

WOMEN, INSTITUTIONS, AND LEADERSHIP IN JAPAN

*Chikako Usui, Suzanna Rose, and Reiko Kageyama**

This article presents an overview of women's representation in leadership positions in major institutional spheres in Japan. It explores the literature on recent changes and institutional and psychological barriers to women's mobility. Although women have acted as agents of change who challenge the relationship between family and workplace, women's representation in leadership positions remains low. Their tight embeddedness in the institutions of family and community that is built upon the traditional gender division of labor inhibits their aspirations in pursuing non-family careers and has the effect of limiting women's access to channels of leadership. In response to changing family needs and growing international pressures, the government has initiated policies for gender equality and women leadership. However, barriers to gender equality will persist unless certain organizational conditions and resources are promoted.

Key words: gender equality, women's movement in Japan, leadership, gender tracking, Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society, gender stereotyping

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The Women's Movement in Japan

To many Western observers, Japanese women look powerless and oppressed, yet other observers suggest that issues of women and leadership challenge us with a glass half filled. In truth, both pictures are valid. Women are embedded in family and community as integral parts of Japanese society, but this same embeddedness is a major barrier to women's progress as leaders and decision makers. Japanese women operate in spheres that are separate from men, and work outside the mainstream. Their talent remains invisible. Their positions as outsiders of the major establishments have led some to challenge the core institutions of the society. If we focus only on changes in women's roles and their leadership in national and corporate institutions, we are likely to find slow progress. International comparisons of gender equality and women's leadership indicate there is much work ahead. Yet in their efforts to question not just women's lot, but the basis of society itself, women are prime movers in society.

Japan had little in its pre-modern history or culture to support the idea of human rights, much less women's rights or gender equality. When Japan began to modernize in 1868, the country was emerging from almost seven centuries of feudalism in which the samurai class of male warrior elites ruled and no women rose to positions of authority. During the Meiji period (1868-1911), Japan launched a new system of guided modernization based on Western models. However, the ideology of "good wife, wise mother" (*ryosai kenbo*) guided women's roles under the emperor system in national development. It defined women's place at home and emphasized household responsibility, children's education, and submission to the *ie* system (the pre-war Japanese stem family). Japanese understanding of gender emphasized differences between women and men and influenced policies toward education, social welfare, employment, and reproduction.

Women's suffrage became an issue as early as 1876 as Western ideas came to Japan. The Meiji constitution of 1889 did not recognize women's political rights, and men's voting rights were dependent on tax payment. Intellectuals, educators, and feminists criticized the idea of "good wife, wise mother" through writings

and protest,¹ which culminated in a short wave of feminism in the early 20th century. In 1922 the women's movement achieved modest success by gaining rights for women to organize and attend political meetings. In the context of war mobilization, however, the women's movement was seen as unpatriotic. The state redefined women's proper role as child bearers rather than household managers or educators. In this climate, emphasis moved from women's rights to protection for motherhood and protection for working women and widows.²

Women's status improved dramatically with the American Occupation, which brought far-reaching democratic social change. Women gained full political rights and in the first post-war national election of 1946, thirty-nine women were elected to national political office. Women's representation in high political positions was roughly comparable to that in other advanced countries or slightly ahead of the United States, Canada, and France in the late 1960s to early 1970s.³ However, by 2000, Japan stood 97th of 126 countries, although after the 2000 election, there were seventy-three women in the Diet, the highest number in Japanese history.⁴

This article presents an overview of women's representation in leadership positions in major institutional spheres in Japan. It explores the literature on recent changes and institutional and

1. Kathleen S. Uno, "The Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother'?" in Edward R. Beauchamp, ed., *Dimensions of Contemporary Japan* (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 226.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 102; Susan J. Pharr, *Political Women in Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1981), p. 21.
3. Pharr, *Political Women*, p. 36.
4. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) ranking of 126 countries in 2003, the world average for women's representation in national parliaments was 15.1 percent. Japan ranked 97th. Top five countries were: Sweden (45.3 percent), Denmark (38 percent), Finland (37.5 percent), the Netherlands (36.7 percent), and Norway (36.4 percent). Except for these Scandinavian countries, women's leadership as represented in national political office is not high among the advanced countries as we generally believe. For example, Germany ranked 10th (32.2 percent), Canada 36th (20.6 percent), the UK 49th (17.9 percent), the U.S. 59th (14.3 percent), France 65th (12.2 percent), and Italy 70th (11.5 percent). IPU, *Women in National Parliaments* (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm, 2003, accessed May 11, 2003).

psychological barriers to women's mobility. The concept of leadership is complex. It involves one's ability to influence others to want to accomplish tasks or goals in a way that makes leadership more cohesive and coherent. A leader may be a social architect or strategist. A leader may be a catalyst or an advocate for change or those who inspire people. Leaders make impact on lives of individuals, families, organizations, and the community. In this article, we use a broad definition of leadership. Leaders refer to those people who rose to the position of decision making in business, education, and political life and those who mobilized movements. We examine objective measures of women in leadership positions and evaluate women's access to channels of leadership.

Although women's social and political participation in society increased with democratization, the emphasis on "good wife, wise mother" tethered women's role to the family at least until the 1980s.⁵ The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the dominant political party since World War II, and corporations formulated policies based on the concept that men and women were different, and wifehood and motherhood came first for women.⁶ Employment and family policies strengthened family responsibilities as women's primary roles. They emphasized complementary roles of men in the labor market and women in the family, rather than the treatment of men and women as equal individuals.

5. It is difficult to find a precise transition in time. As for education policies, some authors suggest the 1970s as the time of change when the fundamental educational goals for women changed from the preparation for marriage and family to the socialization of citizens with democratic principles. Educational policies also began to address gender problems. Also, the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985) greatly influenced Japanese policy makers and women activists on Japan's approaches to gender equality. For example, college course offering of gender and women's studies emerged in the 1980s, and in the labor force, the legal recognition of women's equality in employment came in 1985 with the Equal Employment Opportunities. Yet, the emphasis on women's primary roles to family continued, which in turn shaped their economic roles as complimentary to men's economic roles. This explains the dominance of women in part-time work and persistent gender inequality in wages.

6. Uno, "The Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother'?" p. 303.

As outsiders of the main system, some women vocalized criticisms about the nature of work and the relationship between family and workplace. They identified themselves as protectors and nurturers of families, sought viable conditions for families, and articulated issues affecting both men and women. For example, since the 1950s women's movements have been agents of change on issues of consumer affairs, pollution, defense, employment, social welfare, and educational policies. In the 1960s, they took on consumer safety issues. Since the mid-1970s, women's efforts have grown stronger with international influence and have led to concrete government responses for gender equality. By the mid-1980s, there was a clear shift in the concept of gender equality. Women began to endorse the idea of gender equality (rather than gender difference) as evidenced in the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985 (which went into effect in 1986). In these efforts, women sought to change men's company-centered lives by reconfiguring gender roles within the family. Women's movements focused on changing men's roles or on "human liberation" (both men's and women's roles). Instead of pursuing equality with men in men's terms, women demanded a more humane work environment for everyone: shortening the working hours of men to give them more family time. The passage of the Child Care Leave Law in May 1991 (which went into force in 1992) allows both male and female workers to stay home to care for children up to age one. The law was extended to all types of firms in 1995.⁷

Tight institutional linkages, elite male distributions of top institutional positions, embeddedness at all levels of society, and the group orientation of Japanese culture have discouraged open criticism of authority and have barred women from channels of leadership. Yet, beneath the surface women have brought new awareness and acted as agents of socialization in democratic politics. While largely middle-aged and older women (especially housewives) carried out these movements, young women brought a new challenge in the 1990s: demographic boycott.

7. Nobuko Nagase, "Balancing Work and Family in Japan: Inertia and a Need for Change," *Issues for the 21st Century Think Social Harmony* (Canada-Japan Social Policy Symposium, June 23-24, Osaka, Japan Kwansai Gakuin University, 2001), p. 8.

