

## Married Women's Labor in East Asian Economies

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One of the most dramatic economic changes in the twentieth century was the increase in married women's participation in work roles outside the home. In country after country, regardless of cultural region, late industrialization drew more married women into the labor force.

It is unusual for empirically minded social scientists to have the chance to make such sweeping generalizations, and we generally relish the opportunity. But the empirical regularity of women's increased work opportunities should not blind us to the fact that there nevertheless remain important lines of divergence in highly industrialized countries. One divergence is in gender inequality. There are substantial cross-country differences in the female-to-male wage gap as well as in levels of sex segregation by occupation and employment status (full-time and part-time employment, self-employment, and employment in small family-run enterprises). A second, related line of divergence is in women's employment patterns across the life cycle. In some societies the majority of women leave the labor force at the time of marriage or childbearing; in other countries large numbers of women continue their labor force participation uninterrupted throughout these life-cycle stages. The economic, cultural, and institutional reasons behind the international differences in gender inequality and in women's own work patterns constitute extremely interesting terrain for social scientists.

This volume addresses the nature of women's economic participation in three East Asian "miracles": Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. In so doing, it asks three questions: First, what is similar or different about women's economic participation in this region of the world compared to others, particu-

larly to highly industrialized Western nations? Second, what patterns of convergence and divergence in women's economic participation are evident among East Asian societies themselves? And finally, what accounts for these patterns? The task of this introductory chapter is to offer answers to the first two questions and to advance the general thesis developed throughout the book in answer to the third question: that the different patterns of women's economic participation in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea stem from key differences in the structure of labor demand and work organizations in each society and their interaction with subtle differences in labor supply.

I have made the conscious decision to center this book on married rather than single women's participation in the economy, although some of the chapters do touch on the work of single women or compare women's work lives before and after marriage (Brinton, Lee, and Parish, Chapter 2; Lee and Hirata, Chapter 4; Ogasawara, Chapter 6; Mehrotra and Parish, Chapter 11). I concentrate principally on married women because it is their work lives that potentially undergo the most dramatic transformation during late industrialization. Exploring why that potential is realized or unrealized in early twenty-first-century East Asia is therefore highly important.

Scholars of women's work in East Asia have produced a strong body of single-country monographs on the lives of factory women in the context of high-speed export-led economic growth (Greenhalgh 1985; Hsiung 1996; Kim 1997; Kung 1983; Roberts 1994; Salaff 1981).<sup>1</sup> These studies examine the complexities and contradictions faced by wage-earning women in patriarchal societies, particularly in negotiating power relationships in the workplace and at home. They also explore how women's work in the labor market impacts their welfare and quality of life. Studies of Taiwan and South Korea in particular are usually framed in the context of a broader debate over whether economic development expands or restricts women's economic opportunities and status. The marginalization literature (also known as the developmentalist, or dependency, literature) argues that export-led economic growth often creates false opportunities for women; capitalism draws more women into the labor market but relegates them to low-paying jobs that recreate the patriarchal gender relations of households (Lantican, Gladwin, and Seale 1996; Pyle 1990; Ward 1984).<sup>2</sup> Central in this literature are the manufacturing jobs in which both single and married women participate, although single women generally work in factories and married women are often involved in home-based piecework.

But the economies of East Asia are rapidly being transformed into post-industrial ones. The Japanese, South Korean, and Taiwanese economies now have large service sectors. As I discuss below, the experience of other countries has amply demonstrated that the expansion of the service sector increases the opportunities for married women, especially highly educated women, to enter the paid workforce in white-collar rather than manufacturing work. The continued development of postindustrial, "information" economies in East Asia means that it is time to pay particular attention to how married women's work is being shaped and transformed, not principally in factories but rather in offices. This argues as well for a focus on women in urban areas, for it is there that the opportunities for white-collar work are greatest.<sup>3</sup> Future changes in women's work and in labor market gender inequality in East Asia will depend principally on how the constellation of opportunities for women expands or constricts in the evolving and complex service sector—ranging from low-paying, dead-end sales jobs to high-skilled, highly remunerated jobs in information technologies.

This volume sets out to be quite different from prior work, then, in its comparative focus within East Asia and in its attempt to theorize and explore how married women's work is being shaped by the nature of work organizations and labor demand in the postindustrial era. While researchers sometimes compare one of these countries (usually Japan) to "the West," little attention has focused on comparisons within East Asia itself. Despite its economic woes in the early twenty-first century, East Asia is and will remain one of the most dynamic economic regions of the world. The region is an inherently important site in which to consider gender inequality. Moreover, I argue in this chapter that Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea afford a marvelous opportunity for comparative work that can untangle some of the key mechanisms structuring women's work. A half-century ago it would have been reasonable to think that gender inequality and the nature of women's work in the three societies would look quite similar at the beginning of the twenty-first century. But as this book shows, there are in fact significant divergences among the three. A central focus of this book, especially in the initial comparative chapters, is how key differences in the nature of labor demand and in the structure and culture of work organizations interact with some subtle labor supply differences to produce different work patterns for women and different levels of gender inequality in these societies. As I show later in this chapter, the cross-society variations in women's work are par-

ticularly fascinating given the similar cultural backgrounds and the similar overall contours of female labor supply shared by the three societies.

Before moving to the comparisons among Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, it is instructive first to locate them within the context of our general knowledge about the changes that occur in women's work lives with industrialization.

#### INDUSTRIALIZATION AND WOMEN'S WORK

Early comparative studies of women's work by sociologists and labor economists focused mainly on changes in the *level* of female labor force participation with industrialization. This was done by looking at the relationship between level of industrialization and cross-sectional female labor force participation rates (Collver and Langlois 1962; Durand 1975; Pampel and Tanaka 1986; Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1989; Semyonov 1980; Ward 1984; Wilensky 1968). These studies often produced conflicting results; some found evidence of rising rates and others found declining rates. As later studies showed, this confusion was produced by the fact that women's labor force participation typically declines during the early stages of industrialization as production moves out of the home and into the factory, and only later increases as a result of the expansion of the service sector (Goldin 1990, 1995). These critical changes in the nature of labor demand are accompanied by typically dramatic changes in labor supply conditions: declines in fertility and increases in life expectancy mean that the average woman in a highly industrialized society has more years available to potentially engage in productive work outside the home than her counterpart in a less-industrialized society.

This combination of changing labor demand and supply factors produces what economists now call a "U-shaped" pattern of female labor force participation over time (Goldin 1995). If one pictures time stretching across the bottom of a graph and the female labor force participation rate on the vertical axis, then the upper left-hand side of the U corresponds to the high labor force participation rates in agricultural society, where the majority of able-bodied men and women alike are engaged in production. The trough of the U (midway across the horizontal axis) corresponds to the transition of the economy to a manufacturing base. During this period, it is typical for some manufacturing industries to be male-dominated and others, particularly textile-related industries, to be dominated by young, single women. The

productive work roles of married women are generally limited during this stage of economic development, and thus the overall female labor force participation rate is low. The upward-sloping portion of the U on the right-hand side of the graph corresponds to women's labor force participation during late industrialization. Here the expansion of service sector employment generates more sales, clerical, and other white-collar jobs that are considered "respectable" for married women and that therefore draw them into the labor force (Goldin 1990, 1995; Standing 1976). Typically fertility rates have declined markedly and educational expansion has brought new educational opportunities to women by this stage of economic development as well. Both of these trends also bring more married women into the labor force.

#### JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, AND TAIWAN VERSUS WESTERN INDUSTRIAL NATIONS

The societies considered in this volume all went through the transition from agricultural to service-based economies, as outlined above, with breathtaking speed. Table 1.1 shows the change in industrial structure in each country between 1955 and 1995. Japan is the quintessential postindustrial economy, with a large service (tertiary) sector and tiny agricultural (primary) sector bracketing a declining but still substantial manufacturing (secondary) sector.<sup>4</sup> Taiwan and South Korea, two of East Asia's so-called NICs (newly industrialized countries), industrialized several decades later than Japan and have agricultural sectors that remain somewhat larger than Japan's and manufacturing sectors that are comparable or slightly larger. Among the three societies, South Korea was the latest to industrialize and shows the most rapid and dramatic transformation from an agriculture- to a service-based economy, having moved in the course of three and a half decades from a situation where four-fifths of its labor force was engaged in agriculture to a situation where well under one-fifth is.

#### *Consistencies between East Asia and the West*

The panels in figure 1.1 show the change in the overall female labor force participation rate (solid line) as well as the rate in urban areas (dotted line) in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea since 1960. In each case, women's overall rate of participation in the economy fell slightly at some point and then began a steady increase, mirroring the U-shaped pattern documented in cross-

TABLE 1.1  
Industrial Composition of the Labor Force in Japan,  
South Korea, and Taiwan, 1955–1995

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Service	Total <sup>a</sup>
JAPAN				
1955	43.0	22.8	34.2	100.0
1980	10.4	34.8	54.6	99.8
1995	5.7	32.9	61.0	99.6
SOUTH KOREA				
1960	79.5	5.8	14.7	100.0
1980	34.0	28.7	37.3	100.0
1995	12.5	32.9	54.7	100.0
TAIWAN				
1955	60.9	10.0	29.2	100.1
1980	19.5	42.1	38.4	100.0
1995	10.6	38.3	51.1	100.0

SOURCES: Statistics Bureau, Japan, *Labor Force Survey*, various years; National Statistical Office, ROK (Republic of Korea), *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey*, various years; Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, various years.

