

SUMMARIES

Outline and Significance of the International Comparative Study on Child Raising and Family Life 2005

MAKINO Katsuko

The special section of this volume consists of four papers analyzing the results of the International Comparative Study on Child Raising and Family Life 2005, a survey conducted by the National Women's Education Center in Japan, Korea, Thailand, the United States, France, and Sweden. The purpose of the survey was to clarify the characteristics and issues of home education in contemporary Japan through comparisons of the actual conditions of families, home education, and parents' awareness in Japan and other countries. The survey was also meant to provide data to be compared with the results of a similar survey conducted back in 1994. The first paper gives an outline of the survey sample, and explains the methodology as well as the contents of the survey. It also describes the characteristics of Japanese families on the basis of the survey data. For example, in the decade between the two surveys it was found that the number of Japanese families with a child between ages 0 and 12 and in which both parents work is decreasing while the number of families in which the wife is a fulltime homemaker is increasing. Compared with the other countries surveyed, excluding Korea, Japanese fathers tend to entrust child-rearing to their wives, spend the shortest time with their children, work the longest hours, and endure the longest commuting times. Japanese parents are the most indulgent of their children, yet the percentage of Japanese parents who are satisfied with their child's development is the lowest of the six countries surveyed, with the degree of satisfaction decreasing in direct proportion to that child's age. These characteristics are almost same as they were in 1994. The next three papers in this special section discuss the following three issues related to the future of child-rearing and family life in Japan. The first explores the issue of why Japanese fathers spend the shortest time with their children, why they entrust child-rearing to their wives, and why they are so little involved with their children. The second clarifies the issue of division of labor by gender. And the third seeks to provide the answers to these questions by reviewing child-rearing and family life in Thailand.

A Comparative Analysis of the Shortness of Weekday Contact between Father and Child in Japan and Korea: How This Influences the Father-Child Relationship and the Factors That Contribute to the Short Contact Time

SAKAI Kazufumi

This paper discusses the shortness of the weekday contact between father and child in Japan and Korea, using data from the International Comparative Study on Child Raising and Family Life 2005 conducted by the National Women's Education Center in 2005. A study of the data brought us to the following conclusions regarding Japan and Korea.

First, weekday contact between father and child is considerably shorter in Japan and Korea than in the other four countries surveyed, and the average contact time and the manner in which it is distributed are very similar in the two countries.

Second, in both countries, the fathers who spent the least time with their children were most likely to express concern about this. These were the same fathers who also were the most likely to feel that it was their work that kept them from spending more time with their family and their children.

Third, in Japan, fathers who spent little time with their children were less likely to play a role in disciplining the children, tending to leave that up to the mother. But this tendency is not evident in Korea.

Fourth, in Japan, fathers who spent little time with their children tended to be indulgent, but again, this tendency is not evident in Korea.

Finally, an analysis of the factors affecting the father's time with his child revealed that the child's age was a significant factor in the case of employed fathers who had their spouses and offspring in both Japan and Korea. But while long working hours were another important factor in Japan, in Korea, the father's weekly working hours did not appear to be a factor.

It was concluded from these findings that in Japan, reducing the father's working hours was likely to be an effective way to increase the father's time with his children during the week. In Korea, however, it would seem that fathers must bear the heavy double burden of increasingly long work hours and more hours spent in childcare.

Parents' Working Styles and the Social Environment for Children and Families: A Survey of Six Countries