They have sent clear signals about their frustrations over the lack of improvement in balancing the needs of working families by postponing marriage and childbearing. Their top priorities are gender equality in the workplace, flexible work, and family-centered corporate policies. Japan's commitment to the United Nations Convention to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and the adoption of positive action strategies by the government may mark the beginning of a new Japan that embraces gender equality and women in leadership positions.⁸

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8. Japan began adopting steps for the promotion of gender equality in 1975 when the United Nations designated that year as "International Women's Year" and held the first world conference on women in Mexico City. The UN also designated 1975-1985 as the UN Decade for Women. The UN adopted guidelines for specific steps to be taken by member countries and in 1979 adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Japan adopted this convention in 1980 (committing Japan to achieving the goal specified in the convention) and signed it when the second UN World Conference was held in Nairobi in 1985. At the Nairobi Conference, the UN adopted the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (a guideline) for member countries, which was to be adopted by 2000. At the third UN Women's Conference in 1990, the UN made the first review and appraisal of nations' efforts toward gender equality. It outlined basic policies and concrete measures to be taken from 1991 to 1995. At the Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995, the UN adopted the Agenda for the Empowerment of Women by spelling out areas that should receive priority toward the year 2000. That is, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women were reappraised and the UN set a numerical target (20 percent female representation in national decision-making bodies as a short-term goal, to be achieved by the year 2000, and 30 percent as a long-term goal, to be achieved by 2005). Prior to the 1995 Beijing Conference, Japan reorganized its Headquarters for the Planning and Promoting of Policies Relating to Women and established the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The Council for Gender Equality was also established as an advisory body to the Prime Minister. This council presented a "Vision of Gender Equality" proposing Japan's direction and agenda to be pursued by 2010. It identified five existing obstacles for gender equality and spelled out government strategies. The obstacles are: systems and customs that maintain gender-related prejudice; gender gaps in the workplace, family, and community; a large gender gap in policy decision making; a lack of policies preventing gender discrimination; and need for taking positive action (Prime Minister's Office,

Women and Leadership

In its Human Development Report in 1996, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) devised three composite measures of gender equality: a Human Development Index (which takes into account longevity and the standard of living), a Gender Development Index or Indicator (which takes gender equality into account), and a Gender Empowerment Measure (which considers women's active participation in society based on their representation in national political office, management positions in the public sector, representation in professional and technical positions, and the ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings).⁹

According to the UNDP survey of 174 countries published in 2001, Japan ranked 9th in the Human Development Index but 41st in the Gender Empowerment Measure (See *Table 1*).

Low Representation of Women in Leadership Positions in Japan

Japan's low ranking on the Gender Empowerment Measure (38th in 1999 and 41st in 2000, *Table 1*) speaks to low levels of female representation in national and local political office, business, and access to channels of leadership. Most alarming was female representation in national political office. Data in *Table 2* show that women held 1.5 percent of Lower House seats in the Diet in 1975, 4.8 percent in 1999 and 7.3 percent in 2000. In 2003, the world average for women's representation in national parliament is 15.1 percent; Japan ranks 97th out of 126 countries.¹⁰

The United Nations recommended adoption of positive action (similar to a quota system) in the areas of labor, education, and politics. It also designated Belgium, Germany, Denmark, and Norway as exemplary models of gender equality. These countries use positive action or a quota system to promote

Plan for Gender Equality 2000: The National Plan of Action for Promotion of a Gender-Equal Society by the Year 2000 (Tokyo: Government Printing Office, 2001).

9. Arisawa, Tomoko. "Josei seisaku no kokusaiteki choru," in Mamiko Ueno, ed., *21 seiki no josei seisaku* (Tokyo: Nihon hikakuho kenkyujo [Japan Institute for Comparative Laws], 2001), pp. 93, 109.

10. IPU, *Women in National Parliaments*.

Table 1. International Comparison of Gender Equality
(Top Ten Countries) 2000

III. Human Development Index		IV. Gender Empowerment Measure	
Rank	Country	Rank	Country
1	Norway	1	Norway
2	Australia	2	Iceland
3	Canada	3	Sweden
4	Sweden	4	Finland
5	Belgium	5	Canada
6	United States	6	New Zealand
7	Iceland	7	The Netherlands
8	The Netherlands	8	Germany
9	Japan	9	Australia
10	Finland	10	United States
		41	Japan

Sources: United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (New York, 2002) (www.undp.org/hdr2002/indicator/indic_482, accessed February 6, 2003); Prime Minister's Office, *Danjo kyodo sankaku no genjo to shisaku* (Current Conditions and Policies on Gender Equality in Japan) (Tokyo, 1996), pp. 3-6.

V. Japan	1996	1999	2000
Human Development Index	3	8	9
Gender Development Index	12	13	NA
Gender Empowerment Measure	37	38	41

Note: 1996 ranking is from Arisawa (2002, p. 93).

1999 ranking is from Ueno (2001, p. 251).

2000 ranking is from UNDP (2002).

female representation in politics.¹¹

Japan responded to the UN recommendation in May 1996 by adopting a target of 20 percent female representation in government committees.¹² This was an attempt to set female leadership

11. Mamiko Ueno, ed., *21 seiki no josei seisaku* (Tokyo: Nihon hikakuho kenkyujo [Japan Institute for Comparative Laws], 2001), p. 270.

12. The current target (set in 2000) is to increase women's representation in

Table 2. Number of Female Diet Members, 1975-2000

Lower House			Upper House			Diet Total			Year
Total	Female	%	Total	Female	%	Total	Female	%	
475	7	1.5	251	18	7.2	726	25	3.4	1975
511	9	1.8	251	17	6.8	762	26	3.4	1980
504	8	1.6	248	19	7.7	752	27	3.6	1985
510	12	2.4	252	34	14.7	762	46	6.0	1990
511	14	2.7	251	38	15.1	762	52	6.8	1993
-	-	4.8	-	-	17.1	-	-	-	1999
480	35	7.3	247	38	15.4	727	73	10.0	2000

Sources: Yoko Hayashi, "Policies of the Japanese Government Toward Women" in AMPO-Japan Asia Quarterly Review, ed., *Voices from the Japanese Women's Movement* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), Table 6.1, p. 88, citing National Diet Secretariats. Figures for 1999 are taken from Makiko Ueno ed., *21 seiki no josei seisaku* (Tokyo: Nihon Hikakuho Kenkyujo (Japan Institute for Comparative Laws), 2001), p. 274. Figures for 2000 are from IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), *Women in National Parliaments* (www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm, 2003, accessed May 11, 2003).

examples by promoting women in policy decision making. As a result, women's representation in national advisory councils and committees increased. Women's representation in government committees reached 20.9 percent in September 2000. Women were represented in 94.4 percent of all committees and councils.¹³ The promotion of women in government committees, however, may not increase the number of women political office holders because these committees are by appointment, not by election, and for short terms. They do not necessarily provide fertile soil for career development of women politicians.

In Japan, women's representation in political office at local levels is even lower than the national level (See Table 3). This pattern is in sharp contrast to other advanced countries where

government committees to 30 percent. The government source indicates 2005 as the target year; however, *Asahi* newspaper (April 9, 2003) reports the target year of 2020.

13. Prime Minister's Office, *Plan for Gender Equality 2000: The National Plan of Action for Promotion of a Gender-Equal Society by the Year 2000* (Tokyo: Government Printing Office).

Table 3. Number of Political Office Holders at the Local Level by Gender, 1980-1995

Prefectural				Heads of Towns and Villages		Total*		Year
Governors		City Mayors		Female	Male	Female	%	
Female	Male	Female	Male					
—	—	—	—	—	—	735	1.0	1976
0	47	0	644	2	2	822	1.2	1980
0	47	0	650	2	2	1102	1.6	1985
0	47	0	660	1	2	1633	2.5	1990
2.8%	—	8.2%	—	2.9%	—	2757	4.3	1995

Sources: Yoko Hayashi, Table 6.2, p. 88, citing National Diet Secretariats. 1995 figures from Ueno, 2001, p. 275. Figures for "Total" are obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs, *Chihosenko kekka* (Results of local elections) (www.gender.go.jp/statistics/2-1-1.html, 1996) (accessed May 11, 2003).

