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Special feature on articles

The Editorial Office of *Japan Labor Issues* has selected significant research papers from those published in 2018–2019 for its annual special issues featuring articles, and will deliver them to you in vol.4, no.20 and no.22. These papers address the latest subjects as well as conventional themes on labor in Japan. Each author has arranged the original papers written in Japanese, in translation for the benefit of overseas readers, which surely will offer useful information and deeper insights into the state of labor in Japan. We sincerely thank authors for their effort for this issue.

Editorial Office, *Japan Labor Issues*

Japan's "Employment Ice-age Generation" Today: Investigating the Impact of Instability in the School-to-work Transition

Yukie Hori

The youth unemployment rate in Japan has remained relatively low in comparison with that of other countries, due to the system of "simultaneous mass recruiting of new graduates" allowing young people to make a smooth transition from school to work. However, during the extreme slump in employment opportunities from 1993 to 2004—, namely a period which became known as the "employment ice age," young people graduating high school or university were often unable to make that transition so easily. This paper sheds light on the state of employment among the "employment ice-age generation" through secondary analysis of data from MIC's *Employment Status Survey* 2017. While said generation is already in or approaching middle age, even now a considerable percentage are still freeters or NEETs. The rate of new graduates entering regular employment was used to divide them into the six generations: the "late bubble economy generation," "early employment ice-age generation," "late employment ice-age generation," "economic recovery generation," "2008 financial crisis generation," and "Abenomics generation." Looking at the results by gender and educational background, the rate for male and female university graduates was at its lowest in the late employment ice-age generation among those six, with the rate subsequently making a rapid recovery to the level it had reached in the early employment ice age generation. In the case of high school graduates, the trends among male were similar to those of male and female university graduates, while among female high school graduates the rate remained low until the recent economic recovery. It was also observed that the rate of people who were still regular employees in the company that they had joined directly after graduation was also low among the ice-age generation in comparison with other generations, suggesting that the instability that this generation faced at the time of first entering employment has an ongoing impact on their careers into middle age. The ice-age generation was the first since the postwar rapid economic growth to provoke awareness of the need to provide support for young people, and is likely to continue to unsettle the frameworks of Japanese society that have long been based on the premise of the availability of stable employment.

I. Background and Objectives

The objective of this paper is to shed light on the current situation of the "employment ice-age generation" through secondary analysis of 2017 *Employment Status Survey* conducted by the Statistics Bureau, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). While support for the employment ice-age generation is addressed in the government's recent Action Plan for the Realization of Work Style Reform, under measures for "creating an environment to facilitate human resources development and other empowerment for women and young people" in a category entitled "empowerment of the employment ice-age generation and young people," many readers may wonder why the employment ice-age generation—who are already in or approaching their 40s—are categorized alongside young people in the context of policies on career development.

The employment ice-age generation was the first since the period of postwar rapid economic progress to reveal issues concerning youth employment in Japan. Simultaneous mass recruiting of new graduates (*shinki ikkatsu saiyo*) has long been a customary means of hiring students straight from school to, generally, regular employment.[1] From the rapid economic growth period until the early 1990s, young people had access to a stable source of employment opportunities and the youth unemployment rate was considerably low in comparison with that of other countries. As a result, young peoples' struggles to find employment as new graduates and in turn develop stable careers following the collapse of Japan's bubble economy had gone unrecognized for over ten years, and it was not until the Youth Independence and Challenge Plan of 2003 that youth employment was acknowledged as a major policy issue in the society. As the employment ice-age generation have grown older, they have been addressed as part of developments in Japan's policies on youth employment, and thus they seem to be regarded as an extension of the younger generation in support frameworks such as those set out in the aforementioned Action Plan.

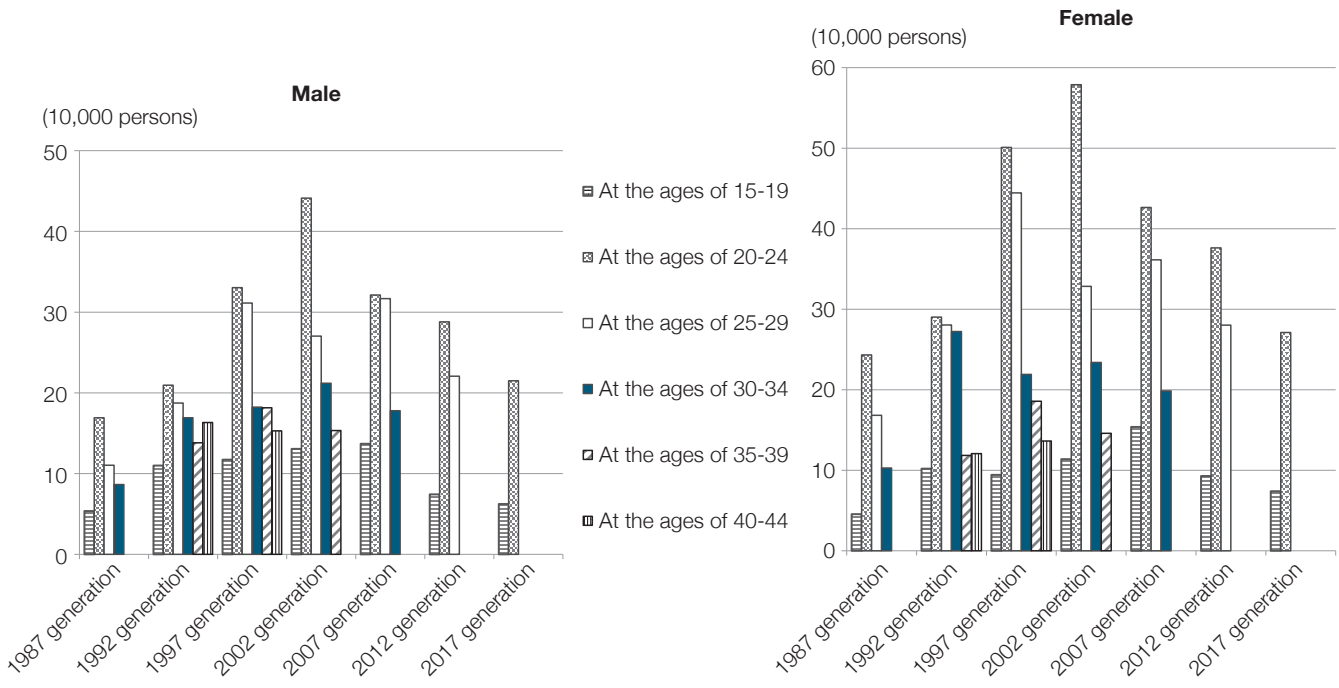
At the same time, a clear consensus is yet to be reached as to the age group that the "employment ice-age generation" covers. While the term "employment ice age," originally coined by a job-placement magazine, appears to have been recognized by society to a certain extent, the period it refers to is not expressly defined.[2] In this paper we will begin by utilizing data from the *Employment Status Survey* to define the quantitative trends in freeters and NEETs among the age group referred to by employment policies as the employment ice-age generation. We will then use the rate of people entering regular employment as a new graduate—as an indicator of the employment situation at the time that those graduates entered the labor market—as a basis to categorize people in the period surrounding the employment ice age and look at the trends in their career paths, before concluding by interpreting and elaborating on the analysis results. In addition to the data provided by the MIC from the 2017 edition of the survey (respondents' employment status as of October 1, 2017), the analysis also draws on results from previous studies.[3]

Before the analysis, let us review the state of research on the employment ice-age generation. The first youth employment issues recognized in Japan were those concerning difficulties in the previously stable transition from high school to employment. Investigation of such issues in turn prompted survey research on the subsequent situations of young people who had entered the labor market under such instability (Hori 2018). There is a significant amount of research on the younger years of the employment ice-age generation after they entered the labor market. However, research on the said generation after reaching their 40s is extremely limited, with the rare examples including studies by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT 2017), the Research Institute for Advancement of Living Standards (RIALS 2016) and in Genda, ed. (2017), in which the employment ice-age generation are treated as "non-regular workers in mid-prime-age." This paper seeks to provide insights on the current situation of the employment ice-age generation by investigating the consequences that the instability in their school to labor market transition may have had for them as they enter or approach middle age.

II. Quantitative Trends among Freeters and NEETs

Policy documents in recent years have adopted the assumption that members of the employment ice-age generation are currently around 35 to 45 years of age. In this section we will draw on data from the MIC's *Employment Status Survey* and the fact that it is conducted at five-year intervals to investigate the generational trends in employment status by regarding the early 20s (20–25) age group from the surveys in 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2017 as pseudo-cohorts. As the early 20s age group has the highest number of freeters (see note for Figure 1 for definition) across the generations, the "generations" referred to here are early 20s age groups from the respective surveys—for instance, the "1982 generation" refers to the early 20s age group in the 1982 survey. While this approach entails the problem that the timings of the surveys do not necessarily correspond with the economic trends and thus the economic circumstances faced at the time of entering the labor market may differ from person to person within the same five-year cohort, it is an excellent means of ascertaining a dynamic view of the changes that have occurred.

Among the 1987 generation, who were able to make a stable transition into employment, the number of freeters decreases sharply following a slight increase in their early 20s (Figure 1). The employment ice-age generation (in their late 30s and early 40s as of 2019) includes the 1997, 2002, and 2007 generations, and its core is the 2002 generation. A comparison between the genders shows a rather high number of freeters among women, but a highly similar trend in the changes. Among the 1997 generation the number of freeters did not decrease even in their early 20s. The number first showed a decrease in their late 20s, which was relatively limited. While among the 2002 generation the number of male freeters significantly exceeded 400,000, this decreased in their late 20s, and continued to decrease into their early 30s. For the 2007 generation, the number

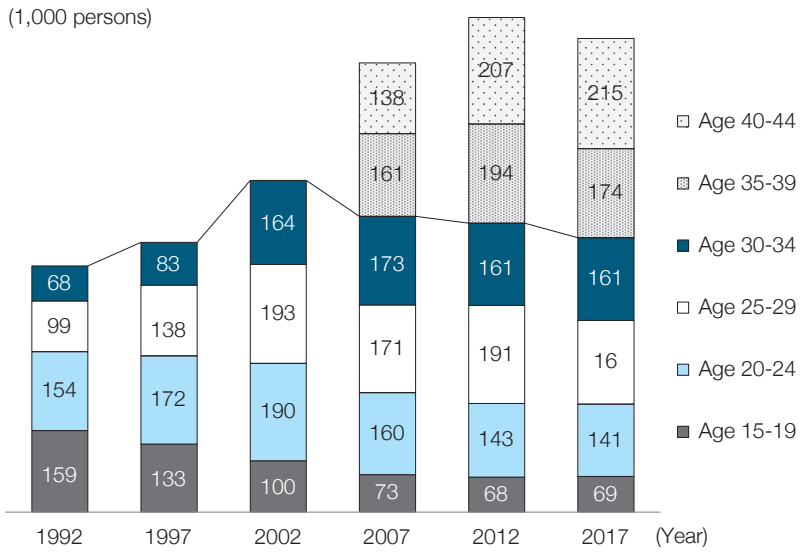


Source: JILPT (2019).
Note: "Freeters" refer to school graduates (and the unmarried in the case of female) who are currently employed and referred to as "part-time workers or *arbeit* (temporary workers)" at their workplace, or who are currently not engaged in work and neither doing housework nor attending school but wish to be employed as part-time workers or *arbeit*. The typical age range for "freeters" (15–34 years of age) is not applied in this analysis.

Figure 1. Trends in the number of freeters by generation (pseudo-cohorts)

of freeters saw almost no change in their early 20s and late 20s, but decreased rapidly in their early 30s. Similar to the preceding generations, both the 2012 and 2017 generations showed the highest numbers of freeters in their early 20s, and among the 2012 generation that number was on the decrease in their late 20s. While the number of freeters always saw the highest increase among those in their early 20s across the generations, the numbers also decrease at the time of economic upturns. Here it is particularly interesting to note the numbers of freeters in the late 30s and early 40s age groups. While the figures for the 1987 generation, which are only estimates for up until the early 30s, show small values, the succeeding generations—the 1992, 1997, and 2002 generations—clearly include a considerable number of freeters even among those in their late 30s and after. The trends in the numbers of freeters aged 35–44 are, for men, an increase from 230,000 in 2007 to 340,000 in 2012, followed by a slight decrease to 300,000 in 2017, and, for women, an increase from 190,000 in 2007 to 310,000 in 2012, followed by a slight decrease to 290,000 in 2017. This shows that a significant number of those from the age group known as the employment ice-age generation are still not in stable employment in mid-to-older age.

Let us now look at the trends in NEETs (see note for Figure 2 for definition), albeit with a slightly different approach.[4] While the cohorts are defined according to the same principle as adopted above, here we will focus on those in their late 30s and early 40s from 2007 onward. These are the same age groups as those for the freeters in the 1997, 2002, and 2007 generations above. In the 2017 survey, the late 30s and early 40s age groups include greater numbers than the early 20s age group, shifting the overall volume toward a higher age range. Moreover, the rise or fall in the number of NEETs is not significantly influenced by the employment conditions as opposed to freeters. While the relevant graph has been omitted, it is important to note that this trend appears to be due to a combination of multiple issues that may not all be related to employment, given that a higher percentage of respondents state "illness or injury" as a reason for not working in comparison with other age groups, and that a significant number are not working for long periods.



Source: JILPT (2019).

Note: "People not in education, employment or training (NEETs)" are defined as graduates who are currently not receiving education and are neither in employment nor seeking employment. Those who have a spouse or are engaged in household work are excluded. For those aged 35 or over, only the results of the 2007 survey onward have been included.

Figure 2. Trends in the number of people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

III. Categorization of the Employment Ice-age Generation

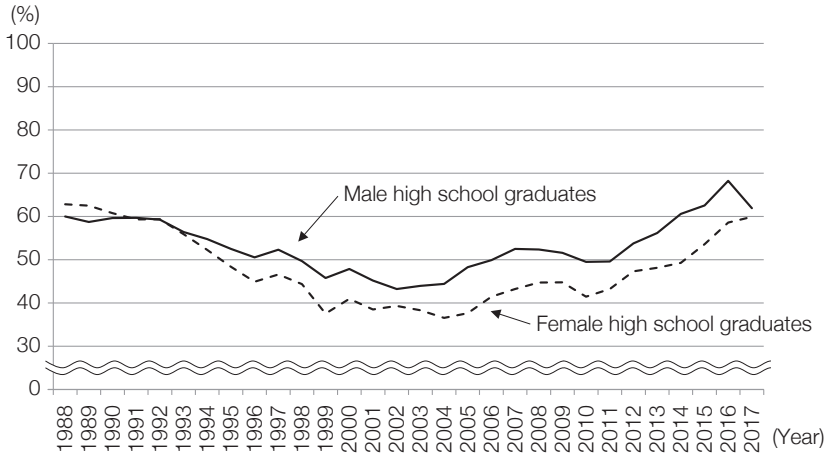
As touched on above, the concept of the employment ice-age generation is still not clearly defined. The "lost generation," a term adopted by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper to describe an almost identical concept, is defined as referring to people born between 1972 and 1982 (Asahi Shimbun "The Lost Generation" Press Team 2007). While both the "employment ice-age generation" and the "lost generation" are generally regarded as those who graduated in a period of poor employment opportunities and have continued to face unstable conditions thereafter, Taromaru (2009) questions such a definition of the issue. Building on the premise that the "lost generation" were merely victims of the "chronocentrism" (the misconception that the period one is living in is special or unique) of that age, he uses data from the "Labour Force Survey" conducted by Statistics Bureau, MIC to argue that the rates of people in non-regular employment are in fact comparatively lower among the "lost generation" than among younger generations (Taromaru 2009: 135). While this is certainly a thought-provoking argument, when considered that the employment ice-age generation is a category defined with a focus on the poor economic conditions at the time of their graduation, it could be suggested that analysis is more effective if it includes data by gender, year of graduation, and educational background respectively, rather than only by year of birth and gender.[5] For instance, in the case of people born in 1972, those who entered employment as high school graduates did so during the bubble economy, while those entering employment as university graduates did so in the employment ice age. That is, the problem of analysis only by year of birth and gender is that the economic circumstances at the time of entering employment may differ from person to person among those born in the same year. The analysis is insufficient if people with the same year of birth but differing educational backgrounds are placed in the same group, particularly when such a group corresponds with a shift in the economy, and this may have influenced the results. When setting the generations within the labor market, it is therefore preferable to use groups categorized by gender, educational background, and year of graduation, as seen in Ota, Genda and Kondo (2007).

