifically, it analyzes the following three points. Firstly, it verifies whether or not the unemployment of husbands is more likely to occur amongst certain strata. In the same way as previous studies, one would expect that unemployment would be high amongst those who are engaged in sales and technical work. This is because jobs in sales have a tendency to be affected by the economic climate. Secondly, families in which the husband has become unemployed can be expected to cope by curbing their expenditure, receiving unemployment benefit, and reaching into their savings, and this paper looks at whether this can actually be observed. Thirdly, it examines whether or not the division of labor by gender role is reconsidered in families in which the husband has become unemployed. One would expect that the wife would go out to work to increase income, and that the time spent by the husband on housework and childcare would also increase in response to this.

#### **1. Outline of the Data Used in Analysis**

The Japanese Panel Survey of Consumers (hereinafter abbreviated to JPSC) carried out each autumn by the Institute for Research on Household Economics has been used. The objective of this survey is to clarify the factors contributing to changes in living conditions resulting from the transition between life stages and major life events, as well as the problems relating to these. Its characteristics are that it conducts follow-up surveys of the same individuals each year, and that it gains an understanding of living conditions from such perspectives as the household budget, employment behavior, and family relationships.

The first wave was carried out in 1993. The population is women aged 24 to 34 across Japan. The sample was selected using two-stage stratified sampling. Data was collected through the self-administered questionnaires. The number of valid, complete responses to the first survey was 1500 (an effective response rate of 41.4%). Amongst the recovered sample, the proportion of married women was somewhat higher than amongst the survey population as a whole, but there was no major difference (Institute for Research on Household Economics 2009). The subjects of the second wave were those who had responded to the first one. The number of valid, complete responses was 1422 (an effective response rate of 94.3%). From the third wave onwards, the survey subjects have been those

who responded the previous year and those who were unable to respond the previous year due to their personal circumstances. Since the third survey, the effective completion rate has been maintained at around the 95% mark. Nevertheless, as a few survey subjects each year drop out of the survey, the number of effective, complete responses to the 16th survey was 826.

The subjects who have continued to respond to the survey between 1993 and the present day are called Cohort A. New samples (Cohorts B-D) were added in 1997, 2003 and 2009.

Compared with official statistics, the sample size of the JPSC is small. The age range of the subjects is not broad. The most important point is that the survey subjects are solely women. In other words, one can gain an understanding concerning the unemployment of the husbands of the married survey subjects, but one cannot gain an understanding of unemployment amongst men overall, including those who are unmarried, divorced or widowed. However, the survey includes a diverse range of questions, including those concerning the household budget and time use, so it has the advantage that one can gain a multifaceted understanding of changes in the household budget and lifestyle before and after unemployment.

## 2. Target of Analysis and Analytical Techniques

The target of analysis in this paper is Cohort A only. Furthermore, the paper focuses on the impact of the unemployment of the husband on family life, so it is restricted to women with spouses. Women who remarried within a year of becoming divorced or widowed were also excluded. In addition, women whose husbands were aged 60 or above were excluded. This is because the impacts on family life can be assumed to differ in the cases of unemployment amongst the younger generation and unemployment due to reaching the mandatory retirement age. The occupations of the husbands were restricted to those who were employees, and those who were self-employed, family workers of self-employed people, and freelance workers were also excluded.

Thus, the target of analysis has been restricted, so the number of unemployed people, who were already few in the data, are reduced even further. Consequently, rather than carrying out multivariate analysis or statistical testing, this paper restricts itself to describing changes in family life over the course of a year from point  $t-1$  to point  $t$ . In addition, the fact that point  $t-1$  and point  $t$  can be compared means that married life continues for at least a year after the husband's unemployment. In other words, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that there is a bias, in that the study focuses on the stratum of relatively stable families.