* Total includes all elected political office holders at the local level.

women politicians build their careers by running for local political office and moving up to national politics. In 1995, women held 2.8 percent of prefectural-level political offices, 8.2 percent of city offices, and 2.9 percent of town and village offices.¹⁴ Women's representation in local political office is low because, first, local politics is mainly tied to economic development projects for regional growth, and second, women tend to run as independents without backing from a major political party. Up to 80 percent of female candidates in local elections run as independents, often supported by regional organizations and associations that are organized by residents. According to Ueno, this kind of support is too small to elect female candidates.¹⁵

14. Yasuko Muramatsu and Yasuko Muramatsu, *Empowerment no joseigaku* (Gender Studies for Empowerment) (Tokyo: Uchikaku, 1996).

15. In addition, common explanations of Japan's low level of female representation in national and local politics include the following. (1) Low level of interest in politics among women. However, this explanation is not well grounded in evidence. For example, women's voting rates have consistently been higher than that of men in Japan. The number of female voters expressing difficulties in understanding political matters has also declined over time. (2) Difficulties in running for political office

Table 4. Percentage of Workers in Paid Employment Who Are Managers (1994)^a

	Japan	U.S.
Total	3.0	12.8
Male	5.0	14.0
Female	1.0	11.4
Percentage of Women in Total Managers^a		
	1981	1995
Japan	5.1%	8.9%
Korea	0.1%	0.2%
U.S.	27.0%	43.0%
Percentage of Women in Total Senior Executives^b		
	1981	1995
Japan	0	0.1
Korea	0	<0.1
U.S.	1.0	3.0

Sources: a. Ministry of Labor, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics 1995* (Tokyo: Policy Planning and Research Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Labor, 1994);

b. ILO, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics* (Geneva, Switzerland, 1996).

Women managers account for only 1 percent of all female workers in paid employment. Women's representation among all managerial positions (men and women included) was 8.9 percent in 1995 (Table 4). They made up 7.2 percent at the level of assistant section chief level, 2.0 percent at the section chief level, and 1.5 percent at the department head level,¹⁶ and less

among women. Ueno suggests the need to study systematically how women run for local political office. (3) Lack of funds for campaigns. Ueno recommends giving more funds to women political candidates. (4) Women's reluctance in taking leadership roles. For this, many have urged the creation of leadership education for young women and training programs that cultivate female talent in leadership roles. Ueno, *21 seiki no jousei seisaku*, p. 275.

16. Yasuko Ito, *Tatakau jousei no 20 seiki* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1999), p. 164.

than 0.1 percent of senior executives. In addition, women managers earn 68 percent of men's salaries.¹⁷

Women's low representation in managerial positions is attributed to barriers to women's access to channels of leadership positions (i.e., weak institutional foundations for women's advancement), men's resistance, and women's resignation from seeking such positions because of their commitment to family responsibilities.¹⁸

Gender differences in seniority provide one explanation for the wide gender gap in wages. Over the years, women have gained more seniority on the job (measured in number of years of continuous work) and the gender gap in seniority has shrunk considerably. On average, women's continuous job tenure is five years shorter than that of men. However, it has not reduced the earnings gap between men and women in accordance with recent increases in women's seniority. Education is another explanation for wage disparities for women. Although since 1969 women have had higher high school graduation rates than men, they still lag behind men in advancement to four-year universities; women constituted 32.3 percent of the student bodies

17. Jean R. Renshaw, *Kimono in the Boardroom: The Invisible Evolution of Japanese Women Managers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 137.

18. It is not that women are reluctant to work and wish to withdraw from the labor force after marriage. Japanese women account for 40 percent of the total labor force and 68 percent of all employed women are married and most have children. More than 50 percent of mothers work. Ito, *Tatakau josei no 20 seiki*, p. 161; Merry White, "Home Truths: Women and Social Change in Japan," in Edward R. Beauchamp, ed., *Dimensions of Contemporary Japan* (New York: Garland, 1998, pp. 183-204). The M-curve of female employment has been the canonical description of the view that women emphasize family roles over work. It describes women's employment pattern from their first entry into the work force after graduation from high school, junior college, or university, to their first retirement for marriage/or childbearing, to their re-entry after their children have entered schools or passed critical educational levels, and finally, to their second exit to care for aging family members or permanent retirement. This mutually reinforcing pattern, shaped by cultural values and child-care needs, dominated female work patterns in the 1960s and 1970s. See White, "Home Truths," p. 191; Chikako Usui, "Women's Roles," in Allan Bird, ed., *Encyclopedia of Japanese Business and Management* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 474-77.

in universities in 1995.¹⁹

Even though women's work career patterns increasingly resemble those of men, women's work still remains a separate category for employers. Managers believe that company investment in young women is not worthwhile since they will leave to have children. There has been a systematic pattern of overt corporate discrimination against women based on conditions of marriage, family, and age. In the late 1960s, women took to the courts the issue of "forced retirement upon marriage or pregnancy" (e.g., the Sumitomo Cement case in 1964). In the 1970s women brought lawsuits over gender discrimination in promotion, wages, and benefits.²⁰ Despite the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985, legal enforcement for gender equality in the workplace remained lax, at least until the law's revision in 1997.

Barriers to access to the channels of leadership characterize the lack of leadership in government and business. Comparatively few women occupy positions of national political leadership and dramatically few hold local political office. The absence of women in local political office exemplifies problems of women entering the channels of political leadership because it is the training ground for women in other countries. In business, women either do not enter the channels of leadership or they are institutionally eliminated from pursuing managerial positions because of prevailing definitions of their roles in the family.

Variation by Company and Industry

In 1997, about 300,000 women were managers in Japan, up from 130,000 in 1983. A 1991 survey by Diamond found 50,000 women as president (*shacho*), up from fewer than 15,000 in 1981. Among all Japanese businesses, 55 percent have a woman manager, 38 percent have women first-line supervisors (*kakaricho*), 19 percent have women managers (*kacho*), and 7 percent have one or more women general managers (*bucho*).²¹ However, women managers constitute only 8.9 percent of all managers in Japan.

19. Ito, *Tatakau josei no 20 seiki*, p. 163.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

21. Renshaw, *Kimono in the Boardroom*, p. 96.

They account for 1.2 percent of all general managers, 2.3 percent of middle managers, and 5.4 percent of first-line supervisors.²² The number and percentage of Japanese women on company boards remain extremely small: 200 women were board members compared with 80,000 men in the 1990s, which is less than 0.3 percent.²³

Women have become entrepreneurs, starting their own businesses in Japan. In 1996, there were 57,000 women-owned businesses in Japan; 5.7 percent of all heads of companies in Japan were women, in businesses ranging from small shops to major companies. Women's business ownership is not limited to small to medium-sized firms. They own the largest publishing company; one of the most prestigious fashion houses; moving companies; database, information, and research services; high-technology materials and manufacturing firms; financial service firms; franchises; food services; restaurants; and retail stores.²⁴ Comparative figures, however, show the number of women entrepreneurs in Japan is very small. In the United States where women-owned and minority-owned businesses have been the fastest-growing business segment, women owned nearly 8 million businesses in 1995.²⁵

Moreover, routes to success (as business owners) reveal the narrow channels of success in Japan. Among the top 1,000 women business owners, the majority (65 percent) inherited their businesses from their families, only 15 percent started their own businesses, and an additional 5 percent rose from within. In contrast, in the top fifty-two women-owned companies in the United States, 43 percent were inherited from family or husband, 46 percent of the owners founded their own companies, and 12 percent bought existing companies.²⁶

22. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

Women-Friendly Companies

The government bureaucracy was the earliest and best employer and incubator for Japanese women managers.²⁷ Civil service examinations, with hiring and promotions based on merit and open criteria, have provided more equal opportunity to women. The Ministry of Labor (MOL) has been at the forefront of the development of women managers. The Women and Children's Bureau was created within MOL by the Occupation in 1946, with a strong recommendation it be headed by women. It has continued to promote women.²⁸