An online survey led by Genda (RIALS 2016) limited its subjects to those who had graduated from a four-year university and categorized them on the assumption that they graduated from university at 22 years of age. Those who graduated between academic year (AY) 1989 and AY 1993 are classed as the "pre-employment ice-age generation," followed by AY 1994–1998 graduates as the "early employment ice-age generation," AY 1999–2003 graduates as the "late employment ice-age generation" and AY 2004–2008 graduates as the "post-employment ice-age generation." While it is unfortunate that only university graduates are included, this was no doubt unavoidable given the general difficulty in securing high school graduates as subjects for online surveys. It would also be more effective to directly inquire the year of graduation, rather than using an assumed year of graduation.[6]

For this paper we have therefore divided people in the period surrounding the employment ice-age generation into "generations" based on a combination of gender, educational background and year of graduation. It is, however, necessary to note that there are also problems involved in using data from the *Employment Status Survey*. While the survey includes questions on year of graduation, year of first entering employment, and job status in first employment, it does not inquire about the situation at the time of graduation in detail. Moreover, respondents may not necessarily have first entered employment directly after graduation, and where respondents did not first enter employment in the same year as they graduated, there may be a discrepancy between the year of graduation and the year of first entering employment. We addressed these issues by creating the following variables: "entered regular employment directly (by June) after graduation," "entered regular employment within three years," "entered regular employment three or more years later," "first form of employment was not regular employment," "year of entering employment predates year of graduation," "yet to enter employment," "other/unknown." In calculating the rate of people entering regular employment as a new graduate (the percentage of those who "entered regular employment directly, i.e. by June, after graduation"; referred to as the "new graduate regular employment rate" hereinafter NGRER), those

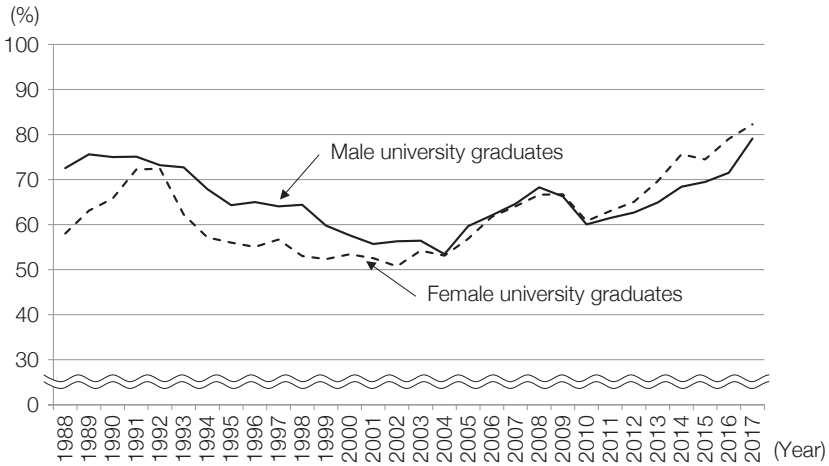
who selected the response "year of entering employment predates year of graduation," or "other/unknown" were excluded. Moreover, the survey response options for "year of first entering employment" included only 1988 or later. We therefore investigated the trends in NGRER by educational background, gender, and year of first entering employment for people who graduated in 1988 or later. As it is not possible to cover all types of educational background in this paper, we focus exclusively on high school graduates and university graduates.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the trends in NGRER by gender for high school graduates and university graduates respectively. In the case of high school graduates, NGRER for both men and women dropped below 60% from 1993 onward, and from the early 2000s fell below 50% for men and 40% for women. Despite recovering in 2006, it fell once again in 2010 due to the impact of the 2008 financial crisis. While it has since then been on the increase as a result of the economic upturn in recent years, for female high school graduates



Source: JILPT (2019).
Note: Low NGRER in 2017 is thought to be attributable to the fact that the survey was conducted in the same year and respondents therefore included high school graduates who had failed university entrance examinations and were studying to retake (*shingaku rōnin*).

Figure 3. Trends in the new graduate regular employment rate (percentage of people who first entered employment as a regular employee by June in the year of their graduation) among high school graduates



Source: JILPT (2019).

Figure 4. Trends in the new graduate regular employment rate (percentage of respondents who first entered employment as a regular employee by June in the year of their graduation) among university graduates

it has not returned to its level during the bubble economy. Looking at the trends for university graduates (Figure 4), NGRER for male university graduates, which is relatively high in general, exceeded 70% even in 1993 but dropped below 60% in 1999. It recovered to 60% in 2006 and has improved in recent years despite a temporary dip due to the 2008 financial crisis. At 58.0% NGRER for female university graduates in 1988 was considerably low in comparison with that of male university graduates, but this is thought to be attributable to the fact that at the time it was harder for women who had graduated from a university to find employment in comparison with those who had graduated from a junior college (two-year post-secondary college). NGRER for female university graduates peaked in 1992, after which it dropped below 60% in 1994 and stagnated around that level, until later recovering to 60% in 2006. Although subsequently also affected by the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, it is currently higher than the levels it reached during the bubble economy. As this analysis shows, while the trends in NGRER differ slightly according to educational background or gender, the key turning points are 1993–94, 1998–99, 2004, and 2010, regardless of those factors.

This analysis therefore defines the "employment ice-age generation" as those who reached school graduation age between 1993 and 2004, as is also the range adopted in policy development. Given, as shown in Table 1, the differing levels in NGRER within said employment ice-age generation we divided the generation into the *early* employment ice-age generation and *late* employment ice-age generation, and created a total of six "generations" as follows: the "late bubble economy generation" (graduation between 1988 and 1992, the same applies below), the "early employment ice-age generation" (1993–1998), "late employment ice-age generation" (1999–2004), "economic recovery generation" (2005–2009), "2008 financial crisis generation" (2010–2011) and "Abenomics[7] generation" (2012–2017).

The significant changes in NGRER can be seen in the figures for high school graduates and female university graduates. High school graduates faced even greater difficulty in periods of economic downturn. In recent years, NGRER for male high school graduates has been returning to the level it had reached during the "late bubble economy generation," while for female high school graduates it was not until the "Abenomics generation" that it finally reached the level it had in the "early employment ice-age generation." In the case of female university graduates, NGRER has seen an unprecedented rise since the mid-2000s, despite the impact

Table 1. Categorization of generations by new graduate regular employment rate

(%)

Year of graduation	**Generation**	New graduate regular employment rate (NGRER)	
		Male	Female
High school graduates			
1988–1992	**Late bubble economy generation**	57.6	61.5
1993–1998	**Early employment ice-age generation**	49.7	47.4
1999–2004	**Late employment ice-age generation**	42.1	35.5
2005–2009	**Economic recovery generation**	48.3	39.2
2010–2011	**2008 financial crisis generation**	48.3	38.9
2012–2017	**Abenomics generation**	56.8	47.6
University graduates			
1988–1992	**Late bubble economy generation**	76.2	68.6
1993–1998	**Early employment ice-age generation**	67.8	58.6
1999–2004	**Late employment ice-age generation**	57.4	54.7
2005–2009	**Economic recovery generation**	66.4	65.2
2010–2011	**2008 financial crisis generation**	63.1	62.8
2012–2017	**Abenomics generation**	70.1	76.5

Source: Hori (2019).

of the 2008 financial crisis slowing its recovery.

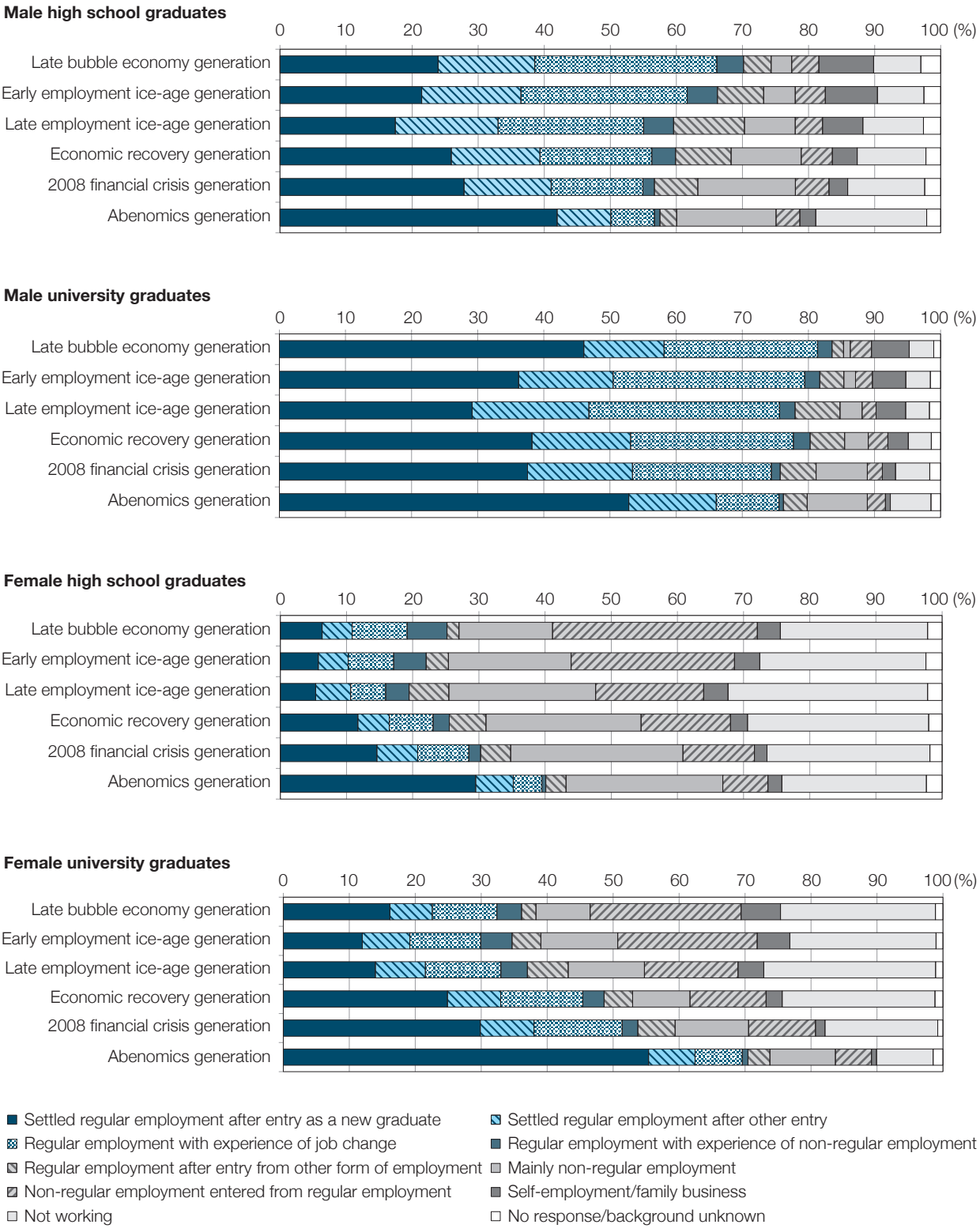
Let us now look at the current situation of the employment ice-age generation in Figure 5 in terms of their career types as shown in the box below. The high school graduates of the "Abenomics generation" include young people who had just graduated high school at the time of the survey. Those "not working" are considered to include high school graduates who had failed university entrance examinations and were studying to retake. Note that full-time homemakers (male and female) have been excluded from the analysis of career types.

Looking at the distribution of career types by generation for each educational background, male high school graduates have a low percentage of those in "settled regular employment after entry as a new graduate" and a high percentage of those in "regular employment after entry from other form of employment" in the early and late employment ice-age generations in comparison with other generations. A similar trend can also be seen among male university graduates, with the percentage of those in "settled regular employment after entry as a new graduate" lower among the "late employment ice-age generation" than among the "early

Career types

- **Settled regular employment after entry as a new graduate**
  First entered employment as a regular employee and currently in the same job (first entered employment by June of the year of graduating school)
- **Settled regular employment after other entry as a new graduate**
  First entered employment as a regular employee and currently in the same job (first entered employment in July of the year of graduating school or later)
- **Regular employment with experience of job change**
  First employment, previous employment, and current employment all as a regular employee (has changed jobs)
- **Regular employment with experience of non-regular employment**
  First employment as a regular employee, previous employment in a type of employment other than regular employee, and current employment as a regular employee
- **Regular employment after entry from other form of employment**
  First employment in a form of employment other than regular employee, current employment as a regular employee
- **Mainly non-regular employment**
  First employment in a form of employment other than regular employee, current employment is also non-regular employment
- **Non-regular employment entered from regular employment**
  First employment as a regular employee, current employment is non-regular employment
- **Self-employment/family business**
  Currently self-employed or engaged in family business
- **Not working**
  Currently not working
- **No response/background unknown**
  Current employment is regular or non-regular employment but background is unknown, or, current form of employment is unknown

Source: JILPT (2019).
Notes: 1. The survey asks respondents to state their "first employment," "previous employment" and "current employment."
2. "Non-regular employment" refers to those *not* employed as regular employees or workers, under categories referred to by their employers as "part time," "side job (*arubaito*)," "dispatched worker from a temporary staffing agency," "contract employee," "temporary contract employee (*shokutaku*)" or "other."
3. "Other form of employment" refers to "non-regular employment" as well as "self-employed/family business" and those whose "form of employment is unknown."



Source: JILPT (2019).

Figure 5. Careers of the employment ice-age generation in comparison with other generations

employment ice-age generation." Among those in the same employment ice-age generation NGRER differs between the early and the late stage of the generation, suggesting that developing a career was more difficult for those in the "late employment ice-age generation."