## 3. Variables Used in the Analysis

How is the unemployment of husbands, which is the central variable in the analysis, defined? The Labour Force Survey of the Statistic Bureau of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications defines those who satisfy the following three conditions as being "totally unemployed persons": (i) those with no job and who did no work at all during the sur-

vey period; (ii) those who are ready to work if work is available; and (iii) those who did any job-seeking activity or were preparing to start a business during the survey period. In regard to this, Higuchi (2001) points out that there can be different definitions, depending on the objective of the survey, and introduces the definitions of the six types of unemployment rate in the USA. The details will not be described here, but in addition to “totally unemployed persons,” the broadest definition also includes “those who wish to work, who are not engaged in job-search activities, but would be able to take up employment immediately if there was a job, and who have experience of having sought employment in the past” and “those who want a full-time job and can take one up immediately, but who are engaged involuntarily in part-time work due to an economic downturn or other reason.”

Due in part to data constraints, unemployment is defined broadly in this paper. In addition to the official definition of “totally unemployed persons,” this paper views “those who are not engaged in job-search activities, but who are envisaged to be able to take up employment immediately if there was a job, and who have experience of having taken up employment in the past” as being unemployed. In operational terms, “those who had a job at point  $t-1$  and who do not have a job at point  $t$ , but who is envisaged to be able to take up a job immediately if one were available” (in other words, those not in employment) are deemed to be unemployed (Type 2 in Table 1). This is irrespective of “whether or not they wish to be in employment.” Moreover, the reason for unemployment and the period of unemployment were not set as criteria for classification.

Table 1 summarizes the changes in husbands’ ways of working between the survey at point  $t-1$  and the survey at point  $t$ .<sup>4</sup> These can be broadly classified into four types. Type 1 is those who had a job at both point  $t-1$  and point  $t$ . Type 2 is those who had a job at point  $t-1$  but were not in employment at point  $t$ . Type 3 is those who did not have a job at point  $t-1$ , but had acquired a job at point  $t$ . Type 4 is those who did not have a job at either point  $t-1$  or point  $t$ . Type 1 can be further subdivided into three subcategories: Type 1a “those who continued working at the same company for the whole of the last year”; Type 1b “those who changed jobs”; and Type 1c “those who went on secondment, etc.”

This paper focuses on Type 2. The reason why the focus on unemployed persons was restricted to Type 2 is because the aim is to see the impact of unemployment more directly. Figures for Type 1a, which consists of those who are thought to have the most stable working lives, are also presented for the purposes of comparison and reference.

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<sup>4</sup> These were classified into four types based on the questions asked in the survey about employment status at the time of the survey (“Has a job,” “On leave,” “Student,” “Otherwise unemployed”), and retrospective questions about employment experience over the past year (“Did your husband also have a job a year ago (at the end of September last year)?” → “Had a job,” “Was not working”; “Was he working at the same company a year ago as he is now?” → “Same company,” “Not the same”; “Which of the following applies in regard to his change from the company where he was working a year ago (at the end of September last year)?” → “Change of jobs,” “Secondment,” “Transfer,” “Merger/Demerger”).

Table 1. Changes in Husbands' Ways of Working from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$

	$t-1$	$t$	Number of observations
Type 1	Employed	Employed	
Type 1a	Always at the same company		9812
Type 1b	Change of job		415
Type 1c	Secondment / Transfer / Merger / Demerger		89
Type 2	Employed	Unemployed	108
Type 3	Unemployed	Employed	91
Type 4	Unemployed	Unemployed	47

*Note:* Excludes those who are self-employed, family workers or freelance workers.

The data were pooled, in order to extract as many unemployed persons as possible. Consequently, even in the case of the same subject, there are times when they are classified as unemployed and times when they are not, depending on the time when the survey was conducted. The fixed effects model and the random effects model are not used, so it is not possible to consider the unobserved heterogeneity of the individuals. The characteristics of the subjects who have continued with the survey, without dropping out, and those who have been married since the beginning of the survey, are particularly likely to emerge in Type 1a, which is the target for comparison. It is necessary to pay particular attention to these points in interpreting the results.