NOTES: All values are percentages. The agricultural sector consists of agriculture, forestry, fishing, and animal husbandry. Manufacturing consists of mining, construction, and manufacturing. The service sector consists of utilities, transportation and communication, sales, finance, insurance and real estate, services, and government.

<sup>a</sup>Due to rounding errors, some rows do not add up to 100.0.

national studies (discussed earlier) that include large numbers of countries. Interestingly, in Taiwan the upturn occurred in the mid-1960s, fully a decade earlier than in its more industrially advanced neighbor, Japan. In South Korea, the female labor force participation rate began its upward trend in the late 1960s.

As one would expect from historical patterns of women's labor force participation in other countries, urban women's rates of participation in East Asia started out lower than those of agricultural women (as evidenced by the gap in the overall rates and the urban rates in figure 1.1), then at some point began to increase more rapidly. This is consistent with the eventual shift from

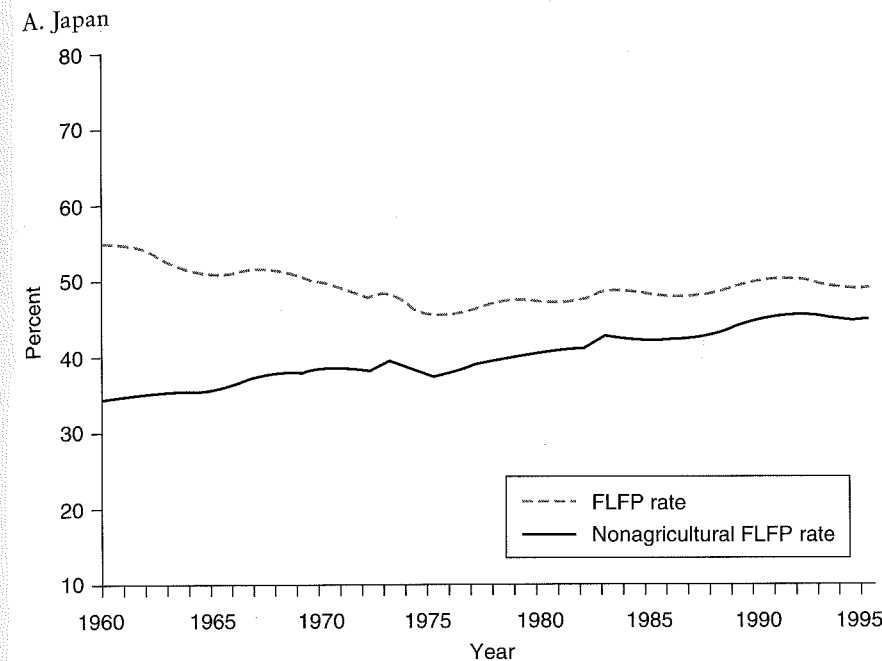


Figure 1.1. Female Labor Force Participation in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, 1960–1995

SOURCE: Statistics Bureau, Japan, *Labor Force Survey*, various years. Figures are based on the population over age 15.

NOTE: FLFP = female labor force participation.

a manufacturing to a service base in urban areas, which opens up increased opportunities for women. Women's labor force participation rates in urban and non-urban areas are a little more similar to each other in Taiwan than in either Japan or South Korea. We come back to this point in later chapters; Taiwan experienced more even geographical urbanization than the other two countries, and the dominant organizational pattern in that society is the small family business, thousands of which are dispersed across the island. This equalizes women's work opportunities geographically more than is the case in Japan and South Korea, both of which have a mixture of very densely populated mega-cities, smaller cities, and villages.

The trends presented so far show nothing particularly unusual about women's labor force participation in East Asia compared to the industrial-

## B. South Korea

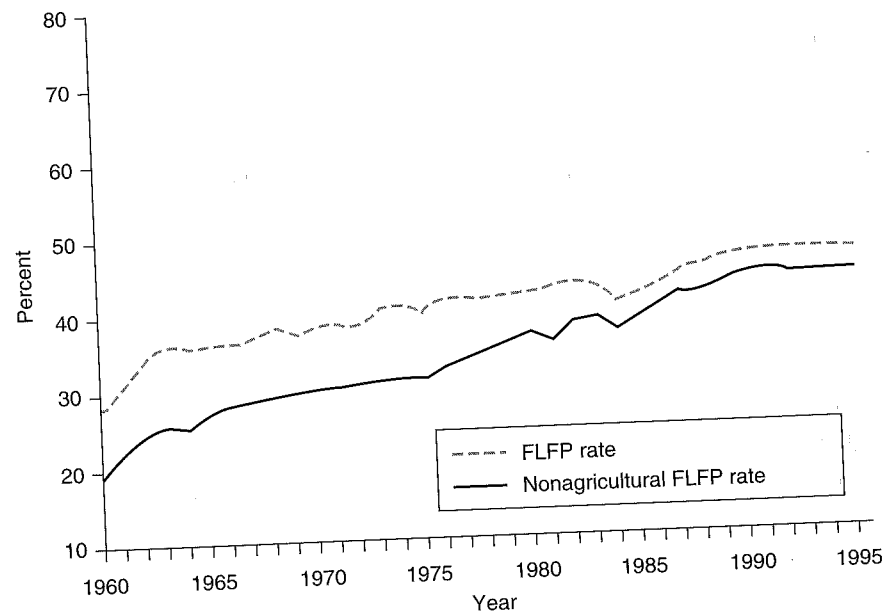


Figure 1.1 (continued)

SOURCE: National Statistical Office, ROK (Republic of Korea), *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey*, various years. Figures are based on the population over age 15.

NOTE: FLFP = female labor force participation.

ized West. The overall rate of women's labor force participation in these societies is very similar to that of several European countries (including France, Germany, the Netherlands, and England). Women participate in the economy at substantially higher rates (10 to 30 percentage points more) in the United States, Canada, and the Northern European countries.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Divergences from Western Patterns*

It is when we turn to the *type* of women's employment—the proportions of women working as wage/salaried employees, family enterprise workers, or self-employed workers—that East Asia looks quite distinct from either North America or the countries of the European Community. Paid (wage/salaried) employees make up about 90 percent of all working women in nearly every

## C. Taiwan

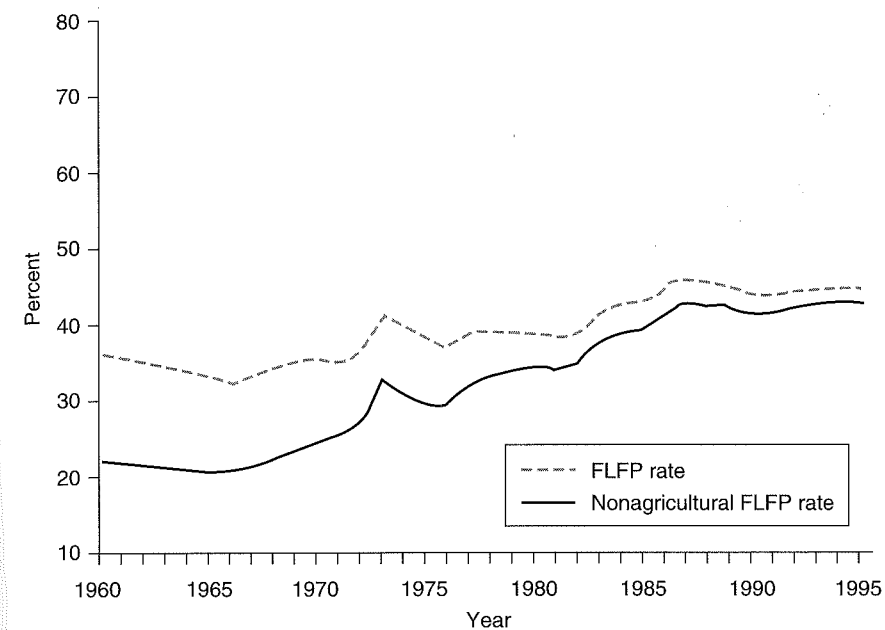


Figure 1.1 (continued)

SOURCE: Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, various years. Figures are based on the population over age 15.

NOTE: FLFP = female labor force participation.

Western industrial country, whereas this is not the case in any of the countries dealt with in this book.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan all show a very substantial decline over time in the proportion of working women engaged in family enterprise labor (which is typically, but not always, unremunerated) and a slight decline in rates of female self-employment. There has been a corresponding dramatic increase over time in the proportion of women working as paid employees (figure 1.2). But even so, only a little over 80 percent of Japanese women are paid employees; in Taiwan the figure is under 75 percent, and in South Korea it is under 65 percent.