In the case of female high school graduates, although it is difficult to identify clear trends given that many leave employment due to marriage, having children or other such reasons, the percentage of those in "regular employment after entry from other form of employment" is high among those in the "late employment ice-age generation." While female university graduates also demonstrate a similar trend to that among female high school graduates, the fact that the percentage of those in "settled regular employment after entry as a new graduate" is lower among the "early employment ice-age generation" and "late employment ice-age generation" than among the older age group—namely, the "late bubble economy generation"—appears to indicate the persistent aftereffects of the difficulties of finding employment at the time of graduation.

IV. The Employment Ice-age Generation Today and the Future of Policy Support

This paper has utilized data from the 2017 *Employment Status Survey* to ascertain the situation of the employment ice-age generation. Even as the employment ice-age generation grows older, a considerable number are still in unstable forms of employment or not working. A categorization of the generations on the basis of NGRER revealed that the rate was lowest among the "late employment ice-age generation," regardless of gender or educational background. Female high school graduates in particular saw a consistently low NGRER not only in the employment ice-age generation but across the generations, up until the economic recovery of recent years. The analysis showed that the careers of the employment ice-age generation are more unstable in contrast with those of other generations, suggesting that the difficult situation they faced at the time of graduation has an ongoing impact on their careers even as they grow older.

While many developed countries have responded to the unstable conditions that young people have been facing since the 1970s by gradually developing various forms of social support, in Japanese society—where it has been assumed that young people will enjoy a stable transition into employment—unstable economic conditions in people's younger years have resulted in considerable difficulty for affected people and their families. As it took Japanese society some time to recognize the necessity of support for young people, the employment ice-age generation were forced to rely on their own resources to endure difficult conditions in a persistently struggling economy. Among the younger generation it is also generally the case that those who fail to make the transition into regular employment at the first opportunity go on to have an unstable career. The employment ice-age generation was the first since Japan's postwar rapid economic growth to reveal to Japanese society the necessity for young people to receive support,[8] and in the future it will continue to unsettle the various frameworks that were established from the rapid growth period onward. The difficulties that the employment ice-age generation are currently facing in middle age are also likely to arise in similar forms for the younger generations at some point. Particularly the trend of NEETs, who have hardly decreased despite the economic recovery, is thought to be likely to remain an ongoing problem.

In addition to the provision of support for members of the employment ice-age generation—who are already in or approaching middle age—to convert to regular employment, it is also expected that Work Style Reform to ensure equal pay for equal work and measures to ensure that workers can convert to open-ended employment under the amended Labor Contracts Act will provide means for those who are working to continue doing so, even if they are in side jobs (*arubaito*) or other such forms of non-regular employment. For those who are not working, there is a need for action such as collaboration with forms of welfare support that go beyond the conventional forms of job seekers' support. At the same time, looking at the practical steps that have been taken to implement support, there are also a considerable amount of issues to address. Given that the current support for the employment ice-age generation is largely provided by support institutions such as the "Regional Youth Support Stations" intended to assist young people of 15–34 years of age, it is

necessary to consider whether it is viable to apply the conventional methods of support for young people to the employment ice-age generation.

Moreover, high school employment guidance, which for many years contributed to ensuring a smooth transition from high school to employment on the basis of a plentiful selection of job vacancies for high school graduates, has inevitably undergone changes since the early 1990s—particularly in high schools specializing in commerce (*shōgyō kōkō*) and high schools providing a comprehensive academic curriculum (*futsū kōkō*)—as a result of the difficulties that arose as the labor market for high school graduates shrunk rapidly in times of economic recession (Hori 2016). In the coming years, the deteriorating employment environment seems likely to continue to directly affect the transition of high school graduates, particularly female high school graduates, into employment. While in other societies the difficulties surrounding said transition for young people who do not go on to receive higher education have attracted significant social concern, in Japan they have not been regarded as such a major issue due to the role played by Japan's unique system for high school graduates to enter employment. In the future, it will be necessary to provide even greater support for ensuring the smooth transition of high school graduates into Japanese professional society.

* This paper is based on an article commissioned by the editorial committee of *The Japanese Journal of Labour Studies* for inclusion in the special feature "Work Style Reform Series 3: Other Implementation Plans" in its May 2019 issue (vol.61, no.706) with additions and amendments in line with the gist of *Japan Labor Issues*.

Notes

1. Companies recruit inexperienced young people on the basis of their 'trainability.' The principal criterion for taking on a graduate is the school or college from which he or she graduated. Companies plan on developing employees' abilities within the company over the long term. Unlike recruitment aimed at filling vacancies, the mass recruitment of new graduates involves recruitment of school or college students at fixed intervals to start work as *seiki koyo* employees (regular employees) (Hori and Nakajima 2018).
2. The term "employment ice age" received a special recognition award in the "New Words and Buzzwords Awards of the Year" (*Shingo/Ryūkōgo Taishō*) in 1994.
3. The analysis covered in this paper was conducted independently and may not be consistent with the individual questionnaire data from the *Employment Status Survey* conducted by MIC.
4. As the analysis of past trends in NEETs has only been conducted for the 1992 survey onward, the surveys analyzed are not identical to those for the analysis of freeters.
5. Taromaru (2017), which follows up on these insights, also focuses its analysis of the "Labour Force Survey" on year of birth and gender only.
6. The analysis in JILPT (2014) also uses an assumed year of first entering employment.
7. Abenomics is the economic policy to overcome deflation and strengthen the economy adopted by the administration led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.
8. While empirical research on the generation effect in labor economics includes analysis regarding population size and state of demand (Ota, Genda, and Kondo 2007), this analysis investigates the conditions of transitions into employment as the result of population size and the state of demand. It could be suggested that one of the key reasons why the "employment ice-age generation" prompted the youth employment problem to be widely recognized is that Japanese society was unable to withstand the considerable quantitative impact of this problem, due to the fact that the population size is large in comparison with other generations.

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The Slow Decline of the Male-breadwinner Family Model in Contemporary Japan and Its Ramifications for Men's Lives

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The strength of a "gender triad" consisting of company employees, housewives, and corporations that formed during the nation's years of high economic growth has been partly responsible for Japan's lateness in shifting from the male-breadwinner family model to the dual-earning model. However, today, as the cost-benefit balance of the male-breadwinner family model worsens, a rise in the employment continuation rate among women is observed in various forms of statistical data. In this paper, I use an interview survey of 26 men and women that was conducted in two large enterprises in 2017 to consider the significance of the slow decline of the male-breadwinner family model, as indicated by macro data, for the way Japanese men work and live, in comparison with the United States and Sweden. The survey data suggest that the likelihood of women continuing employment has increased compared to before. Companies have taken various measures to support work-family balance, resulting in a rise in the number of women who continue employment by actually using these support systems; ultimately, inspired by the role models in their workplace, the number of women who commit to continuing employment has also increased. As a result, there are now not a few men and women who plan their lives based on the assumption that both will continue working. Moreover, according to the survey data, the possibility that more men will participate in family life can be expected, as is the case in Sweden, as the model's conversion takes place; however, the data also suggest the danger that more men will withdraw from family life, as is the case observed among some men in the United States. Japanese men now stand at a crossroads that could lead to two completely opposite directions.

I. Introduction

In many Western countries, male-breadwinner families are being replaced by dual-earning families. However, the change in the family model is taking place slowly, if at all, in Japan. It has been pointed out that this delay in the shift is responsible for various social problems in Japanese society, such as an increase

in the number of people who remain unmarried and a decrease in the number of children. In this paper, I will start with an overview of family change in the United States and Sweden, two of the earliest examples of the dual-earning model penetrating into society, with the aim of later making a comparison with Japan. I will then discuss the reasons why the shift to the dual-earning model is lagging in Japan. Next, I will examine early signs of transformation in Japanese families in order to identify which part of the model is changing, how, and why. Finally, I will consider the significance of the model's tentative transition for the way Japanese men work and live.

II. Family change in the United States and Sweden

Following the Second World War, industrialization and economic development in Western countries produced benefits that spread throughout society. Many women were freed from wage labor and became full-time housewives, and the male-breadwinner family model became commonplace. However, beginning in the 1970s, the industrial structure began to change from being manufacturing-based to service-based, and consequently, demand for low-skilled, relatively homogeneous male laborers declined dramatically in the manufacturing sector. As male employment destabilized and wages fell, the difficulty and risk of supporting a family with only the man working grew. On the other hand, the shift from manual labor to office work and interpersonal services increased demand for female workers. Against this backdrop of major social and economic change, an environment in which both men and women work gradually took shape. However, the dual-earning model did not spread evenly to all developed countries. The shift in models occurred most quickly in the United States and Sweden. Key factors were the socialization of childcare, followed by men's participation in family life.

For full-time housewives to enter the workforce, there had to be someone who would take over housework and child-rearing on their behalf; particularly important were child-rearing duties that could not be put off and housework that concerned child-rearing. Relatively speaking, the U.S. and Sweden are countries that have been successful at socializing childcare. However, the ways they went about doing this were completely different.

As indicated by the analysis of postindustrial economies presented by Esping-Andersen (1999), Sweden is progressing on a path of social democracy that maintains high welfare and high tax and social security burdens. Compared to other Western countries, the male-breadwinner family model was relatively weak from the beginning and was swept away in the 1970s as women's participation in the labor force progressed (Sainsbury 1996). Public services were provided for childcare and elderly nursing care, and many of the women who were released from care work in the home were absorbed into the public sector as care workers. As a result, occupational gender segregation took place with men, many of whom were employed in the private sector, and it has been pointed out that although women had a high participation rate in the workforce, the percentage of women in management positions was not as high (Tsutsui 2015). Additionally, a government-led childcare leave system was established, in part due to a relatively strong tendency toward emphasizing infant care by parents. One of the characteristics of the Swedish childcare leave system is that it provides income compensation not only to mothers, but also to fathers.[1] In fact, in addition to the socialization of childcare, Sweden is among the most advanced countries in terms of male participation in family life. According to Takahashi (2016), who analyzed data from the "2015 Comparative International Awareness Survey on Societies with Declining Birth Rate," respondents in the 20 to 49 age group who indicated that the statement "wives and husbands handle child-rearing equally" best describes their own thinking was 94% for both men and women in Sweden. This figure is much higher than those of Japan (men 37%, women 30%), France (men 51%, women 50%), and the United Kingdom (men 68%, women 62%).

In the United States, where the stress is placed on market mechanisms, public support for childcare such as childcare leave systems and public nursery schools is limited. The socialization of childcare became

possible when a large low-wage workforce, primarily composed of immigrants, provided care work through the market. In addition, because the external labor market is well developed in the U.S., women had many opportunities to leave the labor market to give birth or raise children and then return to the market by taking another job. The female employment rate in the U.S. rose markedly from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. As a result, the share of households with a full-time housewife among all households fell conspicuously from roughly two-thirds in 1950 to 28% in 1980 (Reskin and Padavic 1994). Moreover, as more and more women joined the American workforce, the percentage of women in management positions also rose considerably. This percentage, which stood at just 18.5% in 1970, reached 35.6% in 1985 (Kurosawa 2011). However, in the United States, it is difficult for low-wage earners to pay expensive childcare costs in order to work, and thus the entrenchment of social class disparities has become a problem.

In Sweden, male participation in family life increased with the socialization of childcare. However, the situation is slightly different in the United States. This is because, despite the fact that, like Sweden, the number of men who participate in family life undoubtedly increased—in other words, those who share the responsibility for maintaining the family's livelihood as well as housework and child-rearing duties with their wife expanded—as the share of households with a full-time housewife decreased, the number of men who opt for independence over commitment to their families also increased. Bernard (1983) reports that, even from the 1960s, there were men who worked hard to achieve "success" as livelihood providers on the one hand, but also the number of men who rejected this kind of "success" and abandoned their families gradually increased on the other. This trend was accelerated when traditionally male jobs in the manufacturing sector decreased, male employment became destabilized, and wages fell, and it became more difficult for a man alone to fulfill his responsibility to provide for his family. For example, in a study analyzing the decrease in men who fulfill the role of breadwinner, Gerson (1993) stated that two new trends could be seen among American men. One was an increase in men who participated in family life ("involved fathers"), and the other was an increase in men who shied away from family responsibilities ("autonomous men"). Gerson asserted that evading family responsibilities was a pattern of behavior that men took when they were denied the authority they traditionally held as breadwinner and failed to build a new (nonauthoritarian) relationship with women and children. Gerson pointed out that the latter trend—specifically, the increasing number of men who gave up their economic and non-economic responsibilities for child-rearing through divorce or separation—was a problem having a huge negative impact on American society as a whole.

To summarize, the socialization of childcare was advanced publicly in Sweden and through market mechanisms in the United States. In both countries, care work that was previously provided free in the home was now being provided for a fee by many women, although there was a difference in that, in Sweden, these women were employed in the public sector, and, in the United States, they were low-wage immigrant workers.[2] It must be noted that, even in Sweden, where more men participate in family life, it is not correct to say that the reason women are spending less time doing housework and child-rearing is because men are taking their place. On the other hand, two trends going in opposite directions—participation in family life and withdrawal from the family—are being seen among American men as the single-breadwinner model weakens.

III. The difficulty of making the transition to the dual-earning model in Japan

Japan, along with Southern Europe, has the lowest female workforce participation among the developed countries. However, this is not to say that Japanese women have traditionally not worked. Tsutsui (2015) points out that the male-breadwinner family model was more entrenched in the West than in Japan. In the 1960s, the percentages of women participating in the workforces of major Western countries were generally below that of Japan at around 40 to 50%. On the other hand, in 1960, the percentage of women participating in Japan's workforce was 60%. Even in 1975, when the number of full-time housewives in Japan increased the most, the percentage never fell below 50%. This is because, as is well presented in Ochiai (2004), the

shares of people engaged in agriculture and self-employment remained solid for a comparatively long time in Japan's postwar economy, and the fact that workplaces and residences tend to be adjacent in these sectors made it possible for women to work as family workers. Why, then, has the shift toward the dual-earning model occurred in Western countries, where the male-breadwinner family model was stronger, but not yet in Japan? The question that must be asked here is: Why can't Japan escape from a male-breadwinner family model adapted to its period of high economic growth even after becoming a postindustrial society? Tsutsui (2016) states the reason is that the model "fit too well." In the following, I discuss what precisely "fit too well" means.

The combination of a man who is devoted to maintaining the family's livelihood and a woman who is devoted to housework and child-rearing is, it could be said, a team of two specialists. Both the man and the woman are specialists in their respective areas, and both require the services of the other. Thus, their linkage is theoretically stronger than the combination of two generalists who can cover both areas and, in this sense, do not require the services of the other person. It is often said that divorces increase when women have economic power. This is because a woman who is a generalist is less dependent upon a man's breadwinning ability than a full-time housewife who is a specialist. Kano (2004) states that, in certain ways, Japan's high economic growth was made possible by the strong bond formed between "salaryman" husbands and full-time housewives. He called this system the "Company Employee–Housewife System."

Even if it is argued that identity as a "salaryman" is unique to Japanese men, (Dasgupta 2013, Taga 2011), the combination of a male employee and housewife is not exclusive to Japanese society. What, then, is uniquely Japanese? It is the existence of corporations that fully supported the coupling of a company employee and housewife and that generously provided them with financial assistance. In this sense, Japan's gender structure is not a dyad comprising men and women, but rather a triad that includes corporations (Ogasawara 2016). Japanese companies of the postwar era stepped into the daily lives of not only their employees, but also their employees' families, and attempted to align them with the company's interests. An example is the New Life Movement, which major corporations initiated in the 1950s. The movement's aim was to make their (male) employees' lives more democratic, rational, and cultural and thereby provide an environment in which they could devote themselves to their work without worries. It mainly organized employees' wives and provided guidance on all modern household matters, including family planning (Takeda 2014).