The other variables used in analysis are husband's academic background (junior high school/high school, technical or vocational school/junior college, or university/graduate school) and content of the husband's job (professional/managerial work, clerical work, technical work, sales/service work) at point  $t-1$ , and husband's age at point  $t$ . Furthermore, other variables used when analyzing the impact of unemployment on family life are (i) household budget at point  $t-1$  and point  $t$  (annual income, expenditure, amount of loan repayments and amount saved during the month of September, and bank balance of the household); (ii) status of receipt of unemployment benefit; (iii) changes in the wife's way of working at point  $t-1$  and point  $t$ ; and (iv) the number of working hours and time spent on housework and childcare (minutes) on weekdays by husbands and wives from point  $t-1$  to point  $t$ .

#### IV. Results of the Analysis

Firstly, after verifying who has become unemployed, this section looks at the impact of the husband's unemployment.



Table 2. Changes in Husbands' Ways of Working from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$  by Age

Age (at point $t$ )	Employed → Unemployed (%)	Employed → Employed (same company, %)	Number of observations
25 - 29	4.2	95.8	24
30 - 34	1.1	98.9	549
35 - 39	1.1	98.9	1852
40 - 44	1.2	98.8	2887
45 - 49	0.9	99.1	2598
50 - 54	1.0	99.1	1469
55 - 59	1.7	98.3	541

*Note:* Only husbands who were in employment at point  $t-1$ . This also excludes those who changed job or were seconded elsewhere.

### 1. Who Has Become Unemployed?

Table 2 looks at the ways of working at point  $t$  of husbands who had a job a year earlier at point  $t-1$  by age at point  $t$ . Although the level is around the 4% mark in the case of those in the latter half of their 20s, who are not very numerous amongst those observed in the survey, it is around 1% in the case of all other age brackets. In overall terms, it is low compared with the unemployment rate in the Labour Force Survey. This is because it is the figure for married men, for whom the unemployment figures are thought to be relatively low, and also because the denominator for this analysis and that of the Labour Force Survey are different. That is, husbands who had a job at point  $t-1$  are the denominator in the analysis in this paper, whereas in the Labour Force Survey, men who are included in the labor force at point  $t$  are the denominator.

However, with regard to fluctuations in the unemployment rate by age bracket in this paper, the graph describes a U-shaped curve, with high points in the youngest age bracket and amongst in the latter half of their 50s. Broadly speaking, this is the same pattern as that seen in the Labour Force Survey.

If one looks at the relationship with the content of the husband's job before unemployment (Table 3), one can see that the unemployment rate amongst professional workers, managerial workers and clerical workers is less than 1%. In contrast, it is above 1% in the case of technical and blue-collar workers and sales/service workers. In particular, the figure for sales/service workers is in excess of 2%. This is thought to be because such positions are prone to be influenced by the economic climate. This study corresponds with previous studies in that blue-collar workers are more prone to become unemployed than white-collar workers; in other words, the less socioeconomically advantaged a person is, the more likely he/she is to become unemployed. Academic background is also an important contributing

Table 3. Changes in Husbands' Ways of Working from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$  by Job Content

Job content (at point $t-1$ )	Employed → Unemployed (%)	Employed → Employed (same company, %)	Number of observations
Professional and managerial work	0.6	99.4	2570
Clerical work	0.7	99.3	2744
Technical and blue-collar work	1.2	98.8	3334
Sales and service work	2.5	97.5	1025

factor and is related to this. The proportion of husbands who graduated from university or graduate school who were unemployed at point  $t$  is low in comparison with husbands with any other academic background.