It has been known in Japan that foreign companies are women friendly and promote women to managerial ranks at much higher rates than do Japanese firms. According to a survey conducted by the Japan Institute of Labor in 1998, among foreign firms, 35.8 percent of women with universities degrees held managerial positions, while among Japanese firms, the figures were 20.2 percent for small and medium size firms, 18.9 percent for large firms, and 17.8 percent for nonprofit organizations.²⁹ When asked about key features of their jobs, women managers at foreign firms differed most from those who work for Japanese private and nonprofit organizations in several respects. They emphasized that their firms utilized their decision-making ability, provided on-the-job training and challenging tasks, and treated women and men managers equally. In addition, another survey published in 2003 by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare showed that companies that are

27. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

28. Yoshiko Akamatsu, minister of education, ambassador to Uruguay, ambassador to the UN, deputy minister of labor, and president of the Japan Institute of Women's employment, began her career in the Ministry of Labor. Ginko Sato, who also began her career in the MOL, was appointed ambassador to Kenya and Uganda, and is now the first woman commissioner on the Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission. Former MOL managers are represented at the UN, the Prime Minister's Office, director of the Tokyo International Labor Office, a vice governor, and president of the Body Shop. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

29. Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, *Hataraku josei no jitsujō* (Current Conditions of Working Women), online at www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2003/03/hD32B-3a.html#gaikyō 2003, Table 2-1.

women friendly were also more successful companies (as measured by increase in sales).³⁰

In addition to foreign firms, some internationally competitive Japanese firms and financial institutions are known as women-friendly (or family-friendly) companies. The mass media have also recruited women in management and contributed to the reduction of sexist language and an increase in articles of interest to women. Renshaw identified the following companies as women-friendly: Seibu (retail), Recruit (communication, service), Sony (communication, information technology), IBM Japan (communication, information technology), Daimaru (retail), NTT (telecommunications), Credit Saison (financial service), Isetan (retail), Seiyu (retail), and Odakyu (retail).³¹ Four of these companies were also named as women-friendly companies by *Tokyo Business Today* in 1994. IBM Japan has publicly announced and made a written policy of supporting women managers. It is considered one of the best companies for Japanese women, according to *Nikkei Women* in 1994. Seiko (precision machinery) and NEC (information technology) were also named in 1999 by the Ministry of Labor as family-friendly companies.

International aid agencies, both government and private, have attracted female university graduates, who see more equal opportunities in them. These organizations have indirectly benefited from the rigid organizational structure of Japanese companies where men are reluctant to leave career tracks for international service, fearing a loss of promotion at home. For example, the UN has utilized the talents of Japanese women. Ambassador Sadako Ogata, the UN high commissioner for refugees, is probably the highest-profile Japanese international woman manager. She provides an excellent role model for Japanese women. Moreover, the UN is the only organization in which there are more Japanese women than men in management.

The potential for women's advancement in leadership positions appears to reside in market forces and international non-

30. There was a strong relationship between women friendly companies and company success (Ibid.). More research is needed to explore the question of which way the causal direction runs—whether successful companies promote women's careers and gender equality in the work place or the promotion of gender equality increase company sales.

31. Ibid., p. 173.

governmental agencies (NGOs). International business corporations, as well as large retail and media chains that cater to female clientele, appear to hire and promote women at greater rates. In addition, international NGOs have demonstrated a willingness to handicap the market and hire and promote talented Japanese females.

Women and Education: Entry to Channels of Leadership

The educational reform carried out by the Occupation abolished the complicated gender-segregated higher education systems of the prewar period and replaced them with the "one-ladder" coeducation system.³² Prewar universities for men opened

32. Until the end of World War II, Japan administered different systems of education for men and women. Primary schools (began in 1872) were co-educational. Education Ordinance of 1879 created separate education systems for boys and girls from the middle school level. With the enactment of the Higher Girl's School Law of 1899, middle schools for girls were called "higher schools" (while middle schools for boys were called middle schools) and were established throughout the country. The reason for girl's middle schools were called higher schools is middle school education was regarded as a high level of education for girls at that time. The goal of middle-school education was to educate women to become good wives and wise mothers. At the beginning of the 20th century, six private institutions of higher education (equivalent of college/university) were established: Japan Women's University, the Tsuda Women's English College, the Women's Specialized English College of Aoyama, the Kobe Women's Special College, Doshisha Women's College, Tokyo Women's Medical College, the Sacred Heart Specialized Higher School, and the Tokyo Woman's Christian College. It was the result of the Special College Law of 1903, which recognized women's college/university. All of these institutions were legally "women's higher special schools" rather than college or university. In addition, two institutions of higher education for training teachers for these higher special schools were created, one in Tokyo and one in Nara. Major fields of study at these women's schools (above cited) included humanities, home economics, social welfare, medicine, pharmaceuticals, and science. In short, for women, education progressed through primary school to higher school, and to private women's higher special schools or to women's higher normal schools. In contrast, education system for men progressed from primary school, middle school, high school, and finally, to the imperial

gates to women. Various higher institutions that existed before the war were unified to form “universities” or “colleges” (four-year institutions). For example, in 1948, the five private “women’s higher special schools” became Japan Women’s University, Tsuda College, Tokyo Woman’s Christian College, University of the Sacred Heart, and Kobe College.³³ Two “women’s higher normal schools” gained the status of national university and became Ochanomizu University and Nara Women’s University.³⁴ However, many other prewar specialist schools received the provisional status of “short-term college” (junior college). This idea was copied from the American model of schools for specialized studies for certain occupations or institutions of simplified higher education. In 1964, the junior college system gained permanent (rather than provisional) status. While the junior college system was not exclusively for females, in practice it became the institution of higher education for women.

Thus, a two-track system of higher education emerged with the idea that junior colleges are for females and universities are for males. The popularity of junior college for women is reinforced by strong norms of marriage and workplace practices.

university. Only women from the higher elite class entered women’s higher special schools or women’s higher normal schools.

33. Shibusawa Eiichi was one of the supporters of the founding of Japan Women’s University and became its third principal. Hiratsuka Raicho, perhaps the best known activist of pre-war women’s movement in Japan, graduated from Japan Women’s University. Shibusawa was also one of the founders of Hitotsubashi University (Tokyo Shoka Daigaku).
34. After unification of the prewar institutions of higher education for women into one unified system, some universities/colleges eliminated the qualifier “women’s” from their institution names while others remained non-coeducational women’s colleges/universities. Christian missionaries among the members of the Civil Information and Education Section supported the idea of distinctive roles of women’s colleges and mission-type universities. Noriko Hashimoto, *Historical Research on the Co-Education System* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Otsuki Book Store, 1995), pp. 282-93. Some women’s colleges themselves chose to remain institutions for women. All five women’s universities have strong connections with Christianity. For example, Japan Women’s University was founded by Naruse Jinzo, who was formerly a minister of the Congregational Church. Tsuda Umeko was a member of the Anglican Church and the three other colleges are mission schools.

Parents and educators are concerned that high levels of education might hinder women's prospects for marriage and even job opportunities because many employers expect women to withdraw from the labor force upon marriage. These employers avoid hiring women into permanent employment positions that require long-term commitment.

Gender tracking continues at the college level, with women typically entering junior colleges and focusing on particular courses of study deemed appropriate for them.³⁵ It is a persistent feature of the Japanese educational system that limits women's training and opportunities. Table 5 shows that females are concentrated in home economics, the arts and music, and humanities. Although gender representation is more equal in medicine and education, women lag considerably behind in

Table 5. Major Fields of Study in Junior Colleges and Universities

Major Field	1975		1985		1994	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Humanities	59.7	40.3	59.4	40.6	66.7	33.3
Social sciences	7.8	92.2	9.3	90.7	20.0	80.0
Math and science	14.4	85.6	18.1	81.9	22.2	77.8
Engineering	0.9	99.1	2.7	97.3	7.1	92.9
Agriculture	8.9	91.1	14.7	85.3	32.7	67.3
Medicine *	32.4	67.6	33.4	66.6	44.9	55.1
Home economics	99.6	0.4	99.2	0.8	97.6	2.4
Education	58.5	41.5	51.8	48.2	56.5	43.5
Art and music	58.1	41.9	63.9	36.1	66.8	33.2
Other	28.8	71.2	26.8	73.2	36.5	63.5
Student composition						
(%)	21.6	78.4	23.9	76.1	31.9	68.1

Source: Ministry of Education cited by Yasuko Muramatsu ed., *Joseino rikanoryoku o ikasu* (Strengthening Knowledge and Skills in Science for Women) (Tokyo: Nihon Hyoronsha, 1996), Table 2-1, p. 52.