The various family allowances companies paid also strengthened the triad's bonds. Historically, government-provided public assistance for housing and children's education has been limited in Japan in comparison with Western countries, and therefore corporations have filled this role. Many companies have paid some kind of allowance—such as a dependent allowance or childcare allowance—that is linked to the number of dependents an employee has. As a result, the entire family became dependent upon the company. Thus, instead of viewing her husband's absence from home due to long working hours as a problem, a wife would actively support her husband's giving everything to his work.

The "gender triad" was supported by the government as being in alignment with the national goal of building economic strength. For example, the aforementioned New Life Movement received strong government backup from its very beginning. Additionally, the tax and social security systems that were beneficial to households with a full-time housewife or a housewife working part-time whose income was below a certain amount were not reformed for many years despite criticism that they limited women's participation in the workforce. Amano (2006) points out that men's work-centric lifestyle during the nation's period of high economic growth was a product of a "happy collusion" of the man, his wife, and the company. In this way, the bond between the company employee and housewife, both of whom were specialists and therefore tended to be tightly coupled, became the extremely strong "gender triad" with the powerful support of the corporation (and the government supporting the corporation).

IV. Cracks in the "gender triad"

The "gender triad," which was a "happy" thing during Japan's high economic growth, gradually turned into something not so happy for company employees and housewives when the economic foundation changed. Beginning in the 1970s, global competition among companies intensified within the postindustrial economy. In the 1990s, even major companies became exposed to the risk of bankruptcy, with some of them actually going under. There were more and more cases in which companies, though not faced with bankruptcy, were nonetheless forced to reduce personnel expenses, and thus shed employees through restructuring. This was the process by which an extremely important assumption for the company employee and housewife coupling lost its validity—specifically, the expectation of the husband's long-term stable employment in exchange for long working hours. The result was a diminishment of the benefits men received for sacrificing their private lives and devoting themselves selflessly to the company, and that women received for giving up their own career to support their husband's.

In addition, companies sought to reduce personnel costs and achieve management flexibility by increasing non-regular employment to take the place of regular employment. As a result, there was an increase in the number of so-called "freeters" (part-time jobbers), who could not find employment as a regular employee after graduation and who could not expect to receive guaranteed long-term employment or stable increases in their wages. On the other hand, the amount of work required of regular employees, whose number was now smaller, increased, in turn leading to longer working hours. According to Kuroda (2018), the percentage of full-time employees who work at least 11 hours per weekday has been increasing for both men and women for forty years since the mid-1970s. For men, this percentage, which was less than 10% in 1976, reached about 30% and for women about 10% in 2016.

It has been pointed out that the increasing trend in Japanese workers' weekday working hours is putting considerable strain on family life. For example, Shinada (2015) reported that the number of nuclear families with children that had meals together with all members present fell by roughly half between 1988 and 2012. Moreover, the families that were most unable to have dinner together were male-breadwinner families in which the husband had a relatively high income. Families in which both parents worked with the mother working full time had more opportunities to have dinner together. Additionally, Watanabe (2016), using the 2015 National Time Use Survey, analyzed why, despite rising awareness among men that the husband should naturally be involved in housework and child-rearing, the difference between the hours spent doing housework between Japanese men and women remained large. She states that the number of men working long hours is growing, particularly among men in their thirties and forties, and confirms that this is hindering growth in the ratio of men who do housework, and, as a result, suppressing the number of hours spent doing housework among all men. Furthermore, Watanabe notes a conspicuous presence of young fathers who want to be involved in child-rearing, despite the fact that nearly half of all men in their thirties work at least ten hours on weekdays.

In this way, under the postindustrial economy that has existed since the 1970s, the long-term stable employment and wage increases that were expected during Japan's period of high economic growth are no longer assured, while, at the same time, working hours are lengthening to the point that they are affecting family life. Moreover, as the balance between the benefits and costs of being a company employee deteriorates, getting married and having children are becoming a burden for men. Both Taga (2011) and Yamada (2001) point out that having a family is becoming a burden in terms of both cost and risk for modern Japanese men. In fact, the number of unmarried men is rising rapidly. The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS) announces that the lifetime never-married rate for Japanese men, which is estimated from the never-married rate of men in their late forties and that in their early fifties, is more than one in five as of 2015.

V. Early signs of change in the male-breadwinner family model

Even if the cracks in the old triad of company employees, housewives, and corporations can be detected in the rapid increase of unmarried people, the dominance of the male-breadwinner family model has been maintained for a long time among married people. For example, according to the 14th Japanese National Fertility Survey conducted by IPSS, approximately 70% of women who gave birth to their first child between 2005 and 2009 were unemployed, and no change in this percentage had been seen over the course of 20 years beginning in 1985. Many women leave employment when they give birth and return to the workforce, primarily as part-timers, when their child reaches a certain age. This employment pattern that only supplements the family budget cannot be described as the kind of full-scale dual-earning model that is seen in Western countries. It is therefore noteworthy that, according to the 15th Japanese National Fertility Survey, the percentage of women who continued their jobs even after childbirth exceeded 50% for the first time between 2010 and 2014. While women who left work to give birth remained high at about 60% over the course of approximately 20 years until 2009, the number who continued work grew by more than ten percentage points in just five years. Furthermore, if only regular company employees are considered, the number of women who continued work rose substantially from about 40% between 1985 and 1989 to roughly 70% between 2010 and 2014.

A similar change is reported by Nagase (2014), who measured the rate of employment continuation after first childbirth using Longitudinal Survey of Adults in the 21st Century conducted by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare from 2002 to 2010. Beginning in 2007, a significant rise in the employment continuation rate was observed, regardless of company size. According to Nagase, a factor thought to be behind this change is an enhancement of childcare leave allowances in 2007 and 2010. Nomura (2017) also writes that approximately 70% of female regular company employees continue their jobs after childbirth, and in the case of large enterprises, nearly all women are now said not to leave their jobs. Here I will use micro data to examine the implications that the increasing female employment continuation rate has for the shift in the male-breadwinner family model. This dataset is based on an interview study that was conducted at two major enterprises in 2017. Of the two companies, Company X is a manufacturer whose head office is in Osaka, and Company Y is a financial institution headquartered in Tokyo. The personnel departments of these companies were asked to select employees as subjects for the interviews. Selection covered male and female employees in a young-aged group in their mid-twenties to thirties and a middle-aged group in their forties to mid-fifties. The survey interviewed a total of 26 people from the two companies. In the case of Company X, respondents totaled 14 employees, with five female employees in the young group, five female employees in the middle-aged group, two male employees in the young group, and two male employees in the middle-aged group. In the case of Company Y, they totaled 12 employees with five female employees in the young group, three female employees in the middle-aged group, two male employees in the young group, and two male employees in the middle-aged group (see Table 1).

About one month prior to the interviews, a preliminary questionnaire was distributed to the respondents for the purpose of obtaining information about all job transfers after joining the company and changes in their family makeup. Responses were received by email. On the day of the interviews, researchers shared the task of conducting the interviews, which lasted between 90 minutes and two hours and focused on such matters as the background leading up to respondents' joining the company; work-related events experienced after joining the company; family events experienced since joining the company; changes in their views of employment as a result of those experiences; involvement in housework, child-rearing, nursing care, etc.; relationship with spouse, parents, and children; and vision of their own career and life in the future.

Table 1. Attributes of interviewees

Company	Employee	Sex	Age	Marital status	Presence of child(ren) and age(s)
Company X	B	Female	26	Married	0
Company X	A	Female	33	Married	None
Company X	D	Female	33	Married	4, 1
Company X	E	Female	33	Single	None
Company X	C	Female	34	Married	1
Company X	I	Female	42	Married	9, 6
Company X	H	Female	46	Married	16, 13
Company X	J	Female	46	Single	None
Company X	G	Female	48	Divorced	19
Company X	F	Female	50	Married	16
Company X	L	Male	31	Married	1
Company X	K	Male	33	Married	2
Company X	N	Male	42	Married	6
Company X	M	Male	52	Married	22, 19
Company Y	V	Female	34	Single	None
Company Y	T	Female	35	Married	6, 2
Company Y	U	Female	36	Married	0
Company Y	S	Female	37	Married	2
Company Y	P	Female	38	Married	6, 4
Company Y	R	Female	41	Married	8, 4
Company Y	Q	Female	46	Married	10
Company Y	O	Female	54	Married	24, 21
Company Y	Z	Male	35	Married	6
Company Y	Y	Male	39	Married	9, 6
Company Y	W	Male	41	Married	13, 10
Company Y	X	Male	45	Married	15, 8

1. Attitudes toward employment continuation among female employees

It became apparent in the interviews that the female respondents had not all had the intention of continuing work for a considerable time when they first joined the company. The ratios of women who had had the idea that they would work for a long time and those who had joined the company without that idea were 5:5 in the case of Company X and 5:3 in the case of Company Y. Additionally, a comparison of the young group and middle-aged group does not reveal a clear tendency for women of the young group to have had a stronger desire to continue employment.

However, it was revealed that, at the time of the interview, almost all the women were planning their lives on the premise that they would continue working. For example, according to Ms. D of Company X, she felt it natural that she and her husband would both work after marriage, and she did not recall ever talking with her husband about her quitting or not quitting. As represented by Ms. S of Company Y, who said "I did not think about quitting when I became pregnant," the women's intention to continue working was not shaken even when childbirth came into the picture. One needs to be careful here, as the interview subjects were "successful cases" selected by their personnel departments, meaning that employees who did in fact quit were excluded from the survey. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, these female employees' attitudes toward employment continuation contrast with those of women workers from a similar survey conducted ten years earlier.

Factors that seemed to influence the female employees' attitudes toward continuing employment were,

first, the existence of a company system that supports a balance between life events (e.g., housework, child-rearing, long-term care, etc.) and career, and second, the presence of older female employees who continue work by actually using those systems. Ms. V of Company Y is currently single, but she feels it would be possible to continue working even if she had a family. The reason she gave was that "The company's system is very good, and when I see older colleagues [continue working], I think I can do it too." Ms. I of Company X, who originally planned to quit a few years after marriage, also explained, "Around that time, I noticed several women around me and in the same workplace who still worked after giving birth. So, I thought, well, I could do that. My workplace needed me, and I began thinking it would be natural for me to continue working as long as it did not become too difficult."

Many women with the intention and hope to continue working were also identified in a study of how dual-earner couples viewed employment that was conducted by Ogasawara in 2005.[3] However, at the time of that study, there were indications that even if women could continue working at the present time, they were unsure about the future. For this reason, there were many married couples who covered the essential parts of their family budget with the husband's income and used the wife's income for savings and leisure activities. In this way couples prepared themselves for the loss of the wife's income at any time. In contrast, what is noticeable from the current survey is the expectation that women will continue to work. Systems that support work-family balance have expanded between the times of the two surveys, and opportunities for women to see other women around them actually achieve this balance have increased. To some degree, it has become possible for women to anticipate that they will continue working until retirement age should they desire to do so, particularly in large enterprises such as those in this survey that are forward-looking in terms of supporting female employees.

2. Attitudes toward shared livelihood

In the 2005 survey, it was pointed out that what the employment of a full-time working wife meant differed from couple to couple, and that the working wife was not always seen as maintaining the family's livelihood. In more than one-third of thirty dual-income married couples that were raising children and in which both the husband and wife had continued working full-time after graduation, the wife had no intention of sharing responsibility for maintaining the family's livelihood. For example, some wives took out a relatively small amount in loans in their own name even when their income was equivalent to their husband's in order to have the freedom to quit work at any time. Others stated that they were "doing a job they enjoyed" rather than working for income and would "quit if they lost interest in the job." A considerable number of husbands indicated that it did not matter to them whether their wife worked or not, and it was revealed that they saw employment as being for the wife's sake—e.g., "She likes working" or "It's better for her mental health if she works"—rather than helping with the family budget. Additionally, there were husbands who, while desiring that the couple share responsibility for maintaining the family's livelihood on the one hand, were not concerned about the degree of contribution their wife made on the other. These husbands had a desire to mentally share responsibility for maintaining the family's livelihood with their wives, but did not strongly demand the actual splitting of family accounts. It is possible that they did not ask for a shared family budget because they were unsure if their wife could continue working into the future.

In contrast, economic considerations ranked high as a reason for continuing work given by the female interviewees in the current survey. For example, Ms. S of Company Y explained her reason for continuing work in this way: "Rather than saying that I really want to work, it's probably more accurate to say that I would be giving up a lot if I quit." This response suggests a difference in thinking from that of the wives of more than a decade ago who stated that they would quit their jobs if they lost interest in them. Ms. S says candidly that she has not felt her job to be very interesting, and she is not aiming to gain self-fulfillment through her job. The reason Ms. S gave for continuing to work was, "So I can live, I guess." But then she asked herself, "What else is there?" To this she added, "I suppose it's because I want a place where I can

demonstrate my abilities a little." It could be argued that Ms. S's thinking vis-à-vis employment is very similar to that of many men who continue doing a job not because they particularly enjoy it, but in order to fulfill their livelihood responsibility. Ten years ago, when women who continued work were the exception rather than the rule, maintaining a livelihood was not thought to be a woman's responsibility. Accordingly, the reasons for continuing work at that time when doing so involved significant hurdles for women were non-economic reasons including "because working is fun," "it's better than being stuck in the house," and the like. Over the course of ten years, women's continued employment has become less unusual than it once was, and prospects that women will be able to continue working have risen, particularly in large enterprises like the ones surveyed that actively support work-life balance. This change seems to be reflected in these women's remarks that they work primarily for economic reasons.

In fact, the women who participated in the interviews were generally highly committed to continuing employment and also had strong awareness vis-à-vis the sharing of livelihood responsibilities. Ms. D of Company X says, "My husband and I agree how good it is that both of us work. If only one of us worked, our savings would be one-tenth of what they are now. That's the kind of situation we would face, I think." Ms. D says she has plotted out a financial plan premised on dual incomes that extends until she reaches the age of 90. Likewise, Ms. U of Company Y says, "We're fifty-fifty when it comes to our family budget." She adds that she and her husband talk about selling their house "if one of us quits" or "if one of us takes a part-time job and we can no longer pay for necessities." In the past, it was exclusively the wife who would quit a job or change from full-time to part-time work. What makes Ms. U's statement notable is that she said "if one of us quits," without limiting the possibility of such a change to the wife only. This suggests that the possibility of quitting exists equally for the husband as well as the wife—or, in other words, that the likelihood of this possibility occurring for the wife is considered to be as low as it is for the husband. Similarly, Ms. I of Company X, who has a higher income than her husband, thinks that "We power the family together" and "I can support us if something happens to [my husband's] company." Similarly, Ms. B of Company X said, "I suppose my husband is like other young people today in that he's not the aggressive type who says, 'I'm going to get married and be the breadwinner for my family.' So I have to work too."

