A WOMAN'S PLACE IN SOCIETY
COMPARATIVE ATTITUDES IN
JAPAN, WEST GERMANY AND
THE UNITED STATES

Meiko Sugiyama*

Survey findings from personal interviews with respondents in three countries (Japan, West Germany, and the United States) are used to determine differences in attitudes toward the role of women in these respective countries. Findings are first classified for each country by sex and age groups on the basic topics of "men and women", "marriage", and "the family". Overall differences between countries are then analyzed by an application of Quantification Theory (III). It is found that attitudes toward the social role of women range more widely between different countries than between sex or age groups within any given country.

1. Introduction

Eight years have passed since the World Conference of the International Women's Year met in Mexico City in 1975 and officially opened the "United Nations Decade for Women". Conditions for women have changed much in those years. In Japan, a majority of the population has now been born after the Second World War, and has been educated under a concept of sexual equality. Women are today having fewer children, and living longer. This means longer years of personal freedom, and a more important role outside the home—especially because that home today is less likely to be a large extended family, but a small nuclear family. The educational level of women is also rising, and more of them are entering the job market. In short, women's horizons are expanding from the family to society as a whole.

Since signing the resolution of "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" presented at the 1980 Copenhagen World Conference of the UN Decade for Women, Japan has seen a number of legal tests of sexual equality in this country. Movements for greater equality are coming both from outside nations and from within Japan itself.

This report attempts to compare attitudes by and toward women in Japan with those in two other advanced, industrialized countries, the United States and West Germany. For those of us in Japan, the interest in this type of comparative survey is that it allows us to view ourselves from the outside, as it were; that is, from the perspective of non-Japanese people.

Japan today is a highly international society in the sense that our news media are filled with news items from around the world; in that many Japanese now travel abroad; and in that more and more non-Japanese people are to be seen visiting or living in this country. But this increasing contact with foreign manners and customs often has the effect of

* NHK Public Opinion Research Institute, Atago 2-1-1, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105, Japan
reminding us that Japan and the Japanese in many ways remain distinctly different from other countries and people. A simple example is the Japanese bow of greeting and farewell: when we see a person from another culture shake hands or embrace or kiss in this situation, we immediately realize again how different our own style of bowing really is.

Opinion surveys have long been used to reveal statistically the social and political attitudes of people of different countries. A comparison between the results can then be used to see how different historical and social conditions have led to different contemporary attitudes.

In Japan, as in any country, the results of an opinion survey can be broken down into any number of categories, including education, occupation, or region. But the biggest differences in this country are usually seen by age, and, above all, by sex. This is especially true of social questions of the type taken up in this present study; i.e., the role of women in society. After all, men and women view this type of question from exactly opposite, complementary standpoints. This survey attempts to find out to what extent the trends found in Japan carry over into the United States and West Germany, and to what extent they differ.

2. Methodology

2.1 Survey method

The survey was carried out by different polling organizations in each of the three countries. In all cases, respondents were selected by random sampling, and were surveyed by personal interview.

All questions were first composed in Japanese, and translated into English and German. They were then independently re-translated into Japanese to verify the accuracy of the translation. They were further tested by small sample surveys prior to the actual survey.

| Table 2.1 |
| Summary of the NHK International Survey |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents surveyed</td>
<td>3,600 men and women 16 years and older</td>
<td>1,680 men and women 18 years and older</td>
<td>1,651 men and women 18 years and older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents usable for data</td>
<td>2,651 (73.6%) of whom 2,544 were 18 and over</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>1,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of survey</td>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td>Personal interview</td>
<td>Personal interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying organization</td>
<td>NHK</td>
<td>Gallup Corp.</td>
<td>Mid Institute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Analysis by Quantification Theory (III)

The correlation between the various classifications of respondents and their response types was analyzed by quantification theory. Six questions (with 26 possible responses) were selected: A. sexual relations between men and women; B. marriage for women; C. jobs for women; D. possibility of divorce; E. sharing housework; and F. husband's right to final decision (Table 2.2). Response percentages for each of these were computed for...
each country overall, and each sex and age group. This totals 13 groups for each of the 3 countries: 1 overall group and 6 age groups for each sex. The percentage of each of these 13 groups choosing each of the 26 possible responses was analyzed by input data as provided for by Quantification Theory (III).