This means that, compared to their counterparts in North America and the European Community, many more women in each of these East Asian

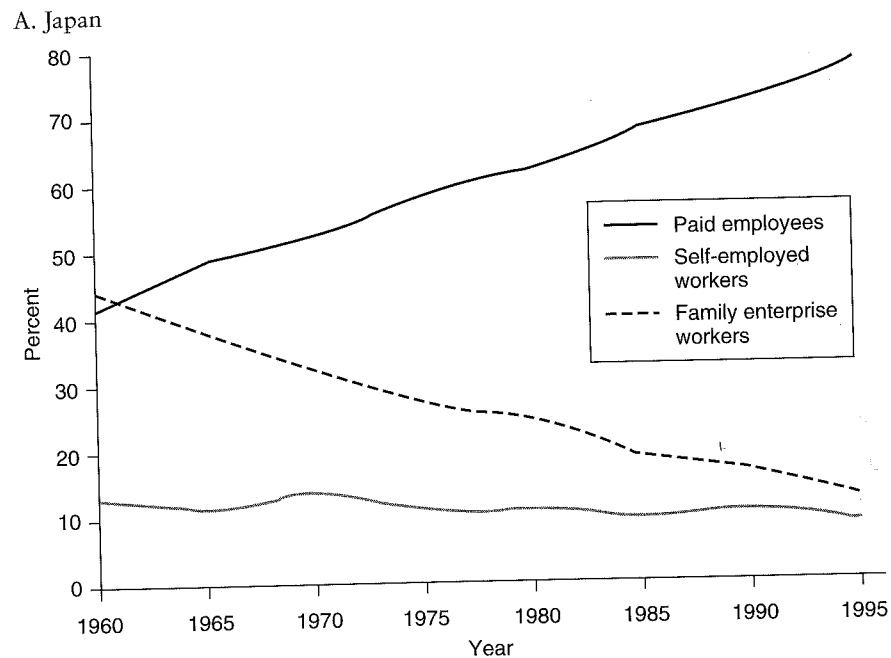


Figure 1.2. Structure of Female Employment in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, 1960-1995

SOURCE: Statistics Bureau, Japan, *Labor Force Survey*, various years.

countries work in what is typically called the “informal sector” (self-employment and family enterprises). There is also more divergence on this dimension (women’s employment status) *within* East Asia than in the West, with Japan having the smallest informal sector and South Korea the largest. These facts, and the implications of them for women’s working lives, are therefore a central focus of several chapters in the present volume.

The second main divergence between East Asia and the West lies in women’s work patterns across the life cycle. Figure 1.3 shows that Japan and South Korea exhibit an “M-shaped” curve of female labor force participation with age. Sizable numbers of women withdraw from the labor force in the early years of marriage or childrearing (typically their mid-to-late 20s) and many of them return to work a number of years later, thereby creating the second peak in the M (in their mid-40s). This M-shaped pattern was characteristic of Western industrial countries until recently, but has now been trans-

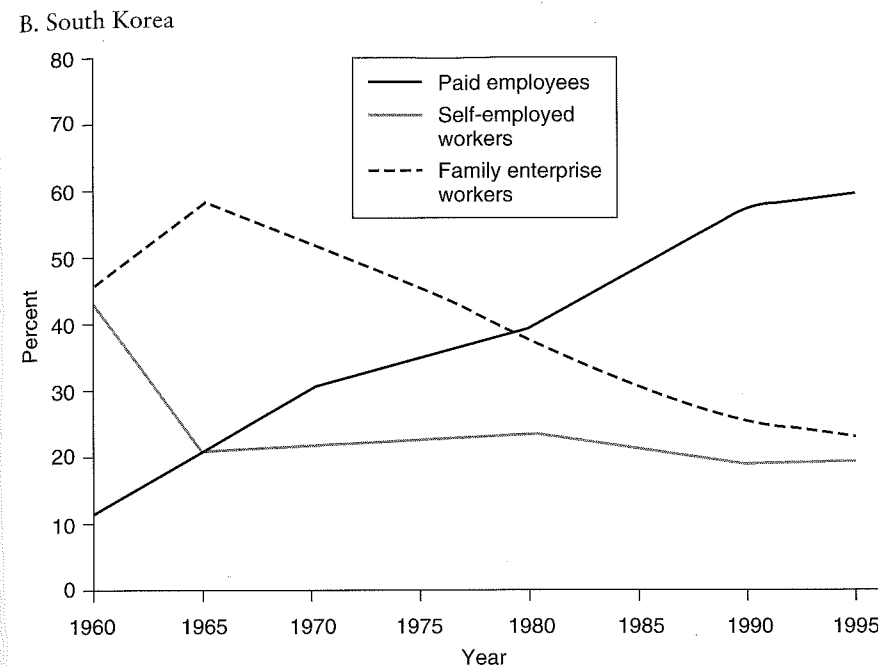


Figure 1.2 (continued)

SOURCE: National Statistical Office, ROK (Republic of Korea), *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey*, various years.

formed in North America and nearly all European countries to a smoother, more continuous curve of labor force participation across the life cycle (Brinton 1993; Yu 1999b).<sup>7</sup> For example, the labor force participation rates of mothers with young children (two years old or younger) increased nearly 30 percentage points between 1975 and 1995 in the United States; by the mid-1990s, two-thirds of American mothers of young children were in the labor force (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1997).

The persistence of the M-shaped curve is arguably the most definitive characteristic of women’s economic participation in Japan and South Korea compared to Western industrial nations. Moreover, the M-shaped pattern of participation became *more* rather than *less* evident in Japan throughout the entire post-World War II period until at least the mid-1980s (Yamaguchi 1997). Nor has it shown signs of disappearing in South Korea and evolving to the more “Western” pattern. Taiwan, on the other hand, is much closer

## C. Taiwan

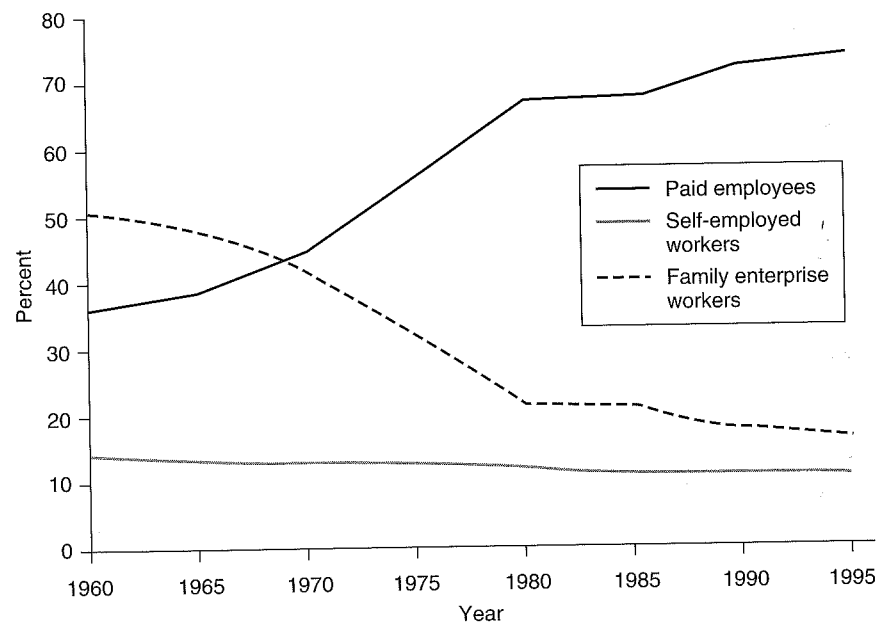


Figure 1.2 (continued)

SOURCE: Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, various years.

to the West in exhibiting a “single-peaked” pattern of women’s labor force participation across the life cycle (figure 1.3). In this, Taiwan clearly stands apart from its East Asian neighbors of Japan and South Korea, a point taken up by this chapter and others in the volume.

In sum, women’s employment in East Asia differs in two significant ways from women’s employment in the West: many more women are self-employed or work in family-run businesses, and many more women (especially in Japan and South Korea) withdraw from the labor force at the time of marriage or childbirth and either permanently remain out of the labor force or reenter only after their children are older. These are the two central differences between East Asia and Western industrial countries that this volume takes up; understanding the causes and the implications of these patterns is crucial for understanding women’s working lives in the East Asian region.

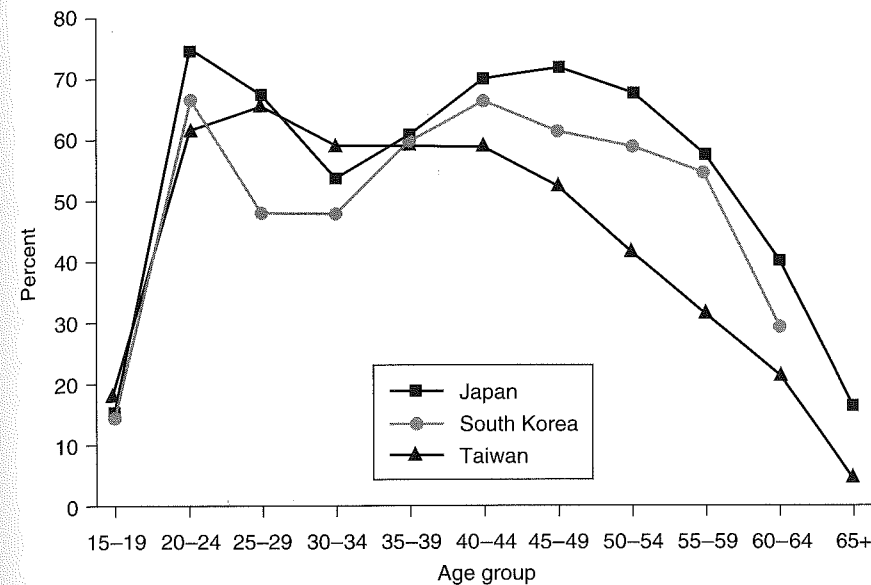


Figure 1.3. Female Labor Force Participation by Age: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, 1995

SOURCES: International Labour Organisation, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*, 1996; Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, 1995.

