

Gender Differences in Perceived Barriers to Marriage among Never Married Japanese  
Individuals

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## Abstract

Delayed transition to marriage in Japan suggests there are barriers for young adults to marry earlier. Using the data from the Japan 2000 National Survey on Family and Economic Conditions (Tsuya, Bumpass, & Rindfuss, 2008), I examined gender differences in never married individuals' perceived barriers to marriage. As barriers to marriage, I focused on four domains: (1) economic resources, (2) couple agreement on wives' employment, (3) pressure to have a child soon after marriage, and (4) pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law. Results reveal significant gender differences in perceived barriers to marriage, except the pressure to have a child. Women were more likely than men to report that economic resources, couple agreement on wives' employment, and close relationships with in-laws were barriers to marriage. Implications of these gender differences on trends of delayed marriage are discussed.

## Introduction

The trend of delayed marriage in Japan is well documented. The average at first marriage in Japan has been rising, and it was 30 for men and 29 for women in 2008 (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2009). Recent surveys demonstrate that the proportions of never married individuals have also dramatically increased over the last few decades in Japan. In 2005, about 70% of men and 60% of women ages 25-29 were never married, and roughly 47% of men and 32% of women ages 30-34 were never married (Statistical Research and Training Institute, 2009). Even among those who were ages 35-39, roughly 30% of men and 20% of women were never married (Statistical Research and Training Institute, 2009). These figures rose approximately 5% for both men and women of each age group between 2000 and 2005, with an exception for men ages 25-29 which had about 2% increase from 2000 (Statistical Research and Training Institute, 2009). The trends toward postponement of marriage and a corresponding increase in nonmarriage are expected to continue in Japan (Rindfuss et al., 2004).

Prior research has examined factors associated with trends of delayed marriage in Japan (e.g., Ono, 2003; Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005; Tsuya & Mason, 1995). Indeed, some argue that marriage has become a less attractive life event to some women, due to a combination of increased opportunities for higher education and employment and little-changed women's share of household labor as well as childcare (Rindfuss et al., 2004; Tsuya & Mason, 1995).

Using a national sample of Japanese single men and women, this study examines the perceived barriers to marriage, and how perceptions differ between men and women. Findings from this research contribute to a new understanding of the postponement of marriage in Japan by investigating never marrieds' own perceptions about barriers to marriage. Furthermore, if men

and women perceive different barriers to marriage, that might account for the delayed transition to marriage.

I begin by reviewing relevant literature with a focus on four domains which are potentially perceived as barriers to marriage among Japanese young adults; (1) economic resources, (2) balance of marriage and women's employment, (3) pressure for having a child soon after marriage, and (4) pressure to co-reside or have a close relationship with parents-in-law. Economic resources are often discussed as an important factor in the United States, but the other three domains are uniquely related to Japanese marriage and families. Then, I propose several hypotheses and discuss the research design to test these hypotheses. Finally, I present results and conclusions.

## Literature Review

### *Economic resources for marriage*

Having sufficient economic resources is considered an important prerequisite among young adults in the United States for their decision to marry. Marriage symbolizes young couples' economic achievement as adults, which is often signaled by stable employment, savings, independent housing, and a wedding (e.g., Cherlin, 2004; Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Smock, Manning, & Porter, 2005).

Likewise, marriage is considered a significant marker of adulthood in Japan (Lebra, 1984; Yamada & Shirakawa, 2008), which requires financial independence from parents. In 1997, roughly 20% of men and 10% of women ages 25-34 who were in a romantic relationship reported that they had not married because of economic strain (Iwasawa, 2004). Consistent with Smock et al.'s (2005) finding for the U.S., this figure indicates that young adults in a steady relationship strongly believe in the importance of having economic resources in the transition to

marriage. A more recent study (Kaneko et al., 2008a) also shows that roughly a quarter of Japanese men and one-fifth of Japanese women ages 18-34 reported financial strain as a reason for not marrying.

These findings also illustrate that men are more likely to consider the lack of economic resources as a reason for not marrying compared to women. This gender difference could reflect women's financial dependence on men after marriage and particularly after childbirth in Japan (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005), which will be discussed in the following section. Moreover, men may anticipate women's financial dependence on them after childbearing and perhaps they think they do not have enough resources to support the entire family.

#### *Wife's employment after marriage*

Increased enrollment in higher education among women since the 1970s has corresponded with their increased labor force participation (Bumpass, Rindfuss, Choe, & Tsuya, 2009; Tsuya & Mason, 1995). Indeed, more women ages 25-29 than men attained post-secondary education in 2000 (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005). Moreover, roughly 70% of women ages 25-29 were in the labor force in 2000 (Bumpass et al., 2009). Thus, couples' agreement on women's employment after marriage could be an important factor in the transition to marriage.