### 3. Differing Types of Response

3.1 Clear-cut American responses vs. cautious German and Japanese responses

It is often said that Japanese people tend to avoid clear-cut statements, particularly when refusing or objecting to another person. Rather, they prefer to express themselves in a somewhat vague manner, such that the other person can gradually understand the objection without having to be told directly.

By contrast, Americans have a reputation for expressing their attitudes quite clearly. One measure of this is the frequency of the words “yes” and “no” in American conversation.

In our survey as well, it seemed that the Americans interviewed could quite easily answer either “yes” or “no” to most of the questions, whereas the Japanese and the Germans tended to attach conditions to their responses. To test this theory, answers to 62 questions of various types were compiled and divided into four categories: positive, negative, neutral, and “don’t know” (DK).

Positive responses were considered to include the most positive choice of multi-level questions (such as “agree”, “very satisfied”, etc.), and all answers except “other” to single choice questions.

Negative responses were considered to include the most negative choice of multi-level questions (“disagree”, “not at all satisfied”, etc.).

Neutral responses were taken to be the intermediate choices of multi-level questions (“more or less agree”, “more or less disagree”, “more or less satisfied”, “more or less dissatisfied”, etc.).
Table 3.1 shows the result of this analysis. The Americans were found to respond positively somewhat more often (53%) than did the Japanese (49%) or the Germans (45%). Likewise, the Americans tended to respond negatively rather more often (14%) than did the Japanese (11%) or the Germans (10%). In other words, the Americans gave a clear-cut positive or negative response in 67% of the questions considered, or 8-12% more than did the Japanese (59%) or the Germans (55%).

Conversely, both the Germans (40%) and the Japanese (37%) gave neutral responses more often than did the Americans (30%). This tendency is even more notable if DK responses are included in the neutral category: fully 45% of the Germans and 41% of the Japanese gave vague or unsure responses. Among both men and women in all three countries, the share of positive responses increased slightly with age, while that of neutral responses declined.

Table 3.1 shows the result of this analysis. The Americans were found to respond positively somewhat more often (53%) than did the Japanese (49%) or the Germans (45%). Likewise, the Americans tended to respond negatively rather more often (14%) than did the Japanese (11%) or the Germans (10%). In other words, the Americans gave a clear-cut positive or negative response in 67% of the questions considered, or 8-12% more than did the Japanese (59%) or the Germans (55%).

Conversely, both the Germans (40%) and the Japanese (37%) gave neutral responses more often than did the Americans (30%). This tendency is even more notable if DK responses are included in the neutral category: fully 45% of the Germans and 41% of the Japanese gave vague or unsure responses.

Among both men and women in all three countries, the share of positive responses increased slightly with age, while that of neutral responses declined.

Virtually no difference was seen in the relative percentages between men and women in either the United States or West Germany. In Japan, however, there was an appreciable difference. Older women in particular tended to give DK responses far more often, and neutral responses less often. There were also differences in the frequency of DK responses depending on the type of question, as discussed below.

3.2 Unassertiveness among older Japanese women

The frequency of DK responses was studied for questions in six different areas: politics and country (18 questions), society and work (8), lifestyle and home (9), self and identity (20), religion (1), and women (6). As shown in Fig 3.2, the tendency of Japanese women to respond DK increasingly with age was observed across all six question areas. The trend was especially outstanding in the politics and country category: women below 50 answered DK in 4-6% of these questions; those in their 50s, 10%; those in their 60s, 15%; and those 70 and above, 36%. This appears to be because older women, raised and married before the Second World War, were brought up in a strongly male-dominated and rather feudal society, in which a woman was expected to follow the opinions and morals of her parents and husband, rather than to form attitudes of her own. Even in questions of home and family life, where she has experience and may have opinions, she is not accustomed to expressing them. Clearly she is even less likely to offer an opinion on matters such as politics or country, with which she has almost no direct contact. This reticence is in fact one of the difficulties of conducting opinion polls.