#### East Asia as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea

Before looking in more depth at the differences in women’s work patterns *within* East Asia, I should say a word about why I chose to structure this book around a subset of societies in the region and to leave out mainland China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The reasons are simple. Mainland China is so different from other East Asian societies in its geographical size as well as its political and economic history that bringing it into the picture raises fundamentally different analytical questions, not all of which bear much relevance to the societies in this volume. As shown in table 1.1, agricultural workers make up less than 15 percent of the labor force in South Korea and Taiwan and less than 6 percent in Japan. This compares to a very large agricultural sector in mainland China. The complex and changing mix of state- and privately owned enterprises in mainland China has spawned a lively cottage industry for sociologists in the past decade, but many of the central analytical issues in that literature are not key to understanding Japan, South

Korea, and Taiwan, all of which are dominated by private-sector enterprise. (The larger size of the government sector in Taiwan compared to the other two countries does, however, have some implications for female employment. This is taken up later in this chapter as well as in Chapters 3, 4, and 9 of the volume.)

On the other hand, Hong Kong and Singapore stand at the other end of the spectrum from mainland China in terms of being much smaller, more compact, more urban societies than the three East Asian societies considered here. While relevant comparisons can certainly be made between these two and Taiwan, the comparisons are less relevant to Japan and South Korea.

This being said, readers of this volume who are country specialists, whether of Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan, may still find it jarring to compare the three. Japan specialists in particular may question the utility of comparing Japan with two of its East Asian neighbors, given that Japanese industrialization substantially preceded that of Taiwan and South Korea and stretched over a longer period than the highly condensed trajectories of those two societies. No one in their right mind would have called Japan a “developing country” even a quarter-century ago, while Taiwan and especially South Korea teetered uneasily on the definitional border between “developing” and “industrialized” until quite recently. (South Korea became a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] only in 1996.) But the East Asian export-led NICs have outgrown their “developing country” status, and this volume is based on the premise (explicitly articulated in Chapter 2) that the broad similarities among these three East Asian cases produce a research opportunity that is akin to a natural experiment. The reasoning behind this premise will become more apparent later in this chapter when I outline the strong similarities in the social, economic, and cultural contexts for married women’s labor supply.

#### CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT IN EAST ASIA: TAIWAN’S EXCEPTIONALISM

When we compare patterns of women’s employment across Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, there are certainly similarities. As outlined above, women participate in nonwage/nonsalaried employment at higher rates in East Asia than in Western industrial nations. Table 1.2 shows the occupational distribution of women workers and likewise demonstrates some likenesses among

TABLE 1.2  
Distribution of Female Workers by Occupation, and Percent Female in Each Occupation  
in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, 1995

Occupation	JAPAN <sup>a</sup>		SOUTH KOREA <sup>b</sup>		TAIWAN <sup>c</sup>	
	Distribution	% Female	Distribution	% Female	Distribution	% Female
Professional/technical	13.1	43.2	13.8	35.2	22.4	42.5
Administrative/managerial	0.8	8.9	2.6	4.4	1.6	15.0
Clerical	29.0	60.5	12.3	50.9	18.8	74.7
Sales and service	26.7	44.8	21.9	58.9	22.2	52.4
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	6.3	45.5	11.7	46.5	7.7	28.3
Transportation and communication	0.5	5.5	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Manufacturing, labor, and mining	23.3	30.4	37.7	29.7	27.3	27.4
All*	99.7	40.5	100.0	40.3	100.0	38.6

<sup>a</sup>SOURCE: Statistics Bureau, Japan, *Labor Force Survey*, 1995.

<sup>b</sup>SOURCE: National Statistical Office, ROK (Republic of Korea), *Annual Report on the Economically Active Population Survey*, 1995.

<sup>c</sup>SOURCE: Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, 1995.

\* Due to rounding errors, some columns do not add up to 100.0.

NOTE: N.A. applies where data are not available—i.e., the category does not exist.



the three economies. More than one-fifth of working women in each society are in sales or service occupations, and about one-quarter (or in South Korea's case, closer to two-fifths) are in manufacturing. But the similarity in women's extent of employment in the informal sector and in certain occupational sectors is outweighed by several other dimensions that clearly seem to group Japan and South Korea together and render Taiwan the divergent case.

First, as discussed above, Taiwan is the only one of the three societies that demonstrates a continuous curve of female labor force participation across the life cycle—many women continue to participate in the labor market throughout their 20s, 30s, and 40s.

Second, as several of the chapters in this book discuss, the link between married women's education and their labor force participation is positive in Taiwan but weak in the other two societies (see Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7; also see Kao, Polachek, and Wunnava 1994; Kim 1990; Yu 1999b).

Third, wage rates for women relative to men are greater in Taiwan (table 1.3). Taiwan women who work as full-time employees earn on average 69.8 percent of men's monthly earnings. This is substantially above the ratios of 60.4 in Japan and 54.6 in South Korea, and compares quite favorably with the United States (which had a female-to-male weekly earnings ratio of 75 percent in 1992; Bianchi 1995) and a number of European nations (Blau 1993). Table 1.3 further indicates that Taiwan's favorable showing is evident in all major occupational groups. Japan and South Korea also show smaller variation than Taiwan in the relative wage returns for women across occupational groups. In contrast, Taiwan women earn considerably closer to what men earn if they are in white-collar jobs (especially professional/technical, clerical, and sales and service) than in manufacturing jobs. This is consistent with other studies that report returns to women's education and work experience in Taiwan that are more consistent with human capital theory than is true for either Japan or South Korea (Brinton, Lee, and Parish, Chapter 2 this volume; Kao, Polachek, and Wunnava 1994; Yu 1999b).

Another way of looking at the female-to-male wage gap is across the life cycle (figure 1.4). The wage rates of young men and women strongly resemble each other in all three East Asian countries and then increasingly diverge with age. But here again, Taiwan is somewhat exceptional because the divergence is less marked than in Japan and South Korea. In those countries,

TABLE 1.3  
Female-to-Male Wage Ratio by Occupation among Full-Time Paid  
Employees in the Nonagricultural Sector, 1995

Occupation	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan
1. Professional		81.8	86.4
2. Administrative/managerial	64.8 <sup>a</sup>	67.8	72.6
3. Technical and assisting professional		58.7	82.2
4. Clerical	68.8	58.0	91.2
5. Sales and service	68.7	66.0	81.3
6. Manufacturing, labor, and mining	50.0	55.0	66.8
Total	60.4	54.6	69.8 <sup>b</sup>

NOTES: All values are percentages. Figures are calculated from aggregate data published in the *Yearbook of Labor Statistics, 1995*, prepared by the Ministry of Labor, Japan; *Wage Structure Survey, 1994*, prepared by the Ministry of Labor, ROK (Republic of Korea); and *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China, 1995*, prepared by the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC. Figures for Japan do not include part-time or temporary employees. Figures for South Korea are for 1993; category 6 is "plant and machine operators and assemblers." For Taiwan, category 6 is "production machine operators and related workers."

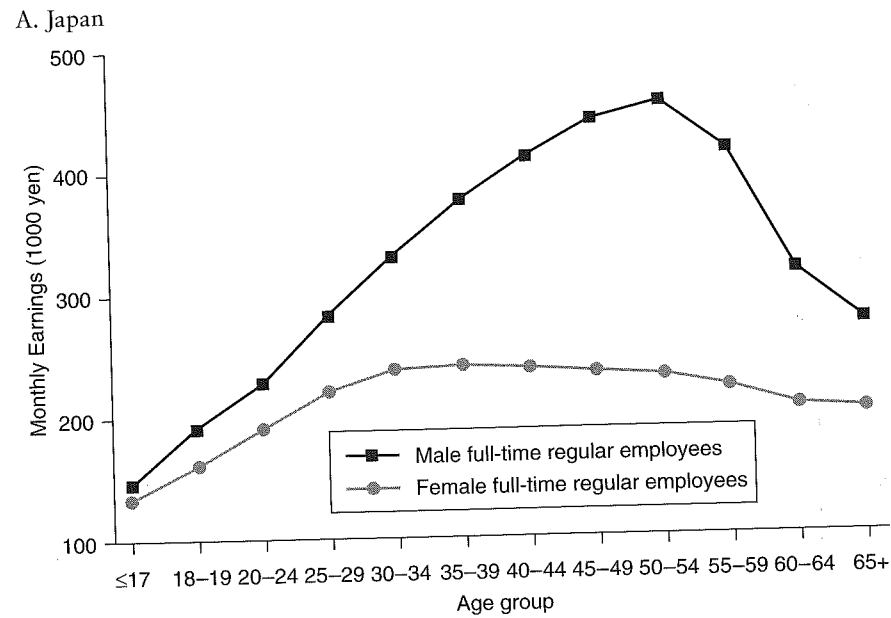
<sup>a</sup>This figure is for professional, administrative/managerial, and technical and assisting professional occupations.

<sup>b</sup>For Taiwan, the figure for the category "total" includes wages of paid employees in the agricultural sector.