Japanese female labor force participation rate by age is characterized as an M-shaped curve, with a decline in the rate during ages 30 to 34, primarily due to childbearing and childrearing (e.g., Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000; Haga, 2003). Although the decline in female labor force participation rates at primary ages for childbearing and childcare has become less dramatic in the last three decades (Haga, 2003), only about one-third of mothers with children under 4 years old were in the labor force in 1999 (Rindfuss et al., 2004). Women still perform the overwhelming share of household labor and childcare (e.g., Rindfuss et al., 2004; Tsuya &

Mason, 1995), and men's involvement in childcare is limited in Japan (Ishii-Kuntz, 1994). Because of the difficulty of achieving work-family balance, substantial proportions of women drop out of the labor force or reduce their employment to part-time. Furthermore, there are typically limited employment opportunities as full-time employees for women who intend to return to the labor force following childbearing (e.g., Bumpass et al., 2009; Nomaguchi, 2006; Ogasawara, 1998).

Moreover, Japanese young men tend to be more concerned than women about the impact of married women's employment on family members' well-being. For instance, about 40% of men ages 25-29 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother works*" in 1994 (Bumpass & Choe, 2004). In contrast, only about one-fifth of women in the same age group agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Bumpass & Choe, 2004). Similarly, roughly 40% of men ages 25-29 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*Family life suffers when the wife has a full-time job,*" while less than 20% of women in the same age group agreed or strongly disagreed to the statement (Bumpass & Choe, 2004). Thus, there are clear gender gaps in the perceived impact of married women's employment on family members, and men's generally unfavorable attitudes toward women's employment after marriage and childbearing may be viewed as a barrier to marriage among women.

#### *Pressure to have a child soon after marriage*

Social expectations related to having a child (MacDonald, 2008) stem from the historical significance of children (sons) in the patriarchal Japanese family system. These expectations might be considered a barrier to marriage among some never married individuals.

Marriage and childbearing remain strongly connected in Japan (e.g., Lebra, 1984; Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004; Tsuya & Mason, 1995), and almost all births still occur within marriage today

(Rindfuss et al., 2004; Tsuya & Mason, 1995). Hence, it is possible that young adults anticipate that they are expected to have a child once they marry. Research finds that never married Japanese individuals often report they want to have children, and a desire to have children could be a strong motivation for marriage (Kaneko et al., 2008a; Nemoto, 2006). However, men tend to believe in the importance of parenthood more strongly than do women. For instance, more men think that having children is important in their lives than women do (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004). Moreover, men have a stronger sense of the importance of motherhood for women's lives than women themselves do (Bankart, 1989). Thus, social pressure to have a child soon after marriage may not be considered a barrier to marriage among men.

Nevertheless, the strong connection between marriage and childbearing might be a burden for some individuals, particularly women with economic opportunities. As discussed in the previous section, the incompatibility of work and family among Japanese women is well documented (e.g., Tsuya & Mason, 1995). Since having children has a strong impact on women's career trajectories, some women might be inclined to retreat from marriage to avoid social pressure to have a child soon after marriage.

Recent studies indicate that the time between marriage and first birth has been increasing. Some note that the transition into parenthood occurs fairly quickly after marriage in Japan (Jolivet, 1997). However, other studies find that childbearing is being postponed after marriage (e.g., Bumpass et al., 2009; Retherford et al., 1996). For example, the interval between marriage and first birth has increased from 16.4 months to 27.1 months between 1955 and 1992 (Retherford et al., 1996). One of the reasons for this is fewer women leave the paid labor force when they marry, compared to a few decades ago (Retherford et al., 1996). Nomaguchi (2006) finds that some married women who have more leisure time delay the transition to parenthood

after marriage. In addition, married couples with no children have increased in recent years (Bumpass et al., 2009).

*Co-residence or close relationships with parents-in-law*

The first son and his wife historically have lived with his parents in Japan (Lebra, 1984) to take care of elderly parents and maintain the patrilineal family line (Taeuber, 1958; Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004). Intergenerational co-residence is still relatively common among married couples today, and about a third of all married couples live with parents (Rindfuss et al., 2004). In most cases, couples live with the husband's parents (Ogawa & Ermisch, 1996; Rindfuss et al., 2004).

Co-residence with parents has several implications. First, care for elderly parents has traditionally been provided by family members, mainly by wives (i.e., daughters-in-law) (Bumpass et al., 2009). Thus, when married couples live with parents, wives take a role as daughter-in-law, in addition to wife and mother, and a recent study shows that the daughter-in-law role is a pressure for many women today (Rindfuss et al., 2004).

Next, co-residence with parents-in-law could cause conflict in the family. Specifically, conflict between married women and their mothers-in-law has been discussed (Kumagai & Kato, 2007). For instance, Kumagai and Kato (2007) find that Japanese married women who co-reside with parents-in-law are more likely to be in the labor force, relative to those who do not live with parents-in-law or those who live with their own parents. Kumagai and Kato (2007) explain that this is likely a strategy to avoid conflict between married women and their parents-in-law. Notably, co-residence with own parents is not significantly related to labor force participation among married women.

On the other hand, co-residence with parents might benefit married couples. Sasai (1998) finds that married couples living with parents (or parents-in-law) tend to have first, second, and third children significantly faster than those who are not co-residing with parents. Thus, Japanese grandparents play an important role in providing childcare for grandchildren, particularly when both parents are employed (Sasai, 1998).

