

Discussion Paper Series

University of Tokyo
Institute of Social Science
Panel Survey

東京大学社会科学研究所 パネル調査プロジェクト
ディスカッションペーパーシリーズ

Social Inequality among Japanese Youth:
Education, Work, and Marriage
in Contemporary Japan

Hiroshi ISHIDA

(Institute of Social Sciences, University of Tokyo)

February 2011

No.41

**Institute of Social Sciences
University of Tokyo
Panel Survey Project Discussion Paper Series No. 41
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This paper is based on the 12th John W. Hall Lecture in Japanese Studies, delivered at Henry R. Luce Auditorium, Yale University on 28 October 2010. I am grateful to Satoshi Miwa for his suggestion on the analysis of the determinants of dating and to Masao Oshima for his advice on the analysis of transition from school to work among university students.

**Social Inequality among Japanese Youth:
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Abstract

This lecture examines the process of two critical transitions for Japanese young people: the transition to work and the transition to marriage. At these transitions, social inequality, or the unequal distribution of life chances, clearly occupies the central place. In the transition from school to work, I focus on the role of schools in shaping the unequal distribution of the outcomes of the first job. Previous studies have pointed out the distinctive features of the school-to-work transition among high school graduates in Japan; Japanese schools play an active role in matching students to jobs. The empirical evidence presented in the lecture suggests that there is no apparent decline in the use of the school-mediated system or the effects of using such a system. The school-mediated transition continues to provide assistance to the socially disadvantaged. The students coming from less advantaged social origins and those who were not successful in the early stages of the job search are the people who benefit most from the school-mediated system. Dismantling the system will further disadvantage those who are already disadvantaged in society.

With regard to the transition to marriage, I focus on the process of finding a marriage partner, rather than the actual marriage. However, a very similar mechanism can be found about the likelihood of getting married. There are substantial differences between those who married and those who stayed single according to socio-economic position and home environment. Social inequality accumulated at earlier life stages, such as the unequal chances of entry into employment and one's parental home environment, have profound influences on subsequent life events, such as dating and marriage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of today's lecture is social inequality among Japanese youth. For a large part of my professional career, I have worked on issues related to social inequality and social mobility, so it will come as no surprise that today's lecture centers on this topic. But I hope that the topic is seen as timely, because there has been a resurgence of interests in social inequality in contemporary Japan. Today I hope to talk about two aspects of social inequality among the youth, using recently collected panel surveys. My contribution will take the form of analyzing this unique panel data, and describing the process through which social inequality is generated and reproduced in contemporary Japan.

I would like to focus on two critical transitions that young people face, and examine the detailed process of these transitions, and how they are related to social inequality. The first is the transition from school to work: that is, the process of getting a job after school. I will examine the activities leading to a job (就職活動) and their impact on the outcomes of the job search. The second is the transition to marriage: the process of finding a partner and getting married. Here the activities leading to finding a marriage partner (結婚活動) will be examined. For those of you who know Japanese, these two sets of activities are called 就活 and 婚活 respectively, using abbreviated forms, and they have been attracting considerable attention in the Japanese media recently.

These are probably the two most crucial transitions that young people must experience in their life course. Yet, for both transitions, recent observations by the mass media and the academics alike emphasize changes in the process of transition. As for the transition from school to work, some argue that the traditional assistance provided by schools has disappeared, and individual students are left alone to find their own ways in the job search. As for the transition to marriage, there is a renewed interest in the activities surrounding the search for future partners. With the practice of arranged marriages long disappeared, and the ability to rely on relatives, or a workplace superior, to introduce prospective partners becoming less effective, young people are compelled to find their own partners. In both transitions, the key terms among the proponents of change are individual choice and responsibility. With the influence of neo-liberal thinking, individual youth are expected to take the initiative in their job search or partner search, without relying on the existing institutions and, at the same time, they are expected to take full responsibility of the outcomes of the search.

To give you the upshot of my argument first, these claims about significant changes are often groundless or require heavy qualifications. The idea of the

breakdown of the school-mediated transition to work or the prevalence of active search activities among youth does not receive much empirical support. Schools continue to provide assistance to students, and the effect of an active partner search on the actual likelihood of finding a partner is greatly overestimated. I will show that the processes of getting a job or finding a marriage partner are embedded in the existing institutions and the sequence of events in the individual life course. The apparent changes that are often emphasized in the media are not accurately representing the underlying mechanism.

2. TRANSITION TO WORK

Let me begin with the transition from school to work. Japan has been praised for its low level of youth unemployment and the smooth transition from school to work. Japanese students have been generally successful in moving into the labor market in an orderly fashion, immediately following school graduation. The main reason for this successful transition was ascribed to the active role played by schools in the matching process of students and jobs.

Cross-national comparisons highlight the distinctive characteristics of the Japanese transition from school to work. Table 1 shows cross-national differences in the methods used for finding jobs after school completion from a survey conducted by the Japan Employment and Occupation Institute. In Japan, the overwhelming majority of students used the school placement office. In the US and Britain, advertisements and personal contacts were the most popular methods. The cross-national difference is especially striking among high school.

Previous studies pointed out that Japanese schools played an important mediating role in the process of transition from school to work. I will first focus on the transition from school to work among high school students, and then I will talk about the transition among college students.

School-to-Work Transition among High School Students

The following five features characterize the School-to-Work transition among Japanese high school students:

(1) The schedule is highly regulated by the rules set forth by the government.

The schedule regarding the transition is highly regulated by the rules set forth by the national government. The schedule begins in the middle of the senior year and continues until the graduation date in March. For your reference, Japanese academic

year begins in April and ends in March. The job search takes place while students are still in school. Furthermore, important dates are determined in advance. For example, every year June 20th is designated as the starting date for employers to submit hiring forms to the Public Employment Office, the agency under the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. Employers must fill out the hiring forms if they are interested in hiring high school seniors who are expected to graduate the following spring. These forms are forwarded from the Public Employment Office to high schools beginning July 1st. Interviews and the formal screening process of job candidates cannot begin until September 16. Employers are prohibited to engage in any recruiting activities until that date.

The highly regulated system is based on the philosophy that high school students are still minors and need guidance by teachers who have a good working knowledge of the job market and, at the same time, know the character of the students.

(2) The opportunities of employment differ depending on the high school

The opportunities of employment for high school students are determined by which high school the students happen to attend, because the job openings are not equally distributed among different schools.

Employers are allowed to designate the schools to which the job announcements are sent from the Public Employment Office. In other words, it is not a system where individual students apply to a company, but rather a system in which students must apply through schools. So if the school where a student attends does not receive a job opening announcement, he/she does not have a chance to be hired by this particular company. The students must find the best possible employer from the list available at the high school they attend.

(3) Students can only apply to one company at a time.

Students can only apply to one company at a time, at least in the first round of applications. In order to assure fairness among students, and make sure that a particular student does not receive multiple offers, schools regulate the application process. Because students can only apply to companies through their school's recommendation, schools are able to regulate the process and use the "one-student-one-company" allocation rule. In order for this system to work, when a student is offered a job by the recommended company, he/she is expected to accept the offer. Once a student accepts an offer, he or she will not be recommended to another company, because it is based on the trust between the employer and the school that the

recommendation is a serious one.

(4) Schools select which students can apply to which companies.

Schools select among students usually based on meritocratic criteria, in order to determine which student is recommended to a particular company. Since it is possible that many students are interested in the same company, schools must have a selection procedure to restrict the candidates. In selecting the nominees, schools normally use grades and attendance records. Since students are given one recommendation at a time, they try to maximize their chances of being hired by the company in the first round. Otherwise, the students must compete for a job in the second round, and the job openings are likely to be less favorable than those in the first round.

(5) There is a long-term relationship between employers and schools.

There is a long-term relationship between particular employers and particular high schools, due to the repeated transaction of recommendation and hiring. Some employers are willing to hire students from the same high school over and over again, and ask the high schools to recommend the students to them. In return for job openings, high schools try to make sure to recommend students every year. Because of the long-term relationship, employers value the recommendations highly and almost always hire students recommended by the schools. In return, high schools do not recommend students who do not meet employers' specification, even though that may mean recommending no student in a particular year.

This is a very intriguing system, which has its historical origins in the late 1940s. So this system has been in place for a long time. Recently, however, the school-mediated system has been subject to criticism.

According to the critics, faced with the economic downturn beginning in the late 1990s, the schools are not equipped to adjust to the changing economic environment. There is not only an increase in the number of young people who engage in part-time and non-regular jobs, but there is also an increase in the number of young people who are neither working nor studying in educational institutions. The critics argue that the role played by schools in the job placement of high school students has completely disappeared since the late 1990s.