Ms. B's view of today's young men is supported to some degree by the comments made by the male interviewees. For example, Mr. L of Company X is married to a part-time lecturer at a university. When explaining why he thinks having a dual income is good even after having children, he said, "Having money lets us have a lifestyle that is satisfying for us, so I think it is good that both of us work." Moreover, Mr. L noted that, among his close friends of the same age, he knows of only one whose wife is a full-time housewife. With regard to dual-earner couples, he said, "I think they have become very common."

Mr. K of Company X has a wife who also works for Company X. However, it is probably not accurate to call their union a "marriage between colleagues." This is because they were already dating when they were job-hunting. They decided to join Company X because it seemed to be a realistic place for them to work as a couple. Since then, he has been sharing housework, child-rearing, and livelihood maintenance with his wife on a fifty-fifty basis. However, there was one time when his resolve was shaken: when it was feared that his wife would give birth prematurely. When it crossed his mind that his child might be born with a disability due to the premature delivery, he thought, "I'll have to get even more serious about my work." In other words, facing the possibility that his wife might not be able to continue work in order to care for their disabled child, he became aware of the responsibility of supporting a family alone for the first time since his marriage. Or, to put it another way, it can be said that until he encountered an emergency—the threat of his child's premature delivery—he had not thought of himself as the family's breadwinner.

3. Women who are the main livelihood providers

There were two cases in which the wife was the main livelihood provider: Ms. O and Ms. Q of Company Y. In the past, when a Japanese man and woman working in different regions married, it was almost always

the woman who quit her job and went to where the man worked. Such a situation was seen in this survey as well, as it applied to Mr. M of Company X and to Mr. Y and Mr. Z of Company Y. However, in Ms. O's case, the person who changed vocations and work locations as a result of the marriage was the husband. Ms. O said, "At the beginning, we had no money. We had nothing. And that's still true today [laughs]. But even so, I felt we were fine, probably because I had a job. So I didn't have much in the way of financial expectations for my husband. I thought things would be fine if he did a job that he liked."

Unlike Ms. O, Ms. Q married a colleague. Traditionally, when a husband and wife worked at the same company and if one of them were to quit, it would be the wife who left. In fact, this was the case in the married couples of Mr. M of Company X and of Mr. Y and Mr. Z of Company Y. In the household of Ms. Q, both spouses pursued their careers even after their child was born with the help of their respective parents. Ms. Q described her thoughts when both spouses were promoted to management positions in the following way: "Both of us were working a lot of overtime hours, and I wondered how long we could continue living like that." Later, when Ms. Q was promoted even higher to senior-level management and took on heavier responsibilities, she discussed the matter with her husband. After considering their individual skills, her husband left the company in order to look for an opportunity in another firm with a more flexible working style. At the time of the interview, he was still searching for a job.

4. Partial movement toward the dual-earning model

Six years have passed since the Japanese government began emphasizing women's participation in the labor market as a part of its growth strategy. The establishment of systems supporting work-family balance is progressing in companies like Company X and Company Y. Meanwhile, more and more women are continuing to work by actually using these systems and becoming role models for other women. Women are increasingly committed to continuation of employment, and these women and their partners plan their lives based on the premise of earning dual incomes. In the survey conducted over a decade ago, many women also spoke of continuing work with the desire to become economically independent. However, although such statements as "I want to buy my own things with my own money" and "I think I have to do something for my old age" suggested that women wanted to assume responsibility for their own lives to a certain degree, it did not appear that they were prepared to support the lives of their husband and children. It could be said that, in a sense, the earlier women's wish to be economically independent had more in common with women earning just enough money to cover their own personal spending from a part-time job than with that of someone bearing responsibility for sustaining the family's livelihood.

In contrast, women who participated in this survey spoke more clearly about their responsibility for the family budget. Among them were women who spoke of establishing a financial plan premised on dual incomes and of having mental readiness to become the family's breadwinner should the husband's company fail. Additionally, men in dual-earner couples now clearly mention their reliance on their wife's income. This includes a man who said he wanted his wife to continue working to maintain their current standard of living, and a man who only became aware that he could become his family's breadwinner when faced with the emergency of a premature birth. Examples in which the solidity of women's economic power is clearly shown included the Ms. O couple, in which the husband quit his job and moved to his wife's work location and the wife became the main provider of their livelihood, and the Ms. Q couple, in which the husband resigned from the company in order to avoid a situation in which both spouses would be aiming to advance to senior-level management in the same company.

VI. Possible implications of the decline of the male-breadwinner family model for Japanese men

Our examination has shown that as the costs and risks of the male-breadwinner family model rise, the

dual-earning model has become a reality in Japan to a certain degree. If this trend continues, will more men participate in family life, like in Sweden? Or is it possible that more men will withdraw from family life, as is found among some men in the United States? I would like to explore this matter in the final part of this paper.

1. Men who participate in family life

Throughout the survey, it was apparent that the way men interacted with their families differed from the conventional "work first" attitude. For the men interviewed, the importance of their families was clearly high. Many men did not hesitate to say that their family was very important to them. Some men said that leaving work in time to pick up their child at nursery school was difficult, but they tried at least to make it home in time to give the child a bath. Others said that although they left most things to their wife on weekdays, they tried to spend as much time as possible with their child on weekends.

Mr. W of Company Y, who has a working wife with a part-time job, said, "Right now parenting is my main concern. I want to give my child as much love as I can." He added that his child is "a kind of living joy." Similarly, Mr. Z of Company Y, whose wife is a full-time housewife, said, "I have a family now and it has become the center of all I do. No matter how busy my job gets, I go to my family whenever it needs me."

Mr. X of Company Y also has a wife who is a full-time housewife. He has not done much of the housework since his marriage. Even so, he took his crying child out to pacify her after arriving home late at night, and he took his child out alone on weekends when she was still in diapers. "It was a pretty important time for me," he said. Even now, he and his high-school-age daughter are close enough to go out shopping together. He is thus giving a serious thought to an anticipated job assignment away from his family. The reason is because when he hears from his colleagues who have relocated how they go home for their children's sports festivals and parents' days, he feels depressed. Mr. X sees a parent-child relationship that is built solely on such events as "just photographs, like snapshots." He commented that "The family's time together becomes fragmented. It's hard." Mr. X wants to spend time having meals and doing other activities with his family each day, not to mention participating in those events. He said that male employees who similarly do not want a job transfer talk about this among themselves, asking why men do not have the same options women have to work in specified regions only without the need to relocate, and even mentioning the possibility of career changes in some cases. From what Mr. X said in the interview, job transfers are anticipated to become a major problem not only for women who aim to balance work and family, but also for men who put importance on the time spent with their family.

Hamaguchi (2013) refers to the employment system often found in Japanese companies as "membership-type." This is in contrast with what he calls the "job-type employment" of Europe and the United States. He insightfully says that a characteristic of membership-type employment is its unconditional nature, whereby once a person becomes a member of a company, he or she is expected to "do anything, anywhere, at any time." During Japan's period of high economic growth, the unconditional loyalty to the company in the sense of "doing anything, anywhere, at any time" came with rewards in the form of long-term stable employment and wage increases. However, in a time when such rewards cannot necessarily be expected, the unconditional nature of working has come to be regarded as a major sacrifice by men who have clearly begun to want to participate in family life. Notwithstanding his youth, the aforementioned Mr. X was selected to be a branch manager. For this and other reasons, he is evidently a promising employee for Company Y. To lose such capable employees for career changes only to avoid job transfers because they value family life must be a loss for the company as well. The system that makes "doing anything, anywhere, at any time" its de facto standard for male employees is coming to a point where reexamination is called for.

2. Men who withdraw from family life

Gerson (1993) warned American society of an increase in the number of men who abandoned their child-rearing responsibilities. To what degree does the possibility exist that Japanese men will similarly withdraw

from family life? As was mentioned above, one route toward this is already becoming a reality. Specifically, there is a rapid rise in the number of unmarried men. A difference with the United States is that there are far fewer children in Japan who suffer from the loss of their father due to divorce or separation.

Regarding married men, can any trends toward withdrawal from family life be identified? Although no such men were actually found in the survey, there were cases that theoretically suggested their existence. For example, Ms. R of Company Y spent approximately two years on an overseas assignment while she was single. She married after returning to Japan and is now the mother of two children. She moved near to her parents' home in order to raise her children, and completely depends on her parents to pick her children up from nursery school and for her children's dinners and bathing. Ms. R says her role is to manage "Team R." Team R comprises seven members: her two children, Ms. R and her husband, her parents, and her single younger sister who lives in her parents' home. Ms. R's role as a manager is to make sure "everyone in the team leaves home cheerfully each day." On the other hand, referring to her husband, she says, "He hasn't changed his work routine [since marriage]" and "He spends a little time [with the kids] on days off, and not much at all on weekdays." Although she said that "In eight years, he has only taken one day off because a child had a fever, and that was just the other day," she has few complaints, saying, "I'm happy because everything is going well."

Last year, Ms. R waived the restrictions on where she would work and submitted a request for a transfer overseas. If her wish comes true, she plans to take her parents and children with her, and anticipates that her husband will remain in Japan for his job. Regarding this plan, Ms. R explained that "We have built our family," and she was ready for an overseas assignment. From Ms. R's story, one pictures a relatively weak father-child relationship, not to mention the spousal relationship, and a strong mother who is pushing forward in her career. In cases more radical than Ms. R's, fathers can become something like the "autonomous men" identified by Gerson even if they do not get divorced. Taken to the extreme, the father's role may become limited to conceiving children.

VII. Conclusion

Japan is lagging behind Western countries in terms of the shift from the single-breadwinner family model to the dual-earning model. The reason for this is not because Japanese women have not traditionally worked; rather, it is partly because of the strength of a "gender triad" consisting of company employees, housewives, and corporations that formed during the nation's years of high economic growth. Macro statistical data show, however, that the number of women who continue to work even after childbirth is increasing. In this survey, I was able to confirm, using micro data, that the development of systems to support work-family balance has progressed in some companies, that women increasingly continue employment by actually using these systems, that more women, inspired by role models in their workplace, commit to continuing employment, and, as a result, that there are now men and women who plan their lives based on the assumption that both will work.

However, the transition in Japan to the dual-earning model has been slow, and in the meantime, there has been a rapid increase in the number of men (and more recently women) who reluctantly withdraw from family life by not marrying, despite their desire to marry. What could be done to promote a shift toward the dual-earning model before it is too late? First, it will be necessary to provide support so that the development of systems supporting work-family balance expands in more companies. Additionally, as is clearly demonstrated in the cases of Sweden and the United States, the socialization of childcare will be essential for the transition to the dual-earning model. The extreme shortness of the amount of time Japanese fathers spend for housework and child-rearing compared to their counterparts in the West is undoubtedly a problem. However, Japanese society must soberly accept the fact that fathers will be unable to compensate for the shrinkage of home child-rearing hours that is occurring as a result of mothers' entry into the workforce, and implement sufficient

countermeasures, such as promoting the installation of nursery schools.

That there are children waiting for admittance into nursery schools is a topic that has received lengthy discussion in Japanese society. I believe the findings of this paper will be useful when considering this problem. For wives to share the responsibility for maintaining the family's livelihood with their husbands, it has been important to have the "prospect" of their being able to continue working. If this "prospect" is lacking, a couple that appears to have dual incomes on the surface would still face the uncertainty of the wife's leaving her job or being forced to leave her job someday, and would therefore be unable to commit entirely to the dual-earning model. Because of this, it has been necessary to be prepared for the possibility of returning to the male-breadwinner family model at any time. The same applies to nursery schools. Things are on the wrong track if couples are saying that they could "finally" put their child into a nursery school. If they do not have the "prospect" of being able to put their child in a nursery school without fail, they cannot apply the dual-earning model with peace of mind.

In addition, to encourage men to participate in family life and prevent their withdrawal from the family as the dual-earning model takes hold, it will be necessary to reexamine the unconditional working style of "doing anything, anywhere, at any time" and rectify the situation in which they must work long hours. Will they participate in family life, or will they withdraw from it? It seems that, at present, Japanese men stand at a crossroads leading in two completely opposite directions.

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Notes

1. According to Funabashi (2006), who compared and examined the child-rearing strategies of married couples based on fieldwork conducted in three countries (Japan, France, and Sweden), the national governments of both France and Sweden took the initiative in socializing childcare; however, their policies differed. Unlike Sweden, where the idea that infants should be raised by their parents encouraged the introduction of the childcare leave system, the parent-child relationship in France is more detached, and historically it has been customary to entrust children to others. Thus, France went in the direction of expanding its nursing and educational systems. Additionally, it was working women that were the primary target of France's national family policies (Kamio 2007). For many years, programs to support work-family balance focused mainly on women and not on parents, and men's participation in housework and child-rearing is not as advanced in France as it is in Sweden.
2. In both Sweden and the United States, the providers of care work are primarily women, although a difference exists in that, in Sweden, care work is provided by women employed in the public sector, while in the United States, it is provided by low-wage immigrant workers. No "de-gendering" of care work has taken place. While this is an important problem in itself, I will not discuss it further here.
3. Both studies involved interviews with women possessing relatively high academic backgrounds who were continuing work. However, the studies were not conducted for comparative purposes and cannot serve as strict control samples. The aim of this paper is to provide an exploratory discussion, and it is anticipated that its content will be supported with larger sampling.

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International Comparison of Higher Education Cost Sharing and Japanese Challenges

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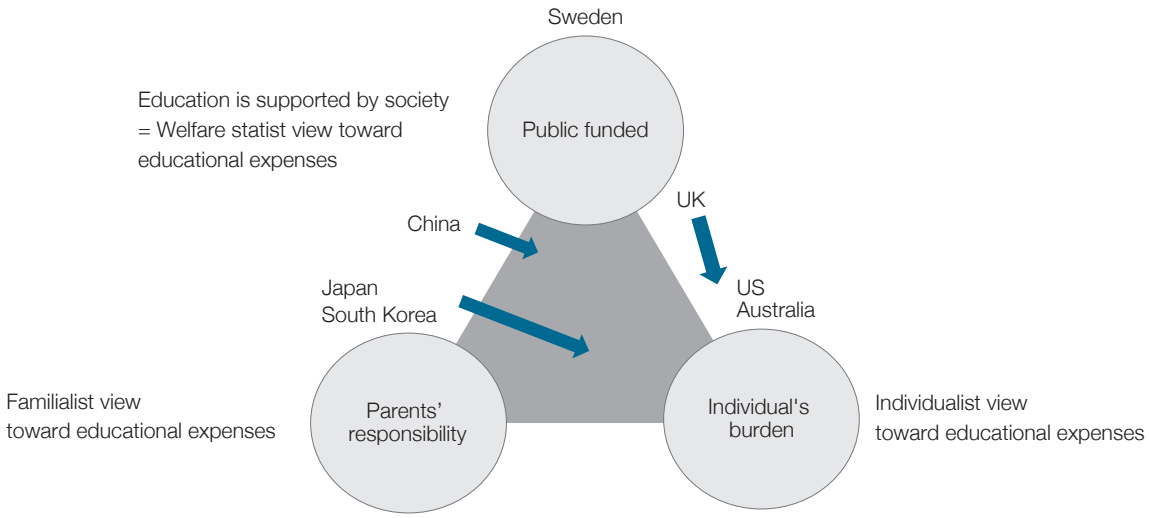
This paper examines the present situation and problems of the burden of higher educational expenses in Japan and tries to show future prospects by an international comparison, describing three models of views on education based on principles of the educational expense burden, and also considering the current trend of the argument for providing education free of charge. The analysis elucidates the strongly entrenched perspective in Japan on the family burden of higher educational expenses based on the view that education is the responsibility of the family. Now that Japan seems to be coming to the limit of depending on such a heavy family burden to cover higher educational expenses, two measures to reduce the burden have been established recently. One is a new grant for undergraduate students, and the other is a new income-contingent student loan program. Furthermore, the New Economic Policy Package advocates that an enormous annual sum of approximately 800 billion yen be spent for the reduction of the heavy burden on lower-income families. This paper analyses the background, characteristics, and problems of these initiatives, and suggest perspectives on the higher educational expense burden in the future.