## 2. Impact on Family Life: How Did the Family Cope with the Husband's Unemployment?

### (1) Changes in the Household Budget

Table 4 summarizes changes in the household budget before and after unemployment. The distribution of incomes is skewed, so median values are shown. As a result of unemployment, husbands' annual incomes have fallen by as much as 400,000 yen. Moreover, if one looks at the proportion of husbands whose income has declined between point  $t-1$  and point  $t$ , one can see that it is as high as 59.5%. In contrast to this, the annual incomes of Type 1a husbands, who have continued to work at the same company, is increasing, albeit slightly. Amongst Type 1a husbands are some whose income has fallen, but they account for only 35.2%. On the other hand, 54.5% experienced an increase in income. From this, one can see that unemployment has a great impact. Furthermore, one can ascertain that the annual income of husbands who have become unemployed was not very high even before unemployment. If their incomes were not very high, there is unlikely to be much leeway in their household budgets. One can say that high-risk husbands become unemployed and their household budgets are placed in an even harsher situation. However, the annual income of the wife does not increase very much. This is perhaps because it is difficult for her to increase her income suddenly, unless she finds a new job or has a good job transfer.

How did expenditure change in response to the decline in annual income? It looks as though there are no major changes in living costs for families experiencing unemployment. This is presumably because it is difficult to reduce one's standard of living suddenly, just because one's annual income has declined. Job-hunting also makes one's outgoings mount

Table 4. Changes in Husbands' Ways of Working and Household Budget from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$ 

	Employed → Unemployed			Employed → Employed (same company)		
	$t-1$	$t$	Number of observations	$t-1$	$t$	Number of observations
Annual income* (median value)						
Husband	316.0	270.0	79	535.0	550.0	8068
Wife	80.0	86.0	87	40.0	50.0	7952
Expenditure in September** (median value)						
Living costs	192.5	191.5	94	210.0	220.0	8538
Savings	31.0	15.0	83	31.0	35.0	8388
Loan repayments	51.5	35.0	88	60.0	60.0	8741

\* Unit: 10,000 yen.

\*\* Unit: 1,000 yen.

up. Families cope with this by reducing their loan repayments and the amount they put aside as savings each month. On the other hand, the living costs and amount put aside as savings in the case of families where the husband continued to work at the same company increased slightly. The amount of loan repayments did not change. However, although it appears that there was no great change when one looks at the median value, if one calculates the proportion of families who have reduced their monthly expenditure on living costs, the amount they save, and their loan repayments, one can see that in families where the husband is unemployed, the figures are 53.2%, 56.8%, and 31.3%, respectively. In contrast to this, in families where the husband continued to work at the same company, the figures are 43.0%, 41.9%, and 26.2%, respectively. One can say that families in which the husband has become unemployed maintain their standard of living by reducing the amount set aside as savings and curbing the use of credit cards and purchases of expensive items.

One of the reasons why the living costs of families experiencing unemployment do not change a great deal is that they are dipping into the savings that they have built up hitherto. Of the families in which the husband is unemployed, the proportion of families whose bank balances decreased is 40.0%. In contrast to this, the proportion of families in which the husband continued to work at the same company, which experienced a fall in their bank balance was 34.5%.

One coping mechanism other than curbing expenditure and dipping into savings is to increase income. One way of doing this is to receive unemployment benefit. If one checks

Table 5. Changes in Wife's Way of Working by Change in Husband's Way of Working from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$

Husband: Employed → Unemployed			
Wife at point $t-1$	Wife at point $t$		Number of observations
	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	
Employed (%)	87.1	12.9	62
Unemployed (%)	26.1	73.9	46
Husband: Employed → Employed (same company)			
Wife at point $t-1$	Wife at point $t$		Number of observations
	Employed (%)	Unemployed (%)	
Employed (%)	90.1	9.9	5209
Unemployed (%)	14.1	85.9	4594

the status of receipt of unemployment benefit amongst families in which the husband has become unemployed, one can see that the proportion responding “Received” was just 47.2%. The proportion responding “Did not receive” was 32.4%. The proportion of families responding “Was not enrolled in employment insurance” was 9.3%. It is not the case that all families received this benefit. Amongst those responding “Received” were many families in which the husband’s previous work fell into the category of white-collar worker. It can be inferred that the reason why a family is not receiving the benefit is that the husband was not enrolled in employment insurance for some reason, or he did not know that one cannot receive the benefit unless one applies for it oneself. Alternatively, as the responses to this survey were provided by the wife, it is possible that she was unaware of the actual situation. In addition to unemployment itself, there would appear to be differences between strata in terms of ways of coping with unemployment.