* Includes medicine, dentistry, pharmacology, nursing, and other technical fields.

35. Masako Amano, "Women in Higher Education," *Higher Education* (September, 1997), pp. 215-35.

engineering, science, and social sciences, despite recent increases in the number of females in these areas.

As for the rate of advancement to higher education (junior college and universities combined), gender differences continued to narrow, and in the 1990s, the rates were identical: 48.2 percent for males and 49.6 percent for females in 1998, and 50.5 percent for males and 49.0 percent for females in 2000. These figures compare well with the rate of advancement to higher education in other countries. The rate of student enrollment in higher education in the United States was 41 percent for males and 50.4 percent for females in 1998; in the United Kingdom, it was 53.4 percent for males and 63.6 percent for females in 1999.³⁶

However, it was not until 1997 that female entry to four-year universities/and colleges exceeded that of junior colleges for the first time. In 2001, 44 percent of women entered universities as opposed to 21.3 percent in junior colleges. In contrast, 67 percent of males entered universities while only 2.5 percent entered junior colleges.³⁷ Thus, the relatively high rate of female enrollment in higher education is not a signal that educational equity has been achieved. Gender differentiation in higher education still exists, with a large gender gap at the four-year university and college level.

Gender tracking in major fields of study at the college/university level is rooted in gender tracking in high schools.³⁸ Although the rate of entrance to high school exceeded 90 percent for both males and females in 1975, women are likely to end up in lower-ranking high schools, whereas men are more likely

36. Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, *International Comparison of Education Indicators* (in Japanese) (Tokyo: Government Printing Office, 2002), pp. 9-13. At the postgraduate level, women made up 25.3 percent of the student body at the masters level and 23.6 percent at the Ph.D. levels in 1998 (Teruko Inoue and Yumiko Ebara, eds., *Women's Data Book* (3rd revised edition) (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 2001), p. 145. The latest figure shows that it increased to 36 percent at the Masters level.

37. Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, *International Comparison of Education Indicators* (Tokyo: Government Printing Office, 2002), pp. 9-13.

38. Hiroshi Ono, "Who Goes to College?: Features of Institutional Tracking in Japanese Higher Education" *American Journal of Education*, vol. 109, No. 2 (February, 2001), pp. 161-195.

to go on to higher-ranking high schools. Furthermore, high-ability women with the same GPAs (Grade Point Averages) as men are less likely to advance to college. The gender gap in college advancement in Japan therefore may be based on factors other than women's ability, such as job or marriage opportunities, educators' attitudes, parental preferences for children, and gender bias in the allocation of family resources.³⁹

As Table 6 shows, the percentage of women teachers falls as the level of education becomes higher. In Japan, female teachers comprise about 60 percent of those engaged in elementary schools. At the middle school level, they comprise about 30 percent of the total number of teachers. In 1996, they comprised 14.6 percent of teachers at higher educational institutions. This percentage rose to 16.9 percent in 2001, but female representation remained at 14.1 percent at the university level. This is an extremely low percentage, but it is even lower (7 percent) in national universities. Comparative figures also convey the extremely low representation of women in higher education in Japan. Women teachers accounted for 41 percent in the United States, 31.8 percent in England, and 24.8 percent in Germany.⁴⁰ The National University Association of Japan recently announced

Table 6. Female Distribution in Teaching at Different Levels of Education

	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Japan (1996)	61.6%	31.7%	14.6%
U.K. (1993)	82.5%	49.8%	23.6%
France (1993)	76.6%	55.7%	29.1%
W. Germany (1991)	77.8%	46.3%	18.0%

Source: Ministry of Education cited by Mariko Bando, *Illustrated Data Bank on Japanese Women* (in Japanese), 3rd revised edition (Tokyo: Ministry of Finance Printing Office, 1998), p. 35.

39. *Ibid.*; Mary Brinton, *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993).

40. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2001* (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 2002), online at nces.ed.gov/pubs/2002/2002130.pdf; Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, *International Comparison of Education Indicators*.

its goal of increasing female representation from 7 percent to 20 percent by 2010.⁴¹ The number of women in administrative positions in schools also remains low. Women constituted 17 percent of elementary school principals, only 4.0 percent of principals in middle schools, 4.1 percent in high schools, 13.9 percent in junior colleges, and 8.2 percent in universities.

There is no solid empirical evidence to suggest advantages of women's colleges over coeducational institutions in fostering women's leadership positions.⁴² Even though women's high schools and women's colleges have produced prominent women leaders, the number of women leaders graduated from the well-known women's universities has decreased in correspondence to the increase in the number of women entering coeducation colleges and universities in recent years.⁴³ The elite composition of student body at these women's universities has also lessened. Also, women in four-year coeducational institutions appear more likely to resist gender tracking. More women in coeducational colleges than in junior or women's colleges aspire to "work to earn a living" or "to be economically independent," and "want to be assigned the same responsibility as men."⁴⁴ In addition, coeducational four-year institutions more often offer research opportunities and graduate education. However, women's colleges have a higher percentage of women faculty.⁴⁵ Some researchers urge women's colleges to adopt majors traditionally dominated by men (e.g., engineering, science) or to make their all-women status an advantage by introducing curricular or research centers on women studies.⁴⁶

41. *Asahi shimbun* (Tokyo), April 10, 2003.

42. Yasuko Muramatsu, "Learning to Build a Gender Equal Society," *Kenkyu Kiyo* (Journal of the National Women's Education Center of Japan), vol. 6 (2002), p. 85.

43. In 1992 there were ninety-one four-year women's colleges, accounting for 9 percent of total female entrants to higher educational institutions. Amano, "Women in Higher Education."

44. *Ibid.* p. 223.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

46. *Ibid.*

The Importance of Women and Gender Studies

In Japan, college courses on gender studies have increased rapidly since the 1980s, from seventy-five colleges or ninety-four gender courses in 1983 to 609 colleges or 2,456 gender courses in 2000.⁴⁷ This means nearly 50 percent of four-year universities and junior colleges offered gender courses in 2000. (There were 649 universities and 572 junior colleges in 2000.⁴⁸) However, gender courses are virtually absent in departments of natural science and engineering.⁴⁹

In the United States, women and gender studies programs have been shown to have a distinctive pedagogy that enhances students' career confidence and feminist activism.⁵⁰ A major goal of women's studies is to improve the lives of women by empowering them to make personal and social changes.⁵¹ In addition, women's studies students, compared to non-women's-studies students, report more feminist activism during their course of study and more positive course-related influences on their personal lives, such as enhanced self-confidence and assertiveness and adoption of new/nontraditional behaviors.⁵² The impact of women's studies courses appears to be relatively long-term. Nine

47. Muramatsu, "Learning to Build a Gender Equal Society," p. 5. This sharp increase in the number of colleges offering gender courses was also caused by more accurate counting of these courses in the subsequent surveys.

48. The latest data indicates that there were 686 four-year universities and 541 junior colleges in 2002. Junior colleges grew in number in the 1960s as the baby boom cohort created increasing demand for higher education. With declining birth rates, however, many junior colleges suffered from a precipitous drop in student enrollments and were absorbed by or merged with four-year universities in the 1990s.

49. Muramatsu and Muramatsu, *Empowerment no joseigaku*.

50. See for example, Frances L. Hoffman and J. E. Stake, "Feminist Pedagogy in Theory and Practice: An Empirical Investigation," *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 79-97.

51. Marilyn J. Boxer, "For and About Women: The Theory and Practice of Women's Studies in the United States," *Signs*, vol. 7, No. 3 (Spring, 1982), pp. 662-95.