I. International comparison of the burden of educational expenses

1. Views of education and state of the burden of educational expenses

The burden of educational expenses is broadly divided into public funding and private burdens, and private burdens are roughly divided into private-sector organizations (companies, universities, charities, etc.) and household budgets. Further, the household burden can be divided into the burden on parents and guardians, and the burden on students (children). Of these, the private-sector burden does not account for a large percentage in any country. A corporate tax for education has been proposed to place some of the burden on employers, but there is no country where this has been implemented.[1] Instead, when considering the future burden of educational expenses, the burden on employers such as companies and donations by charities and individuals is seen as increasing in importance.

Thus, there are three major bearers of educational expenses—the public, parents (guardians), and children (the students themselves), as shown in Figure 1—which underlie the differences in views of education. First,



Note: Revised by author on the basis of Yano, 2012.

Figure 1. Three views of education and attitudes toward burden of educational expenses

the "public burden" of educational expenses is rooted in a view of education that holds that education should be supported by society. This can be called the "welfare statist" view of the burden of educational expenses. It is a concept widely seen in the Nordic countries, France, Germany, etc. Tuition fees are free or extremely low.[2] In Sweden and other Nordic countries, tuition is also not collected in private universities. Second, underlying the "parents' responsibility" is the view that parents and guardians should be responsible for their children's education. This can be called the "familialist" view of the burden of educational expenses. This is a very strongly entrenched view of education in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Third, underlying the "children's (students') burden" is a view of education holding that education is for individuals. This can be called the "individualist" view of the burden of educational expenses. This view of education is widespread in Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United States and Australia. In the UK, tuition was once free of charge and the country had been synonymous with the welfare state, called "from the cradle to the grave," but it has been rapidly shifting from the public burden of educational expenses to the individual burden, with increases in tuition tripling the amount twice in recent years. Even if students themselves are supposed to bear the burden, it is difficult for them to pay tuition fees themselves while working part-time, and instead, in most cases, they take out student loans which must be repaid after graduation.

These are categories by philosophy. In reality each country has a mixture of the three views of education and distribution of the burden. For example, in the US there is an expectation for students themselves to be responsible, but in reality, the parents' burden is also large. Also, more than a third of students in the US are mature adults, and naturally their burden is higher. When discussing the burden ratios, it is necessary to pay attention to differences in the education, culture, economy, and society of each country.

Especially in recent years, as shown in Figure 1, there has been a tendency to shift the burden of expenses from public to private and from the burden of parents (guardians) to that of children (students). Underlying this is the fact that, on the one hand, public finances are stringent in almost every country, and, on the other hand, the increasing number of students in higher education is making it more difficult for the public sector to bear the burden of their expenses. Johnstone describes this process as "cost-sharing" (Johnstone 2004). Incidentally, economics generally treats parents (guardians) and children (students) as "households" without distinguishing between them, but in the case of the burden of educational expenses, this distinction is of crucial importance. Parents' and children's burdens of educational expenses can be roughly divided into three

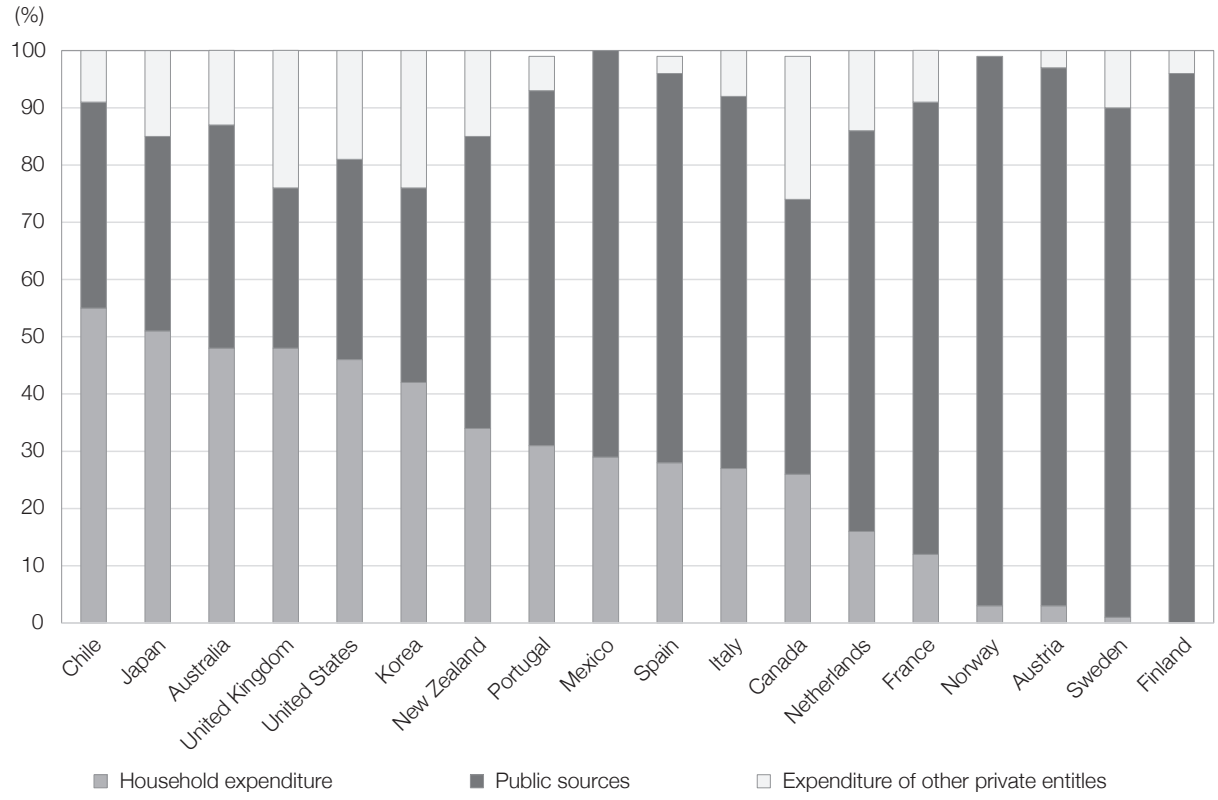
categories: investment, consumption, or gift. There are few empirical studies on this subject, but "five sponsor models" (Suetomi 2005, 2010) have been proposed. This is one of the very exceptional works on this topic in Japan.

2. Burden ratio of higher educational expenses

How to share expenses among these three parties (public, private, and household) or four parties (if households are divided into parents/guardians and students/children) is not something that can be theoretically determined. Expenses are one source of the burden in question, but in the case of higher education, there is a problem in that expenses are difficult to calculate. Universities are institutions that conduct not only education, but also research and contributions to society, and these are carried out through joint production. Education and research, in particular, are inseparable, and it is practically impossible to calculate their expenses separately. This means that cost-based pricing cannot be posited.

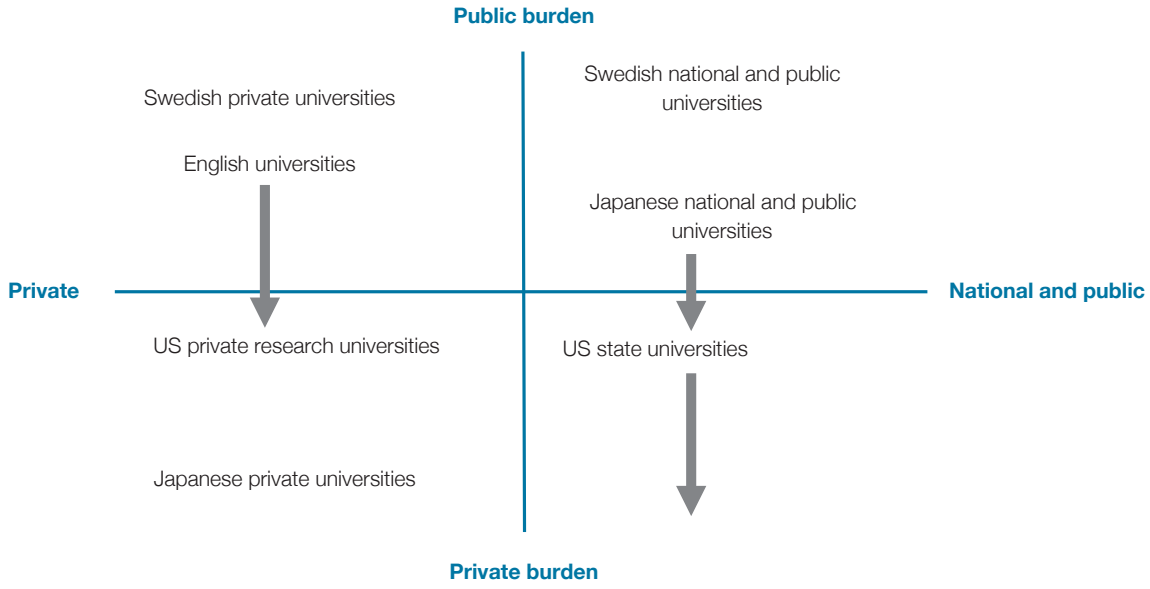
For this reason, the above factors are taken into account when calculating the actual burden of educational expenses, and the results show major differences among countries. With regard to the level of the public burden for higher education, in 2014 the average percentage of GDP for OECD member countries was 1.1%, whereas in Japan it was approximately 0.5%, the lowest of all OECD nations. Meanwhile, the private burden for higher education constituted 1.0%, double the OECD average of 0.5%. In other words, when the ratios of public and private burdens are compared, those of Japan and the OECD member countries' averages are reversed[3] (OECD 2017).

Among OECD member countries, Japan is one of the countries where household expenditure on higher education costs is heaviest. As shown in Figure 2, in Japan, the percentage of total higher education costs



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance*, 2017.

Figure 2. Higher education cost sharing



Note: Created by author.

Figure 3. University category and burden of expenses

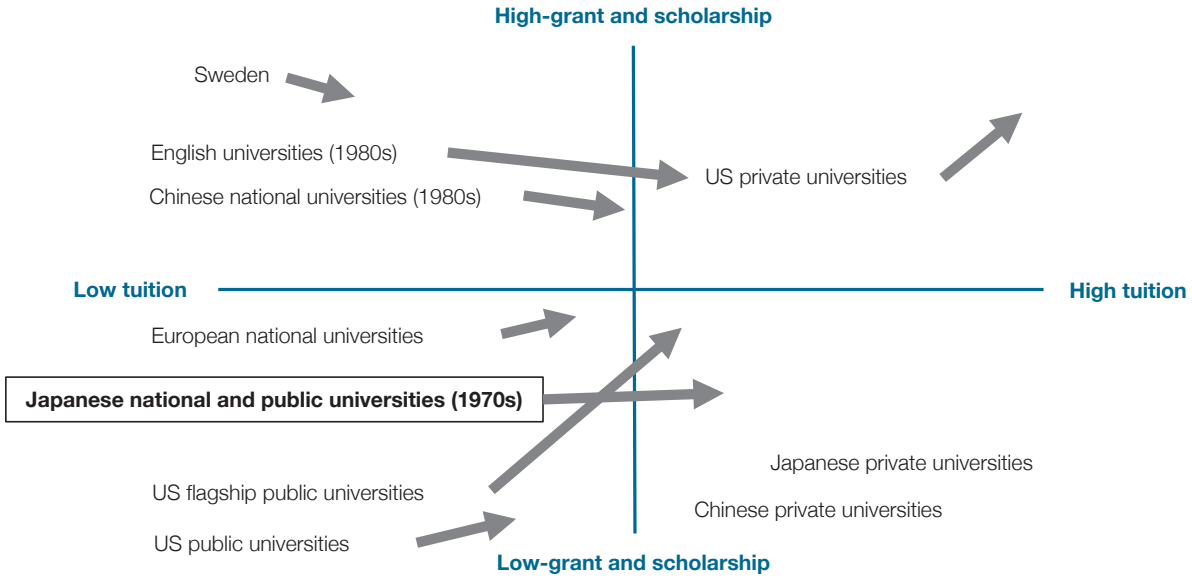
borne by household budgets is more than half, at 51%, second only to Chile (55%) among OECD members. In Australia and the UK, the household expenditure ratio is rising because tuition has risen significantly in recent years, and the expansion of grants and scholarships has not kept up with it. Meanwhile, South Korea has been one of the countries with the highest household expenditure ratios, like Japan, but the household burden as a percentage of the total is now falling because grants have been reinforced in recent years while tuition increases have leveled off.

The high ratio of the household burden in Chile, Japan, and South Korea is due to the high proportion of private-sector higher education, reliant on tuition, in these countries, and a paucity of public support for higher education institutions. On the other hand, on the right side of Figure 2 are countries with low levels of household expenditure. Household costs are almost zero in Nordic countries such as Finland and Sweden.

It should be noted that in the case of universities, mainly for those outside Japan, the parties establishing educational institutions and the forms of funding sources are different. As shown in Figure 3, in general, public expenditure goes mainly toward national and public universities and private expenditure to private universities, but there are also examples of the public burden applying to private universities in countries including Sweden and the UK. Meanwhile, at some US state universities, the percentage of public subsidies is extremely low, accounting for less than 10% of total income, which is lower than the 10% average for private universities in Japan.

3. Policies for tuition and grants in various countries

The actual burden of university expenses varies depending on the combination of tuition and grants. Here, we will divide these combinations into four types as shown in Figure 4.[4] This is a schematic diagram giving a general overview of the relationship between tuition and grants, and it should be noted that the actual change over time and variations by countries are more complicated and there are many exceptions. Here, the tuition on the horizontal axis is the official tuition of the university, referred to as the sticker price, published price, etc. The vertical axis shows grants and scholarships. Net tuition is obtained by subtracting institutional grants (grants and scholarships provided by higher education institutions) from this amount. It should be noted that



Note: Created by author.