In opinion surveys over the decades since the war, the percentage of women answering DK to this type of question has steadily declined. Obviously the DK response ratio
remains high among older women, but the growing number of women raised in post-war Japan has brought down the overall percentage considerably.

4. Men and Women

4.1 Glad to be a woman: American and German women

One indicator of how satisfied women are with their place in a given society at a given time can be obtained by asking “Are you glad you were born a woman?”. This question was asked in the present survey, along with the question to men “Are you glad you were born a man?”. As shown in Table 4.1.1, with the exception of Japanese women, an overwhelming percentage of both men and women in all three countries were happy to have been born to their respective sex. The figure exceeded 90% for males in all three countries: U.S., 94%; Japan, 92%; W. Germany, 90%. Among women, American women (94%) answered “yes” fully as often as their male counterparts. German women (84%) were also highly positive. Japanese women, however, seemed markedly less pleased: only 67% said “yes”, and more strikingly, 25% answered with a clear “no” (compared to only 3% in the U.S. and 9% in W. Germany).

Nevertheless, past surveys show that a growing number of Japanese women have become satisfied with their being born female (Table 4.1.2). Thus while there is still a very considerable gap between Japan and the two Western countries surveyed, even Japanese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Are you glad you were born a man/woman?”</th>
<th>Unit: %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Yes</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Don’t know, no answer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>1,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

women are coming to find society a more satisfying place for their sex.

4.2 Dissatisfaction among women in their 40s

In both the U.S. and W. Germany, most women of every age group are largely happy with being female. In Japan, however, the percentage is lower in every age group, and especially so among women in their 40s. Only 60% were satisfied with their sex (while 34% were clearly not). Older women were also relatively dissatisfied: only 64% of those in their 50s answered "yes"; 62% of those in their 60s; and 65% of those in their 70s and above. On the other hand, over 70% of all younger women said they were happy to have been born female.

The Japanese women in their 40s at the time of this survey were born in the years 1931-40, and grew up in a time of war and upheaval of traditional values. That is, they were born into a patriarchal system and then married into a man's family to obey and care for his parents; yet now their own children are leaving the home, setting up their own nuclear families, and purposely distancing themselves from their parents. In other words, these women must bear the realization that they can no longer expect of their children the debt, as it were, they already paid to their own parents. Now that their child-bearing years are over, some seem apt to look back with a certain sense of emptiness and regret, and blame it on the fact they were born women and not men.

4.3 Japanese women's high regard for men's ability

Among the questions asked was "Do you think there are by nature differences between men and women in their ability to think about and analyze things?" (Table 4.3.1). While

![Fig. 4.2 "Are you glad you were born a woman?"

a majority of the Americans and the Germans indicated there was no difference between the ability of men and women, a majority of the Japanese answered that men have higher ability. Furthermore, more Japanese women (63%) than men (57%) indicated this belief in male superiority.

The number of people answering that women have higher ability was extremely small in all three countries surveyed.

Fig. 4.3 breaks down these responses by age group for both men and women. The number of young people asserting male superiority was relatively low in all three countries, tending to peak rather in the 30s to 50s generations.

Conversely, the highest ratio of those answering “no difference between men and women” was found among the youngest age group, and this percentage declined steadily with age. Even in Japan, more males in the 18-29 age group answered “no difference” than did “men have higher ability”. Nonetheless, Japanese women of this age group tended to give both those responses in about equal number, showing again that Japanese women tend to rate men’s ability even higher than do the men themselves (Table 4.3.2).