52. J. E. Stake, L. Roades, S. Rose, L. Ellis, and C. West, "The Women's Studies Experience: Impetus for Feminist Activism," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 18 (1994), pp. 277-83.

months following a women's studies course, students continued to report substantial changes in their interactions with others and willingness to adopt new roles and behavior.⁵³ As we have seen, there has been rapid increase in the number of women's gender courses in recent years in Japan. In addition, Japan made home economics a compulsory subject for both male and female students in junior high schools in 1993 and in senior high schools in 1994. Even though some authors believe that a fundamental solution is still a long way off,⁵⁴ these changes may at least contribute to greater awareness of gender inequality. If similar outcomes are achieved with women and gender studies in Japan, they might prove to be an important influence on women students.

Women as Agents of Change

Women's movements take place outside established institutions. The public sphere is at least in theory and in law a place for both men and women. Until recently, however, women and men operated in separate spheres: women in the home and community and men in the workplace. Women's skills were exhibited only privately, or behind the scenes. The UN Decade for Women (1975-85) and legal changes that took place in the 1980s have raised consciousness about women's rights and forced open the question of the double standard and the gender-based separate spheres. Some women have become more critical and vocal about the nature of work and the relationship between the family and the workplace. In the workplace, they want flexible work, job sharing, fair pay, childcare, family-care leave, and more holidays. They place the highest priority on raising children and want the workplace to create more viable conditions for families. They have become vocal about inappropriate behavior in the workplace (e.g., sexual harassment).

53. J. E. Stake and S. Rose, "The Long-term Impact of Women's Studies on Students' Personal Lives and Political Activism," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 18 (1994), pp. 403-12.

54. Tatsuro Sakamoto, "Gender Issues in Higher Education: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives," *The Japan Society for the Study of Education*, ed., *The Japanese Journal of Educational Indicators*, vol. 70, No. 1 (2003), p. 22.

Women fought for protection at work such as limitation of heavy and night work, and menstrual and maternity leave, in the 1950s. As Japan attained its economic miracle in the 1960s, labor unions, college students, and housewives began to question Japan's single-minded pursuit of economic growth. In the 1970s, women joined student protests against the United States (opposition to remilitarization, the use of Japan as a site for nuclear weapons, and U.S. political control). Women were also active in environmental movements (e.g., against factories dumping deadly mercury poison) and protests against the building of Narita airport and Japan's involvement with the Vietnam War.⁵⁵ In the early 1970s they raised consciousness about womanhood and criticized men's sex tours to Korea and Southeast Asia. Women's groups fought against the government's attempt to ban abortions performed for economic reasons in 1972-1974. The International Year of the Woman in 1975 saw the rise of an older group of professional women fighting for specific changes in policies oppressive to women.⁵⁶

In the 1980s, the women's movement debated the correct course for gender relations. The housewife feminists argued, "they themselves lived lives that were more humane than their husbands who slaved long hours for companies and could not enjoy private life." Other groups of women argued that the homemaker position itself had to be critiqued, for housewives did suffer from an excessive number of abortions, domestic violence, and the treatment of divorced women in alimony settlements and child support. They criticized sexual and economic oppression of women in the middle-class family as well as in the workplace.⁵⁷

Various women's groups also debated what was best for working women. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law guaranteed equality in hiring, transfers, wages, and retirement, though compliance with the law was not mandatory and thus brought limited results. Other groups emphasized the need to bring men into the home. Both groups were unhappy with corporate-centered society that created barriers to men and women.

55. Nancy Rosenberger, *Gambling with Virtue* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p. 19.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Demographic Boycott

In the 1990s Japan was rudely awakened to an impending future depopulation and super-aging society as the result of women's postponement of marriage.⁵⁸ Young women have set off a political crisis over the declining birth rate. Their resistance to prescribed marriage and childbirth became a clear signal that women's place has not improved. Contrary to the government claim of gender coexistence at home and in communities, Japan remained a corporate society. Companies still required long hours of work from corporate warriors while warrior wives managed the home and prepared the young for education. Day care centers remained unavailable for many workingwomen despite the Angel Plan introduced in 1995 that offered a wide-ranging support for childcare.⁵⁹ Recession after the bubble burst (after 1990) only made young women's employment prospects worse. Employers shunned women applicants. Women's part-time employment increased but their wages decreased.⁶⁰ Women's postponement of marriage is not a rejection of marriage, as the majority of women still want to marry and have children. Their image of the ideal family rests on husbands who are respectful of women, self-reliant, and able to communicate as equals.⁶¹ Women

58. Chikako Usui, "Japan's Aging Dilemma?" *Asia Program Special Report*, No. 107 (January, 2003), pp. 16-22.

59. The Angel Plan attempted to provide care for infants and extended hours of child care nationwide. Yet, the number of children on the waiting list for licensed day care remained high in urban areas. The government responded to the problem by adding up to 150,000 care facilities by 2004.

60. Women earn 66.5 percent of men's wages in 2003, with a continuing trend of wage decline for females (expressed as percent of men's wages). Part-time women earn 70.4 percent of the wages earned by full-time females and the earning gap between part-time and full-time workers is widening, not decreasing, in recent years. Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Hataraku josei no jitsujō*.

61. There has been a steady change in women's attitudes towards how women might best combine work and family careers. An overwhelming majority of women, 75 percent, supported the traditional gender division of work and family in 1982, but it had decreased to 56 percent in 1992. Teruko Inoue and Yumiko Ehara, eds., *Women's Data Book* (Tokyo: UHikaku, 1995) p. 44. In 2002, 13.7 percent of female adults supported

did not storm onto the street demanding changes in institutions and corporate practices. To this extent, it was a quiet revolution.

Government Policy

The government has adopted a number of measures in recent years to promote gender equality and have achieved some success. For example, the 1997 revisions to the Equal Employment Opportunity Law prohibit gender discrimination in job advertisements, hiring, job assignment, and promotion and began a public campaign to raise awareness of gender prejudice and discrimination, women's rights, and legal remedy. Revisions to the law also adopted a system of publicly disclosing the names of companies when violations are committed. In addition, it is now legal for women to work overtime, during holidays, and night hours. To increase female representation in the bureaucracy, the government announced more recruitment and appointment of female civil servants, along with training of women civil servants.⁶²

The government enacted the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society (*Danjo kyodo sankaku kihon ho*) on June 23, 1999. The law signified that Japan's approach has shifted from women's issues to gender (men's and women's) issues. This law spells out the

the idea that women should quit work after marriage or first child birth and devote to the family career, 40.6 percent supported the temporary suspension of work during child rearing years, while 38 percent supported the idea that women should combine both careers without disruptions (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Hataraku josei no jitsujo*). The remaining 7.7 percent include those who oppose women's pursuit of work careers and those undecided on the matter.

62. The Ministry of Labor adopted a "Basic Policy on Measures for Equal Employment Opportunities." This five-year policy (2000-2004) will be reviewed in 2005. Its major goals are: the promotion of equal opportunity and treatment of men and women in employment; the promotion of maternity health care; enhanced support for the harmonization of work, child care, and elder care; job training for women; and the creation of systems for the enforcement of gender equality through establishment of prefectural labor bureaus. Gender Equality Bureau, *Women in Japan Today*, online at www.gender.go.jp/women2001/, date accessed February 6, 2003.

responsibilities of the government for the promotion of gender equality through positive actions.⁶³ The key government unit for the promotion of gender equality is the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which was appointed by the Prime Minister's Office. It works with local governments, women's organizations, and other NGOs. In 2001, with the reform of the central government, the government established the Council for Gender Equality. In addition, the Prime Minister's Office has appointed a Gender Equality Program Review and Evaluation Committee, which consists of academics and is headed by a female professor (Mari Osawa) of the University of Tokyo. This committee reports to the Council for Gender Equality.⁶⁴ In addition, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare since October 1999 encourages private companies to take positive action strategies in the promotion of family friendly policies. It awards grants to companies with family friendly policies such as flexible working schedule, childcare, and maternity/paternity leave systems that go beyond those stipulated by the law.⁶⁵

Following the legislation of the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society, Japan launched a Gender Equality Week each year from June 23 to 29, beginning in 2001. In addition, the government adopted in 2000 the new target of 30-percent female representation in politics to be achieved by 2005. This new target is called the international goal, which was set out by the UN in the 1985 Nairobi Conference (the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women). Within the Ministry of Education, which controls policies at the national level and supervision of the institutions of higher education, the highest office holder (the Minister of Education) is (in 2003) a woman. Female repre-