Figure 4. Tuition, and grants and scholarship policy by country

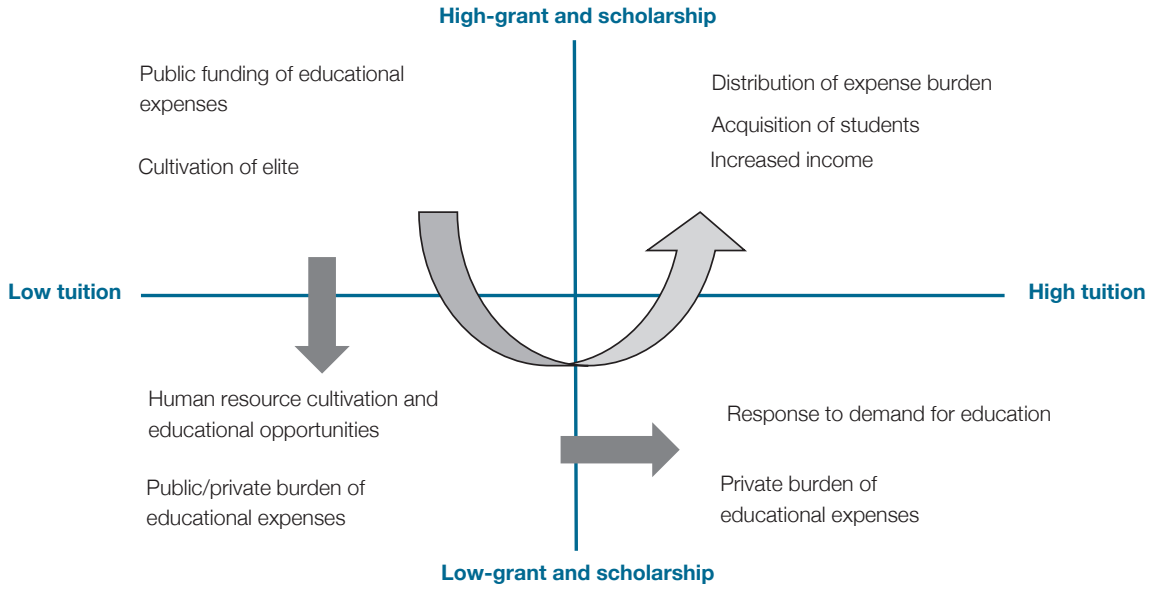
there are both government grants and institutional grants, but in either case, the burden on students and parents is reduced.

First, many modern universities can be viewed as starting out with a low-tuition/high-aid policy. This is because universities' role was, above all, to train the elite: the nation's most important and influential people. Many European national universities and universities in the UK or China also had generous systems of financial aid. Many Nordic universities retain these characteristics today.

As universities expand, the financial burden of generous grants becomes onerous, and as the central role of universities shifts from training the elite to training professionals, and providing higher education opportunities to the general public, there is a tendency to transition to a low-tuition/low-aid policy. US public universities, and especially public two-year universities (community colleges), have this characteristic. Japanese national and public universities also fell into this category in the past. Meanwhile, as demand for higher education expands, private universities emerge to meet these needs. They adopt a high-tuition/low-aid policy, as seen in private universities in Japan, China, and South Korea. In contrast, what we have seen in recent years is a transition to a high-tuition/high-aid policy, which is seen occurring in many countries. Underlying this is governments' fiscal belt-tightening and a shift to a free-market model for higher education in many countries.

In terms of the burden of educational expenses, as shown in Figure 5, a low-tuition/high-aid policy results in the largest public burden, while a low-tuition/low-aid policy reduces the public burden and represents a shift to differentiation of the public and private burdens. On the other hand, a high-tuition policy represents a shift in the burden of educational expenses from the public to the private sphere, and this trend is most prominent in a high-tuition/low-aid policy.

Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of the burden of expenses, a feature of the high-tuition/high-aid policy is that the sticker price is set high, but each student is offered various different forms of financial aid, thereby individualizing the burden of educational expenses. In particular, the policy of the university itself offering discounts in the form of its own grants (institutional grants), in addition to governmental grants, began at US private universities in the 1980s, and is now widely used at public "flagship universities" (generally, the



Note: Created by author.

Figure 5. Tuition, and grants and scholarship policy and burden of educational expenses

best-known public university in a particular state). In the UK, all universities have adopted this high-tuition/high-aid policy since 2006. Universities in the US set multiple discount rates (ratios of financial aid to sticker price) according to the attributes of a student, and apply a formula to the student's characteristics to determine the rate. Some universities have variable rates ranging from zero to 100 percent cost coverage. In this case, net tuition (discounted tuition) differs depending on the student.[5] For example, at Harvard University, the sticker price was about US$64,000 per year (including housing costs, etc.) in fiscal 2015, but the average net grant was about US$40,000, and the net tuition averaged about US$16,000 (according to NCES, College Navigator). In this case, it is important to note that this is an average, and the net tuition varies from zero to US$64,000.

In particular, in the case of lower-income families, there is a loan-free policy through which net tuition is virtually zero. However, there are only a few dozen universities with abundant funds that offer loan-free policies. There are major problems with high-tuition/high-aid policies at universities in general. The university often wants to admit a certain type of student (with excellent academic performance, outstanding sports ability, etc.), and university-specific institutional grants tend to be merit-based rather than based on the student's financial needs. This creates a problem in that grants do not contribute to the expansion of educational opportunities.

4. Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)

Among countries' various systems for alleviating higher education expenses, attention is being paid to the Australian tuition system called the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, commonly referred to as HECS. In the past, the Australian government did not charge public university tuition, but in 1989 it changed to a policy placing some of the burden on individuals. This was based on the idea that both the individual and society are beneficiaries of higher education, so individuals should bear a share of the burden accordingly. HECS refers to this share not as tuition, but as a "contribution."

However, there was a concern that collecting this tuition or contribution would threaten higher education opportunities especially for lower-income families. In response to this problem, HECS adopted a system in

which tuition is not charged while students are in school, but a portion of tuition is repaid based on income (income contingent) after graduation. In other words, HECS is essentially an income-linked student loan. After graduation, tuition is repaid according to income over a long period of time, so the burden on low-income people is light, and therefore there is less tendency to avoid loans and thereby less impact on higher education opportunities.

The contribution amount is determined by the university, within minimum and maximum amounts set by the government, for each group based on the university major, which is called a "band." In most cases, most universities charge the maximum allowable amount, and the maximum amount tends to rise year by year. For all bands, the minimum amount is zero. Band 3, with the highest contribution amount, includes majors in medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, law, and business administration, and the maximum amount is 10,000 Australian dollars (AUD) (at an exchange rate of AUD 1.00 to 84.5 Japanese yen, this comes to approximately 860,000 yen). The maximum for Band 2, including mathematics, health, engineering, and agriculture, is approximately 735,000 yen, and for Band 1, including humanities, clinical psychology, foreign languages, visual and performing arts, and nursing, is 515,000 yen (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training 2016).

It should be noted here that for each of these majors, there is no relation between educational expenses and amount of contribution. The educational costs for medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine are very different from those for law and business administration, but they are all in the same Band 3. Generally, tuition is determined based on costs, but in HECS it is determined based on expected income after graduation. Herein lies the very unique character of HECS.

The amount of the contribution to be repaid annually is income-linked, and determined according to total annual income, etc. and repayment rate. The repayment rate ranges from 0% to 8%, and the higher the income, the higher the repayment rate. For those with incomes under about 4.82 million yen the amount falls to zero, i.e., it is waived. Therefore, low income earners are exempted from paying back tuition for their entire lives.

Since the introduction of HECS, it is said that the overall university enrollment rate has risen, and a major impact on the enrollment rate for lower-income families has rarely been reported (Chapman 2014, 18, etc.).

HECS was a great success, and went on to be introduced in other countries such as the UK. However, as mentioned earlier, with the income-linked model not all contributions can be recovered, and it is expected that the public will shoulder 15 to 20% of the burden of expenses.

II. Public burden of educational expenses and the current situation in Japan

This section discusses the grounds of public funding of educational expenses and the current situation thereof in Japan.

1. Grounds and processes of public funding of educational expenses

Earlier, we discussed the fact that beliefs regarding responsibility for educational expenses depend on views of education. However, the grounds for public sharing of costs of educational expenses are not limited to views of education alone. The most important grounds for this relate to ensuring equal opportunities for education. In Japan, equal educational opportunities are stipulated in the Constitution of Japan, Article 26, and the Fundamental Law of Education, Article 4.[6] Furthermore, the government is obligated to provide financial aid so as to realize equal educational opportunities. It is stipulated in the Fundamental Law of Education, Article 4, Paragraph 3, that "the national and local governments shall take measures to provide financial assistance to those who, in spite of their abilities, encounter difficulties in receiving education for economic reasons."

Such financial aid and provision of education free of charge, based on the principle of equal educational opportunities, is a concept widely shared not only in Japan, but also internationally. In 1966, the International

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated in Article 13, Paragraph 2-C that "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education." Japan ratified this covenant in fiscal 2012, and the government has a duty to endeavor to make higher education free of charge to fulfill its international pledge.

The public burden of educational expenses is based on the principle of equal educational opportunities. However, it can be said that in Japan, calls for equal opportunities for education were not particularly loud until quite recently. In recent years, the argument for ensuring equal access to education on investment grounds has arisen based on human capital theory. That is, disparities in higher education, and people with motivation and ability being unable to receive education, result in wastage detrimental not only to the individual, but to society as a whole. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of educational investment, it is also necessary to contribute to improvements in productivity and efficiency, or to invest in areas that are difficult to connect to the market, such as basic research, in order to contribute to the development of human resources and economic growth, which are the grounds for the public burden of educational expenses. These are ideas that are highly compatible with human capital theory.

Externalities of education (external effects, the external economy) can also be cited as arguments for the public burden of educational expenses. If there are externalities, no one will shoulder the expenses if it is left to the operation of the free market, so the part of supply corresponding to externalities will be under-represented. Therefore, it is necessary for public funds to cover that amount. The externalities of education go beyond basic education such as reading, writing, and math, and include the presence of university graduates improving the productivity of those around them (Moretti 2004), better health and reduced crime as a result of being better educated, labor migration, and alleviation of mismatching (prevention of unemployment). In this regard, however, it is generally said that the external effects of education are higher at lower levels of education.[7] In addition, the public nature of education (education as a quasi-public good) and education as social common capital (Uzawa 1998, 2000) are also cited as grounds for the public burden of educational expenses.

However, the problem here is that, in many cases, it is impossible to calculate expenses because externalities and costs to the public of education do not go through the market, and in practical terms it is impossible to make the burden of expenses correspond to externalities. Therefore, in reality, allocation of the public burden is not based on these theoretical grounds.

2. Current status of the public burden of educational expenses in Japan

The public burden of educational expenses can be broadly divided into two approaches. One is governmental subsidies to institutions, and the other is governmental subsidies to individuals. In the case of national and public educational institutions, the original cost of establishing them is paid by public funding.

Furthermore, in Japan, there are institutional subsidies for the operation of national universities (1.1 trillion yen per year), subsidies for private university endowments (316 billion yen), and local allocation tax subsidies to public universities (35 billion yen). In addition, part of competitive funding such as scientific research expenses, Center of Excellence (COE) Program funding, etc. (400 billion yen) can be regarded as public subsidization. These total about 2 trillion yen (all are rough figures for 2019; the same applies below).

With regard to subsidies to private institutions, tuition reduction and exemption, which take the form of grants, are all implemented as part of institutional assistance. At national universities these amount to approximately 37 billion yen, at private universities 17 billion yen, and at public universities 3.5 billion yen. In the case of vocational schools, prefectural governments are responsible, but only Kochi and Hokkaido have official tuition waiver programs. Although tuition waiver programs have tended to be expanded in recent years, there is a problem in terms of marked disparities not only among national, public, and private universities, but also between universities and vocational schools.

Besides tuition waivers, in terms of subsidies to students, thus far financial aid from JASSO (the Japan

Student Services Organization) had taken the form of loans rather than grants. National funding was only marginal, consisting of assistance with interest payments and so forth, which was completely inadequate. In 2017, two new student financial aid programs were established. These are the new grant-type scholarships and the new income-contingent student loan program (hereinafter "income-contingent program"). The two have clearly different purposes and characters, and they need to be distinguished properly. The purpose of grants is, among other things, to promote the advancement of students from households with difficult financial hardships. On the other hand, the purpose of income-contingent programs is to reduce the burden of repayment, not only for lower-income families, but also for middle-income groups, as in Australia's HECS.[8]

Several factors can be cited as underlying the creation of these two programs. First of all, there are major disparities in higher education enrollment rates depending on income level. In lower-income families (with annual incomes of 4.62 million yen or less), the rate of university enrollment is 41%, but in high-income households the rate is dramatically different, at 71% (The University of Tokyo 2016).

As Figure 1 indicated the three attitudes toward the burden of educational expenses, the parental responsibility model dominates in Japan. This model has led to many households with overstretched budgets. These are households that cut back on other household expenses for the sake of children, devoting an inordinate amount of money to savings or educational endowment insurance for future educational expenses. Paradoxically, it is thought that the presence of such households with overstretched budgets was not apparent in Japan because of the relatively small public burden of educational expenses.[9] While tuition continues to rise, household income is on a downward trend, and as a result the burden of educational expenses on households continues to grow heavier. The annual payment for the first academic year of a university went from 86,000 yen in 1975 to 818,000 yen in 2014 for national universities and from 373,000 in 1975 to 1.3 million yen in 2014 for private universities on average. Meanwhile, the ratio of the first annual payment to monthly disposable income in 1975 was 0.4 for national universities and 1.7 for private universities on average, but these ratios rose to 1.9 and 3.1, respectively, in 2014. It is not feasible to rely any further on households for educational expenses, and in particular there is a limit on extracting these expenses from low-income households.

In addition, many studies have shown that the household burden of educational expenses is one of the causes of declining birth rates. For example, according to a survey by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the most commonly cited reason for not having one's ideal number of children is that "the cost of parenting and education is too high," at 56.3% (NIPSSR 2017). In addition, a 2013 survey by the Cabinet Office inquired about sources of anxiety when considering having children (or additional children) in the future, and "a heavier financial burden" (70.9%) was the most common response.

It is evident that the parental responsibility model for educational expenses has created various problems, and if it continues along the current path, there is concern that these problems will become even more severe. To address this, there is a need to expand public coverage of costs and financial aid.

Another important factor is that Japan's financial aid program, which has scarcely been reformed in more than 70 years since the founding of *Dainihon-ikueikai* (the former Japan Scholarship Foundation), one of JASSO's predecessors, in 1944, and it has become less responsive to various changes. With an increasing number of students going on to become higher education graduates, many students have come to rely on financial aid. In particular, the increasing number of higher education graduates has led many students to take advantage of student aid. Notably, the number of interest-bearing student loans exploded from about 100,000 in 1998 to about 950,000 in 2012, and there have been issues with the financial burden of loans and evasion of repayment. Addressing this has become a crucial issue.

Exacerbating the problem of the financial strain on borrowers (students) is the destabilization of employment in the university-graduate labor market. Formerly, this market in Japan was characterized by a stable lifetime employment system, and since university graduates were able to obtain stable income, it was easy to establish clear plans for steady return of loans through fixed-rate return programs. However, in an

unstable labor market with rising non-regular employment and with one in three university graduates leaving their initial jobs within three years (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, "Job Resignation among Recent Graduates"), having only a flat-rate return plan means that many will be unable to make payments, thus heightening the need for a payback plan calibrated according to income.