FUNABASHI Keiko

The purpose of this paper is to identify the characteristics of Japanese society from the perspective of equality in parenthood, comparing differences in social environment as well as parents' orientations towards balancing work and childcare among the six countries of Japan, Korea, Thailand, the United States, France, and Sweden. Four types of social environments were defined on the basis of the survey results: extended family childcare (Thailand), gender-defined childcare (Japan and Korea), support for a balance of work and childcare (Sweden), and "patchwork" childcare (United States). The social environment for childcare in France falls somewhere between Sweden and the United States. This paper presents a modified version of Esping-Andersen's three types of welfare states from the perspective of the family network. Also investigated are the ways in which work and childcare are balanced between the male and the female parent. Evident are newly emerging patterns such as that of men playing double roles and of attitudes centered on child-rearing, in addition to the more traditional patterns of gender division of labour and maintaining an egalitarian balance. All of these patterns of orientation were found to be influenced by the gender stereotypical assumptions and the social environment for children and families in each of the countries surveyed. Our results suggest that Japanese difficulties in balancing work and childcare are caused by (1) gender division of labour, (2) strong orientation toward double roles for men, and (3) lack of a child-rearing centered attitude of men.

Developments in Child Raising and Child Raising-Related Policies in Thailand: A Study Based on the Comparison of Rural and Urban Areas

ETOH Sae


The purpose of this report is to elucidate the distinguishing characteristics of childcare in Thailand and of Thailand's childcare policies as perceived through an analysis of the results of the International Comparative Study on Child Raising and Family Life 2005, and to compare these findings with childcare practices in the other countries surveyed. Over the past decade, Thailand has emerged as a "semi-advanced" nation, and current childcare practices in this country are distinguished by the following characteristics: (1) Although there is a keen awareness of gender division of labor, 66% of the survey respondents belong to double-income families. Fathers are willing to participate equally in childcare, and the parents are fairly satisfied with their children's upbringing. (2) Thai fathers spent the most time with their children of all the six countries surveyed. Also, Thai parent-child relationship is the closest among the six countries. (3) By 2005, in both rural and urban areas, more parents expressed a keen interest in their children's education, especially in early childhood, than they had ten years ago. Thai parents' choices regarding their children's education and the kind of support they seek in raising their children are made on the basis of environmental and economic concerns. (4) By 2005, the Thai family norm had become stricter than it was ten years ago, and (5) a much greater number of Thai parents now say they do not enjoy raising their children. In fact, Thai parents stand out among the other five countries surveyed for their lack of enthusiasm for raising their children. Economic and lifestyles vary considerably between the countryside and urban areas in Thailand. (6) Those in rural area were less likely to enjoy the task of raising their children while at the same time their expectations were high that their children would take care of them financially in their old age. It seems that children are expected to function as a social safety-net, and this expectation has grown since the 1977 Monetary Crisis. Further study must be made to better understand how these six primary characteristics relate to each other.

How the Interpretation of Prohibitions against Indirect Discrimination Serve as an Endorsement of Flexible Work Styles and Equality: What Can Be Learned from the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act in the UK

HARADA Izumi

In Japan, in April 2007, the Act on Securing, Etc. of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment (amended), which has a provision against indirect sex discrimination, came into force. Under this law, conditions for the employment of women that substantially differ from those for men, such as stipulating height and weight, are now prohibited. In the UK, an employer's refusal to allow a flexible working style for a woman has been interpreted in the courts as a kind of indirect sex discrimination as per the provisions of the UK's 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. Because of this, employers in the UK are now, for all intent and purposes, under legal obligation to provide flexible working conditions for women as well as men.

If women in Japan are to effectively balance work and family obligations and find fulfillment in employment, there needs to be greater dissemination of flexible working styles. And for this, the same kind of interpretation of indirect sexual discrimination as described above needs to be more widely applied. This



kind of interpretation is grounded in the definition of equality that is the premise of the newly amended Act.

The purpose of this paper is to examine this premise of equality, its inherent potential—realized in the way in which the provision against indirect sex discrimination is interpreted—to promote flexible working styles, and how the concept is likely to be disseminated within Japan.

Examination of UK law and the Japanese constitution show that the prohibition of indirect sexual discrimination is in fact the promotion of equal opportunity. In this respect, interpretations that support flexible working styles are in keeping with the constitutional concept of equality and can be highly effective in advancing equality.

While there is the danger that this kind of interpretation could lead to a greater stereotyping of gender roles, it is still an effective means of protecting the rights of women workers.