Among the factors which might explain this phenomenon in Japan is the generally higher educational level of men, and their higher rate of employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Who have greater mental ability: men or women?&quot; (1) Unit: %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>W. Germany</th>
<th>U.S.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Men have greater ability</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women have greater ability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No difference</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 College-educated men, junior college-educated women: the Japanese pattern

Japanese men and women were asked the following question: "If you had a boy/girl of junior high school age, how far would you like him/her to continue his/her education?". The responses (Table 4.4.1) show that most people would like to see a male child educated through college, while for a female child, a majority would be satisfied with junior college or other short form of post-high school study. This desire to provide male children with higher education than females seems deeply rooted in present day Japan, and, remarkably, is even more pronounced among women questioned than men. Discrimination between the sexes, in other words, is found even in the attitudes of women.

The actual situation of education in Japan reflects this same inequality. About the same percentage of both males and females graduate from high school, but at that point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4.1</th>
<th>&quot;How far would you like your child to continue his/her education?&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through middle school</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through high school</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through junior college</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through 4-year college</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through graduate school</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>1,910</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: “Consciousness of the Japanese”, 1978, NHK*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4.2</th>
<th>Share of Japanese students advancing into higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(as percentage of all students finishing preceding year of school, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter high school</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter junior college</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter 4-year college</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the males clearly tend toward 4-year college courses, while females tend toward junior colleges (Table 4.4.2).

5. Marriage

The trend toward freer sexual behavior is now being seen world-wide. In the United States a sharp increase in the number of unwed teenage mothers and in the divorce rate have made broken homes a major social problem. In Germany as well, growing numbers of young people have rejected the traditional concept of marriage, and have chosen to live together without any legal formalities.

Japan too has been deeply affected by these trends. Ever since the early 1970s, expressions such as “living together”, “unwed mothers”, and “sexual revolution” have filled the mass media. Under economic pressure from television, films have turned largely toward sexuality and pornography. Likewise the publishing industry, now under recession, currently finds pornographic magazines accounting for an estimated 20% of annual sales. Too often, it seems, the liberation of sexual manners has resulted in their vulgarization. It was under these conditions that we sought to find out how people view marriage today.

5.1 Importance of “love” to young Japanese

The respondents were asked to choose one of the following as most closely matching their opinion about sexual relations between unmarried young adults.

1. They should not have sexual intercourse before marriage.
   (on condition of marriage)
2. They may have sexual intercourse if they are engaged.
   (on condition of engagement)
3. They may have sexual intercourse if they are deeply in love with each other.
   (on condition of love)
4. They may have sexual intercourse if they feel close to each other.
   (on condition of closeness)
5. Whether or not to have sexual intercourse has nothing to do with marriage or love.
   (unconditional)

The Germans interviewed proved exceptionally liberal on matters of sexuality. As shown in Table 5.1, over 30% of both men and women approved of pre-marital sex on the condition of love. Adding up these figures with those for sex on the condition of closeness and unconditional sex, fully 70% of German men and 64% of the women accepted sex even without plans of marriage. The Americans, on the other hand, were almost evenly divided between those who approved of sex only in anticipation of marriage, and those who condoned it even without marriage plans.

In contrast, a majority of Japanese men (62%) and women (70%) accepted sex only after engagement or marriage. In all three countries, more women than men insisted on engagement or marriage before sex. On the other hand, more men than women accepted sex as distinct from love and marriage. In general, the Germans were the most liberated about sex; the Japanese the most conservative; and the Americans, midway between the two.
### Table 5.1
Sexual relations between unmarried young adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>West Germany</th>
<th>U.S.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. They should not have sexual intercourse before getting married</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They may have sexual intercourse if they are engaged</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They may have sexual intercourse if they are deeply in love with each other.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. They may have sexual intercourse if they feel close to each other.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Whether to have sexual intercourse or not has nothing to do with marriage or love.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On condition of marriage or engagement (1.+2.)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage or engagement (3.+4.+5.) not required</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of respondents</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


![Sexual relations between unmarried young adults](image)

Looking at the breakdown by age of those who disapproved of sex before marriage (Fig. 5.1), in all three countries the percentage was low among the young, and increased in step with age. This trend was particularly clear in Japan and the United States, where the youngest people and the oldest had virtually opposite opinions. Indeed, this was the one question of its type in which the greatest difference by age group was observed. The difference by age among the Germans, while small, is appreciable.