Co-residence with parents-in-law may not have a strong impact on men, relative to women. As discussed above, it is not very common for men to live with parents-in-law in Japan (Ogawa & Ermisch, 1996; Rindfuss et al., 2004). When men live with their parents-in-law, it is unlikely to affect the amount of household labor they perform. Or, co-residence with parents-in-law may even reduce the amount of household labor men perform, compared to when they do not live with parents-in-law, because the mother-in-law will perform the household labor. Thus, role of son-in-law is not well established, and men may not perceive the pressure to live with parents-in-law or have close relationships with them as a barrier to marriage because it is extremely unlikely to occur.

#### Current Investigation and Hypotheses

This paper contributes to the literature on delayed marriage in Japan by examining single men and women's own perceptions of barriers to marriage. Specifically, this study investigates how single men and women view (1) economic resources, (2) spousal agreement on wives' employment after marriage, (3) pressure to have a child soon after marriage, and (4) pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law, as barriers to marriage. Moreover, gender differences in perceptions are examined. Based on prior research findings, I test several hypotheses.

First, drawing on prior research findings on gender differences in young adults' reports on reasons for not marrying (Iwasawa, 2004; Kaneko et al., 2008a), I expect that (H1) men are more likely to view economic resources as a barrier to marriage compared to women.

Next, because of the difficulty of balancing work and family for women in Japan (e.g., Rindfuss et al., 2004; Tsuya & Mason, 1995), I hypothesize that (H2) women are more likely than men to believe that spousal agreement on wives' employment after marriage is a barrier to marriage. Furthermore, I expect that (H3) women with higher socioeconomic status (i.e., those with higher education, those who are employed full-time, or those with higher income) are more likely to think that couple agreement about wives' employment is a barrier to marriage compared to those with lower socioeconomic status (i.e., those who with lower education, those work part-time, those who are not working, or those with lower income).

Similarly, due to the difficulty in maintaining full-time employment among women after child birth (e.g., Rindfuss et al., 2004; Tsuya & Mason, 1995), I hypothesize that (H4) women are more likely to perceive pressure to have a child soon after marriage as a barrier to marriage compared to men. Furthermore, I expect that (H5) women with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to perceive the pressure to have a child soon as a barrier to marriage, relative to those with lower socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, since marriage and childbearing are strongly connected in Japan (e.g., Lebra, 1984; Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004; Tsuya & Mason, 1995) and young adults tend to have a strong desire to have children (Kaneko et al., 2008a; Nemoto, 2006), it is also possible that (H6) pressure to have children soon after marriage may not be considered a barrier to marriage by either men or women.

Finally, given the fact that a majority of married couples that co-reside with parents are living with husbands' parents (Ogawa & Ermisch, 1996; Rindfuss et al., 2004), and women will

take an additional role as daughter-in-law in these co-residential households, I hypothesize that (H7) women are more likely to think the pressure to co-reside with or to have close relationships with parents-in-law is a barrier to marriage compared to men. Nevertheless, women with more economic opportunities (i.e., those with higher education, those are employed full-time, or those with higher income) may not think of co-residence or close relationships with in-laws as a barrier to marriage (H8), because parents-in-laws could be childcare providers (Sasai, 1998).

I control for several factors that might be associated with never married individuals' perceptions of barriers to marriage, such as age, dating status, urban-rural residence in childhood, current geographic size, and gender role attitudes. I control for age because barriers to marriage might vary depending on respondents' age. For instance, those who are younger might be more likely to view economic resources as a barrier to marriage, relative to older singles, because they tend to have fewer assets than those who are older. Dating status is controlled because it might be related to different views on barriers to marriage. Those who are in steady romantic relationships might view spousal agreement on wife's employment or a pressure to co-reside or have close relationships with parents-in-law as barriers to marriage, compared to those who are not in steady relationships. This is because they may think of getting married to the dating partner and couple agreement on employment and living arrangement would greatly impact their lives when they get married to the partner. I control for urban-rural residence in childhood as well as current geographic size because geographic settings might be related to attitudes toward marriage and family (e.g., Tsuya, 1994; Tsuya & Mason, 1995), such that growing up or living in urban setting would introduce less traditional ideas. I control for gender role attitudes because those with less traditional gender role attitudes may view social pressure to have a child soon after marriage or pressure to co-reside with parents-in-law which stem from the traditional

family system as barriers to marriage, compared to those with more traditional gender role attitudes.

Furthermore, when I examine the importance of having a child soon after marriage (H4, H5, H6), I control for whether the respondent is the first child. This is because a married couple needs to have a child to maintain the family line in traditional Japanese family system (e.g., Lebra, 1984), and those who are the first child (particularly son) might be more likely to perceive the importance of having a child soon after marriage.