3. Proposals for a Japanese version of HECS

For the reasons outlined above, deliberations on an income-contingent student loan program were launched in Japan in 2017. Earlier, this paper gave an overview of HECS in Australia, as a unique program that has succeeded in alleviating the burden of educational expenses. In this regard, the Headquarters for the Revitalization of Education of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan's "The 8th Educational Reform Proposal" of May 18, 2017 called for the creation of a Japanese version of HECS. The concept is to expand application of the income-linked model, which currently applies only to interest-free financial aid, into a universal program that extends to interest-bearing loans and applies to all students.

In response to this proposal, on October 31, 2017 a subcommittee of the Ministry of Finance Fiscal System Council objected on the grounds that HECS does not reduce disparities between income levels, and made a counterproposal that alleviation of the financial burden should be limited to children from low-income families that genuinely need assistance. However, the objective of income-contingent programs is reduction of the burden of educational expenses on middle and lower-income families. This in turn results in improvement of higher education enrollment rates of lower-income families and lessening of disparities, but that is not its sole objective. Opposing the introduction of a HECS program simply on the grounds that it cannot address disparities effectively does not seem valid. In any case, a Japanese version of HECS is advocated for further study in the New Economic Policy Package, and it will be necessary to keep an eye on future trends.

4. The New Economic Policy Package

The Abe Cabinet approved the New Economic Policy Package by cabinet decision on December 8, 2017. The contents of this package include a significant expansion of grants amounting to approximately 800 billion yen a year, which will have a major impact on financial aid in the future. In addition to tuition waivers, grants will be provided to assist with the cost of living. Also, in addition to exemption from enrollment fees, which has been limited to some students so far, measures will be taken to address "sudden changes in household finances" (such as parents' job loss, death or divorce), for which public funding had not previously been allocated. The new program should be highly acclaimed for its substantial investment in education and expansion of beneficiaries. In particular, with regard to enrollment fee exemption, in Japan, excessively high first-year payments at the time of admission have been an obstacle to higher education enrollment for lower-income families. The measures to assist those facing sudden hardships in household budgets, who have hitherto lacked public support, are also laudable.

However, many concerns remain on this package program. For one thing, beneficiaries are limited to lower-income families. This is due to the restriction that this package is designated for the purpose of social welfare, and measures to address the declining birthrate, because the package is financed by a consumption tax hike as part of the Comprehensive Reform of Tax and Social Security Systems. Furthermore, beneficiaries are selected on the basis of academic performance in high school. However, if the purpose is strictly social welfare, it is not necessary to impose performance requirements. In particular, there is a strong correlation between academic ability and income, and belonging to a lower-income family tends to be a barrier to academic achievement. These performance requirements have already been removed for lower-income recipients of JASSO interest-free financial aid, but keeping them in place for other forms of assistance could shut out lower-income families.

Second, if the program is not well designed to resolve inequities between residential tax-exempt households that can receive benefits and residential tax-exempt quasi-households that cannot, a gap known as

a "cliff effect" arises between recipients and non-recipients. However, this design is quite difficult, because it has only three stages of the amount of tuition exemption and grants, and there is a risk that any program will remain unfair.

Third, it is highly problematic that not all universities and vocational schools are covered by support measures under this program, but only those that provide "the pursuit of both academic research and practical education in a well-balanced manner to develop human resources who can respond to the needs of society and industry." In particular, there are specific criteria in the form of detailed numerical indicators for teachers and board members from outside higher education institutions with practical experience in their fields. These are likely to have a major impact on the state of universities. It is understandable that as long as taxpayers' money is being spent, it is necessary to set certain standards for educational institutions, but this method of determining educational institutions' eligibility restricts students' range of educational opportunities. Financial aid is a form of support for individuals, and individual choice should be respected. Students at universities and vocational schools that do not meet the conditions cannot receive financial aid, which may also result in the exclusion of lower-income families.

In the US, as well, federal financial aid is limited to the students at higher education institutions that meet the standards of accreditation agencies, but the vast majority of higher education institutions are eligible. On the other hand, with the standards set by this package, the New Economic Policy Package, it is unclear what proportion of higher education institutions will meet the criteria.

The author has already expressed several concerns in this regard, in particular the cliff effect, and the eligibility and requirements for higher education institutions. These seem irrelevant with student financial aid programs (*Asahi Shimbun*, December 15, 2016, and *Mainichi Shimbun*, February 19, 2018). Also, Kyoto University President Juichi Yamagiwa criticized the program as intervention in universities' autonomy at a general meeting of the Japan Association of National Universities on January 26, 2018 (*Nikkei Shimbun*, January 26, 2018). In addition, on February 15, 2018 the Federation of Japanese Private Colleges and Universities Associations released a request not to carry out the selection process.

The contents of the Interim Report of the Cabinet on New Paradigms in the Era of the 100-Year Lifespan, established in 2017, are almost identical to those of the New Economic Policy Package, down to the wording. Meanwhile, a panel of experts within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, which is in charge of the practical design of the program, began deliberations on January 30, 2018. This panel added further detailed requirements for higher education institutions and prospective recipients of this new student aid. The progress of future programs will need to be watched.

III. State of the cost sharing of educational expenses

This section discusses a number of topics regarding the future of the cost sharing of educational expenses.

1. Making education free of charge

As already discussed, the grounds for public support for educational expenses, and, further, making education free of charge, is the realization of equal educational opportunities. Recent proposals for making education free of charge are considered to be effective in lessening disparities in higher education enrollment described above. In addition, it is said that reducing the burden of educational expenses has the effect of boosting household consumption as well as correcting disparities. However, so far there has been little empirical testing on this point.

As mentioned earlier, the Fiscal System Council (October 31, 2017) raised concerns about making higher education free of charge, as it extends benefits to high-income families as well as other groups, and thus may widen disparities. This is a common criticism of making higher education free of charge and of low-tuition policies. The most famous is the so-called Hansen-Weisbrod-Pechman debate over California's

public university tuition in the 1960s. Hansen and Weisbrod (1969; 1971) and Hansen (1970) indicated that the subsidies to higher education institutions subtracting the tax burden per capita was distributed in the order of the University of California system, the California State University system, community colleges, and higher education non-attendees. Because there are more university graduates in higher income groups, state government subsidies to universities are regressive and the education system redistributes income from lower-income households (non-university attendees) to higher-income households (university students). There were many objections to this argument, however, such as Pechman (1970) and Hartman (1970, 1972).
Objection (1): High-income earners also pay a lot of taxes within progressive tax systems.
Objection (2): There are external effects, as mentioned above, which should be considered.
Objection (3): In addition to income redistribution during schooling, redistribution after graduation is also an issue.

In response to these objections, Hansen and Weisbrod (1971, 1978) made an immediate counter-argument, but no definitive conclusions have been drawn due to factors such as an inability to measure external effects quantitatively and different methods of calculating tax payments. However, an important issue raised by this controversy is that elimination of fees and low-tuition policies are fundamentally intended to assist those wishing to go on to higher education, many of whom belong to the high-income contingent, so the disparity correction effect is limited, which is in line with the Fiscal System Council's argument.

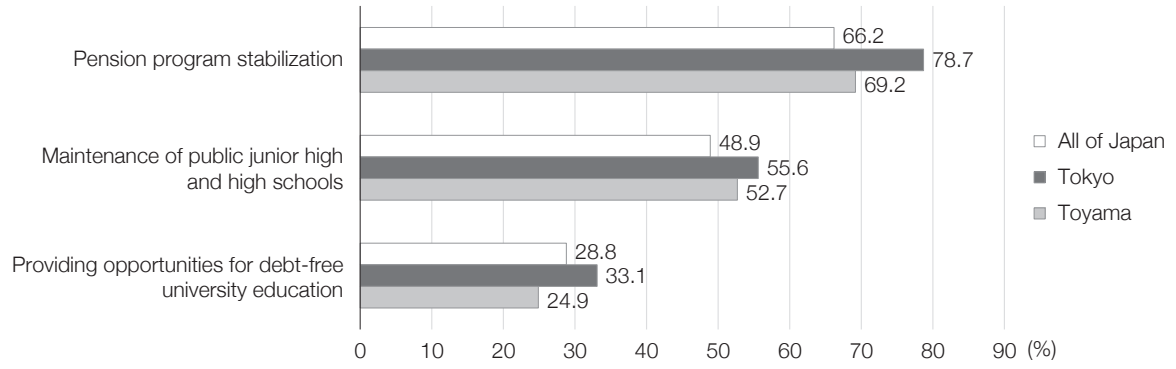
2. Recurrent education: Adults going back to school

In relation to the burden of higher educational expenses and human resource development, I would like to touch briefly on adult members of the workforce going back to school, and the burden of expenses in the case of "recurrent education." In Japan, there are many factors impeding the spread of education for adults, of which expense is the most problematic. In a survey of impediments, the University of Tokyo Center for Research on University Management and Policy "Workforce Survey on University Education" (2010), 52.4% responded that "excessively high cost" is "definitely an obstacle." When combined with 35.4% who cited cost as "an obstacle to some extent," expense accounts for the highest percentage at 87.8%.

It is possible that this situation could change if employment becomes fluid, or if it becomes necessary for adults to go back to school even within the lifetime employment system. With regard to this, it is also necessary to consider the issue of training costs. Becker's (1993) argument regarding the burden of training expenses is well known, namely that the burden of general training rests on the worker while that of specific training is partially on the employer. Workers bear the cost of general training (including school education), which is useful at any workplace, because it represents an investment that the employer cannot recover if the worker moves to another workplace. On the other hand, employers ought to cover the cost of specific training that is useful only at a particular workplace. However, in reality, general and specific training are mixed, and it is difficult to separate them clearly. The important thing here is that specific training is only useful in one workplace, so it cannot be an incentive for workers to change workplaces. However, there are factors influencing job change besides the presence or absence of specific training, and fluidity of the job market is important, as is the correlation between job changes and financial burden (Becker 1993, 43–48). In other words, if more workers leave lifetime employment and change jobs, and the employment situation becomes more fluid, specific training will decrease and general training will increase, which may lead to growth in adult education but may also increase the burden of training expenses for workers.[10] The burden of training expenses has hardly been discussed to date, but it should be considered in the future.

3. Can the burden of educational expenses be shifted?

Up to this point, we have examined the pervasiveness in Japan of the parental responsibility model of educational expenses, and issues with this model. In particular, it is evident that households are coming to the limit of their ability to cover costs, and measures to reduce the burden of educational costs for lower-income



Source: Prepared by author on the basis of Yano, Hamanaka, and Ogawa, 2016, 49.

Note: Data based on Tokyo Survey (2011) and Toyama Survey (2010). Toyama Prefecture is located in the middle of main island of Japan and bordered Sea of Japan to the north.

Figure 6. Comparison of supporters of strengthening of measures through tax hikes

families or eliminate higher education costs altogether are being introduced rapidly. Will Japan shift toward public coverage of the burden of educational expenses, that is, in the direction of welfarism? A national consensus is required to spend more taxes on higher education, but public opinion on this is negative, as shown in Figure 6. Only one-quarter to one-third support "providing opportunities for debt-free university education" through tax increases. It should be noted that more than half of those polled support making higher education free of charge if taxes are not involved.[11]

These findings indicate that the use of tax funds to cover costs of higher education is not supported. A previous survey (Figure 6) conducted by Yano, Hamanaka and Ogawa (2016) shows that current Japanese society consists largely of those with a vested interest and families that prioritize education. In other words, households with members being educated make education a priority in their household budgets, but do not want to cover the costs of "other people's kids that they have never met." It is extremely difficult to convert such self-centered views of the burden of educational expenses into altruistic ones. Under such circumstances, the familialist attitude toward responsibility for educational expenses in Japan is built on very solid foundations. To change people's outlook on this subject, it is necessary to re-examine the significance of the public burden of educational expenses.

There are several keys to encouraging the shift of more educational costs to the public burden. One is the possibility of changing public opinion by demonstrating that higher education has positive socioeconomic effects, and that not only the educated, but the entire society can benefit. A questionnaire survey by Yano, Hamanaka and Ogawa (2016) showed that public opinion toward the possibility of income tax increases to fund university education is trending positive.

In addition, it is necessary to expand the discussion of cost sharing beyond education to related fields such as welfare and investment. However, while preschool education has been discussed in recent years with regard to dividing cost coverage between the education and welfare sectors, in the case of higher education, there has been virtually no discussion of welfare with regard to higher education costs.[12] If the scope of this debate expands spatially, it is necessary to expand it temporally as well, as a generational problem that changes in time and is concerned with investment, intergenerational income transfer, and familial (parent-child) relationships. Study from the viewpoint of mutual aid and public assistance is also required. Currently, up to 15 million yen of inheritance tax is exempted for the purpose of educational funds for children and grandchildren, and this program is currently said to be on a scale of 1 trillion yen. This shows the strength of the principle of the familial burden of educational expenses in Japan, in that people seek to pay lower

taxes by covering educational expenses for their grandchildren, rather than paying taxes that would support the entire system. Under present circumstances we cannot expect much of the public spending in terms of covering educational costs, but it may be possible to frame usage of tax funds as a form of mutual aid to a few low-income people, donations to universities, etc. There is also a need to take measures with regard to private-sector sharing of educational expenses. To this end, it is necessary to loosen regulations governing tax exemptions for charitable deductions, and universities' asset management.

As we have seen, many challenges remain with regard to the public burden of higher educational expenses. To shift more of the burden to the public, it is necessary to strengthen the social credibility of universities by heightening the public benefits of education, and universities should enhance their communality (the nature of public goods) and social contributions, and above all ensure accountability, transparency and information disclosure. These areas have not been sufficiently addressed, and are important research and policy issues for the future.

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Notes

1. Some assert that even if a financial burden is placed on employers, it will eventually be passed on to consumers in the form of increased product prices, etc. (Johnstone 2004, 404).
2. "Public funding" is a cost ultimately imposed on the public in the sense of being funded by taxpayers. However, it envisions costs imposed not on those related to this issue, but to unrelated persons (i.e., neither they nor their family members are being educated). This point will be discussed later.
3. It should be kept in mind that these statistics are rough comparisons. While details are unknown, categories and calculation methods differ depending on the country. This point has been considered by Ishii (2012).
4. For a comparison of tuition and grants in each country according to these four types, see Kobayashi (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2012, 2013b, 2016a) and Kobayashi, ed. (2012) for details.
5. See Kobayashi (2013a) and Kobayashi and Liu (2013a) for details.
6. The Constitution of Japan, Article 26: "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law…" The Fundamental Law of Education, Article 4, Paragraph 1: "The people must be given equal opportunities to receive an education suited to their abilities, and must not be subjected to discrimination in education on account of race, creed, sex, social status, economic position, or family origin."
7. See Mitsubishi Research Institute (2010), and Kobayashi and Liu (2013b) for these details.
8. See Kobayashi (2016b, 2017) for details.
9. See Kobayashi (2008, 2009) for details.
10. A detailed discussion of general and specific training is provided in "Chapter 9: Human Capital Investment," in Omori (2008).
11. For example, 62.0% agree, and 30.4% disagree, that "the Constitution of Japan clearly calls for education, including higher education, to be made cost-free" (Sankei Shimbun and FNN Survey, *Sankei Shimbun*, June 19, 2017).
12. In one endeavor, Nakazawa (2014) examined the relationship between educational expenses and welfare, but this discussion was comprehensive and did not consider higher education in detail.

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