One thing that has become clear through this study of how flexible working styles can be promoted through interpretation of legal requirements is that the provisions against indirect discrimination are not meant to be applied with mechanical uniformity but should be interpreted as necessary to ensure the equality of individual rights. In this respect, this newly amended Act presents a whole new theory of equality.

Donor Insemination and Changing Family Lifestyles

MINAMI Takako

Donor insemination (DI) has aroused much controversy recently as it relates to offspring conceived through donor sperm, whether they have the right to know their origin, and to have access to the identity of the sperm donor. But the issues confronting DI families involve more than just changing government policies. In revealing the fact that they have resorted to DI to have children and in acknowledging the existence of the sperm donor, DI families will be compelled to change their lifestyle, and society as a whole will be compelled to reconsider the currently predominating perception of the family, a perception that is heteronormative and male dominant. The distress of DI families is symbolic of how this kind of perception is oppressing family lives in contemporary society.

The issues confronting DI families have changed with the systematization of DI procedures and changes in social attitudes. Focusing mainly on the relationship between heterosexual DI families and sperm donors, this paper will discuss the following points: why DI has been treated as something to be kept secret, why couples hope to have a child by DI, how the rights of the offspring thus born will be acknowledged, how the abolition of donor anonymity changes DI families, and what kinds of new lifestyles these changes will open up for families in general.

Women Who Undertake New Challenges: Practical Considerations and Issues at a Gender Equality Center

ITO Shizuka

In April 2006, Sankaku Planet (called the Active Plan Net Association in English), a non-profit organization, was appointed the designated manager for the Nagoya City Gender Equality Promotion Center. The women who play a central role in Sankaku Planet were formerly homemakers.

The Sankaku Planet Project emerged out of the Tatsumaki Project, a public facility operated in collaboration with Nagoya City between 2003 and 2006. The Tatsumaki Project was based on the concept that women should do work that matches their life style. Through trial and error, the women of the project constructed a system that made optimum use of their own social resources. As a result, the project brought out the best of these women's abilities, raised their consciousness regarding work, and imbued them with self-confidence.


This project provides a model of how to support women attempting to re-enter the work force and develop their careers. Supporting these kinds of endeavors is a priority of the current Japanese government. Programs are needed that not only train women for work, but also bring out their abilities through practice and empower them via self-affirmation. More places for the implementation of such programs are needed.

In this paper, I examine the Tatsumaki Project to elucidate the processes of women's career development, define the conditions and issues faced by women who strive to re-enter the work force and undertake new challenges, and present a concrete proposal of ways to make good use of women's social resources.

The Recruitment Patterns of Women to the Lower House of the Japanese Diet

PARK In Kyung

Women's representation in government is on the increase in Japan, but there is little empirical research on women who enter politics. The purpose of this paper is to review the research that has been carried out on this subject and to lay the groundwork for future empirical research. It begins with a historical study of women candidates in general elections and of women representatives in the Japanese Diet. Next, it presents an overview of studies on the recruitment patterns of women representatives. Finally, the paper concludes with a section on research design and the items required for social background analysis.



Women's Career Development Research at the National Women's Education Center of Japan

HATANO Keiko

Support for women's career development is an important aspect in achieving gender equality in Japan. Research on women's career development has been conducted at the NWECC (National Women's Education Center of Japan). This paper reports on the Center's research on women's career development through lifelong learning for the three years from FY2003 to FY2005.

The Cabinet Office and Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology have been promoting policies for women's career development since around 2002, with the objectives of finding a solution to the lack of human resources—resulting from the declining birth rate and the growing number of the elderly—and promoting gender equality. These policies have focused on women's career support networks and the need for role models.

The research conducted at the NWECC has endeavored to collect and make presentations of the role models for women's careers. An attempt has also been made to find ways to apply these role models in support programs. The next assignment is to do a survey of women's NPO activities to clarify women's diverse career development and how to support their careers.