The most frequent German response, sex on the condition of love, found a fairly constant level of support among all age groups except for women over 70. In Japan and the U.S. there was a sharp age difference on this choice, with the younger generations supporting it much more than their elders. In particular, the 18 to 29-year-olds showed themselves to be exceptionally liberal, with 53% of the men and 49% of the women agreeing to sex on the condition of love.

5.2 Japanese men’s opinion that women should marry

Interviewees were asked what they thought about marriage for women, and asked to select one of the following choices:
1. All women should get married.
2. It is better for women to get married if at all possible.
3. Women do not necessarily have to get married.
4. It is better for women not to get married.

A majority of the Japanese (57% of men, 59% of women) chose response 2, suggesting a very positive attitude toward marriage. By contrast, the Westerners tended toward response 3: 59% of men and 63% of women in the U.S., and 44% of men and 47% of women in W. Germany.

Fig. 5.2.1 shows the ratio of positive responses (1+2) to negative responses (3+4). Viewed this way, the three countries show remarkable differences. Japan is clearly the most positive about marriage, the U.S. the most negative, and W. Germany in between. In all three countries, women were slightly less positive about marriage than men.

Likewise in all three countries, the share of both men and women giving response 1 increased with their age (Fig. 5.2.2). In every age group in Japan, more men gave
response 1 than did women.

Conversely the share of those answering 3, "a woman does not necessarily have to get married", was highest among the young, and decreased with age. Across every age group, Japanese women were more negative about marriage than the men. Apparently marriage today is becoming less a woman's dream than a man's expectation. For their part, young women now seem more concerned with a relationship based on love, even if not formalized with marriage.

5.3 High marriage rate among the Japanese

Despite these apparent changes in attitudes, the actual marriage rate remains high in Japan. In the U.S., for example, while many people marry in their teens, many others wait until considerably later in life, or do not marry at all. In Japan, however, the great majority of people wait until their mid-twenties (average age for men, 27.8 years; for women, 25.2 years) and then marry in far higher proportion than do Americans. Thus the ratio of married people in the 18 to 29-year-old population is almost twice as high in the U.S. (47% for men, 69% for women) than in Japan (23% for men, 48% for women). But by middle age, many more Japanese are married than Americans: a remarkable 99% of all men and 92-93% of the women. Of the three countries surveyed, marriage rate was lowest in W. Germany. Unmarried German men were as numerous in the 18-29 age group as were unmarried Japanese men, and as numerous in the older age groups as single American men. Fewer German women were married than their Japanese or American counterparts in all age groups.

5.4 Women's desire for re-employment

Society no longer frowns on the idea of a working woman. Indeed, today many women want to be accepted as career women working alongside their male counterparts. So many, both unmarried and even married, are now working that children these days are likely to ask a non-working mother, "Why don't you have a job?"

To elicit opinions on jobs for women, our survey asked respondents to choose among
the following basic beliefs:
1. It is better for women not to have jobs at all. (no jobs)
2. It is better for women to have jobs until they get married. (jobs until marriage)
3. It is better for women to have jobs until they have children. (jobs until children)
4. It is better for women to stop working while their children are small and get a job again after they have grown up. (job re-entry)
5. It is better for women to keep their jobs even after their children are born. (continuous jobs)

As Fig. 5.4 shows, the most popular choice was 4, job re-entry. More women than men chose this response, especially in the U.S. (women, 58%; men, 48%) and Japan (women, 44%; men, 33%).

Around 20% of Japanese women as well as both American men and women chose response 5, continuing jobs. In W. Germany, however, the percentage for both men and women was only about half that level.

While statistics show that an increasing number of Japanese women have re-entered
the job market in mid-life, openings for them are in fact very limited. Most settle for part-time rather than full-time work.