63. Uneo, *21 seiki no josei seisaku*, p. 271.

64. Gender Equality Bureau, *Women in Japan Today*.

65. The Japanese maternity benefits are provided for 14 weeks with 60 percent of wages paid during the leave. In addition, under the Child Care and Family Leave Law (originally legislated in 1992 and subsequently revised), men and women can take leave until a child reaches the age of one with 40 percent of wages paid. Workers can also take up to three months of leave for family care. Nobuko Nagase, "Balancing Work and Family in Japan: Inertia and a Need for Change," *Issues for the 21st Century: Think Social Harmony* (Canada-Japan Social Policy Symposium, 2001), p. 18.

sentation in the Advisory Councils of the Education Ministry was 29.1 percent in 2001. The Councils for University, which deliberates the administration of universities, included six women out of twenty members in 2000. The chair and vice-chair were men. The Central Council for Education, which makes important educational policies, has ten women out of thirty members in 2003. Again, the chair and vice-chair are men. Within the Board of Education, which administers public schools in regional areas, women held only 2 percent of administrative positions in 1998, as opposed to 20 percent of non-administrative positions.⁶⁶

Men hold top leadership positions in key educational committees, but women's share increases in more peripheral committees and advisory councils for institutions related to women's affairs. Thus, women made up the majority of the National Center for the Education of Women in 2002, occupying ten out of seventeen administrator positions.⁶⁷ The chairperson of the Advisory Council for the Creation of a Society based on Equal Participation of the Sexes was female and included fifteen women out of twenty-five members in 1999.⁶⁸

Institutions and Persistent Barriers to Equality

Job market behaviors and outcomes are affected by people's personal relations and by the structure of the overall network of relations.⁶⁹ One's success in job mobility is often the result of direct and indirect personal relations, and formal and informal

66. The National Women's Research Association, *The Status of Women as Seen in Census Data* (Tokyo: Kakiuchi Publishing Company, 2000), p. 108; Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, *Education in Japan 2000: A Graphic Presentation* (Tokyo: Gyosei, 2000), p. 34.

67. Information from The National Women's Research Association, www.nwec.jp/guidance/whatnwec/page11.html, accessed March 25, 2003.

68. Information retrieved from www.gender.go.jp/vision/member110809.html (date accessed, March 25, 2003).

69. Mark Granovetter, "The Old and New Economic Sociology: A History and an Agenda" in Roger Friedland and A. F. Robertson, eds., *Beyond the Marketplace: Rethinking Economy and Society* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990), p. 98.

channels of network relations. Women are outside the network of these relations that lead to positions of leadership and decision making. DiMaggio contends that these same economic behaviors are embedded not only in social relations but also in culture defined as social cognition, the content and categories of conscious decision making, and taken-for-granted bases of action.⁷⁰ Cognitive phenomena include beliefs, attitudes, norms, and evaluations as the focus of conventional social psychology. They are also strategies, logics, or habitual pre-conscious behavior of problem solving routines that provide menus for action that shape people's interpretations of the world and their response to it. They are accounting systems that people use in deciding whether to initiate or maintain action and relationships.⁷¹ People in the networks have cognitive orientations derived in part from their relationships and their history. Here we identify the cultural problem for women. The men who control access to channels toward leadership positions represent not only networks of social relations but cognitive cultures that lead to stereotyping and discrimination in job assignments and promotion. Conversely, women's embeddedness in the institutions of family and community develops social cognition that may inhibit their aspirations and initiatives in pursuing jobs that lead to positions of leadership.

Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are barriers to women's equality globally.⁷² A core stereotype that poses a significant hurdle for women's advancement is "think leader, think male." This stereotype refers to strongly held beliefs that men are more likely to have the traits of a leader than are women, particularly traits such as competence and dominance.⁷³ Competence

70. Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Aspects of Economic Action and Organization" in Roger Friedland and A. F. Robertson, eds., *Beyond the Marketplace: Rethinking Economy and Society* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990), p. 113.

71. Paul DiMaggio, "Nadel's Paradox Revisited: Relational and Cultural Aspects of Organizational Structure" in Nitin Mohria and Robert G. Eccles, eds., *Networks and Organizations: Structure, Form and Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1992), pp. 118-19.

72. Virginia E. Schein, "A Global Look at Psychological Barriers to Women's Progress in Management," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), p. 675-88.

can be conveyed through objective success at a task or through status cues, such as avoiding overly polite forms of speech, conveying confidence nonverbally, and making task contributions. Dominant behavior involves negative forms of influence, including controlling, threatening, or forceful behavior such as having a stern expression, or verbal or nonverbal expressions of aggression or threat. In contrast, women are stereotyped as being warm and communal and are expected to behave in a manner that shows a lack of self-interest. Communal behaviors include verbal and nonverbal behaviors such as smiling, agreeing, and helping others—traits viewed as incompatible with a leadership role.⁷⁴

Cross-cultural research on perceptions of women in management provides strong evidence of gender stereotyping. For instance, Schein summarized stereotypes held by managers and undergraduate business students in five countries, including Japan, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁷⁵ In all countries, men ascribed similar traits to both “men” and “managers,” but perceived “women” as having traits quite different from those of “managers.” Women held similar stereotypes in Japan, China, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Women from the United States were the only group that attributed similar traits to “men,” “women,” and “managers.” In effect, men and women in most countries perceived the role of leader to be incompatible with the female gender role. The degree of managerial sex typing may reflect women’s views of opportunities for and actual participation of women in management in their respective countries. In Japan, with few women in management, both men and women saw no similarity between “women” and “managers.”

Gender stereotypes result in prejudice and discrimination against women when they are used as the basis for limiting women’s opportunities or for giving preferential treatment to men. One of the most persistent and detrimental outcomes of stereotyping in Japan is gender tracking in jobs and education. In most settings, women possess lower levels of status and

73. Linda L. Carli, “Gender and Social Influence,” *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), pp. 725-41.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Schein, “A Global Look.”

power than men, reinforcing the assumption that men have more right to act with authority. In Japan, women generally are tracked into lower-paying, lower-status jobs. Nearly half of all employers surveyed in the mid-1980s provided no promotional possibilities for women, based on the belief that women would leave the workplace when they got married or had children.⁷⁶

As a result of actual gender differences in status and power, people are more open to being influenced by men and more resistant to being influenced by women, even when women occupy positions of authority. Prejudice against women leaders is especially strong in leadership roles that are male-dominated or require masculine qualities. Such gender-incongruent roles have special disadvantages for women. Men in male-dominated settings are particularly resistant to accepting women's authority. Men report feeling more threatened by a competent woman than a competent man and also report liking her less. Thus, women leaders who are authoritative, autocratic, or directive are evaluated more negatively and are less influential than men who behave similarly. Women leaders who enact a subordinate gender role by placating and rewarding subordinates tend to be liked more, but respected less, than confident, authoritative women.

Discrimination against women in the workforce is another consequence of stereotyping. Research conducted in the United States indicates that gender bias in evaluation of job performance plays a key role in discrimination.⁷⁷ Numerous investigations in organizational psychology indicate that women's accomplishments are undervalued as compared to those of men.⁷⁸ The more women are viewed in stereotypic terms, the more likely this is to occur.⁷⁹ Although less research has been done on this topic in Japan, a similar pattern is likely to emerge.

76. Brinton, *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan*, p. 89.

77. Madeline E. Heilman, "Description and Prescription: How Gender Stereotypes Prevent Women's Ascent Up the Organizational Ladder," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), pp. 657-74.

78. Madeline E. Heilman, "Sex Stereotypes and Their Effects in the Workplace: What We Know and What We Don't Know," *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, vol. 10, No. 6 (1995), pp. 3-26.