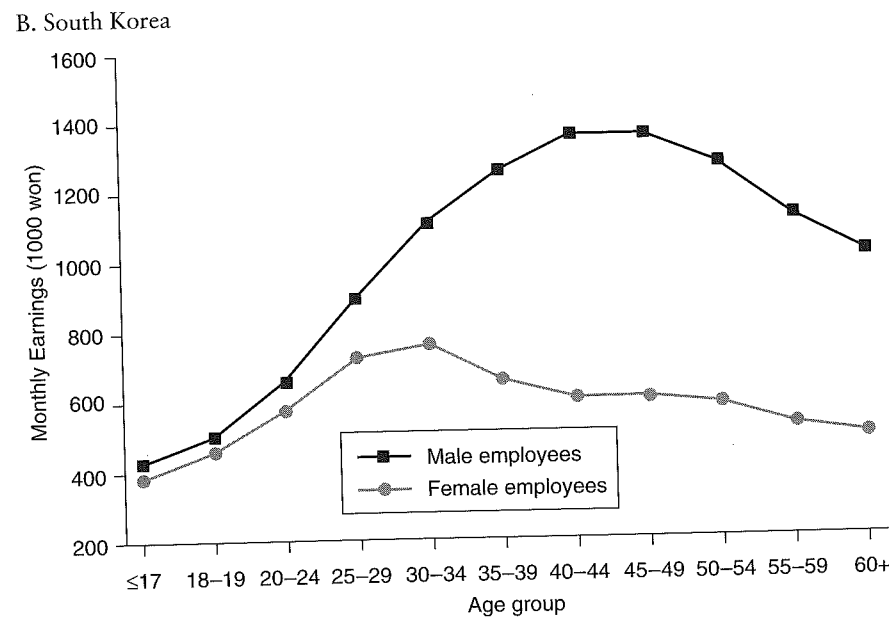
the upward slope of male earnings is steeper past age 25 and women's earnings stagnate or decline during the childrearing years. The female-to-male wage gap remains particularly wide for older workers in South Korea.

Fourth, consistent with the positive link between married women's education and employment in Taiwan and also with the returns generated by their human capital, women are represented more strongly in most categories of white-collar work in Taiwan than they are in Japan or South Korea (table 1.3). This is particularly evident in clerical and administrative/managerial occupations.

What explains the fact that women's work patterns and gender wage inequality in Taiwan stand somewhat apart from what exists in Japan and South Korea and more closely resemble the patterns in the industrialized West?

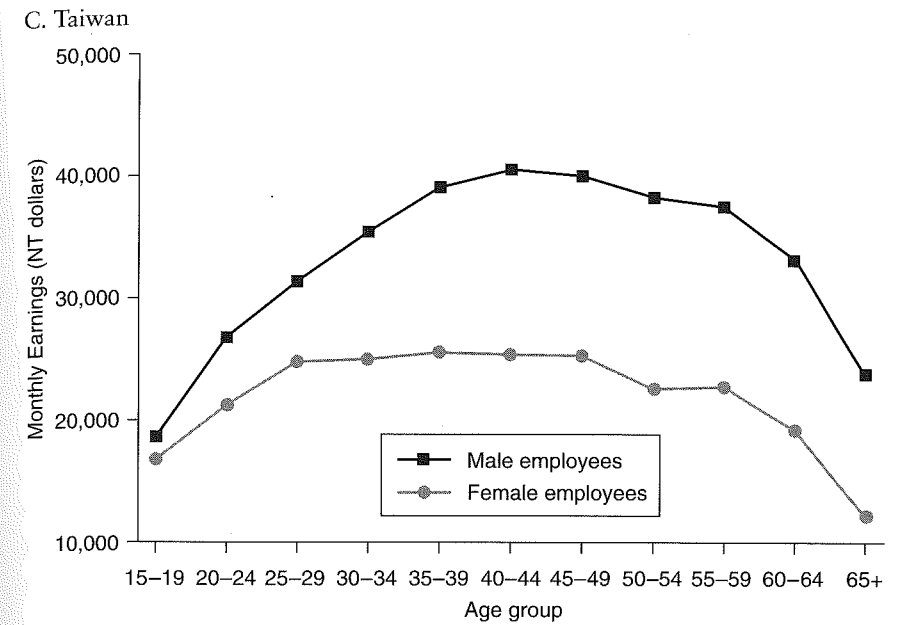


SOURCE: Ministry of Labor, Japan, *Yearbook of Labor Statistics*, 1995.



SOURCE: Ministry of Labor, ROK (Republic of Korea), *Establishment-Level Labor Conditions Survey*, 1993. This survey includes establishments with 10 or more workers.

Figure 1.4. Monthly Earnings of Employees by Age: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, 1995



SOURCE: Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Report on the Manpower Utilization Survey, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, 1995.

Figure 1.4 (continued)

THE MACROLEVEL CONTEXT FOR MARRIED WOMEN'S LABOR SUPPLY: COMMONALITIES ACROSS JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, AND TAIWAN

Women's economic participation is commonly explained by the independent effects of key labor supply and demand factors as well as the intersection of supply and demand (Goldin 1990). Women's educational levels, their marriage and fertility patterns, life expectancies, and household structure are central among the labor supply conditions affecting the decision to enter and remain in the labor force. For example, in highly industrialized societies with large nonmanufacturing sectors and diverse types of white-collar employment in sales and services, women can take advantage of these employment opportunities only if their education levels do not lag far behind men's (Goldin 1995). Large literatures in sociology and labor economics also document the key role that declining fertility rates play in increasing married women's participation in work roles outside the home. The movement of productive

work out of the home and into the factory and, subsequently, the office, generally creates incompatibilities for women between childrearing and economic participation. The declines in fertility that almost always accompany industrialization mean that fewer and fewer of a woman's adult years are spent in intensive childrearing activity, and this consequently frees up more of a woman's time for wage labor outside the home. Longer life expectancies do the same. Meanwhile, changes in household structure that occur with advanced industrialization can have contradictory effects on married women's employment, as I discuss below.

The societies considered in this book demonstrate strong similarities in the macrolevel context affecting these important determinants of married women's labor supply. Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea share the following: (1) a Confucian ideological heritage, (2) Japanese administration in the first half of the twentieth century (through colonialism in the cases of Taiwan and South Korea), which heavily influenced the development of their educational systems, and (3) unprecedented rates of export-led economic growth during their respective periods of rapid industrialization.

#### *Confucian Ideology*

The common underlying Confucian ideology in the three societies has two types of impact on women's economic roles: it affects the nature of familial relationships and the family expectations placed on women, and it affects societal investment in education.

Confucian patriarchal ideology emphasizes strongly defined, hierarchical relationships between men and women and between generations (Rozman 1991). Women traditionally join their husband's family at the time of marriage and lose membership in their natal family. The division of labor between husband and wife is clearly defined, with wives' primary responsibility being the household and husbands' being the productive work world (Kim 1997; Wolf 1972; Yi 1993). Son preference has traditionally been strong in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, and the pressure on women to bear at least one son has at times been extreme. Koreans are frequently referred to as "the most Confucian" in East Asia (Janelli and Janelli 1982). In fact, sex ratios in South Korean elementary schools were reported in the mid-1990s to be as lopsided in favor of males as ratios on the Chinese mainland, where the one-child policy has produced extreme ratios in favor of males. Whereas this was

accomplished in mainland China by abandonment and, by some reports, infanticide, of daughters, sex-selective abortion was widespread among upper middle-class South Koreans in the late 1980s and 1990s. While the emphasis on motherhood remains very strong in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, son preference has weakened considerably in Japan over the past decade, presumably because affluence has rendered one reason for having a son—support in old age—less compelling. The interaction between patriarchal ideology and economic development and prosperity is not a central theme of this book, but greater changes in the strength of son preference in Japan than in the other two societies are certainly one illustration of this interaction.

The second common effect of Confucianism in the three societies lies in the area of education. Confucian ideology strongly emphasizes the perfectibility of individuals and the possibility of achievement and upward mobility through education. These commonly shared beliefs about the importance of education in the three societies were overlaid by an important bureaucratic commonality as well: Japanese colonial rule in Korea and Taiwan in the first half of the twentieth century.

#### *Japanese Administration*

Japanese administration during the first part of the twentieth century resulted in marked structural similarities in the educational systems of the three societies.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, each society underwent extensive American influence on its educational system in the latter half of the century; they share the basic 6-3-3-4 pattern of educational institutions (six years of elementary education, three years of middle school, three years of high school, and four years of higher education). All three societies experienced rapid educational expansion in the second half of the twentieth century, and this extended to women as well as men. Indeed, if one compares the gender gap in educational enrollments across a broad range of countries, East Asia stands out as having a relatively low gender gap.

#### *Rapid Industrialization and Economic Growth*

Finally, all three societies are characterized by high rates of economic growth and rapid industrialization. Industrialization occurred at different time points but was late compared to North America and Western and Northern Europe.

This created, again at different time points in the three countries, rising wages and high demand for labor, both of which impacted female labor supply indirectly and in complex ways (e.g., rising living standards lessened the necessity for middle-class wives to work to help support the family, but at the same time, rising life expectancies lengthened the number of years they were available to work in the labor market).

#### THE MICROLEVEL DETERMINANTS OF MARRIED WOMEN'S LABOR SUPPLY

The effects of these common macrolevel influences—Confucian ideology, Japanese influence, and late industrialization coupled with rapid economic growth—on the key determinants of married women's labor supply in the three societies can best be understood by looking at a number of indicators: education, marriage and fertility patterns, life expectancy, and household structure. Here we see a picture of striking convergence across the societies, with just a few notable exceptions.