In a country such as Japan with strong lifetime employment and seniority systems, it goes without saying that a worker has much to lose by quitting work and then attempting to re-enter the job market some years later. Thus, while more women are becoming re-employed in mid-life, it is not always under favorable conditions. Their best hope to maintain better lifelong working conditions would appear to be by staying in continuous employment.

5.5 The unpopularity of divorce in Japan

Interviewees were asked “If you cannot get along with your marriage partner, you should feel free to get a divorce”. While 40% of the Americans and 30% of the Germans agreed with this statement, only 20% of the Japanese did. Meanwhile over 30% of both Japanese men and women clearly disagreed (Fig. 5.5). Including those who more or less disagreed, almost 60% of all Japanese showed themselves to be fundamentally against divorce. By contrast, over 60% of the Germans indicated they approved of divorce, as did almost as many of the Americans.

One reason for the general disapproval of divorce in Japanese society may well be that women have relatively little economic power here. Neither are they awarded very much “consolation money” (the Japanese equivalent of alimony) in the case of divorce. Thus their life after divorce is scarcely a secure one. Nor is there much of a tradition in Japan, as there is in the West, for a husband and wife to go out together for entertainment, or for a wife to inquire closely into the relations of her husband with other women. Men therefore have relatively more freedom. The typical Japanese wife is likely to think of her life and marriage as for the sake of her children, and does not want to jeopardize their future by divorce, no matter how unsatisfactory the marriage.

Table 5.5 shows comparative divorce rates in the three countries under survey. While the Japanese rate is rising over the years, it remains at less than a quarter of the U.S. divorce rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not possible</th>
<th>Virtually not possible</th>
<th>(Total number of respondents)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese men</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese women</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German men</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German women</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American men</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American women</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5.5 Possibility of divorce

Table 5.5
Divorce rates in Japan, W. Germany, U.S.A.
(annual divorces per 1,000 population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Germany</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


6. The Family

When Britain's Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer on July 29, 1981, the wedding vows exchanged between the two of them had one important difference from those taken by Queen Elizabeth, Princess Anne and, for that matter, most other couples. Lady Diana promised to "love and honor" her husband, but she deleted the traditional oath to "obey" him. Her vow, in other words, was exactly the same as made by her husband. Small as it was, for this change to have taken place in a royal wedding broadcast live by satellite throughout the world must surely have had major impact.

Before the Second World War, Japanese women were taught not one but three principles of obedience. "A daughter obeys her father, a wife obeys her husband, an old woman obeys her son". More recently, an enormously popular song in Japan quoted an old-fashioned husband commanding his new wife in these words: "You are not to go to bed before me, you are not to wake up after me... you are not to speak unless spoken to, you are to follow me silently". In mind of this strong patriarchal tradition, we will now look at family traditions in Japan as compared to those in the West.

6.1 The husband decides: Japan

Most Japanese men and women agreed that "if a husband and wife disagree on something, the husband should make the final decision". Including those who more or less agree, a total of 80% of Japanese men and 74% of the women upheld the husband's right to the final decision. Clearly, the husband is still in charge of the typical Japanese family (Fig. 6.1.1).

By contrast, 48% of American women and 41% of the men disagreed that the husband should make the final decision. Including also those who more or less disagreed, 60% of Americans were against this principle. In W. Germany there was a noticeable difference between the responses of men and women: 64% of the women were against the idea of the husband making the final decision, or about the same share as opposed it in the U.S. But German men were divided on this question into about equal numbers of those who believed the man should make the final decision, and those who did not.

The older the respondent, the more Japanese men and women agreed that the man should have the final decision. By the age of 40, over half were in support. Above 50, a higher percentage of women than men agreed. All of this shows the continuing influence
Fig. 6.1.1 Husband's right to final decision (overall)


Fig. 6.1.2 Husband's right to final decision (by age group)


Table 6.1

Husband's right to final decision
(percentage of married and working women) (Unit: %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>West Germany</th>
<th>U.S.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-working</td>
<td>Working women</td>
<td>Non-working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More or less agree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More or less disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of women</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of traditional Japanese family relations (Fig. 6.1.2).