## (2) Changes in Time Use between Husbands and Wives

One method of increasing income other than by receiving unemployment benefit is for the wife to find employment. Has the wife’s way of working changed due to her husband’s unemployment? Has the amount of time the husband spends on housework and childcare increased in response to this? Table 5 shows changes in wives’ ways of working. If one looks at the proportion of wives who were not in employment at point  $t-1$ , but had a job at point  $t$ , one can see that in families experiencing unemployment, the figure is 26%, while in families not experiencing unemployment, it is 14%. One can say that wives began to work in paid employment in families in which the husband become unemployed. In addition, of the wives who continued to work (“In employment → In employment”), the proportion of those who increased their working hours is higher amongst families experiencing

Table 6. Changes in Time Spent at Work and on Housework and Childcare by Change in Husband's Way of Working from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$ 

	Employed → Unemployed			Employed → Employed (same company)		
	$t-1$	$t$	Number of observations	$t-1$	$t$	Number of observations
Time spent at work* (median value)						
Husband	600.0	0.0	80	600.0	600.0	8815
Wife	300.0	300.0	97	180.0	183.0	9451
Time spent on housework* (median value)						
Husband	0.0	3.0	64	0.0	0.0	8743
Wife	241.5	240.0	94	304.0	303.0	8770

\*Unit: Minutes.

unemployment than amongst families not experiencing unemployment (43.4% and 31.8%, respectively). One can say that wives cope with the fall in their husband's income by taking paid employment. However, as one can see from Table 4, the wives' incomes are not very high.

Meanwhile, do husbands who have become unemployed participate more in housework and childcare? Table 6 shows the time spent on housework and the time spent on their jobs by husbands and wives. The time spent by husbands on housework is low to start with. After unemployment, the majority of husbands have increased the amount of time they spend on housework, but the median value is extremely low. Why is this? Firstly, one can predict that husbands would be busy with job-seeking activities. If they think their period of unemployment will be short, they probably feel that there is no need to change the division of labor to any great extent. Another contributing factor might be the fact that those who are defined as unemployed in this paper include a certain number of those who have voluntarily left their jobs in order to advance. Furthermore, it is conceivable that a major factor is that a family lifestyle has already been created in which the wife mainly takes charge of housework and childcare in their daily lives, so this cannot be changed all of a sudden. It is said that couples who flexibly rearrange the division of labor by gender role find it easier to adapt to events that pose a crisis for the family, but changes in the division of labor by gender role entail negotiations between family members. This can bring about a new crisis for a family (Voydanoff 1990). It is easier in the short term not to change the family's lifestyle. Furthermore, the income of wives, who often leave their jobs to marry or have