For the pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law (H7, H8), I control for the respondent's birth order and status of co-residence with parents at the time of survey. Those who are the first child might view pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage because they may feel obligated to be close to (or living with) their own parents. Those who are living with their own parents may feel that living with parents-in-law when they marry is a concern. This is because they are typically performing few household tasks (e.g., Raymo & Ono, 2007) compared to those who are not living with parents, and living with parents-in-law would increase their responsibilities in household labor.

#### Data

I use data from the Japan 2000 National Survey on Family and Economic Conditions (Tsuya, Bumpass, & Rindfuss, 2008, N = 4,482). The NSFEC is a national sample of Japanese men and women between the ages of 20 and 49, and those who are between the ages of 20 and 39 were selected at twice the rate of those between the ages of 40 and 49 (Tsuya et al., 2008). These data suit this research because they allow me to examine never married individuals' perceptions of barriers to marriage. In this study, I include never married women and men between the ages of

20 and 39 ( $n = 1,793$ ). I exclude ever married individuals (i.e., those who are divorced and widowed), because barriers to marriage might differ for those who will marry for the first time and those who have previously married, and I am interested in investigating perceived barriers to marriage among those who have a risk of entering into marriage for the first time. Means and proportions described in this study are weighted.

Measures: Dependent variables

*Perceived barriers to marriage*

Perceived barriers to marriage are measured by four variables; (1) having sufficient money to live a married life, (2) spousal agreement about wife's employment, (3) pressure to have children soon after marriage, and (4) having to live with or close to in-laws. All items are under the heading, "*Here are some reasons that are often discussed in the society as to why some young single men and women are not marrying. How important do you think each item below would be for you as a condition of marriage?*" I recoded responses to range from 1 = *not at all important*, 2 = *not so important*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *somewhat important*, to 5 = *very important*, such that a higher score indicates a stronger perception as a barrier to marriage.

Measures: Independent variables

*Gender*

Gender is dummy-coded such that 0 = male and 1 = female. Roughly 44% of respondents are women.

*Age*

Age is measured in years, ranging from 20 to 39.

*Dating status*

Current dating status is originally coded as 1 = *engaged to be married*, 2 = *have a steady boy/girl friend but am not engaged to be married*, 3 = *dating but have no steady boy/girl friend*, 4 = *not dating now but have in the past*, and 5 = *have never dated*. I construct a dummy for current dating status such that 1 = having a steady partner and 0 = not having a steady partner. The first category, have a steady partner, represents 1= *engaged to be married* and 2 = *have a steady boy/girl friend but am not engaged to be married*, and the second category, not having steady partner, represents all other responses<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Educational attainment*

Educational attainment is originally measured as 1 = junior high school, 2 = high school, 3 = professional training, 4 = junior college (two year college), 5 = college or more, and 6 = other. I construct dummies for educational attainment, and treat high school completion as the reference category.

#### *Employment status*

Current employment status is originally measured as 1 = work full time, 2 = work part time, 3 = homemaker, 4 = student, 5 = unemployed, and 6 = other. I construct dummies for employment status. I distinguish full-time employment, part-time employment, not-working (by combining homemaker, student, and unemployment as not-working), and other. I treat part-time employment as the reference category.

#### *Income*

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<sup>1</sup> One of the response categories is translated in English as “dating but have no steady boy/girl friend.” However, in my opinion, the category sounds closer to “having opposite-sex friends but being steady as boy/girl friend” in the original Japanese questionnaire. That is why I treat the response as “not having a steady partner.”

I construct dummies for last year's income such that *no income, less than 1 million Japanese yen* (equivalent to approximately 10,000 U.S. dollars or less<sup>2</sup>), *1 – 1.99 million yen* (equivalent to 10,000 – 19,999 U.S. dollars), *2 – 3.99 million yen* (equivalent to 20,000 – 39,999 U.S. dollars), and *4 – 5.99 million yen or more* (equivalent to 40,000 – 59,999 U.S. dollars or more).

#### *Urban-rural residence in childhood*

Type of place where respondents grew up until graduating from elementary school is measured as 1 = urban areas or 0 = rural villages.

#### *Current geographic size*

Current geographic size is originally measured in 1 = large metropolitan cities, 2 = medium-sized cities, 3 = small cities/town, and 4 = rural areas. I construct dummies for the size of residence and treat medium-sized cities as the reference category.

#### *Gender role attitudes*

A gender role attitudes scale is created with the following 5 items: (1) *When jobs are scarce, men should have a priority for a job over women*, (2) *Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother works*, (3) *Wives should work only when extra income is needed by the family*, (4) *It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family*, and (5) *A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work*. Responses range from 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*. I recoded some items such that higher scores indicate more traditional gender role attitudes. The coefficient for the Cronbach Alpha of the scale is 0.69.

#### *Birth order*

I coded respondents' birth order (i.e., first birth) such that 0 = no, or 1 = yes.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. dollars equivalent to Japanese yen are based on author's calculation

### *Co-residence with parents*

I construct a dummy for co-residence with parents such that 0 = no, or 1 = yes.

#### Analytic Plan

First, descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analyses are presented. Then, I conduct Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses to examine factors associated with never married individuals' perceptions of barriers to marriage. I run the model separately for each of four items measuring barriers to marriage.