79. Madeline E. Heilman and M. H. Stopeck, "Being Attractive, Advantage

According to a study of the sex pay gap in a large Japanese firm, women's performances may be devalued and rewarded less even in instances where women's job classification, length of service, quality of skills, and general performance are similar to men's.⁸⁰ A survey reported by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor also shows that women face the same consequences regardless of their employment type (full-time, part-time, or temporary contractual work). Lack of company's investment in women (e.g., on-the-job training to develop skills), unfair treatment of women in job evaluation and promotion, and gender inequality in wages are the top three complaints of women.⁸¹

Gender stereotyping also results in gender tracking in education, as described earlier. In fact, cause and effect in terms of gender tracking in education, jobs, and families cannot easily be separated. In Japan, parents' educational aspirations for daughters are highly gender tracked. Japanese mothers were reported by Brinton to be 2.6 times more likely to aspire to a university education for their sons than for their daughters, whereas in the United States and Sweden, these factors were 1.1 and 1.0, respectively.⁸² Subsequent research indicated that parents are more supportive of a son's receiving a university education than a daughter.⁸³ Parents expressed concern that high levels of education might impair Japanese women's job opportunities because many employers avoid hiring women into permanent employment positions that require more education.

or Disadvantage? Performance Based Evaluations and Recommended Personnel Actions as a Function of Appearance, Sex and Job Type," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 35, No. 2 (1985), pp. 174-86.

80. Keiko Aiba and A. S. Wharton, "Job-level Sex Composition and the Sex Pay Gap in a Large Japanese Firm," *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring, 2001), pp. 67-87.

81. Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, *Hataraku josei no jitsujō* (Current Conditions of Working Women), www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2003/03/hD32B-3a.html#gaikyō 2003.

82. Mary C. Brinton, "The Social-institutional Bases of Gender Stratification: Japan as an Illustrative Case," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 94, No. 2 (1988), pp. 300-34.

83. Gerald LeTendre, "Constructed Aspirations: Decision-making Processes in Japanese Educational Selection," *Sociology of Education*, vol. 69, No. 3 (1996), pp. 193-216; Ono, "Who Goes to College?"

Japanese parents' concerns appeared to be real. Amano concluded that gender bias in education was closely related to gender bias in job opportunities.⁸⁴ For men, academic credentials had instrumental value by providing entry to professions and jobs with high income and social status. For women, academic credentials had little instrumental value; instead, they functioned to signal a woman's social class status.

Strategies for Enhancing Women's Leadership

Two strategies to enhance women's leadership have been proposed by U.S. researchers.⁸⁵ The first strategy focuses on what can be done to enhance women's effectiveness in inhospitable circumstances. The second proposes ways the work environment can be made more congenial for women. Of course, the extent to which these strategies would apply in the Japanese context remains to be explored. Nevertheless, the strategies appear to address similar problems facing workingwomen in Japan and the United States.

The first strategy addressed the finding that leader behaviors that are effective for men often are not effective for women. For instance, competent assertiveness is an effective tool for male leaders. However, when women are assertive, they violate gender roles. Similarly, men who emphasize their status and authority over subordinates are effective, but women are not. Thus, particularly in male-dominated settings, it is recommended that women, first, combine status-leveling efforts with status-heightening strategies, and second, perform with exceptional competence. For instance, women leaders of mixed-sex groups were found to be more effective when they adopted a group-orientation that showed concern with group outcomes and became solidly entrenched in a group before attempting to make changes,⁸⁶ and when they talked and listened extensively to subordinates, avoid-

84. Amano, "Women in Higher Education."

85. See for example, Janice D. Yoder, "Making Leadership Work More Effectively for Women," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 2001), pp. 815-28.

86. Susan Shackelford, Wendy Wood, and Stephen Worchel, "Behavioral Styles and the Influence of Women in Mixed-sex Groups," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 59, No. 3 (1996), pp. 284-93.

ed dominant speech acts, used humor to lighten tense exchanges, and were respectful of others.⁸⁷ In addition, exceptionally competent women who exhibit superior competence on a task, relative to the skills of the group, are more influential than less competent women⁸⁸ or equally competent men.⁸⁹ However, these individual solutions are fundamentally unjust because they establish a different and higher standard for women than for men. Thus, it is critical that organizational changes also occur to make the work environment fairer to women.

The second strategy focuses on providing organizational support that will facilitate women's leadership. Organizations can improve women's leadership by, first, providing women leaders with the resources necessary to reward and help others; second, legitimizing women's leadership; and third, increasing the number of women in leadership positions or job categories. In terms of providing women leaders with resources, sociological evidence indicates that leaders with superior resources will be regarded as of higher status than those with fewer resources.⁹⁰ Organizations that provide women leaders with sufficient resources, then, will enhance their standing. It also is important for organizations to legitimize a woman's authority by having key officials support and favorably evaluate her. An expression of confidence by superiors leads to more favorable evaluations by subordinates for both women and men leaders. However, the need for legitimization is stronger for women than for men.

Last, in terms of organizational strategies, increasing the number of women in leadership positions will improve their effectiveness. The empirical evidence is very clear that women experience negative consequences when they are "tokens," that is, when they operate in groups that are 85 percent or more

87. Senta Troemel-Ploetz, "Let Me Put it This Way, John': Conversational Strategies of Women in Leadership Positions," *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 22 (1994), pp. 199-209.

88. Linda L. Carli, S.J. LaFleur, and C.C. Loeber, "Nonverbal Behavior, Gender and Influence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 68 (1995), pp. 1030-41.

89. M.D. Pugh and Ralph Wahrman, "Neutralizing Sexism in Mixed-sex Groups: Do Women Have to Do Better than Men?" *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 88, No. 4 (1983), pp. 746-62.

90. Yoder, "Making Leadership Work More Effectively for Women."

men.⁹¹ When women comprise less than 15 percent of a group, they experience heightened visibility and performance pressures, social isolation, and gender role stereotyping.⁹² Outcomes are more favorable when women exceed 15 percent of a group, but there also is evidence that increasing the number of women can elicit a backlash. Recent reviews identify a tipping point of 35-40 percent women as the one at which the work group or place becomes a congenial context for women leaders.⁹³ Thus, the gender balancing of work groups is one way to create a positive context for women leaders.

Conclusion

Japanese women have made progress, but by international standards, this progress is slow at best. Japan is a network society where men and women are embedded in networks that affect their prospects for access to institutional positions of leadership and decision making. The effects of societal embeddedness are not the same for everyone. For elites of Japanese society, this embeddedness affects their coordination and communication in institutional leadership positions and maintains the stable fabric of society. However, the embeddedness of subordinate groups, like women, has the effect of muting the criticism, limiting the aspirations, and paralyzing actions associated with mobility and leadership.

Women's channels of embeddedness do not access the circuits that recruit and train the leaders of major institutional decision making. The reason progress for women is slow is that they are *over-embedded* in the networks of family and community based on the traditional division of gender roles.

Uzzi points out that processes by which embeddedness creates a requisite fit with some environments can also paradoxically reduce the ability to adapt to changes in the environment. Japan-

91. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic, 1977).

92. See, for example, Janice D. Yoder, "Rethinking Tokenism: Looking Beyond Numbers," *Gender and Society*, vol. 5, No. 2 (1991), pp. 178-92.

93. *Ibid.*

ese society may face a similar issue.⁹⁴ The same processes by which embeddedness, group orientations of trust and stability, and networks that produced a dynamic economy and stable society may also stand as barriers to Japan's adaptation to a new environment. Solidarity and trust in an embedded society create unique opportunities but often at the cost of fierce regimentation and limited contacts with outsiders. Portes and Sensenbrenner suggest that it may be a sociological bias to see good things emerging out of social embeddedness and to associate bad things with self-interest and market behavior.⁹⁵ However, it is the erosive ability of self-interested behavior and market dynamics on networks of stability that may break down the barriers for women, resulting from being over-embedded in Japanese society. Given that leadership for women has gone the furthest in international business organizations and international nonprofit organizations, global markets are perhaps the best answer for women's progress in the future.

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94. Brian Uzzi, "Social Structure and Competition in Interfirm Networks: The Paradox of Embeddedness" in Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg, eds., *The Sociology of Economic Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Westview, 2001), p. 227.
95. Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner, "Embeddedness and Immigration: Notes on the Social Determinants of Economic Action" in Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg, eds., *The Sociology of Economic Life* (Cambridge, Mass: Westview, 2001), pp. 125-26.

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