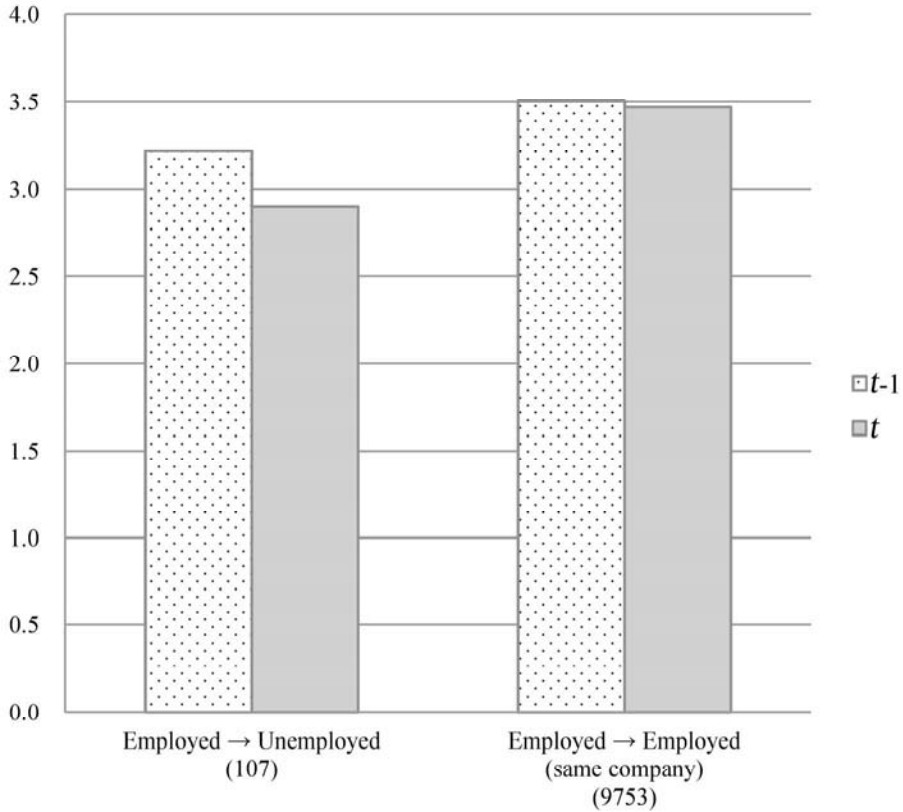


Figure 1. Changes in Wives' Level of Satisfaction with Life by Change in Husband's Way of Working from Point  $t-1$  to Point  $t$

children, is limited. Amidst this kind of situation at present, the most effective coping mechanism is for the wife to take charge of the housework and childcare, and for the husband to find a job as soon as possible.

However, the unemployment of husbands brings about a decline in income, which can become a source of stress for most families. In addition, the fact that the division of roles in regard to housework and childcare hardly changes at all might well also become a source of stress for wives. The level of satisfaction with their lives of wives whose husbands have become unemployed is low to start with, but one can see signs of it declining further. There are considerable errors here, so one cannot definitively say that there is a significant difference, but if the sample size were increased, it can be anticipated that a clear trend would emerge.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Yamaguchi (2007) uses panel data analysis of the JPSC to demonstrate that the husband's unemployment decreases the level of satisfaction with the marital relationship. Based on previous studies

## V. Conclusion

From a comparison of panel data from two points in time, this paper has ascertained what kind of changes occurred in family life as a result of the unemployment of the husband. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the sample size is small and the definition of the term unemployed person differs from that used in a strict sense, but the following three points have become clear: (i) There is a great deal of unemployment amongst those who are in technical work and sales/service work. (ii) The husband's income declines as a result of unemployment. Families are unable to curtail their monthly expenditure a great deal, so they cope instead by reducing the amount of money they set aside as savings or by dipping into the savings that they have already amassed. It is not the case that everyone receives unemployment benefit. (iii) There are wives who go out to work or increase their working hours, but the incomes of wives are not that high. The amount of time that the husband spends on housework or childcare does not increase a great deal. One can perceive a tendency for the level of satisfaction with life of wives, who are forced to shoulder a double burden, to decrease.

In other words, husbands with a low socioeconomic status become unemployed, and the leeway in the already-low household budget decreases as a result of unemployment. Families can cope for the time being by reducing the amount of money they set aside as savings each month, or by dipping into their existing savings, but if this kind of lifestyle continues, anxiety about the future will doubtless remain.

The amount of time that the husband spends on housework or childcare does not increase a great deal after becoming unemployed. It is conceivable that this is because it is more rational to maintain the division of labor by gender role in the short term. If the husband's period of unemployment becomes prolonged and the double burden on the wife continues, there is a possibility that the family will be forced into rethinking the division of labor by gender role, or there is the possibility that it will develop into the dissolution of the family.<sup>6</sup>

The industrial structure is changing greatly, so there is likely to be little possibility that unemployment will decrease in the future. In contrast, there is the view that unemployment will fall if non-regular employment is increased, rather than maintaining regular employment. This would certainly cause unemployment to decrease. However, the current situation is that the proportion of the household budget accounted for by the husband's income is large, and female employment is confined to supplementing the household budget.