I begin with examining factors associated with economic resources as a perceived barrier to marriage. I enter gender in the first model. In the second model, all the demographic characteristics and gender role attitudes are added. In order to support my argument, men should be more likely to view economic resources as a barrier to marriage compared to women.

Second, I predict the importance of spousal agreement about wives' employment on a perceived barrier to marriage. I first enter gender to test if gender is significantly associated with a perceived barrier to marriage. In the second model, all the demographic characteristics and gender role attitudes are added. Women should be significantly more likely to perceive spousal agreement on wives' employment after marriage as a barrier to marriage compared to men to support my hypothesis. Then, I test interactions between gender and college education, full-time employment, and higher income. In order to support my argument, women's higher socioeconomic status should be significantly and positively associated with the perception of a barrier to marriage.

Next, I examine factors associated with a pressure to have a child as a barrier to marriage. I enter gender in the first model. In the second model, all the demographic characteristics, including birth order (being the first child) and gender role attitudes are added. In order to

support my argument, women should be significantly more likely to perceive the pressure to have a child soon after marriage as a barrier to marriage compared to men. Then, I test interactions between gender and college education, full-time employment, and higher income. Women's higher socioeconomic status should be positively associated with their perception of barrier to marriage in order to support my hypothesis. I also test interaction between gender and birth order. Being the first son might be positively associated with the perceived barrier to marriage because the first son needed to have a child to maintain the family line in traditional Japanese family system. Although the family system no longer has authority, Japanese individuals still consider the first son an important figure to maintain the family name and property.

Finally, factors associated with a pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage are examined. I enter gender in the first model. In the second model, I add all the demographic characteristics including respondents' status of co-residence with parents at the time of survey and gender role attitudes into the model. Women should be significantly more likely to perceive the pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage relative to men to support my hypothesis. Then, I test whether there are significant interactions between gender and college education, full-time employment, and higher income. Women's higher socioeconomic status might have no effect on their perceptions of barrier to marriage since parents-in-law could provide childcare.

## Results

### Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analyses by gender are shown in Table 1. There are significant gender differences in three out of four items measuring perceived barriers to marriage. First, the mean score for “having sufficient money to live a married life” is 4.18 (score 5 is *very important*), indicating that Japanese young adults strongly believe that finance is a barrier to marriage. Single women are more likely (mean=4.28) to view economic resources as a barrier to marriage compared to single men (mean=4.11). This is in contrast to previous research findings (e.g., Iwasawa, 2004; Kaneko et al., 2008a), demonstrating that men report financial instability as a reason for not marrying more often than women. Second, the mean score for “spousal agreement on wife's employment after marriage” is 3.48 (5 is *very important*). Japanese single men and women generally view spousal agreement about wife’s employment after marriage as a barrier to marriage. Women (mean=3.61) tend to view its importance more strongly than men (mean=3.37) do. Next, the mean score for “pressure to have children soon after marriage” is 3.22 (5 is *very important*), suggesting that never marrieds view pressure to have children as somewhat important. However, there is no gender difference in mean scores. Finally, Japanese never marrieds strongly believe “having to live with or interact with in-laws” is a barrier to marriage (mean=3.72). Particularly, single women (mean=3.89) are much more likely than single men (mean=3.59) to view co-residence or interaction with in-laws as a barrier to marriage.

Among the control variables, there are also some gender differences. Average age for never marrieds is 26 years old. Men are slightly older (mean=26.32) than women (mean=25.51). About 32% of never marrieds have a steady romantic partner, but a larger share of women (35%) is in steady relationships than men (29%). In terms of educational attainment, for both men and women, high school degree is the modal category for educational attainment. Men are more

likely to have completed junior high (6%), high school (50%), and college or more (25%) than women (3%, 38%, and 16%, respectively). On the other hand, a higher proportion of women (27%) has completed junior college than men (4%). The majority of men and women work full-time (67% of men and 66% of women), but there are gender differences in the other employment categories. For instance, women are more likely to work part-time (12%) and less likely to be non-working (20%), than men (6% and 26%, respectively). For both men and women, earning 2-3.99 million Japanese yen (about 20,000 – 39,999 U.S. dollars) is the modal category. However, more women (22%) earn 1-1.99 million Japanese yen (roughly 10,000 – 19,999 U.S. dollars) than men (13%), and more men (15%) earn 4-5.99 million Japanese yen or more (roughly 40,000 – 59,999 U.S. dollars or more) than women (7%). About 38% of men and women are the first child. There is no gender difference in being the first child. A majority of never marrieds are co-residing with their parents (72%), but a greater proportion of women (76%) are living with parents than men (69%). In terms of urban-rural residence in childhood, a majority of singles (75%) lived in urban areas, and there is no difference by gender. Finally, a quarter (25%) of singles is currently living in large metropolitan cities, roughly 40% of them is living in medium-sized cities, about 17% is living in small cities/towns, and about 18% is living in rural areas. There is no gender difference in current geographic size. Finally, in terms of gender role attitudes, men and women are not generally very traditional. The mean score is 2.60 and scores range from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the most traditional gender role attitudes. However, men have significantly more traditional gender role attitudes (mean=2.79) than women (mean=2.35).