Limiting the statistics only to married women who have jobs, a greater percentage disagreed with the principle of the husband's right to a final decision. This trend, however, was stronger in the U.S. and W. Germany than in Japan (Table 6.1). Nevertheless, it seems certain that the increased economic power of women that comes with employment is having its effect on family relations.

6.2 Shared housework: the American way

Respondents were next asked "if both a husband and wife have outside jobs, each should share housework equally". Japanese were basically divided on this issue, with a slight majority tending to agree. Meanwhile, over 70% of both American men and women agreed, or almost 90% including those who more or less agreed. The Germans had not reached quite the same national consensus, but those agreeing largely outnumbered those who disagreed. In all three countries a slightly higher percentage of women than men agreed that housework should be shared (Fig. 6.2).

![Fig. 6.2 Sharing of housework by husband](source: NHK International Survey (Japan, U.S.A. 1980, West Germany 1981))

7. A Woman's Place in Society

We have now analyzed the responses to a number of questions about the place of women in and outside the home, and will now look at the overall patterns. Obviously more traditional-thinking people tended to give responses stressing reliance on men, while those in favor of greater freedom for women usually leaned toward the opposite direction. What remains to be seen is the correlation these response types and the various classifications of respondents (by country, sex, and age). This was done by quantification theory (by Dr. C. Hayashi).

Six questions (with 26 possible responses) were selected: A. sexual relations between unmarried men and women; B. marriage for women; C. jobs for women; D. possibility of divorce; E. sharing housework; and F. husband's right to final decision (Table 2.2). Response percentages for each of these were computed for each of the sex and age groups.
and for the overall average (13 groups × 3 countries).

Fig. 7.1.1 shows each of the 26 total responses plotted on a graph. The closer together any two points, the higher the correlation between all 39 different groups of respondents. Conversely, the farther apart the points, the less similarity was seen among the responses of the 39 different groups.

7.1 The three basic patterns

Three basic patterns emerged from this analysis: “reliance on husband”, “woman’s autonomy”, and “intermediate”.

Responses included among the “reliance on husband” pattern were B1 (“All women should get married”); F1 (“If a husband and wife disagree on something, the husband should make the final decision”); E1 (disagree with “If both a husband and wife have outside jobs, each should share the housework”); D1 (disagree with “If you cannot get along with your marriage partner, you should feel free to get a divorce”). All these responses show traditional, conservative attitudes about women.

Included among the “woman’s autonomy” pattern were the following: B3 (“Women do not necessarily have to get married”); C5 (“It is better for women to keep their jobs even after their children are born”); C4 (“It is better for women to stop working while their children are small and get a job again after they have grown up”); E4 (“If both a husband and wife have outside jobs, each should share housework equally”); F4 (disagree with “If
a husband and wife disagree on something, the husband should make the final decision"; D4 ("If you cannot get along with your marriage partner, you should feel free to get a divorce"); etc. All of these tend treat women as equals of men.

The "intermediate" pattern included "more or less agree" and "more or less disagree" responses to the above questions. These intermediate respondents can be further broken down into those tending toward reliance on husband, and those favoring woman's autonomy. Indeed, data from a 1973 survey of Japanese respondents only were arranged into the same "reliance on husband" and "woman's autonomy" extremes as well as two intermediate categories: "male superiority" and "male-female equality". Taken together, these two categories roughly correspond to the "intermediate" classification of the present survey.

There were also several responses which did not seem to fall within the three general categories. These concerned relations between unmarried men and women, and therefore were somewhat different from most of the other responses (which tend to make reference to marriage and the family). Among these were notably the responses "Unmarried young adults may have sexual intercourse if they feel close to each other" and "Whether to have sexual intercourse or not has nothing to do with marriage or love". These were put into a "sexual freedom" category of their own, along with the response "It is better for women not to get married". Obviously, not all supporters of "woman's autonomy" also agree with sexual freedom.