##### *Education*

As table 1.4 shows, secondary education is nearly universal for both sexes in South Korea, Taiwan, and especially Japan. In fact, more women than men advance to secondary education in Japan and South Korea. At the higher-education level, Japan and Taiwan show near-parity in advancement rates for the two sexes, and in Japan's case women's advancement rate exceeds men's.

There are, then, significant similarities across East Asia in the arena of education. Women have high levels of education, and there is virtual gender parity at the secondary education level. But there are a few differences that are key for women's potential parity or disparity with men in labor market competition. These lie at the level of higher education.

First, Taiwan is the only society of the three that exhibits gender parity in higher education. In South Korea, men currently proceed on to higher education at nearly twice the rate that women do. Japanese women advance to higher education at similar rates to men, but table 1.4 shows that this masks an important gender difference: as Chapters 5 (Brinton and Lee) and 8 (Lee) discuss, Japanese women advancing to higher education have tended to choose junior college rather than university, whereas year after year only about 2 percent of men have done so (Fujimura-Fanselow 1995). In fact, it

TABLE 1.4  
Conditions Affecting Women's Labor Supply in Japan,  
South Korea, and Taiwan, 1995

	Japan	South Korea	Taiwan
Educational advancement rates (%)			
Secondary education			
Men	94.8	89.4	83.6
Women	97.1	88.0	87.4
Higher education <sup>a</sup>			
Men	41.9 (2.3)	80.9	18.3
Women	24.6 (23.7)	47.6	19.6
Marriage and fertility			
Women's mean age at first marriage	26.3	25.4	28.2
Average number of children ever born per woman	1.4	1.6 <sup>b</sup>	1.8
Women's average life expectancy	82.9	76.0 <sup>c</sup>	77.7
Household structure			
Composition of all households (%)			
Nuclear family (two generations)	59.1	66.3	57.7
Extended family (three generations)	15.8	12.2	34.1
Other (one-person households, households with nonfamily members)	25.1	21.5	8.2

SOURCES: Ministry of Education, Japan, *Basic School Statistics*, 1996; Ministry of Education, ROK, *Statistical Yearbook of Education*, 1995; Ministry of Education, ROC, *Statistical Yearbook of Education*, 1994; Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japan, *Vital Population Statistics*, 1996; National Statistical Office, ROK, *Population Projection*, 1991a, *Vital Registration Statistics*, 1995b, *Life Table*, 1993; Ministry of the Interior, ROC, *Survey on Women's Living Conditions*, 1998.

<sup>a</sup>For Japan, higher education figures represent advancement to university and, in parentheses, advancement to junior college.

<sup>b</sup>Figure is for 1990.

<sup>c</sup>Figure is for 1991.

was only in 1996 that the number of Japanese women advancing to university inched past the number advancing to junior college (Ministry of Education, Japan, *Basic School Statistics* 1998).

Second, it is important to note that the rate of higher-education advancement for South Korean males currently exceeds that in *any other country*, rendering extreme the surplus of highly educated males in that nation

(OECD 2000a). As we will show in this volume, this has significant ramifications for the likelihood of South Korean women (especially highly educated married women) being able to compete in the labor market for white-collar jobs. Japanese higher-education expansion was tempered to a greater extent by government policy (see Chapter 5, by Brinton and Lee). Similarly, higher-education expansion in Taiwan did not outpace the economy's need for highly educated workers, as occurred so dramatically in South Korea.

The chapters in this volume (especially Chapters 2, 5, and 8) discuss in greater depth the implications of these higher-education patterns for women's translation of education into remunerated work and for gender wage inequality in each society. As I argue later, these higher-education patterns interact in important ways with East Asian employers' preferential demand for educated male (rather than female) workers.

#### *Marriage and Fertility*

As in most societies, marriage remains a nearly universal event in the lives of women in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, with fewer than 10 percent of women in Japan and fewer than 5 percent in Taiwan and South Korea remaining single throughout their lives (Inoue 1998; Ministry of the Interior, ROC 1998). However, women in all three societies are distinguished by their very high mean age at first marriage (table 1.4), and this age has continued to show marked increases in each society during the past decade. United Nations data show that women's age at first marriage is high in East Asian societies compared to Western industrial nations, and also that the variance in age at marriage is very low (United Nations 1998). This reflects strong cultural norms surrounding the appropriate timing of marriage for women (Brinton 1992).<sup>9</sup>

Women in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea not only share a pattern of marrying late (and nearly universally), but also show greater educational homogamy than women in any other region of the world, once national economic development level is held constant. (Educational homogamy refers to the similarity in educational levels between marriage partners.) As Smits, Ultee, and Lammers argue in a comparative analysis of 65 countries, "The high level of educational homogamy in Confucian countries is probably due to the combination of a traditional family orientation with a strong emphasis on formal education as a channel of social mobility in these countries" (1998: 282). In other words, marriage in East Asia is typically a decision that matches in-

dividuals who are quite similar in terms of social status, especially as reflected by education. In South Korea, employers have attached a very high wage premium to men's education but not to women's (Amsden 1989; Chapters 2 and 8 this volume). Here, educational homogamy and a sex-discriminatory labor market have together exerted a downward pull on highly educated married women's labor force participation; in effect, it is these women's marriage decisions, not their employment, that gives them social status (Kim 1997; Lett 1998; Chapter 8 this volume).

Women in the three societies also show strikingly similar levels and timing of fertility: in each country the average number of children is now below two (table 1.4). The interval between marriage and first childbirth is typically short. In Japan, for example, the interval between the average age at first marriage and at first birth is now only 13 months (Ministry of Health and Welfare, Japan 1998).

#### *Life Expectancy*

Just as women's marital and fertility patterns show striking consistency across the three societies, so too do their general levels of health and their life expectancies. As shown in table 1.4, mean life expectancy for women is now very high, exceeding 75 years in all three societies and reaching 83 years in Japan.

#### *Household Structure*

Finally, table 1.4 shows the dominant living arrangements in each society, although some caution should be exercised in interpreting these figures because they are based on the entire population rather than just married women. There is one strong similarity and one difference: (1) nuclear family (two-generation) households are the most common living pattern in all three societies, and (2) extended family (three-generation) households are more than twice as common in Taiwan as in Japan and South Korea.

Three-generation households have two potentially contradictory implications for married women. On the one hand, older parents may require care if they are sick or very aged. Because this care is more likely to fall on the shoulders of married women than men, it has a potentially negative impact on married women's ability to simultaneously carry out work responsibilities outside the home. On the other hand, older parents, particularly mothers and mothers-in-law, can provide "built-in childcare" for mothers, freeing up their

time for the labor market. The impact of this latter possibility can clearly be seen in Taiwan, as argued in Chapter 3 by Yu, where the availability of grandparents along with higher wage rates for women relative to men (compared to Japan and South Korea) draw more married women into paid employment.

The family patterns I have shown here in statistical form are structural (e.g., age at marriage, household structure, etc.) and are reflective of—as well as significant for—subtle cultural differences in the way patriarchal authority is articulated in these societies. While we delve relatively little into how family norms differ across Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, we do not mean to imply in this volume that the three societies are completely similar in their specific Confucian “family ideologies” (to use the term employed by Lu in Chapter 10). For example, Chapters 3 by Yu and 7 by Hirao suggest that the central emphasis on the mother-child bond may be stronger in Japan and South Korea than in Taiwan. An intense cultural focus on mothering makes it very difficult for mothers, especially those with young children, to engage in full-time work outside the home. Cultural flexibility in turning the care of children partially over to relatives or to unrelated childcare providers, on the other hand, increases women’s range of work options. Of course, these cultural attitudes are of little value unless relatives are close by (as is often the case in Taiwan), children can sometimes be brought to work (also occasionally true in Taiwan), or there are childcare facilities that operate with long hours and are geographically accessible (not the case in any of the societies we examine).<sup>10</sup> The contrasts in childcare norms and availability in Japan and Taiwan in particular are discussed in Yu’s comparative chapter (Chapter 3). A number of chapters also discuss the long commuting hours necessitated by full-time work in the major urban centers of Japan and South Korea, which render work and family very nearly incompatible for women given that there is not a strong childcare infrastructure.

#### THE LABOR SUPPLY SIDE SUMMARIZED

We can summarize the distinctive features of women’s labor supply across the three societies as follows. Women in all three have high life expectancies and low fertility, both of which mean that they have many years in their lives to potentially participate in the labor force. Almost all women marry but do so late; the same is true for childbearing. This means that women have several years in their 20s when they are single and can potentially initiate work

careers. High levels of educational attainment mean that many women do not complete schooling and enter the workforce until their early 20s, but they do so with a high level of human capital (skills and abilities garnered through their education).

These characteristics of women’s labor supply in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea would be consistent with the life-cycle pattern of female labor force participation common to Western industrial countries, that is, a pattern where the majority of women show continuous participation across the life cycle. Moreover, women’s high levels of human capital in East Asia and their high mean age at first marriage would suggest that many women have the opportunity to become committed to jobs in their 20s that further develop their human capital and increase their labor force attachment (or propensity to remain in the labor force).