#### Multivariate Results

Table 2 shows the results of the series of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses examining factors associated with barriers to marriage. The table shows only full models because

inclusion of the set of control variables does not alter the bivariate relationship between gender and each of four domains of barriers to marriage. First, at the bivariate level, women are more likely than men to report that economic resource is a barrier to marriage (result not shown). The full model shows that, in contrast to my hypothesis, single women are still significantly *more* likely than single men to view sufficient money for married life is a barrier to marriage, controlling for other relevant factors. Several other variables are significantly associated with sufficient money as a barrier to marriage. For instance, age is negatively associated with the view that money is a barrier to marriage. Those who are in steady romantic relationship are more likely to view economic resources as a barrier to marriage, compared to those who do not have steady partners. This may suggest that young adults who have steady partners evaluate their own and partner's financial circumstances seriously for the transition to marriage. Low income is positively and high income is negatively associated with view of economic resources as a barrier to marriage, respectively. Finally, those who have more traditional gender role attitudes are less likely to believe that money is a barrier to marriage, relative to those with less traditional gender role attitudes.

Second, at the bivariate level, single women are more likely to report that couple agreement on wife's employment as a barrier to marriage, compared to their male counterparts (result not shown). The full model shows that women are still significantly more likely than single men to view spousal agreement on wife's employment after marriage as a barrier to marriage, even after controlling for relevant factors. This is consistent with my expectation. Those who are in steady relationships are less likely to view spousal agreement of wife's employment as a barrier to marriage, compared to those who do not have romantic partners. Gender and having a romantic partner does not interact (result not shown). I also tested

interactions between gender and college degree, full-time employment, and high income (4-5.99 million Japanese yen or more), respectively. However, none of them reached statistical significance (results not shown).

Next, at the bivariate level, women are neither more nor less likely than men to view pressure to have a child soon after marriage as a barrier to marriage (result not shown). The result is maintained in the full model, with a set of control variables. Those who have more traditional gender role attitudes tend to perceive that having a child soon after marriage is a barrier to marriage, compared to those with less traditional gender role attitudes. Those who are the first child are more likely to view pressure to have a child as a barrier to marriage, relative to those who are not the first child. I tested interaction between gender and birth order, but it was not significant (result not shown). I also tested interactions between gender and indicators of economic resources (college degree, full-time employment, and high income, respectively). However, none of these variables significantly interacted (results not shown).

Finally, at the bivariate level, women are more likely to report that close relationships with in-laws is a barrier to marriage, compared to men (result not shown). The last column shows that, consistent with my hypothesis, single women are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to view having to co-reside or close relationships with parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage, controlling for other relevant factors. Those who have completed college are significantly less likely to view living with or having close relationships with parents-in-laws as a barrier to marriage, compared to those who have high school degree. It is possible that college graduates do not view closeness to in-laws as a barrier to marriage because they could be child caregivers. I tested interactions between gender and college degree, full-time employment, and high income, respectively. However, none of these variables significantly interacted with gender

(results not shown). Finally, those who are living with parents are more likely to view co-residing or having close relationships with in-laws as a barrier to marriage, compared to those who are not co-residing with parents. Although I also tested interaction between gender and co-residence with parents at the time of interview, it was not significant (result not shown).

### Discussion

Given the trend of delayed marriage among Japanese young adults, it is beneficial to examine what they view as barriers to marriage. Specifically, this study investigated how Japanese never marrieds think about (1) economic resources, (2) spousal agreement on wives' employment after marriage, (3) pressure to have a child soon after marriage, and (4) pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law, as barriers to marriage, with an emphasis on whether and how men's and women's perceptions differ.

First, this study demonstrated that single women were more concerned about finances as a barrier to marriage, relative to single men. This is in contrast to prior findings (e.g., Iwasawa, 2004; Kaneko et al., 2008a), suggesting that more Japanese men than women report that not having sufficient economic resources as one of the reasons for not marrying. I speculate that single women might concern the household's financial circumstance when they drop out of the labor force or reduce their work hours after childbearing.

Notably, I found that single women viewed spousal agreement on wife's employment after marriage as a barrier to marriage. As discussed, substantial proportions of women leave the labor force or change their employment status from full-time to part-time after childbearing (e.g., Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000; Haga, 2003). Furthermore, men tend to be more concerned than women about the impact of women's employment on young children (e.g., Bumpass & Choe, 2004). Given the difficulty in achieving work and family balance for married women in Japan

and men's generally unfavorable attitudes regarding married women's work, single women might believe in the importance of understanding and support from the future husband regarding their employment after marriage.