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by authors such as Elder, it would be preferable to analyze the relationship between unemployment and the level of satisfaction with the marital relationship. This paper has simply compared two points in time (point  $t-1$  and point  $t$ ), so level of satisfaction with life, which has been covered in the annual survey, has been used here.

<sup>6</sup> Of the families in which the husbands were unemployed at point  $t$ , 5% were divorced by  $t+1$  year.

If the non-regular employment of married men progresses, there is a possibility that the number of families on low incomes will increase, even if the woman is also in paid employment. In that situation, it would likely be difficult to lead a stable family life. The wife obtaining paid employment is deemed to be an effective means of coping with risk, but in Japan, where there is a clear division of labor by gender role and a large gender pay gap, it is necessary to discount the effect of the employment of wives to some extent.

In Japan, responsibility for welfare was hitherto mainly taken by families, but as a result of the Emergency Human Resource Development and Employment Support Fund introduced in July 2009, long-term unemployed persons and non-regular workers who cannot receive benefits under the employment insurance system became eligible to receive benefits during a period of vocational training. This system finished at the end of September 2011, but a jobseekers' support system that made this system permanent started in October that year. The emergence of a new mechanism that supports the household budget during periods of unemployment is a major change, and it can be expected that this will reduce the burden on families.

Three main challenges remain, as outlined below: Firstly, this paper viewed the impact of unemployment on family life and coping mechanisms as being the same. However, one should, by rights, distinguish between them. As Moen (1982) asserts, it is not necessarily the case that a coping mechanism is effective just because it has been adopted. By analyzing which of the multiple coping mechanisms are effective and who used which coping mechanism, one can more appropriately examine "adaptation," which is an important concept in life course theory and family stress theory.

Secondly, there is the question of grasping the long-term impact of unemployment. This paper focused on the short-term impact over the course of a year from point  $t-1$  to point  $t$ . The household budgets of those who are long-term unemployed are quite tight, (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2006), and they are likely to be forced to adopt different coping mechanisms from the short-term unemployed.

Thirdly, there is the problem of the target of the analysis. There is also the possibility that sample selection bias is occurring, with survey subjects becoming divorced or dropping out of the following year's survey due to unemployment. This may be the reason that no great changes are observed in the household budgets of the unemployed persons in this paper.

If one were to broaden the range of consideration further, it would be important to look at the problem of unemployment amongst those who are unmarried. According to the Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate amongst both men and women aged between 15 and 24 is extremely high, at around 10%. They are highly likely to be unmarried, and there is a possibility that their parents, rather than spouses, are supporting their lifestyles. However, parents cannot support their children indefinitely.

It is feared that this will have an impact both on the demographic structure and on fiscal matters. Japan has a low labor force participation rate amongst married women and it



is a country with a clear division of labor by gender role, but the desire to be a full-time housewife is growing amongst young women. Consequently, young people without a stable working life will also be at a disadvantage when it comes to opportunities to create a family (Cabinet Office Director General for Policy on Cohesive Society 2011). The number of children in Japan born outside marriage as a proportion of all births is extremely low, at less than 5%. Consequently, if the number of young people who do not marry increases, the low birthrate will become an even more serious problem. If the number of unmarried elderly people increases, additional social security expenditure will doubtless be required. Research into life course and socioeconomic disparities in recent years has been focusing on whether or not advantage or disadvantage at a particular point in time builds up in a person's subsequent life (cumulative advantage/disadvantage), and whether or not it has an impact on children's lives. Panel data is ideal for elucidating such mechanisms. One hopes that research into unemployment and family life will progress further and that there will be debate concerning the structure of employment systems that will facilitate a stable family life.

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