As I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, though, only in Taiwan do women’s working lives approximate these patterns. And notably, it is Taiwan that departs from the other two societies in its gender parity in higher education, tempered rates of higher education expansion, and higher proportion of three-generation households. These supply-side differences are coupled with some marked dissimilarities in the labor demand side between Taiwan on the one hand and Japan and South Korea on the other. Before outlining those dissimilarities, though, we should take a look at one final, political dimension of the labor supply side to see if it too could be producing the emergent pattern of Taiwan’s exceptionalism: equal employment legislation. Perhaps it is the case that such legislation in Taiwan makes it easier for married women to work and to receive fair treatment because employers otherwise risk the censure of the government.

Here it is hard not to deliver the punch line first, because it is a striking one: the causality appears to go in precisely the opposite direction from what we would expect. It is Japan and South Korea that both have passed equal employment opportunity legislation, and Taiwan that has not.

The Japanese Diet passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEO) in 1985. In 1987 South Korea also enacted an equal employment opportunity law, strikingly similar to the Japanese formulation. As alluded to in Chapter 4, the law has arguably been poorly enforced and has been of little consequence in forestalling gender discrimination by Korean employers. Likewise, it is widely acknowledged that the Japanese EEO produced little effect in the first decade after its enactment (Hanami 2000).<sup>11</sup> But the

“letter” of equal employment opportunity, if not its active enforcement, does exist in both Japan and South Korea. In contrast, Taiwan has no similar legislation. The Labor Standards Law allows women to take 8 weeks of maternity leave, although this was only recently extended (in 1998) to the finance and service industries. (This compares to the 14 weeks of maternity leave that Japanese women are allowed.) Moreover, Taiwanese employers remain free to state their preference for a male or a female worker in job advertisements, whereas this was prohibited in the most recent revisions of Japan’s EEOL.

Government equal employment policy, then, cannot account for the differences in married women’s economic participation between Taiwan on the one hand and Japan and South Korea on the other.<sup>12</sup> As argued in chapter 2, the tumbling of “marriage bars” in Taiwan occurred due to strong labor demand rather than to government policy. This economic pressure has been much more consequential for married women than have highly centralized legal reforms in Japan and South Korea. (See also Goldin 1990 for a discussion of labor demand vs. legal measures in the United States.)

#### DIVERGENCE IN EAST ASIA: THE EFFECTS OF LABOR DEMAND AND WORK STRUCTURES

The central line of divergence in women’s work patterns in East Asia, then, is between Taiwan on the one hand and Japan and South Korea on the other. Why does Taiwan rather than the more “advanced” postindustrial Japan exhibit the highest rates of married female labor force activity, the strongest relationship between married women’s level of education and their probability of being in salaried employment, the lowest female-to-male wage gap (particularly striking in white-collar jobs), and the greatest representation of women in most categories of white-collar work?

In explaining these cross-country differences, one clearly cannot argue that “stage” of economic development is what matters most (the comparison between Japan and Taiwan defies that logic). Nor can one argue that fundamental differences in the type of economic development, such as import-substitution or export-led, are what matter (Horton 1996), since all three economies have been heavily export-driven. It seems difficult to make the argument that cultural differences in the way Confucian tradition has played out within the families in each society can *alone* account for differences in women’s work patterns (see especially Yu, Chapter 3, for an examination of

similar gender-role attitudes among women in Japan and Taiwan). In short, the macrolevel conditions affecting female labor supply seem insufficient to explain the divergence.

Likewise, the microlevel conditions of female labor supply are strikingly similar across the three societies, with the exception of the three that emerged from the analysis above—two of them having to do with the overall level and nongendered character of higher education in Taiwan, and one of them having to do with the greater proportion of extended family households in that society. The chapters in this volume argue that these few labor supply differences interact with strong divergence in labor market structures and organizational forms in the three societies to determine the economic opportunities available to married women. In affecting the economic strategies of families and women’s own aspirations and attitudes, the demand side of the labor market plays a critical role in shaping women’s work roles relative to men’s. But we argue not for one-way causation from the demand side of the labor market to women’s economic behaviors. Rather, we argue that the few subtle labor supply differences I have outlined among the three societies act in combination with *more extensive differences in the nature of labor demand* to produce distinctive employment and gender stratification patterns across East Asia.

What are the differences in the labor demand side? Three clearly stand out: (1) firm size and the accompanying internal structure and dynamics of work organizations, (2) the size of the public sector, and (3) the overall level of labor demand, especially for highly educated workers.

#### *Firm Size and the Structure of Work Organizations*

Despite a common underlying Confucian ideology and Japan’s colonial administration of Taiwan and South Korea, the size and internal structure of work organizations are highly divergent across the three societies (Hamilton and Biggart 1988; Biggart 1990; Orru, Biggart, and Hamilton 1991). The distribution of employees across firms of different sizes varies significantly. Table 1.5 shows that over half of paid (wage or salaried) employees in Taiwan work in small firms (establishments with fewer than 30 employees). This concentration of employees in small firms is unlike what exists in either Japan or South Korea, where just over one-quarter of employees work in firms of that size. At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion of employees working in very large firms (over 500 employees) in Taiwan is tiny (4 percent)

TABLE 1.5  
Distribution of Employees by Firm Size in Japan,  
South Korea, and Taiwan, 1995

	Japan	South Korea <sup>a</sup>	Taiwan
Employees by firm size (%)			
1-29	32.9	25.3	55.2
30-99	16.1	26.0	14.3
100-499	16.5	25.4	10.3
>500 and government	34.5	23.3	20.3
>500	24.2		4.3
Government	10.3		16.0

SOURCES: Statistics Bureau, Japan, *Labor Force Survey*, 1995; Ministry of Labor, ROK, *Establishment-Level Labor Conditions Survey*, 1994; Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics, Taiwan Area, Republic of China*, 1995.

<sup>a</sup>Data for South Korea are for 1994.

compared to Japan (24 percent) and South Korea (23 percent). But this is offset by the larger size of the public sector in Taiwan than in either of the other two economies, a point to which I return below.

What do these different constellations of firm size signify for the employment of women, especially married women? That the wages paid to employees increase with firm size is well established in the sociological and economics literatures (Brown and Medoff 1989; Brown et al. 1997). This empirical generalization extends to East Asia; wage differentials by firm size are particularly large in Japan and South Korea (Hashimoto and Raisian 1985; Ministry of Labor, ROK 1998; Rebick 1993; Tachibanaki 1993). This means that if women have access to the same jobs as men in large firms, they benefit. But herein lies the rub. While some evidence exists to suggest that large firms are more egalitarian and universalistic than small ones in their personnel practices (Reskin and McBrier 2000), this research is based on the United States, where federal regulation of equal employment opportunity legislation is particularly focused on the large-firm sector. As discussed above, enforcement of equal employment opportunity legislation has been weak in both Japan and South Korea, and the personnel practices of large firms have, from women's point of view, suffered from benign neglect by the government.

In earlier work, I documented that young Japanese men and women enter large firms in relatively equal proportions to each other upon school grad-

uation (Brinton 1989, 1993). In South Korea this is not the case, even for university graduates; Lee documented that among graduates of Seoul universities in the early 1980s, 54 percent of men and only 11 percent of women had entered firms of over 1000 employees in their first job (Lee 1997). But even if entry rates to large firms are the same for the two sexes, as in Japan, tracking by gender produces widely divergent career paths that result in the concentration of women in smaller firms in Japan and South Korea by mid-career (Brinton 1989, 1993; Lee 1997). The managerial logic behind women's near-zero rates of promotion in large Japanese and South Korean firms, while similarly gender-based, has different roots.

#### Japan: "Permanent" versus Marginal Employment

The existence of firm-internal labor markets or so-called permanent employment for males in large Japanese firms has been extensively documented (Brinton 1993; Brown et al. 1997; Cole 1979; Sakamoto and Powers 1995; Spilerman and Ishida 1996). Japanese management experimented with separating women into a career track (*sōgōshoku*) and a "mommy track" (*ippan-shoku*) in the late 1980s after the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (Lam 1992; Shire and Imai 2000). Nevertheless, the proportion of all working women in administrative/managerial work has increased only marginally in the past 15 years, from 0.9 percent to 1.0 percent (Statistics Bureau, *Labor Force Survey* 1998). Japanese women have first and foremost been viewed by large employers as a reserve army of labor, not a reservoir of managerial potential. The strong inclination to privilege men over women for promotions and indeed for recruitment into the management track in the first place was exacerbated by Japan's most severe post-World War II recession in the late 1990s. Here, the pernicious implications that large firms and their accompanying firm-internal labor markets hold for women became starkly apparent: in an effort to retain as many "core jobs" as possible for men in internal labor markets during a painful period of financial belt-tightening, large Japanese firms decreased their hiring of young female graduates as full-time employees and turned increasingly to employing women instead as part-time, temporary employees.

Most of the increase in Japanese female labor force participation in the final years of the twentieth century came from part-time, not full-time, workers. While it could be argued that this resulted principally from the labor force entrance of greater numbers of married women in age groups where the



rate of part-time employment is high (e.g., women in the childrearing years), the data do not bear out such a supply-side explanation. Houseman and Osawa report that nearly two-thirds of the increase in part-time employment between 1982 and 1992 is accounted for by the increased incidence of part-time work *within* age and gender groups. Moreover, the growth in part-time vacancies was faster than the growth in numbers of part-time job-seekers, indicating that employer demand for part-time workers was outpacing the supply (Houseman and Osawa 1997). Thus, while opportunities for part-time work arguably increased for Japanese women at the turn of the century, full-time employment (and the accompanying bonuses and fringe benefits) remained elusive, especially in white-collar work.