The top and bottom halves of Fig. 7.1.1 represent "reliance on husband" and "woman's autonomy" respectively. The left half represents clear-cut responses, whether positive or negative; the right half meanwhile stands for intermediate, vague or unsure responses. The clockwise progression that tends to occur on this chart can be seen in Fig. 7.1.2: first, positive reliance on husband, softening to unsure reliance on husband, changing to unsure woman's autonomy, and eventually to positive woman's autonomy.

With this in mind, it can be seen that the question that elicited the greatest left-to-right span on Fig. 7.1.1 was "What is your opinion about the sexual relations of unmarried young adults?" The questions which produced the greatest vertical span were "If both a husband and wife have outside jobs, each should share housework equally" and "If a husband and wife disagree on something, the husband should make the final decision".

![Fig. 7.1.2 Progression from reliance on husband to woman's autonomy](image)

7.2 "Reliance on husband" in Japan, "woman's autonomy" in the U.S., "intermediate" W. Germany

What type of people tend to fit into each of the three basic categories: reliance on husband, woman's autonomy, and intermediate? Fig. 7.2 shows a charting of these average responses by country, sex, and age group. Positions on this chart can be considered corresponding to those on Figs. 7.1.1 and 7.1.2; the top half represents reliance on husband; the bottom half, woman's autonomy; the left side, clear-cut opinions; the right side, less sure opinions.

![Chart of response patterns by country, sex, and age](image)

Looking first at average response positions per country, Japan can be seen to be located in the mid-top area, between reliance on husband and intermediate, with a slight tendency toward the latter. The U.S. is located clearly in the middle of the woman's autonomy area, while W. Germany is found exactly in the intermediate zone. The three countries, then, each show a distinctly different pattern.

Next we consider sex and age. Lines connect the various age groups of each sex in each of the countries. It is noted that none of the lines cross any others, and that all stay within the general area of that particular country. In other words, the greatest determinant of attitudes about a woman's place in society seems to the country and culture in which a person is born and raised. Next most important is age, which shows a larger variation in response than does sex in any of the three countries. Japanese attitudes vary particularly sharply with age. Men over 50 and women over 40 remain very clearly in the

"reliance on husband" area, while the younger generations have moved deeply into the "intermediate" area. There are also sharp differences even between 10-year age groups. Apparently, attitudes in Japan do not always carry over from one age group to another, even if they are only a few years apart.

The second largest differences by age are seen in W. Germany. Here, the youngest people (ages 18-29) are marked veering toward the lower left side of the chart and "woman's autonomy" and "sexual freedom" patterns.

In the U.S., however, the difference in attitudes by age groups is small, with all ages fitting within the "woman's autonomy" zone.

It seems a safe prediction that the greatest future changes in the attitudes charted here will come in Japan, followed by West Germany.

8. Conclusion

Analyzing Japanese opinion polls, sex and age tend to show much more of an influence on response than do education, occupation, region, etc. This survey, however, reveals that even larger than the sex and age difference in one country are the differences found among different countries, in this case, Japan, the U.S., and West Germany.

All people are of course born with the potential for any kind of opinions, which then in fact develop in reflection of the environment in which that person grows up. It goes without saying that growing up in different cultures with different social customs is going to create different attitudes. Still, all people are the same type of human beings, and in that sense, men and women are equal. It is surprising, then, that attitudes differences between countries are as wide as they are.

Since 1975 and the International Year of Women, sexual equality has been put to many new tests in Japan. But despite the guarantee of equality for women in Japan's post-war constitution, and despite almost 40 years of progress since then, it seems to remain more of a principle than a working reality.

The traditional idea of a division of labor between men and women—men at work, women in the home—is still deeply rooted in Japan. It appears that the problem lies not so much in society outside the home as it does in the lagging conciousness of men and women at home, in the family. It is not an easy task to overcome convention and assert the rights of women without damaging the human relations of the family. The rising idea of sexual equality among younger Japanese today gives hope that the necessary changes within the family will in fact occur.

(Received April, 1983)