Others even argue that schools should not take the responsibility of allocating students, because that violates individual freedom of occupational choice. The idea

echoes the neo-liberal orientation of individual freedom and responsibility.

Today, I would like to concentrate on the question of whether this kind of school-mediated system still works in contemporary Japan, and whether the system makes a difference in the outcomes, that is, the kinds of jobs students obtain.

Before I move on to present empirical findings, I will first provide some background information. Figure 1 shows the trends of destinations of high school graduates. Getting a job following high school graduation constituted the most popular destination until the 1980s. However, the rate has declined sharply, due to the expansion of the higher education sector during the 1990s, and today about 20 percent of high school graduates obtain full-time jobs and move directly into the labor market.

Figure 2 shows the trends of destinations of high school graduates. Getting a job following high school graduation constituted the most popular destination until the 1980s. However, the rate has declined sharply, due to the expansion of the higher education sector during the 1990s, and today about 20 percent of high school graduates obtain full-time jobs and move directly into the labor market.

It is, therefore, true that the number and the proportion of high school students who go through the school-mediated job search process have been decreasing, and the labor market for high school graduates has been stagnating in recent times. However, this does not necessarily mean that the school-mediated process has completely broken down, or that the advantages associated with the school-mediated process have disappeared.

I would now like to present some findings from the recent survey of the young people, the Japanese Life Course Panel Surveys. A very quick overview of the survey is in order. The Japanese Life Course Panel Surveys are composed of two groups: the youth sample which includes those who were aged 20 to 34 in 2007, and the middle-aged sample which includes those who were aged 35 to 40. The surveys are nationally representative, using the residence registrar as the basis of sampling frame. Questionnaires were mailed out to the respondents and were collected from individual households by the employees of a survey company. Wave 1 was conducted in 2007, and the respondents have been followed up every year since then.

Now the findings are presented. Figure 3 shows the proportion of high school graduates in our sample who used schools to obtain their first job after high school.¹

¹ The survey asked the respondents: “how did you get to know and apply to your first job?” The following responses were coded as school mediation: “through the school placement office” or “through school teachers”. The proportion represents those who found their first job through schools. High school graduates who used school

Sixty percent of high school graduates in the middle-aged sample and 53 percent in the youth sample used the school placement office to find their first employment. While the younger cohort used it less, the majority of high school graduates of the youth sample still relied on schools in their job search. The evidence is not consistent with the claim that the school-mediated job search has completely disappeared in recent times.

Next, let us examine the outcomes of the job search, and see whether there are any differences between school-mediated searches and non-mediated searches. The first outcome examined is whether high school graduates were able to start working immediately following graduation. Figure 4 shows 97 percent of those who found their first jobs through school, started working on April 1st, immediately following graduation, while the percentages for those who found their first jobs without the assistance of school are much less: 66 percent for the youth sample and 71 percent for the middle-aged sample. Schools seem to help the smooth transition of students.

The second outcome is whether the respondent's first job was his or her first preference (Figure 5). The majority (56 percent of the youth and 58 percent of the middle-aged sample) of those who found their first jobs through school, reported that their jobs were their first choice. The proportion is much smaller for those who did not use the school to find their first jobs: 30 percent of the youth and 37 percent of the middle-aged sample.

Two other types of outcome are considered. The next figure (Figure 6) shows the firm size of the first job. The proportion of those who found first jobs in large firms (those with more than 300 employees) and the public sector is clearly different between graduates who used the school to find jobs and those who did not. Finally, the proportion of those who found full-time regular employment is shown according to whether the respondent used the school or not (Figure 7). Among the middle-aged sample, the difference is not very large (8 percent). However, among the youth sample, school mediation makes a large difference. If a high school graduate did not use the school mediation process, his/her chances of finding a regular job were greatly reduced, by more than 30 percent (to 60 percent).

All of these results lead us to conclude that school mediation offers significantly better job opportunities in contemporary Japan. And the effects of school

mediation or obtained information through schools, but ended up in jobs which were not introduced by their school, are not included. If the first job was not introduced by the school, the respondent was not classified as someone who used school mediation, even if the student used school services extensively. This explains the difference in the proportion measuring the use of schools in various figures.

mediation are still apparent among the young cohort, and there is no clear sign of the effects being reduced in recent period.

Finally, we consider the question of who actually uses the school-mediated search. In particular, I would like to examine whether the use of the school-mediated job search is related to students' social backgrounds. Figure 8 presents the proportion of those who used schools to find their first job, by the father's social class. Students coming from a manual working class background are more likely to use school mediation than those from the professional-managerial class. The children of the professional-managerial class probably have their own resources and networks, and do not have to rely so much on the schools to secure good entry positions. High school students from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to use the school mediated system and benefit from it.

Young people who move into the labor market after completing high school are those who lack access to further education beyond secondary school. Because enrollment in higher education is closely related to social background, high school graduates are more likely to come from a disadvantaged background than college graduates. So high schools, which mediate the job match process among students, are indeed providing assistance to the most disadvantaged youth in society, and possibly alleviating the negative consequences associated with coming from a disadvantaged background.

In summary, it is true that the number and the proportion of high school students who move into the labor market immediately after high school graduation is shrinking, thereby reducing the number of those who potentially go through school mediated transition. Nonetheless, schools continue to offer guidance in the job search for high school students, and to provide assistance to socially disadvantaged youth.

School-to-Work Transition among University Students

Now I will discuss the process of transition from school to work among college graduates. Cross-national comparisons highlight the two features which characterize the Japanese process (Table 2). First, Japanese college students begin the job search process well before graduation. According to a survey conducted by the Japan Institute for Labor Policy, and Training, 96 percent of Japanese college students began looking for a job more than 3 months before graduation, whereas the average for college students in Europe was only 23 percent.

With regard to the methods used to look for a job as shown in Table 3, 63 percent of Japanese college students used the school placement office, whereas the

average for European students was only 17 percent. Japanese college graduates use the resources provided by the placement office extensively, but that does not necessarily mean that they obtain jobs through the assistance of the placement office. The major functions of the placement offices at the college level are to provide information and guidance to students.

In recent years, the job search among college students begins in the summer/fall of the junior year – very early. During the summer vacation and the fall semester, college placement offices organize guidance meetings and job fairs for juniors who are about to start the job search process. The process begins with the students applying to different companies by filling out application forms on the internet. The companies select students from among the applicants and give written tests and interviews to a selected group. Placement office assists students by giving advice about filling out the application forms, conducting mock interviews, and providing information about alumni who work in companies where students are interested.

By May (the beginning of the senior year), roughly a third of students receive offers from companies they applied to. Up to this point, the job search process resembles the “free market” model of matching between students and employers. However, there are still students who must continue the job search. At this later stage, the college placement office plays a more active role in assisting those students who were not able to find jobs during the first stage of the job search. The placement office receives announcements of job openings from companies which were not able to fill the positions in the first round. The office selects employers from the list and recommends them to students who come to the office for assistance. The students will take the recommendations and ask for interviews at these companies. The important difference from the high school placement office is that the college placement office does not usually select the students, but tries to assist everyone who comes to the office. The college placement office recognizes that the students who seek help are those who were not successful in the first round of the job search. So much for the description of the job search process of college graduates.

Figure 9 presents background information about the trends of the destination of college graduates. Getting a job has always been the dominant destination for Japanese college graduates, partly because graduate schools are not sufficiently developed in Japan. Although there was a drop in the proportion of those who got jobs after college in the late 1990s and early 2000s due to the economic downturn, the rates have been on the increase from 2005.

I would now like to present findings from the Japanese Life Course Panel

Surveys. I distinguish three groups of college graduates: (1) the first group include those who found their jobs in the early stage of the job search and did not use school mediation (this group is composed of about 30 percent of college graduates of our sample) (2) the second group are those who found their job late, but through the introduction of school (comprising about 20 percent), and (3) the third group include those who found their job late without school mediation (which constitutes about a half of college graduates of our sample).

Now the question is whether these three groups have different outcomes of the job search. Figure 10 shows the proportion of college graduates who began working immediately following graduation from college by the three groups. Well over 90 percent of the “Early” group and the “Late with school mediation” group began working immediately after graduation, while the proportion for those who found jobs “Late without school assistance” is much lower, especially in the youth sample where the rate is only 70 percent. The next figure (Figure 11) presents the proportion of college graduates who obtained full-time regular employment. Again, the “Early” groups and “Late with school mediation” groups both scored high—over 90 percent, in both the youth and middle-aged samples. The “Late and no school mediation” groups had significantly lower figures, especially in the youth sample.