Next, this study showed that Japanese young adults did not strongly view pressure to have a child soon after marriage as a barrier to marriage. This is somewhat surprising because marriage and childbearing are strongly connected each other, and the connection could be a pressure for some women because of the incompatibility of work and family in Japan. On the one hand, Japanese never marrieds generally have a strong desire to have a child, and they may not feel a pressure to have a child soon after marriage as a barrier to marriage. The desire to have a child could rather be a motivation for marriage. On the other hand, it is possible that Japanese individuals may perceive the pressure to have a child once they get married. Unfortunately, tapping this issue is beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, a significant gender difference was found in a pressure to co-reside or have close relationships with parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage. Single women were more likely than single men to view a pressure to live with or have close relationships with in-laws as a barrier to marriage. As Rindfuss et al. (2004) discussed, marriage is considered a package for women which includes a caregiver role as daughter-in-law (in addition to a wife and a mother), and this is not attractive to some young women. Parents-in-law potentially become significant support system for working married couples with children (e.g., Sasai, 1998), but never married women typically view a pressure to be close to parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage.

There are some limitations in this study. First, I relied on a cross-sectional sample, and therefore findings of this study cannot speak to the causal order. For instance, I was unable to examine whether and how young adults' perceived barriers to marriage would influence their

timing of marriage. As individuals' attitudes do not always predict behavior (e.g., Bumpass et al., 2009), reported barriers to marriage may not necessarily directly related to young adults' transition to marriage.

Second, values for  $R^2$  were relatively small across the four models, suggesting that there are other factors that were not captured in the models that are associated with each measure of barrier to marriage. For instance, parents' economic circumstances could be related to young adults' perceived barrier to marriage. If never marrieds anticipate financial support from parents, they may not perceive economic strain as a barrier to marriage. I found that those who have steady partners were significantly more likely to view economic resources as a barrier to marriage, compared to those who are not in steady relationships. It is possible that some young adults who have steady partners are currently cohabiting with a plan to marry. Thus, a measure of cohabitation status might allow us to better understand the association between dating status and economic resources as a barrier to marriage. Next, regarding spousal agreement on wife's employment after marriage, flexibility or support at the workplace for employees could be related to perceived barrier to marriage. Women's satisfaction with current employment or career plan (i.e., if they expect to maintain the current job) might also be associated with perceived barrier to marriage. Then, I found that those who are the first child, regardless of gender, are significantly more likely to view the pressure to have a child soon after marriage as a barrier to marriage, relative to those who are not the first child. Similarly, characteristics of household might also be related with perceived barrier to marriage. For example, those who grew up in a renowned household or in a household owning family business might believe the necessity of having a son to maintain the family name. Finally, in terms of the pressure to co-reside or have close relationships with parents-in-law, personality or traditionalism of parents-in-law could

impact how young adults think living with or having close relationships with parents-in-law as a barrier to marriage. Moreover, I controlled for whether the respondent was the first child, but future spouse's birth order could also be related to perceived barrier to marriage. Specifically, a woman whose partner is the first son might be more likely to view the pressure to co-reside or have close relationship with parents-in-law is a barrier to marriage. Unfortunately, all these measures are unavailable.

Findings from this research contribute to a new understanding of delayed trends of marriage in Japan by demonstrating single men's and women's own perceptions of barriers to marriage. Gender differences in perceived barriers to marriage observed in domains of economic resources, spousal agreement on wife's employment after marriage, and the pressure to co-reside or to have close relationships with parents-in-law suggest some of the possible factors related to Japanese young adults' delayed transition to marriage. Future waves of the NSFEC data will allow researchers to examine how never marrieds' reported barriers to marriage will indeed relate to their transition to marriage.