Part-time employment is less common in both South Korea and Taiwan, where there is less necessity to maintain a marginalized labor force as a buffer to support permanent male employment in firm-internal labor markets. Fewer than 6 percent of the female labor force in Taiwan worked fewer than 40 hours a week in 1995, compared to the high figure of 39 percent for Japanese women (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, *Yearbook of Manpower Survey Statistics* 1995; OECD 2000b). Similarly, only 9 percent of employed South Korean women work part-time (OECD 2000b). Yet women's low rate of part-time employment in South Korea hardly signifies their incorporation into stable "core" employment, as discussed in the next section and in Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 8 of this volume.

#### *South Korean Corporate Culture: "Patrimonial Authoritarianism"*

If large firms in Japan restrict married women's full-time employment opportunities due to the prevalence of internal labor markets and the consequent shunting of middle-aged women out of the firm or into unstable part-time work, large firms in South Korea create barriers to women from the start, and for different reasons. Internal labor markets and "permanent employment" are not common in South Korea, and men's labor mobility between firms is higher than in Japan (Amsden 1989; Chung, Lee, and Okumura 1988). Women's difficulties in large South Korean firms can arguably be traced to what has been dubbed "patrimonial authoritarianism" (Biggart 1988; Chung, Lee, and Okumura 1988; Orru, Biggart, and Hamilton 1991). While family ownership is a pattern extending throughout Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, large firms in South Korea exhibit an extraordinary lack of

separation between ownership and management functions, especially as compared to their Japanese counterparts (Chung, Lee, and Okumura 1988). Nepotism is an important feature at the upper levels of management (Janelli and Janelli 1993; Lett 1998). In most *chaebol* (large, diversified business groups), the owner's control is exercised through hiring and promotion based strongly on sex, school affiliation, and, in some cases, region of geographical origin (Biggart 1988).<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, many observers suggest that the hierarchical, nonegalitarian structure of control evident in most large South Korean firms may be related to the fact that all South Korean men go through a period of compulsory military training. In contrast to the more consensus-oriented, egalitarian working environment (at least among men) in large Japanese firms, firms in South Korea are characterized by greater authoritarian control and hierarchy. While Japanese women are excluded from the warm "firm as family" ideology promulgated in large Japanese enterprises, South Korean women are also excluded from the much more "macho," hierarchical organizational culture of large firms in their society (Amsden 1989; Kim 1997; Chapter 4 this volume). Married women in both countries who must work full-time to help support their family, especially if it is in blue-collar jobs, are often openly pitied by their younger single female coworkers (see Ogasawara 1998 and Chapter 6 this volume; Kim 1997).

#### *Taiwanese Small Firms: "Flat" Hierarchy*

The different authority structure and the obvious absence of internal labor markets in Taiwan's extensive small-firm sector translate into a different, generally more hospitable organizational culture for married women than in the other two societies. The degree of formalization in job titles is low and promotional trajectories are short in these firms, and employers' need for labor sometimes makes them amenable to allowing working mothers to have slightly more flexible schedules (Yu 1999b and Chapter 3 this volume). Most businesses are family-owned. As Lu discusses in Chapter 10 of this volume in regard to family businesses, depending on their relative abilities, husbands and wives have highly interdependent and sometimes interchangeable roles, and wives often exercise considerable authority given their status as the owner's most trusted worker.

In summary, the greater prevalence of large firms in Japan and South Ko-

rea vis-à-vis Taiwan translates into distinctive intraorganizational authority relations and career structures that differentially favor men. Other features of large-firm employment can also create constraints on work opportunities for married women. As the second chapter of this volume argues, Taiwan's pattern of dispersed industrialization and small firms has meant that married women's transportation times to work are generally quite minimal. This contrasts sharply with the long commuting times to corporate headquarters or branches in Tokyo, Seoul, and the other major metropolitan areas of Japan and South Korea. Prevailing childcare arrangements in these two societies rarely accommodate this extension of employed mothers' workdays (see Yu, Chapter 3 this volume). Furthermore, the long overtime hours typically expected of full-time employees in both Japanese and South Korean large firms render long commutes to and from work even more untenable for married women with children (Amsden 1989; Brown et al. 1997; Lett 1998).

#### *Public Sector Employment*

In contrast to the rigidities of the work environment in large private firms and the exclusion of women from organizational culture, public-sector employment typically offers more regular work hours and vacations (see Yu, Chapter 3 this volume). The public sector is subject to more careful scrutiny by the government for adherence to legally sanctioned equal employment opportunity rules (Beggs 1995). Entrance to the civil service in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea is governed by examination, which is a more equal, meritocratic recruitment channel than personal connections.

That women actually do fare better in government employment than in private firms is supported by findings for both Japan and Taiwan showing that female full-time employees earn higher wages in government service (Brinton 1993; Yu 1999b and Chapter 9 this volume; also see Chapter 4 for a comparison of women's jobs in the private and public sector in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan).<sup>14</sup> The size of the public sector therefore is of significance for women's wage-earning opportunities.

Here again, it is Taiwan that stands apart from Japan and South Korea. As table 1.5 shows, Taiwan has a larger public (government) sector compared to Japan. The South Korean survey that reports the distribution of employees across firms of different sizes does not separate out civil servants; they are subsumed in the 23 percent of employees who work in firms of over 500 employees. Data from other sources, though, specify that just under 8 percent

of employees in South Korea worked as civil servants in the mid-1990s (Kim 1995). This figure is even lower than that for Japan.

#### *Level of Labor Demand*

Finally, the level of labor demand itself has been quite different in the three societies, arguably working more to the advantage of women in Taiwan than in Japan or South Korea. Chapter 2 of this volume demonstrates that unemployment rates in South Korea, particularly among highly educated men, have been much higher than in Taiwan since 1980. Under conditions of slack labor demand, employers in patriarchal societies can readily exercise their preference for male over female employees (Pyle 1990). This is obviously much more difficult when, as has more often been the case in Taiwan, businesses need to go begging for labor (Yu, Chapter 3, and Lu, Chapter 10, this volume). The interaction with the labor supply side is obvious here, as Taiwan's higher-education expansion did not create the bloated supply of highly educated workers that occurred in South Korea. In Japan, it is not so much the oversupply of highly educated workers that has stalled opportunities for many married women in the white-collar sector, but the slow pace at which labor demand increased in much of that sector (see Chapter 5 this volume). And most recently, the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s wreaked greater havoc in the labor markets of South Korea and Japan than in Taiwan, lowering labor demand and keeping educated married women in a position far from the front of the labor queue.

#### CONCLUSION

While Japan industrialized earlier than either Taiwan or South Korea, it is Taiwan that stands out in East Asia as having the employment patterns for married women and the degree of gender equality (although hardly complete) that we associate with the highly industrialized West. This chapter has examined the macrolevel social, economic, and cultural contexts for female labor supply in the three societies and argued that there are strong similarities in these and, likewise, in the microlevel supply-side determinants of women's employment. But there are three subtle ways in which Taiwan differs. Two of these have to do with higher education, and the third has to do with the structure of households and hence childcare availability. Moreover, there are sharp disjunctures on the labor demand side—in the dominant

small firm size in Taiwan as compared to Japan and South Korea and hence in the predominant organizational culture; in the size of the public sector; and in the absolute level of labor demand, especially for educated workers.

This chapter provides a framework for the chapters that follow. These chapters testify to the complexities and contingencies of married women's changing employment in East Asia with rapid industrialization. They provide an unusual array of glimpses into how hierarchical gender ideology (permeating households and workplaces), highly competitive educational systems, and the structure of labor markets and work organizations in three East Asian societies influence the work lives of urban married women.

Together with the authors of the research presented in these pages, I have tried as much as possible to knit together the chapters so that readers will be able to trace subthemes and questions throughout the book. To this end the chapters contain many cross-references to one another, and are also presented in two major groupings. The first five chapters (including this one) are comparative. Chapters 2, 3, and 5 each compare the economic roles of women in two of the three societies with each other, and Chapter 4 is comparative across all three societies. This first half of the book is quite quantitative in nature, with the chapters drawing on large-scale survey data. The six chapters of the second half of the book each focus more or less exclusively on either Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan. This part of the book contains at least one chapter for each society that is more ethnographic or descriptive in nature; others combine quantitative and qualitative methods.

Because the chapters throughout the book refer to one another extensively, I expect that readers will gain the most from the volume by reading all of it. For most readers, going through the chapters in order will probably be the best method of reading.

This introductory chapter has explored the central theme of how key labor market differences, along with more subtle labor supply differences, affect married women's working lives in East Asia. A number of subthemes are developed throughout the book as well. These are very much in the form of implicit questions, and although I will close by mentioning here a few of the ones I see as being central, we invite readers to generate others as well from the empirical materials on East Asian contexts that we present in this book. How do we assess the "value" of work available to married women in different countries and cultural contexts? Does wage employment necessarily benefit women more than work in the "informal" sector (work in family-run

businesses or in self-employment)? If so, under what conditions? Is full-time work always "better" than part-time work? Is employment itself necessarily a "good" in married women's lives? How can we judge this? These are big questions, and we do not claim to fully answer them. Rather, we hope that readers will not only learn much from the pages that follow but will be stimulated to pursue for themselves some of the myriad questions that our volume raises.