Although the figures are not shown, the same pattern can be found for the likelihood of finding first jobs in large firms or the public sector, and the proportion of people who claim that their entry jobs were their first choice. All these results indicate that the job outcomes of college graduates who found jobs early in the process and those who found jobs late but with the introduction of schools are clearly better. And the effects of using the schools seem to be larger in more recent period.

Finally, we examine whether the use of the school mediated job search is related to students’ social origin, that is, the father’s social class. The figure is not shown here, because there is no significant association between class background and three groups of college graduates. Those who benefited from the assistance of the school placement office do not come from any particular class background. This suggests that the use of school mediation is not restricted by social background, but is open to all students who required assistance.

In summary, the school-mediated transition was used by college graduates who were not successful in the first round of the job search. School placement offices provide these students with relatively favorable job opportunities. The opportunities seem to be equal to, if not better than, those enjoyed by college students who were successful in the first round of the job search. In other words, school mediation plays

an important role in helping students who were disadvantaged early in the job search process. Even though they failed to secure jobs in the first round, they were able to compensate for their early failures with the assistance of the school.

3. TRANSITION TO MARRIAGE

Let me move on to the second topic: the transition to marriage. I begin with presenting some background information. One of major demographic changes taking place in contemporary Japan is the declining fertility rate. Fertility is relevant to the shifting balance between the working population and the retired generation and the shrinking demographic basis for the support of the social security system in Japan. As shown in Figure 12, there has been a continuous decline in the fertility rate in Japan since around 1970. In the last 40 years, the rate has been running below the replacement rate of 2.08, the bold line in the figure.

There are two main reasons for the decline in fertility: the decline in the number of children born among married couples, and the decline in the marriage rate. The trend which became most apparent in 1990s is that the proportion of couples with more than three children has been declining. The average number of children per married couple was 2.83 in 1962, but 2.09 in 2005. This had a direct effect on the fertility rate. The other reason relates to marriage. Because out-of-wedlock babies are still extremely rare in Japan, marriage and childbirth are closely linked, and shying away from marriage will result in a fewer number of babies born. The proportion of people who are single by age-group and by year is shown in Figure 13. The dark bars on the right, which represent the most recent period of 2005, show the increasing proportion of single people in the 25-29 and 30-34 age cohorts both for men and women.

There is a sudden increase in the interest in marriage and dating among the mass media, and even among government officials and politicians. Special agencies are being set up in local governments to assist the mate-searching activities for young people. They do not advocate the old match-making system, but provide young people with meeting occasions and parties organized by the local government, in order to boost marriage rates and eventually birth rates. Despite the increasing attention given in the media, we know very little about the dating behavior and the process which leads to marriage.

In this part of my lecture, I will examine the following three questions: (1) how prevalent are the activities leading to finding a partner? (2) who are actively engaged in the search for a partner? and (3) does actively searching for a partner affect the actual

probability of finding a partner?

The first figure (Figure 14) presents the proportion of non-married people who engaged in activities to find a partner, according to the Japanese Life Course Panel Surveys. Please note that respondents who were already married are excluded from the analysis. Thirty-eight percent of people engaged in the active search of a partner, and there is no clear difference by gender. It is hard to conclude whether this figure is high or low without having any benchmark, but given the fact that the notion of “active search of a partner” is so widespread and popular among the media, the actual figure is probably lower than people would expect.

Figure 15 presents the proportion of people who engaged in activities to find a partner by gender and by age group. There is virtually no difference between men and women, except for the oldest group of 35 to 40. Among women who are 35 to 40, the likelihood of actively searching for a partner is substantially reduced by more than 10 percent. Men do not show such a tendency. It is possible that women in their late 30s have given up the idea of getting married, given that the average age of first marriage for women is 29. Another possibility is that women of this generation are still not used to engaging in an active partner search because men, not women, are expected to take the initiative.

I just want to show you quickly the kinds of activities these young people engaged in, when “actively searching” for partners. Here is a list of the activities reported by the respondents (Figure 16). The most popular activity, as you can see from this figure, is to ask friends for an introduction to a possible partner. Taking part in drinking parties organized for meeting opposite sex is also popular, followed by asking colleagues and boss at the workplace for an introduction. The use of commercial dating services is still a rare activity.

The second question I posed was: who engages in these kinds of activities? It turns out that there is a substantial variation in the likelihood of engaging in these activities. For example, as shown in Figure 17, individual income affects the propensity to engage in the active search of a partner for men: that is, the higher the income level, the greater the chances of search activities. Women do not show a similar tendency.

Figure 18 shows the relationship between employment status and the likelihood of engaging in partner-searching activities. For both women and men, the chances are higher among those who have regular employment and those engaged in self-employment. If one holds a non-regular job or not working, the chances are substantially reduced. There are other factors, such as educational attainment, home

environment, and the intention to get married, affecting the propensity to engage in partner-searching activities. These results suggest that socio-economic positions and home environment are related to an individual's decision to engage in the active search of a partner.

Finally, does searching actively for a potential partner really make a difference in the likelihood of finding a partner? The answer, I am afraid, is no. The following procedure was used to evaluate the impact. I took the respondents who did not have a partner in the first wave of the survey and examined what proportion of them actually found a partner by the second wave. I computed the proportion separately for those who engaged in "the active search" for a partner and those who did not. Here is the result.

Even if people did not actively seek a partner, 11 percent ended up meeting a partner the following year. People do meet partners by chance. That's good. If people actively searched for a partner, 17 percent found partners the following year – an increase of 6 percent. In terms of the odds of finding a partner, those who engaged in active search are 1.5 times more likely to find a partner than those who did not. This number is shown in Figure 19 as "gross effect" of the active search. And as you can see, the difference in odds is slightly higher among females than males. Among females, 1.7 times greater, and among males, the odds of finding a partner are 1.4 times greater, if they engaged in active search. So the looking actively for a partner seems to make a difference in finding a partner.

However, as we already know, socio-economic position and home environment are related to the chances of engaging in the active search of a partner. Socio-economic position and home environment are also related to the chances of finding a partner. Therefore, if we compare the people who have the same socio-economic positions and background, the effect of the active search disappears. The net effects, after controlling for other factors, are shown in Figure 19. For both men and women, the odds ratios are virtually 1.0. This means that the odds of finding a partner are the same for the two groups of people: those who engaged in active search and those who did not.

The apparent gross difference we observed in the likelihood of finding a partner between the two groups can be explained by the fact that socio-economically advantaged youth are more likely to look actively for a partner and, at the same time, are more likely to find partners. It is not the search activities themselves that are making the real difference in the probability of finding a partner. Rather, one's position in the labor market and home environment, which are causally prior to the

partner-searching activities, are responsible for the differences in outcomes. We should not, therefore, overestimate the effect of search activities.

So far I have focused on the activities of searching for a partner. Finally, I would like to talk briefly about transition to marriage. If we examine the chances of getting married, again socio-economic positions are found to have a very similar influence. The final piece of empirical evidence deals with the respondent's chances of being married in wave 2, given that the respondent was not married at the time of wave 1.

Figure 20 shows the effect of first employment on marriage chances. For both men and women, the chances of getting married are substantially higher among regular workers and the self-employed than non-regular workers. The entry labor market position appears to have a long-lasting impact on marriage prospects. I have not shown here, but income is a strong predictor of the chances of marriage for men: the higher the income level, the greater the chances of marriage.

In addition, co-residence with parents acts as a factor which reduces the chances of marriage (see Figure 21). A large proportion—75 percent—of single respondents in our sample live with their parents. For many young people, parental homes offer comfortable living arrangements, and leaving home and getting married can be associated with a reduction in the standard of living. Alternatively, parents who are economically disadvantaged may be dependent on the youth to support the family. In either case, living in the parental home seems to deter young people from starting a new family. In summary, these results suggest that the chances of getting married are affected not only by people's labor market positions but also by people's home environment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this lecture, I have examined the process of two critical transitions for Japanese young people: the transition to work and the transition to marriage. At these transitions, social inequality, or the unequal distribution of life chances, clearly occupied the central place.

In the transition from school to work, I focused on the role of schools in shaping the unequal distribution of the outcomes of the first job. Previous studies have pointed out the distinctive features of the school-to-work transition among high school graduates in Japan. Japanese schools play an active role in matching students to jobs, and the empirical evidence suggests that there is no apparent decline in the use of the school-mediated system or the effects of using such a system. The school-mediated

transition continues to provide assistance to the socially disadvantaged. Critics of the school-mediated system claim that the schools should not take the responsibility of placing students because they interfere with the notions of individual freedom and responsibility. However, these critics do not fully recognize the fact that the students coming from less advantaged social origins and those who were not successful in the early stages of the job search are the people who benefit most from the school-mediated system. Dismantling the system will further disadvantage those who are already disadvantaged in society.

With regard to the transition to marriage, I focused on the process of finding a marriage partner, rather than the actual marriage. However, a very similar mechanism can be found about the likelihood of getting married. There are substantial differences between those who married and those who stayed single according to socio-economic position and home environment. Social inequality accumulated at earlier life stages, such as the unequal chances of entry into employment and one's parental home environment, have profound influences on subsequent life events, such as dating and marriage.

Despite the increased popularity in the activities leading to finding a marriage partner, the effectiveness of these activities is open to question. The efforts of the local government to sponsor official settings for meeting prospective spouses and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's project looking into how to promote private dating services are probably missing the real target, if the purpose is to increase the marriage and fertility rate. Young people who already have stable jobs and good income are also those most likely to take advantage of these opportunities. If we wish to promote successful marriages, targeting at labor market conditions among young people should be more promising.

In concluding this lecture, I would like to stress the importance of (1) employing the dynamic life course perspective, and (2) paying attention to the role of institutions, in understanding the transitions experienced by Japanese youth. Family background, education, work, and family formation are sequenced and linked to each other. Getting a job or finding a marriage partner does not take place as an isolated event. Rather, they are embedded in the dynamic sequence of events in the life course of the individual. More generally, events which happen at the earlier stages of the life course (such as education and first employment) may have enduring impacts on later life chances (such as marriage and childbirth). In particular, we need to pay close attention to how the advantages and disadvantages are accumulated across the life course. It is crucial to examine the process through which the accumulation of

advantages and disadvantages is passed on to the subsequent stages of life course, thereby reproducing social inequality across the life course.

We also need to pay attention to how institutions affect individual life chances and the shape of social inequality at various stages. Institutions, such as schools, have the potential for affecting the life chances of the individual at particular stages, and breaking the cycle of cumulative disadvantages. Only through tracing the process of cumulative advantages and disadvantages and recognizing the role played by institutions, are we able to understand the mechanisms through which social inequality is produced and reproduced in Japanese society.

Table 1. Methods Used for Searching a Job by Education for Three Countries (multiple answers)

	Relatives	Friends	Booklets Magazines	Ads	Public offices	Schools	Private agencies	Other
Japan								
Secondary education	22.4	11.7	4.9	6.6	4.5	62.6	0.9	3.7
Higher education	25.1	15.8	19.5	13.0	4.0	59.6	3.4	11.6
USA								
Secondary education	41.1	35.5	0.0	45.8	15.7	13.8	8.4	30.1
Higher education	38.4	36.1	0.0	56.2	16.4	46.6	14.6	27.4
Britain								
Secondary education	37.6	29.8	0.0	48.7	15.2	42.3	25.9	12.1
Higher education	18.1	25.0	0.0	68.1	14.7	36.2	21.6	11.2

Source: Koyo Shokugyo Sogo Kenkyusho. Seishonen no Shokugyo Tekiou nikansuru Kokusai Hikaku Kenkyu. (Tokyo: Koyo Shokugyo Sogo Kenkyusho, 1989).

Table 2. Timing of the Start of Job Search (%)

	Italy	France	Germany	Britain	Sweden	All Europe	Japan
When started looking for a job							
more than 3 months before graduation	11.0	8.0	29.0	35.0	25.0	23.0	96.0
1-3 months before	5.0	9.0	19.0	13.0	28.0	18.0	1.0
at the time of graduation	42.0	18.0	34.0	24.0	33.0	32.0	2.0
1-3 months after	25.0	16.0	10.0	12.0	6.0	12.0	0.0
3 months after	17.0	48.0	7.0	15.0	8.0	14.0	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

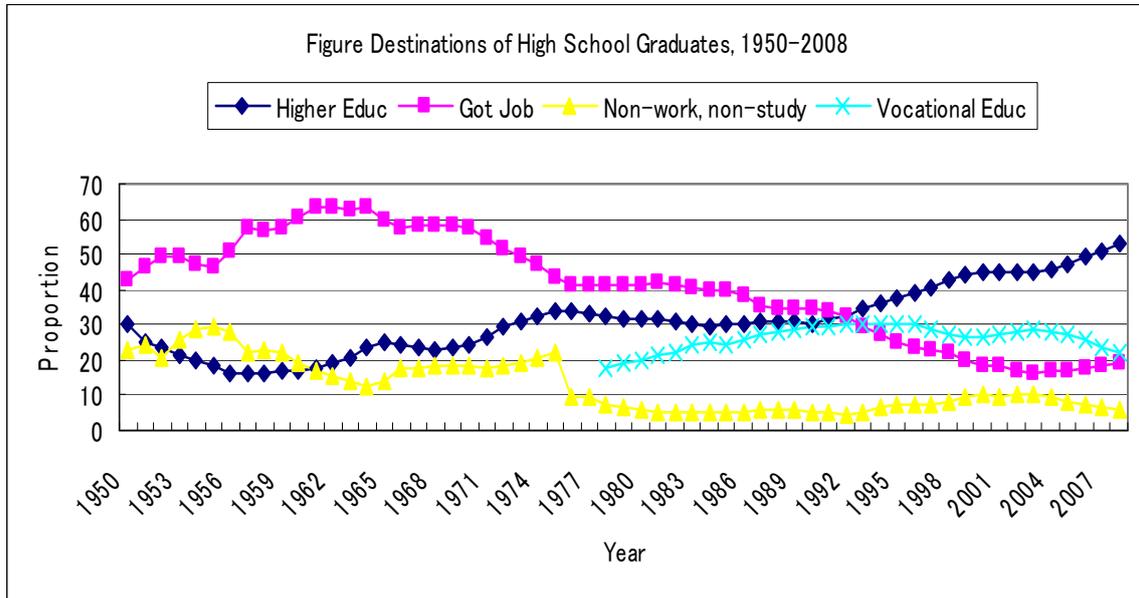
Source: Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Kiko (ed.) Koto Kyoiku to Shokugyo nikansuru Kokusai Hikaku Kenkyu (Tokyo: Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Kiko, 2003)

Table 3. Methods Used for Looking for a Job (multiple answers) (%)

	Italy	France	Germany	Britain	Sweden	All Europe	Japan
Application to an opening	48.0	75.0	74.0	69.0	78.0	71.0	73.0
Direct contact to company	70.0	79.0	60.0	40.0	61.0	57.0	13.0
Advertisement	10.0	24.0	11.0	1.0	1.0	7.0	1.0
Approach from employer	19.0	10.0	12.0	9.0	18.0	15.0	14.0
Public employment agency	40.0	63.0	40.0	26.0	48.0	39.0	13.0
Private employment agency	14.0	16.0	4.0	27.0	-	20.0	13.0
School placement office	10.0	14.0	7.0	37.0	3.0	17.0	63.0
University professors	13.0	6.0	8.0	9.0	5.0	9.0	23.0
Personal connection	54.0	39.0	26.0	27.0	25.0	32.0	21.0

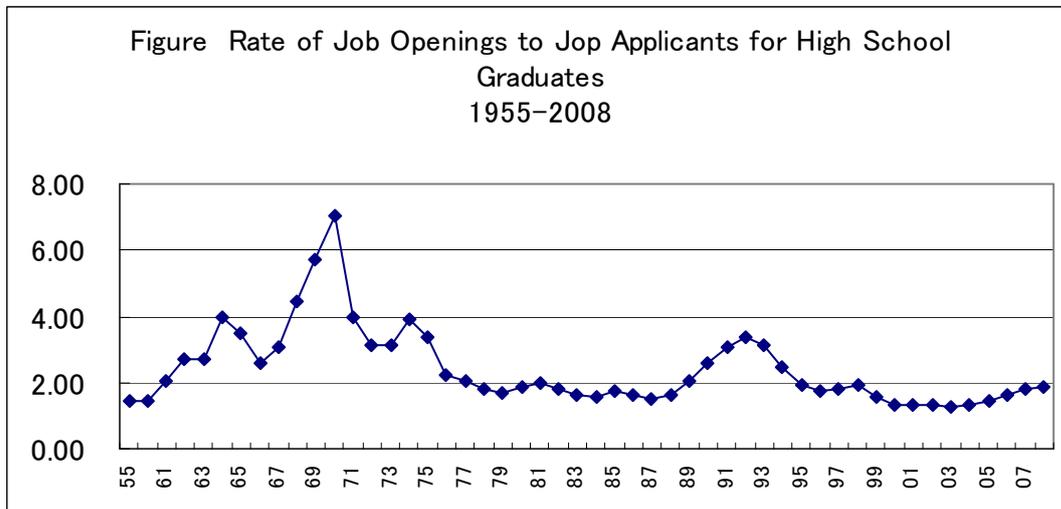
Source: Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Kiko (ed.) Koto Kyoiku to Shokugyo nikansuru Kokusai Hikaku Kenkyu (Tokyo: Nihon Rodo Kenkyu Kiko, 2003)

Figure 1.



Source: Ministry of Education, Gakko Kihon Chosa (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, various years)

Figure 2.



Source: Shokugyo Anteikyoku, Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, Shinki Gakusotsusha no Rodo Shijyo (Tokyo: Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, various years)

Figure 3. School Mediation Rate among High School Graduates by Youth and Mid-aged Samples (%)

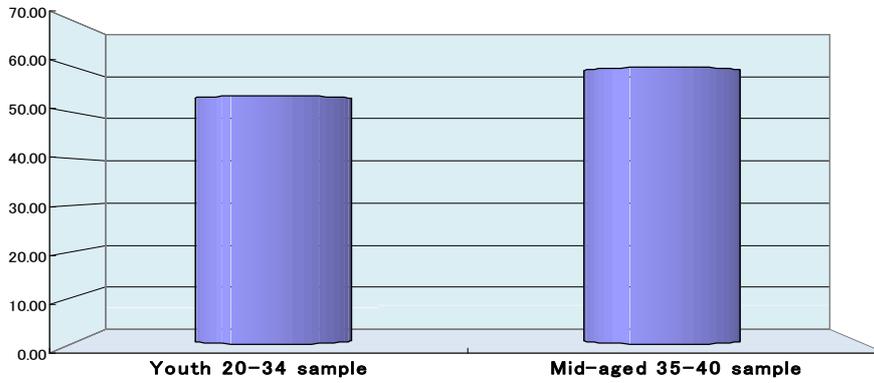


Figure 4. School Mediation and Timing of the Start of First Job

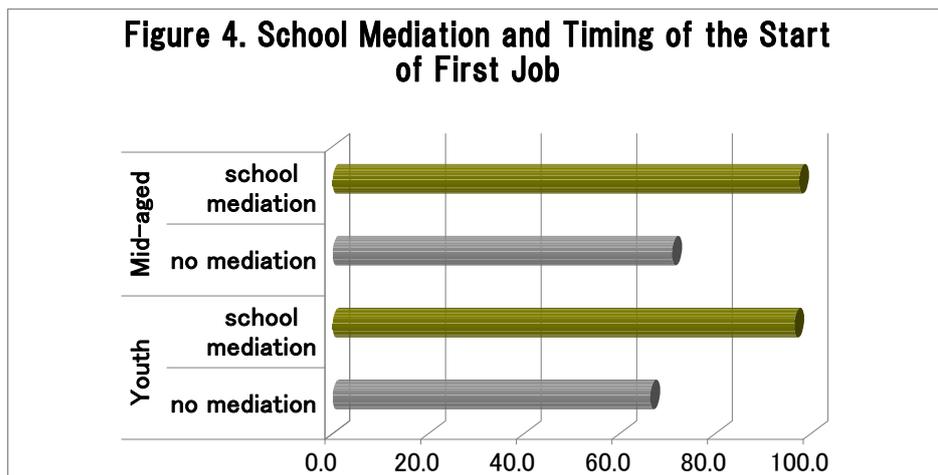


Figure 5. School Mediation and Whether the First Job was Something the Respondents Desired

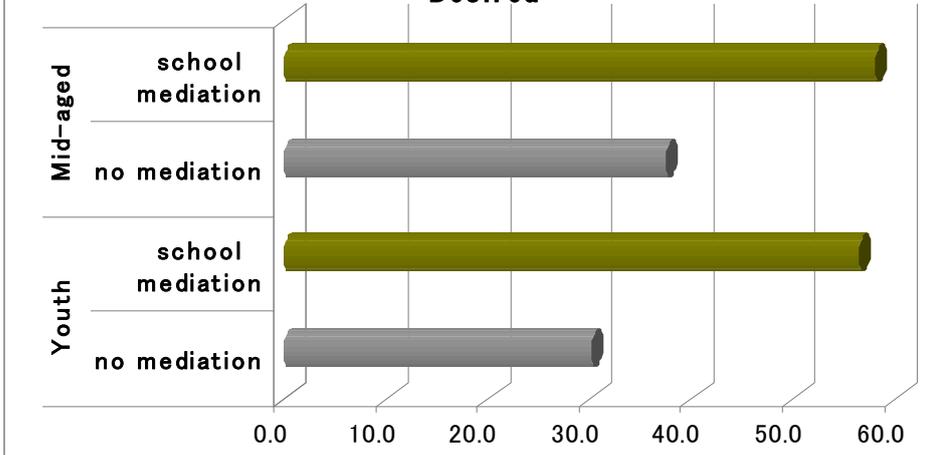
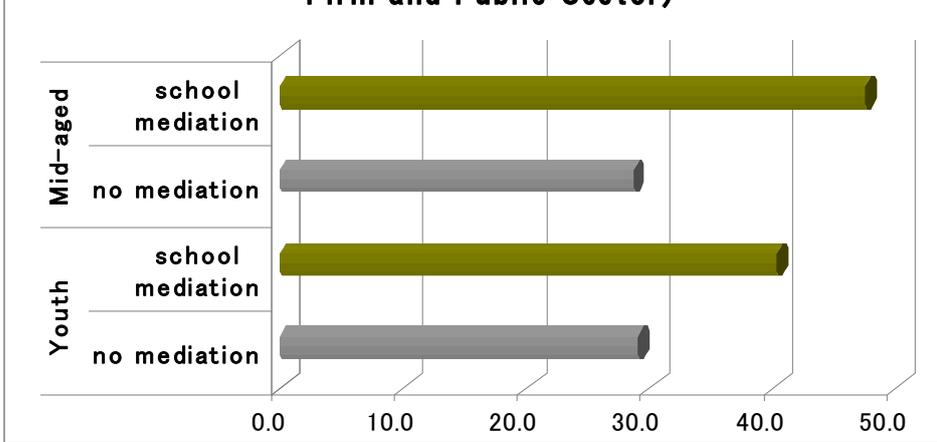


Figure 6. School Mediation and Firm Size (Proportion of Students who Work in Large Firm and Public Sector)



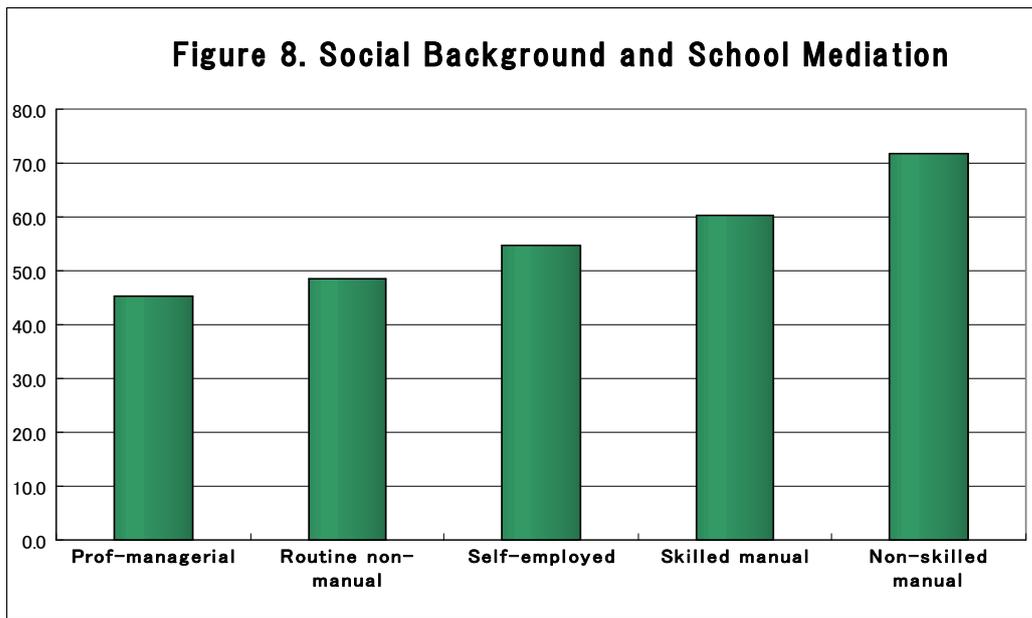
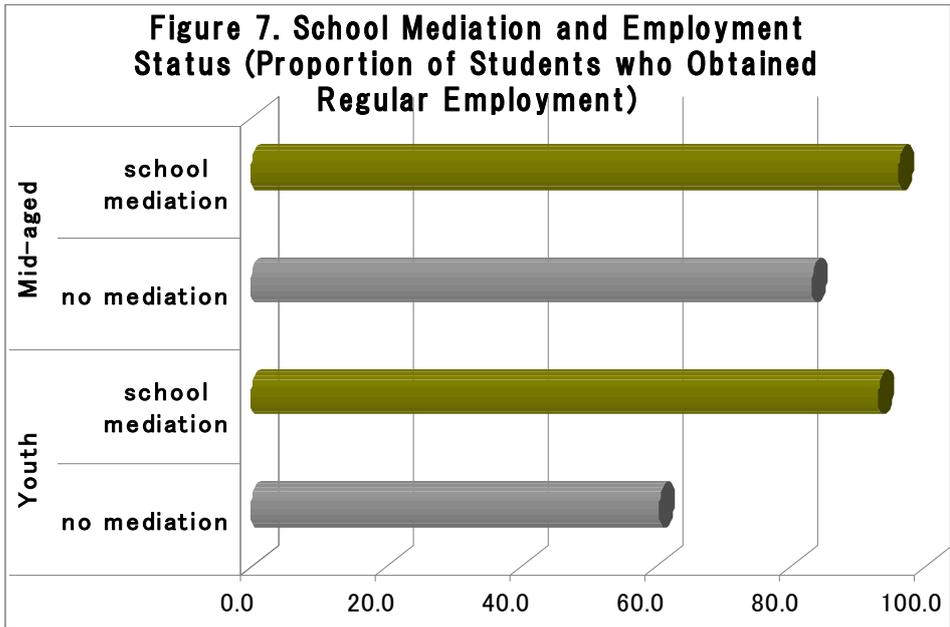
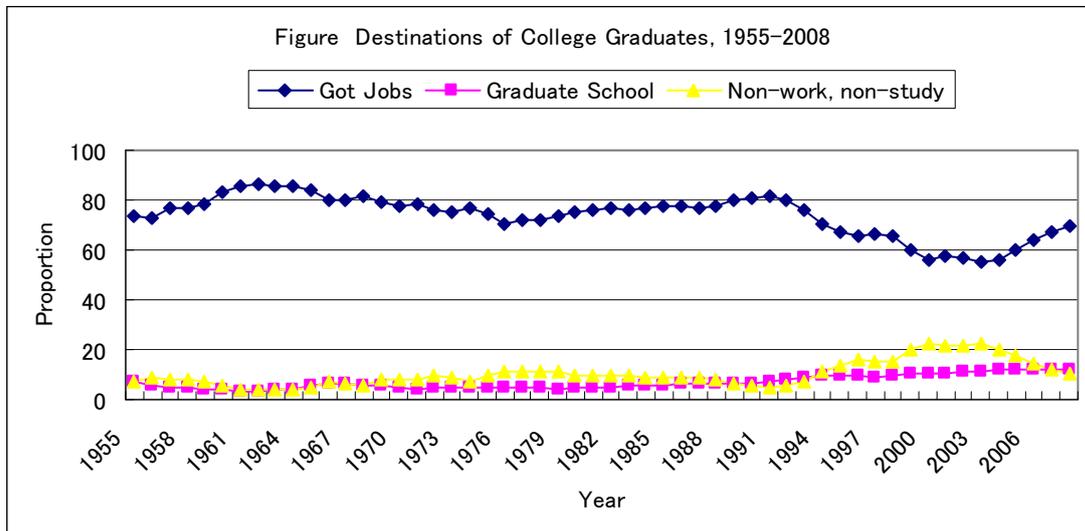
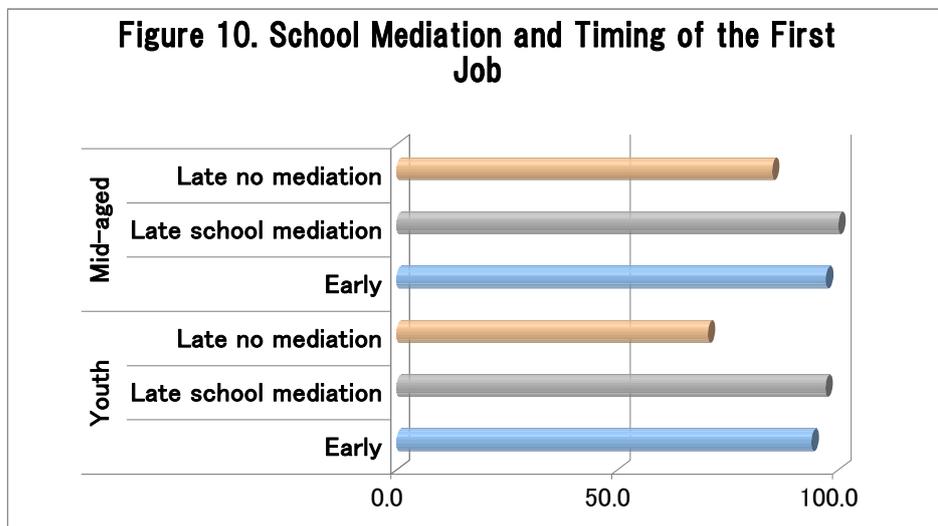


Figure 9.



Source: Ministry of Education, Gakko Kihon Chosa (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, various years)



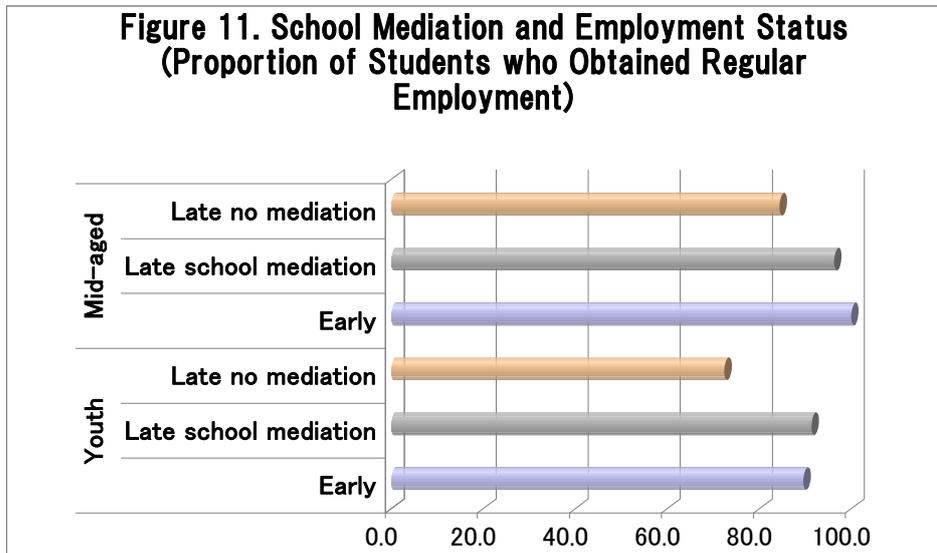
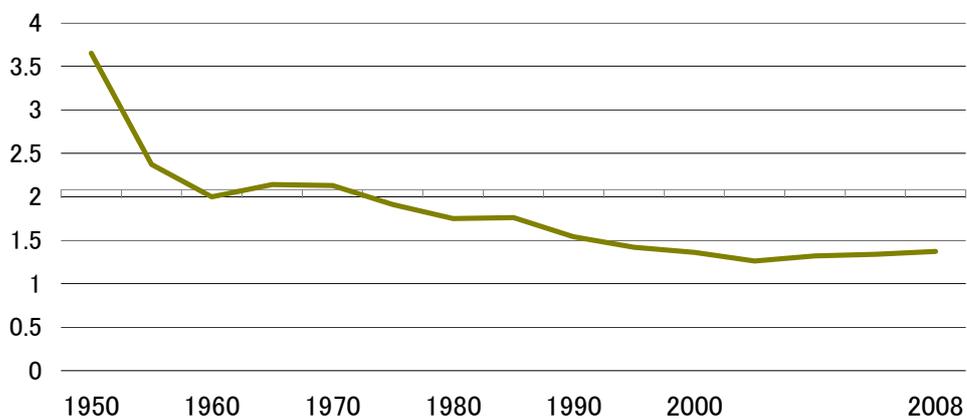


Figure 12. Trend in Total Fertility Rate in Japan since 1950



Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (ed.), Population Statistics 2010 (Tokyo: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2010)

Figure 13. Proportion of People Who Were Never-Married for Men

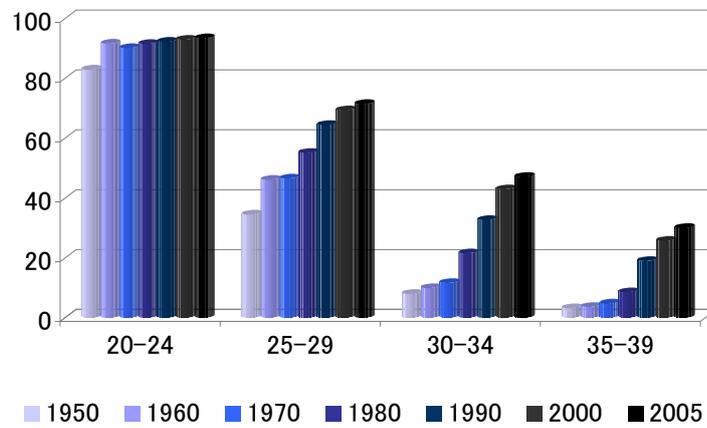
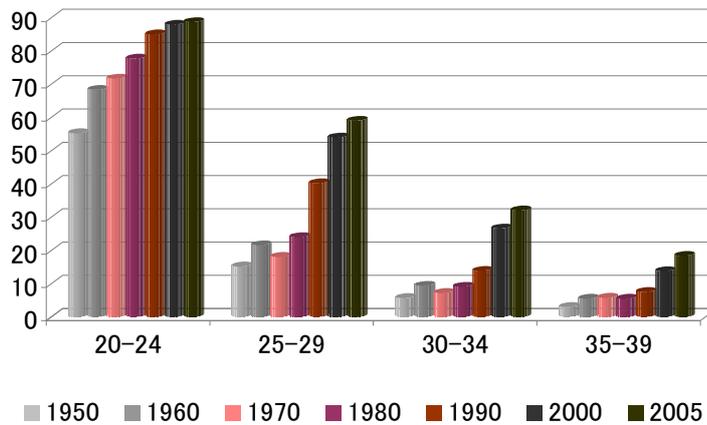


Figure 13. Proportion of People Who Were Never-Married, Women



Source: Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (ed.)
 Kokusei Chosa (Population Censuses) (Tokyo: Statistics Bureau, various years)

Figure 14. Proportion of People who are Engaged in Activities to Find a Partner

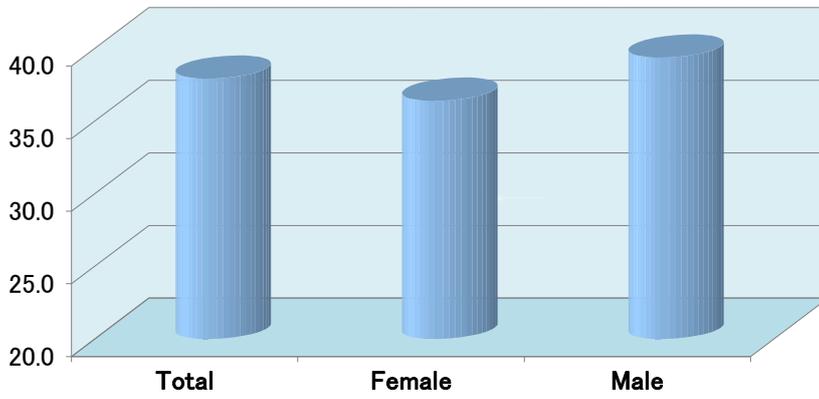


Figure 15. Proportion of People who are Engaged in Activities to Find a Partner by Age Group and Gender

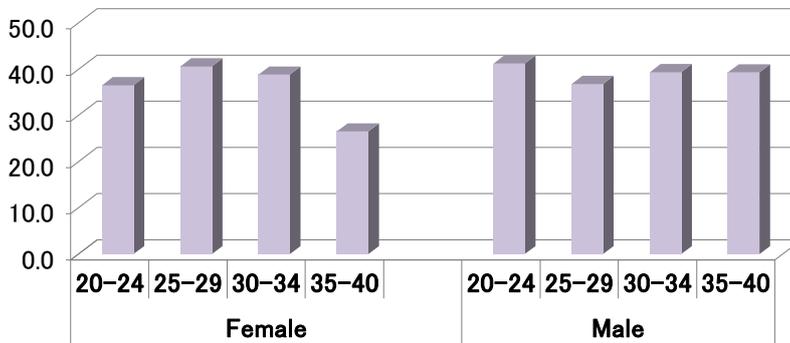


Figure 16. Distribution of Various Activities to Find a Partner by Gender (%)

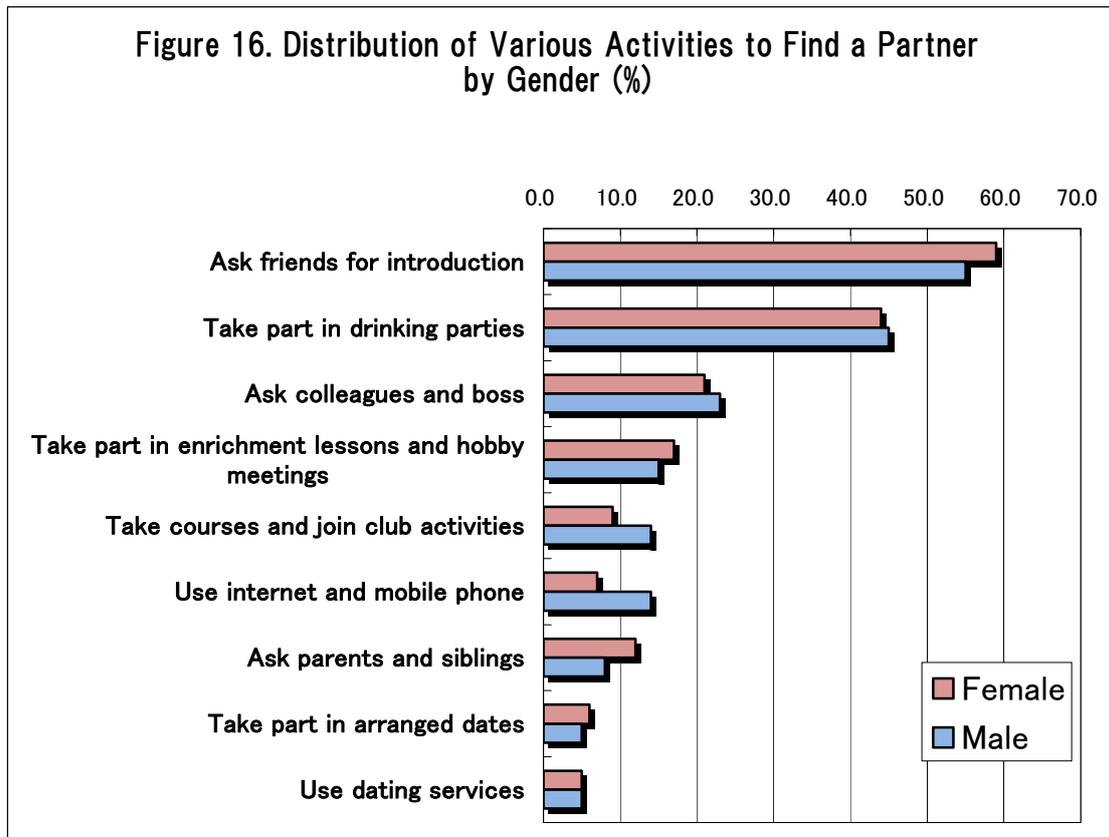


Figure 17. Proportion of People who are Engaged in Activities to Find a Partner by Income and Gender

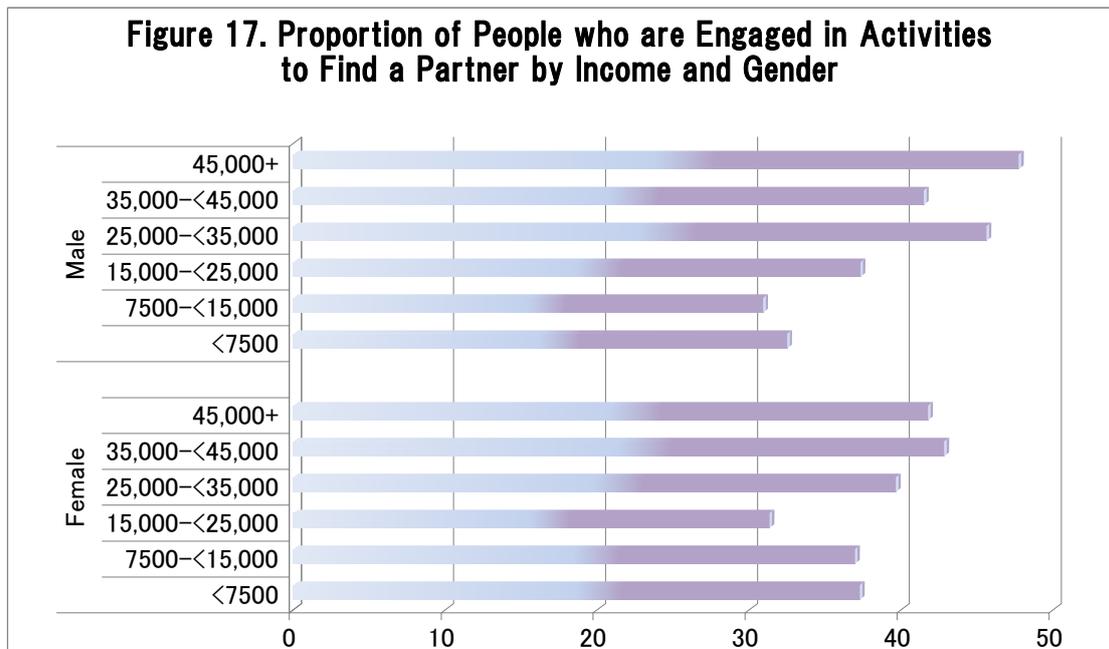


Figure 18. Proportion of Non-married People who are Engaged in Activities to Find a Partner by Employment and Gender

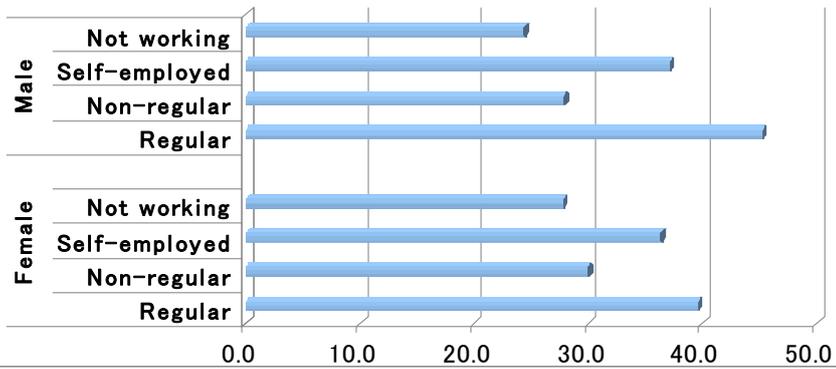


Figure 19. The Effect of Active Search on the Odds of Finding a Partner, Before and After Control for Other Relevant Factors

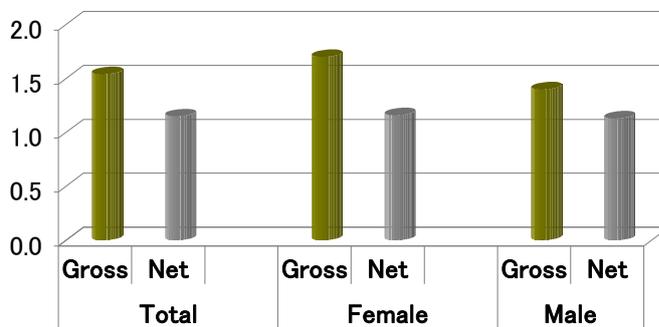


Figure 20. Proportion of People who Got Married from Wave I to Wave II by the First Employment Status by Gender

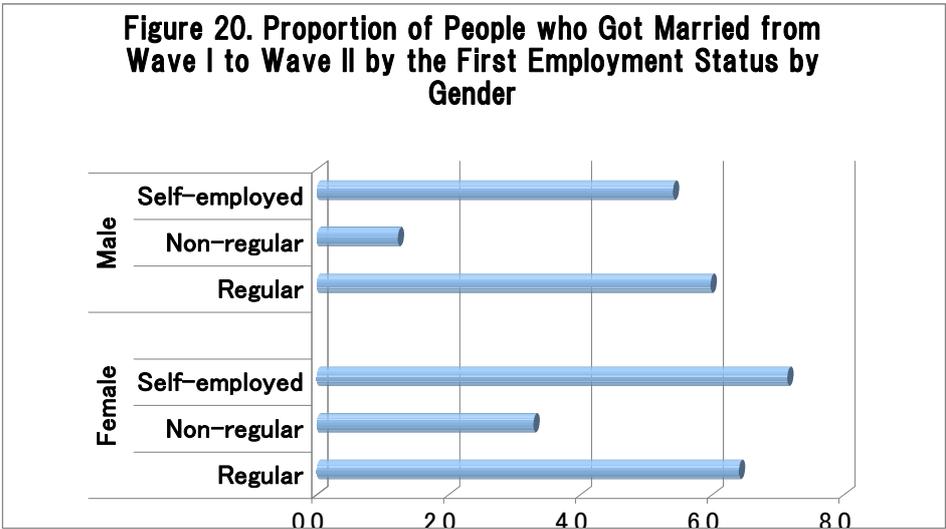
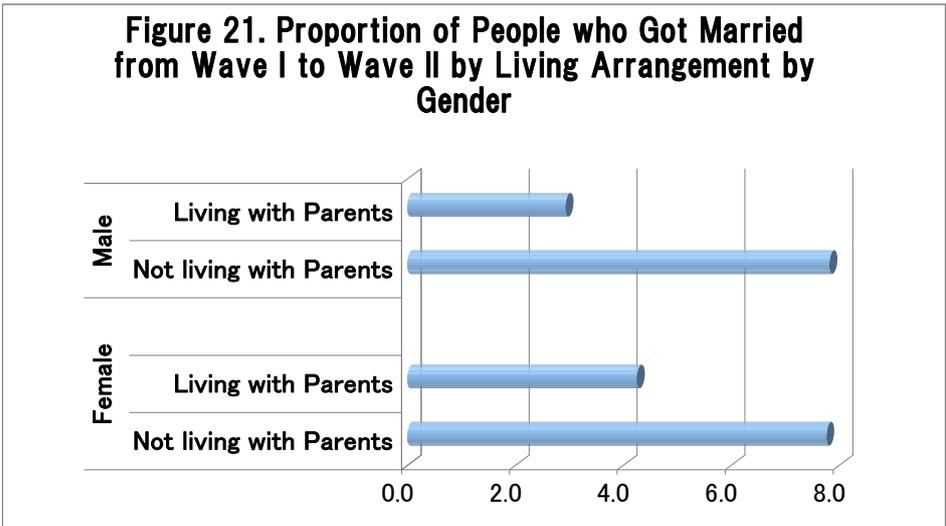


Figure 21. Proportion of People who Got Married from Wave I to Wave II by Living Arrangement by Gender



東京大学社会科学研究所パネル調査プロジェクトについて

労働市場の構造変動、急激な少子高齢化、グローバル化の進展などにもない、日本社会における就業、結婚、家族、教育、意識、ライフスタイルのあり方は大きく変化を遂げようとしている。これからの日本社会がどのような方向に進むのかを考える上で、現在生じている変化がどのような原因によるものなのか、あるいはどこが変化してどこが変化していないのかを明確にすることはきわめて重要である。

本プロジェクトは、こうした問題をパネル調査の手法を用いることによって、実証的に解明することを研究課題とするものである。このため社会科学研究所では、若年パネル調査、壮年パネル調査、高卒パネル調査の3つのパネル調査を実施している。

本プロジェクトの推進にあたり、以下の資金提供を受けた。記して感謝したい。

文部科学省・独立行政法人日本学術振興会科学研究費補助金
基盤研究 S：2006 年度～2009 年度、2010 年度～2014 年度

厚生労働科学研究費補助金
政策科学推進研究：2004 年度～2006 年度

奨学寄付金
株式会社アウトソーシング（代表取締役社長・土井春彦、本社・静岡市）：2006 年度～2008 年度

東京大学社会科学研究所パネル調査プロジェクト ディスカッションペーパーシリーズについて

東京大学社会科学研究所パネル調査プロジェクトディスカッションペーパーシリーズは、東京大学社会科学研究所におけるパネル調査プロジェクト関連の研究成果を、速報性を重視し暫定的にまとめたものである。

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