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Table 1 : *Weighted Means and Standard Deviation of Variables by Gender*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Range</i> <i>Min Max</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Dependent variables</i>							
Having sufficient money to live a married life	(1 - 5)	4.18	0.86	4.11	0.92	4.28 ***	0.77
Agreement about wife's employment	(1 - 5)	3.48	1.00	3.37	1.03	3.61 ***	0.96
Pressure to have children soon after marriage	(1 - 5)	3.22	0.96	3.21	0.98	3.24	0.93
Having to live with or interact with in-laws	(1 - 5)	3.72	0.94	3.59	0.97	3.89 ***	0.87
<i>Independent variables</i>							
Gender (1=women)	(0 - 100%)	44.42	0.49				
Age (in years)	(20 - 39)	25.96	4.64	26.32	4.96	25.51 ***	4.24
Dating status (1=yes)	(0 - 100%)	31.87	0.46	29.29	0.46	35.12 **	0.45
<i>Educational attainment</i>							
Junior high school	(0 - 100%)	4.58	0.21	5.72	0.24	3.15 **	0.17
High school (ref)	(0 - 100%)	44.34	0.49	49.76	0.51	37.56 ***	0.46
Professional training	(0 - 100%)	14.89	0.35	14.54	0.36	15.32	0.34
Junior college	(0 - 100%)	14.29	0.34	4.40	0.21	26.66 ***	0.42
College or more	(0 - 100%)	21.03	0.40	24.72	0.44	16.42 ***	0.35
Other	(0 - 100%)	0.57	0.07	0.61	0.08	0.52	0.07
<i>Employment status</i>							
Full-time	(0 - 100%)	66.59	0.46	67.20	0.48	65.83	0.45
Part-time (ref)	(0 - 100%)	8.58	0.27	5.66	0.23	12.23 ***	0.31
Not working	(0 - 100%)	23.17	0.41	26.08	0.44	19.52 ***	0.38
Other	(0 - 100%)	1.52	0.12	1.06	0.10	2.10 *	0.14
<i>Income</i>							
< 1 million Japanese yen	(0 - 100%)	29.11	0.45	27.92	0.45	30.61	0.44
1-1.99 million Japanese yen	(0 - 100%)	17.16	0.37	13.20	0.34	22.11 ***	0.39
2-3.99 million Japanese yen (ref)	(0 - 100%)	38.33	0.48	39.50	0.49	36.86	0.46
4-5.99 million Japanese yen or more	(0 - 100%)	11.37	0.31	15.06	0.36	6.76 ***	0.24
Urban residence in childhood (1=yes)	(0 - 100%)	75.24	0.43	75.22	0.44	75.27	0.41
<i>Current geographic size</i>							
Large metropolitan cities	(0 - 100%)	24.79	0.42	24.34	0.39	25.35	0.41
Medium-sized cities (ref)	(0 - 100%)	39.59	0.48	39.87	0.50	39.23	0.46
Small cities/towns	(0 - 100%)	17.44	0.37	17.59	0.39	17.25	0.36
Rural areas	(0 - 100%)	18.18	0.38	18.19	0.39	18.16	0.37
Gender role attitudes	(1 - 5)	2.60	0.71	2.79	0.71	2.35 ***	0.64
Birth order (1=first child)	(0 - 100%)	38.49	0.48	37.77	0.49	39.39	0.46
Co-residence with parents (1=yes)	(0 - 100%)	72.47	0.44	69.46	0.47	76.24 ***	0.40
<i>N</i>			1,793		937		856

Source: The Japan 2000 National Survey on Family and Economic Conditions (NSFEC)

Note 1: *T* tests for significant gender difference: \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001.

Table 2: OLS Regression Models Predicting on Barriers to Marriage

Variable Names	Having sufficient money		Agreement on wife's employment		Pressure to have a child		Having to live with or close to in-laws	
	Full Model		Full Model		Full Model		Full Model	
	1		2		3		4	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Gender (1=women)	0.091 ***	0.05	0.261 ***	0.06	0.051	0.05	0.247 ***	0.05
Age (in years)	-0.012 *	0.01	-0.002	0.01	-0.014	0.01	0.009 †	0.01
Dating status (1=yes)	0.165 ***	0.05	-0.142 **	0.05	-0.013	0.05	0.010	0.05
Educational attainment								
Junior high school	-0.017	0.11	-0.146	0.12	0.048	0.12	-0.062	0.11
High school (ref)								
Professional training	0.062	0.06	0.036	0.07	0.003	0.07	0.007	0.07
Junior college	0.055	0.07	0.042	0.08	-0.026	0.08	0.008	0.07
College or more	-0.008	0.06	-0.003	0.07	-0.061	0.06	-0.127 *	0.06
Other	-0.345	0.27	-0.377	0.32	-0.424	0.31	-0.547 †	0.30
Employment status								
Full-time	0.035	0.08	0.069	0.09	-0.105	0.09	-0.032	0.09
Part-time (ref)								
Not working	0.009	0.09	0.194	0.10	0.069	0.10	0.053	0.10
Other	0.191	0.18	-0.117 †	0.21	0.200	0.20	0.022	0.20
Income								
< 1 million Japanese yen	0.065	0.07	0.053	0.08	-0.053	0.07	0.053	0.07
1-1.99 million Japanese yen	0.104 †	0.06	0.013	0.07	-0.013	0.07	0.121 †	0.07
2-3.99 million Japanese yen (ref)								
4-5.99 million Japanese yen or more	-0.174 *	0.07	-0.094	0.09	0.013	0.08	-0.045	0.08
Urban residence in childhood (1 = yes)	-0.038	0.05	0.027	0.06	0.071	0.06	-0.018	0.06
Current geographic size								
Large metropolitan cities	-0.101 †	0.05	-0.092	0.06	-0.038	0.06	-0.146 †	0.07
Medium-sized cities (ref)								
Small cities/towns	-0.023	0.06	0.099	0.07	0.157	0.07	-0.049	0.07
Rural areas	-0.011	0.06	-0.100	0.08	0.061	0.07	-0.071	0.08
Gender role attitudes	-0.066 **	0.03	0.041	0.04	0.070 *	0.03	-0.031	0.03
Birth order (1=first child)					0.108 *	0.05	0.056	0.05
Co-residence with parents (1 = yes)							0.133 **	0.05
Intercept	4.560 ***	0.19	3.261 ***	0.23	3.354 ***	0.22	3.378 ***	0.21
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.0323		0.0229		0.0124		0.0296	

Source: The Japan 2000 National Survey on Family and Economic Conditions (NSFEC)

†  $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .