

# Current Sociology

<http://csi.sagepub.com/>

---

## The Employment Discontinuity of Married Women in Taiwan : Job Status, Ethnic Background and Motherhood

Chin-fen Chang

*Current Sociology* 2006 54: 209  
DOI: 10.1177/0011392106056743

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://csi.sagepub.com/content/54/2/209>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



International Sociological Association

**Additional services and information for *Current Sociology* can be found at:**

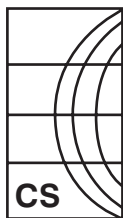
**Email Alerts:** <http://csi.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://csi.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations:** <http://csi.sagepub.com/content/54/2/209.refs.html>



# The Employment Discontinuity of Married Women in Taiwan

*Job Status, Ethnic Background and Motherhood*

Chin-fen Chang

*Academia Sinica, Taiwan*

**abstract:** This article studies the determination of married women's employment discontinuity in Taiwan. Many studies have demonstrated that a high proportion of married women leave their jobs because of marriage, pregnancy, or childbirth (MPB). This article suggests the concept of labour market segmentation be brought back into the study of women's employment stability. Using nationwide sampling data from the 2001 Taiwan Social Change Survey, the article analyses how job status and sociocultural factors affect women's various decisions to quit their job. By using multinomial logistic analysis of over 900 married women, the author discovers that job status of both wives and husbands, husbands' ethnic background and gender-role attitudes have significant impacts on women's reasons to quit. Labour market segmentation by gender significantly affects the employment stability of married women. The results indicate a complex decision-making process when married women struggle to hold onto their jobs in this East Asian society.

**keywords:** ethnicity ♦ labour markets ♦ motherhood ♦ quitting one's job ♦ Taiwan

## Introduction

Ostensibly, why many married women leave their jobs is an old and well-researched question. Most of them withdraw from the labour market upon getting married, getting pregnant or giving birth (MPB) (Felmlee, 1995; Chien and Hsueh, 1996). They very often leave their jobs because of the conflict between their roles as housewives or mothers and full-time employees. Some of them indicate the lack of childcare centres as their reason for quitting, while others make the decision to bring up their children themselves. However, MPB alone cannot explain all the reasons why married women give up their jobs. Work-related reasons, including discriminatory practices against working mothers in the workplace, low

---

Current Sociology ♦ March 2006 ♦ Vol 54(2): 209–228  
SAGE (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi)  
DOI: 10.1177/0011392106056743

pay or being forced to resign by superiors, have received little attention in studies on the employment discontinuity of married women. Our understanding of this phenomenon is therefore incomplete, to say the least.

Economists have long been concerned with the impact of women's employment status on family income. The opportunity costs of giving up the current job remain a rational concern for the married women and their families. According to new home economics, women with high reservation wages, such as a high educational level or good income, should be less likely to give up their jobs (Lee and Hirata, 2001). However, high earnings may also represent the ability to afford better childcare. Previous studies also find that there is less likelihood of those working in a profession disrupting their career (e.g. Chien and Hsueh, 1996). These findings indicate that being employed in secondary jobs, that is, low pay and lower status, has an adverse effect on the employment stability of married women (Chang, 1995). Married women particularly experience unfriendly or discriminatory treatment because of the stereotype that they are less committed to their jobs than married men. The impact of job status on the employment of married women is real and cannot be ignored in the discourse.

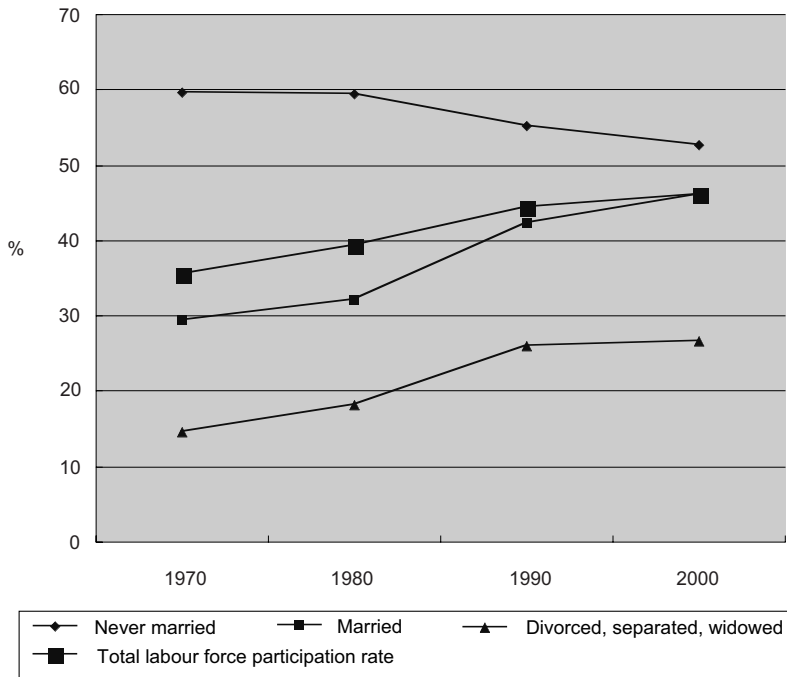
In some instances, sociocultural background also plays an important role in the decision to give up one's job. Families adhering to traditional gender- or mother-role ideology would want women to stay at home after marriage or giving birth. Some mothers may wish to take care of their children by themselves either due to a sense of maternal responsibility or family pressure. Gender-role attitudes or ethnic background may function independently of the occupational status of the wives or their husbands.

To reveal the complexity of the employment instability of married women, this article examines the various explanations behind the decision taken to leave one's job. Taiwan serves as a good case study to explore the determinants behind women's decisions to quit. It has been shown that many married women do give up their jobs upon MPB and a large percentage of them never return to the labour market (Chang, 1995). The total female labour force participation rate remains low in Taiwan in comparison with other East Asian countries. The reversed-V shape of the female labour force participation pattern by age group is a unique phenomenon of the Taiwanese labour market compared with other East Asian societies (Brinton, 2001a). As Japan, Korea and Taiwan are all heavily under the influence of Confucian doctrines, cultural factors may not provide a satisfactory explanation for the low rate of labour force participation. Unlike Japan and South Korea, Taiwan had no law prohibiting gender inequality in the workplace until 2002. Considering these similarities and differences, Taiwan's case may shed light on the low participation rate by married women in the job market.

## Employment Conditions of Married Women in Taiwan

Female labour force participation has been increasing for the past 30 years in Taiwan. As shown in Figure 1, the average rate is close to 35.5 percent during the 1970s and gradually increases to 39.3 percent in the 1980s and 44.5 percent in the 1990s. It reaches over 46 percent in the early 2000s. As expected, unmarried women form the biggest proportion of this sector of the labour force. But unexpectedly, the major source of the increase of the participation rate is due to the increase in the rate of married women. Even though one previous study argues there is relative equality between genders in the workplace in Taiwan compared with Japan or South Korea (Lee and Hirata, 2001), this does not result in a greater total labour force participation rate. The total female labour force participation rate in 2000 is 49.3 percent and 48.3 percent in Japan and South Korea respectively, which are both higher rates than that of Taiwan (46.1 percent in 2001).

Previous studies have already indicated the phenomenon of women leaving the workplace upon MPB. Getting married and/or pregnant and giving birth are cited as the most important reasons why married women



*Figure 1* Female Labour Force Participation by Marital Status, 1970–2000

give up their jobs (Chang, 1995). Yi and Chien (2001) find that 29 percent of all married Taiwanese women with premarital job experience leave the labour force at marriage or pregnancy, and that another 10 percent leave at the birth of the first child. According to a governmental survey, many married women experience difficulty regaining employment because of professional requirements, age limitations and low pay (DGBAS, 2004). Many work-related factors operate against women's employment chances both before they leave their job and when they seek re-employment.

Even with the economic boom beginning in the 1960s and the increasing importance of women's participation in the public sphere, the old ideology of dividing work into 'outside matters for men and household matters for women' generally still holds in Taiwan (Kao, 1999). Women still have to bear the major burden of the housework whether they have full-time jobs or not (Lee and Chang, 2004). According to official statistics, working women spent two hours and 58 minutes on childcare and other household chores every day in 1990, which is one hour and 19 minutes more than working men (DGBAS, 1991). Ten years later, working women aged between 25 and 34 spent two hours and 19 minutes on similar duties, which is still two hours more than working men in the same age group (DGBAS, 2001). Such discrepancy in the division of household duties between husbands and wives is observed in other countries too. For instance, a survey in Germany shows that wives with full-time jobs spend about double the time on caring for their babies than do their husbands (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 67). Family responsibilities remain a serious burden for wives or mothers regardless of their formal employment status but have limited impact on married men's employment stability.

While MPB represents an internal force pulling married women home, labour market conditions serve to push married women into leaving their jobs. Many employers still view women as less committed than men, especially when they get married or become mothers. As Lewis (1997: 16) puts it, 'women who work reduced hours or who do not work beyond 9 to 5 are defined as less productive and less committed than other staff'. Hochschild and Machung (1989) finds that some enterprises deliberately ask women to show their commitment by working longer hours. Most women cannot comply with that requirement. This unfriendly, gender-discriminatory treatment of employees means many women are unable to stay in the labour market upon MPB.

Labour market conditions are more hostile for married women in Taiwan than in western societies. In fact, many women working for private employers are not even guaranteed job protection when becoming pregnant or after giving birth in Taiwan. The Labour Standard Law, passed in 1984, specifies that female workers are entitled to eight weeks' paid maternity leave. However, it seems that only a few employers adhere

to this legislation. According to a 1998 survey conducted by the Labour Affairs Council, only 30 percent of the island's private companies comply with the law; the figure is even worse (18 percent) for firms in the service industry, which employ more than 62 percent of all Taiwanese working women. Many private companies simply lay off their female employees upon MPB – discriminatory practices generally referred to as the 'single-only' (*danshen tiaokuan*) and 'pregnancy-prohibition regulation' (*jinyun tiaokuan*) in Taiwan. While most private firms have retained this practice (which emerged during the period of Japanese colonial rule of Taiwan), a significant number have made the effort to comply with the Employment Service Law of 1992, which specifically prohibits such discrimination against married women. However, a large number of firms, such as local credit cooperatives or some small-size firms, have found numerous ways to skirt around the regulations.<sup>1</sup>

Besides, even though the Labour Standard Law stipulates equal pay for equal work, the government monitoring agencies find a low rate of enforcement in private companies. It is one of the discriminatory practices that affect many women in the secondary job sector, keeping them in low-status occupations with poor pay. According to a recent government report (DGBAS, 2003: 180–1), women earned about 66 percent of men's wage levels in manufacturing in 2001 and women account for fewer than 15 percent in the administration or management sectors. The impact of labour market segmentation by gender matters when married women try to balance working for a low wage with managing home responsibilities. Many married women leave their jobs because of poor job status, not just MPB.

## **Explanations for Making the Decision to Quit**

Based on previous literature and the Taiwanese context, I conceptualize the explanations why women leave their jobs along two dimensions: labour market conditions of both husbands and wives and sociocultural factors. Major elements of labour market conditions include earnings, working experience, occupational categories and employment sector. The sociocultural dimension includes the ethnic background of both wives and husbands and gender-role attitudes. I begin by discussing women's job status, followed by that of men and then sociocultural factors.

### **Women's Job Status**

Previous studies demonstrate how type of occupation impacts on women's career decisions in Taiwan (Chien and Hsueh, 1996). Being in a profession works against the decision to leave their jobs for married women compared with other occupations such as lower white-collar jobs

(see also Lee and Hirata, 2001). This article proposes that married women who hold jobs as professionals or managers are less likely to leave their jobs upon MPB. They would leave for reasons other than MPB instead. Also, since giving up one's job usually results in a significant decline of the family's economic standards or the loss of a large proportion of one's pension, women earning a higher salary or with longer work experience are less likely to cite MPB as the reason for quitting.

Fringe benefits varies between public and private sectors. Taiwanese women working in the governmental sectors, schools or state-owned enterprises are entitled to apply for family leave to take care of children under the age of 12. In 1990, the central government passed an executive order outlining what was called the Principle of Applying for Childcare Leave for Female Workers to be applied in the Executive Yuan (the executive branch of the ROC government) and its affiliates. According to the Principle, public employees, either male or female, can apply for family leave without pay through the first three years after their children are born. Public employees are entitled to this benefit twice during their careers. Those who work in the private sector did not have the legal right to apply for parental leave until 2002, when the Gender Employment Equality Law was passed. There is far less pressure for married women working in the public sector to quit than those working in other sectors. Their decision to give up their jobs would be less likely due to MPB.

### ***Husbands' Job Status***

In Taiwanese society, family members have a significant influence over married women's employment stability (Yi and Kao, 1986). Husbands, parents-in-law or even the wives' own parents often discourage women from staying in the labour market, especially after giving birth. To a great extent, this is due to a patriarchal ideology that emphasizes a rigid gendered division of labour between men and women. Married women are still seen as the main caretaker of the children and have the greater share of domestic duties. Marrying husbands earning a high income would put pressure on married women to quit their jobs. For men to earn a 'family wage' to keep their wives at home is regarded as a point of honour in East Asian society.

The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent 98 percent of the total number of firms and employ close to 78 percent of workers in Taiwan (Small and Medium Enterprises Administration, 2002). As raising capital is relatively easier for men because they have the advantage of intergenerational inheritance practices and of being able to get loans from financial institutions, most of the owners of SMEs are men. Their wives are usually expected to assist the family enterprises by giving up their own career. Husbands who are small business owners

or self-employed may expect their wives to leave their own jobs upon MPB.

As to the impact of husbands' occupations, findings based on the data of other countries may provide some suggestions as to Taiwan's case. For example, using Italian data, Bernardi (1999: 293) finds that married women with husbands holding high-status jobs have a higher probability of leaving the labour market. Husbands holding professional or managerial positions may be less likely to accept their wives' career and would put pressure on their wives to give up their job upon MPB.

### **Sociocultural Factors**

The pressure imposed by husband, parents or parents-in-law to conform to the role of the traditional wife or mother varies by ethnic background. Han people account for more than 95 percent of the population in Taiwan. The majority of them are Hokkien, whose ancestors mainly came from Fukien province several generations ago. Hakka people emigrated to Taiwan later than Hokkien and mainly came from Kwangtung province in China. Mainlanders are mostly those who retreated to Taiwan with the Nationalist Party after the latter's defeat by the Chinese Communists in 1947. In comparison to the other groups, mainlanders in general belong to nuclear family types and have a much smaller number of relatives. According to Lu and Hu (1997), Hokkien women are more likely to be housewives than Hakka or mainlander women. Lin (1998) finds that, controlling for generational differences, both Hakka and Hokkien women tend to have less power in the household than women from mainlander families. She argues that with a large family network, Taiwanese daughters and daughters-in-law learn the interactional patterns between their parents and their grandparents from childhood. Other things being controlled for, they would be more likely to abide by the traditional female role ideology than their mainlander counterparts. Lin and Lee (1999) further point out that the pressure for women to give up their jobs is smaller when the husband is a mainlander rather than a Hokkien or a Hakka.

The decision to stay out of the labour force is also related to gender-role attitudes. Married women or their husbands believing in the traditional gendered division of labour would more likely cite quitting the job as a result of MPB than other reasons. With regard to why married women have a propensity to be willing to follow the traditional role of mothers, Nancy Chodorow claims that motherhood is nurtured through various social agents and is the result of a gendered division of labour (cited in Tong, 1989: 153–6). Badgett and Folbre (2001: 333) also call it 'socially imposed altruism', as many women are coerced into accepting the gender-biased system of socialization. In general, the notion of



motherhood is far more prevalent than that of fatherhood or parenthood in human societies. Japanese mothers show similar attitudes and are reported as criticizing working mothers who put their children into daycare centres as irresponsible (Yu, 2001: 92). Interviews cited in some qualitative studies show that, in Taiwan, married women tend to accept the notion that women should contribute more than men in the family and that mothers should care more about the children and their needs (Chang, 2002: 112).

## **Data and Variables**

The data used in this analysis come from the Taiwan Social Change Survey conducted in 2001 (hereafter 2001 TSCS). It was conducted with random sampling at the national level, resulting in a sample of 1979 valid cases. Among them, 70.3 percent are married or cohabitating with partners during the survey. In the survey, married female respondents are specifically asked if they have ever given up their jobs and the reasons for doing so. For men, the interviewers asked the same questions about their wives. Married women who have resigned from their job are then asked why they left. The questionnaire specifies some reasons as well as provides spaces for them to fill out other reasons not shown on the list. If they have quit more than one job, the survey asks the information about the last job. The answers about the decisions to give up a job are grouped into three types: quitting because of MPB, work-related factors or other reasons. There are 794 married women used in the multivariate analysis. The article adopts multinomial logistic models to explain factors accounting for the different reasons behind married women's decisions to quit.

For this study, the 2001 TSCS provides better measures of independent variables compared to previous research. The survey specifically asks about the job status of husbands and wives when the latter gave up their jobs, including their earnings, occupational categories and employment sectors. The dataset also contains information about the length of tenure and job satisfaction when women gave up their job. These are what previous studies lack in the analyses (e.g. Chien and Hsueh, 1996). The current study is thus able to provide better information concerning the impact of job status on married women's decision to quit.

Age when quitting, education and job satisfaction also affect married women's decision to leave the job. The first two variables are treated as background in the analysis as they are not main factors to be tested in this article. And since satisfaction with the job would evidently reduce the likelihood of leaving the job because of MPB, it is also utilized as the controlling factor in the multivariate analysis.

## Statistical Findings

### Descriptive Statistics

Tables 1a–1c shows women’s employment patterns and reasons for withdrawing based on the 2001 TSCS. Table 1a contains the distribution of employment patterns for all respondents. The employment status of female respondents clearly varies according to marital status. Eighty percent of those who have never married engage in the labour market, but just under 56 percent of married women are employed, and for the ‘divorced, separated, and widowed’ group, the percentage employed is even lower (46.6 percent). The pattern of female labour force participation across marital status seems to be consistent with the results in Figure 1. As to the male sample, the percentage of employment among the never married group is above 71 percent. The employment rate is over 90 percent for the other two marital categories. Apparently, marital status does not make much difference to employment status among men, as it does in the women’s case.

The results in Table 1b show the employment status of married women only. The sample of married women includes both female respondents and the wives of male respondents. About 42 percent of the married

**Table 1a** *Labour Force Participation of Women and Men (2001)*

	Total (%)	Women (%)			Men (%)		
		Never married	Married	Divorced, separated, widowed	Never married	Married	Divorced, separated, widowed
Employed	1455 (73.8)	118 (79.7)	372 (55.7)	76 (46.6)	147 (71.4)	678 (94.3)	64 (91.4)
Out of the labour force	518 (26.3)	30 (20.3)	295 (44.2)	87 (53.4)	59 (28.6)	41 (5.7)	6 (8.6)
Number of respondents	1973	148	667	163	206	719	70

**Table 1b** *Employment Stability of Married Women and Wives of Male Respondents (2001)*

	Frequency (N)	%
Withdrew from formal labour markets once	362	26.2
Withdrew more than once	437	31.6
Never withdrew	584	42.2
Total number of cases	1383	100.0

**Table 1c** Frequency Distribution of Major Causes of Withdrawing from the Labour Market (2001)

	Frequency	%
Getting married	214	27.0
Work-related factors	199	25.1
Getting pregnant	176	22.2
None-specific reasons	136	17.1
Take care of family members	36	4.5
Expectations of husbands or family members	33	4.2
Total number of cases	794	100.0

*Note:* Of the 799 married women who reported having ever left their jobs, from Table 1b five did not give any specific reasons for their resignation.

women have never quit their jobs. Over 26 percent have left once and more than 32 percent have left the labour market twice or more. Thus, close to 60 percent of married women experience employment discontinuity in their career. The next question is why they leave.

Table 1c shows the frequency distribution of the reasons why married women quit their jobs. Close to 27 percent of them withdraw from the labour market after getting married, and about 22 percent do so due to pregnancy or childbirth. These two reasons together constitute about 49 percent of the respondents. The figures seem to be higher than those in Yi and Chien's (2001) study cited earlier. However, it might be due to the inclusion in their analysis of only the women who quit after the first birth. Married women may leave because of having second or more children later. The second most frequently chosen reason in Table 1c is work-related factors (25 percent). Other reasons for quitting the job comprise taking care of other family members and family's expectations. These results support the arguments made earlier that MPB should not be treated as the only reason why married women leave their jobs.

Table 2 lists descriptive statistics of the independent variables used in the multinomial logistic analyses by grouping them into three types of reasons to quit. Those who give up the job because of MPB are mostly in their thirties or forties, while those who leave for work-related reasons are either in their twenties or fifties. Differences between reasons to quit according to wives' ethnic background are not significant. Married women with junior or senior high school diplomas are more likely to quit upon MPB. Married women having work tenure of between one and 10 years are more likely to quit because of MPB. Quitting for work-related reasons is more likely to happen in the first year of the career. Higher earnings discourage married women from leaving their jobs upon MPB. However, differences among the decisions to quit are not significant

**Table 2** *Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Reasons to Quit*

Variables	Frequency by reasons to quit			Total number of cases	$\chi^2$ values	<i>p</i> -value
	MPB	Work reasons	Other reasons			
<i>Wife's age<sup>a</sup></i>						
20–29	32.8	41.6	25.6	125	39.1	.000
30–39	48.8	25.4	25.7	346		
40–49	48.2	24.3	27.5	284		
50–59	31.6	34.7	33.7	95		
60–69	37.0	15.2	47.8	46		
70+	31.6	15.8	52.6	19		
<i>Wife's ethnicity</i>						
Hokkien	44.9	27.0	28.0	692	.87	.929
Hakka	40.7	28.7	30.6	108		
Mainlander	42.3	28.5	29.3	123		
<i>Wife's education</i>						
Primary	39.3	28.1	32.6	22	46.4	.000
Junior high	50.3	22.2	27.5	167		
Senior high	51.4	29.5	19.1	356		
College	29.6	29.6	40.8	98		
University	29.4	23.5	47.1	85		
<i>Wife's then tenure<sup>a</sup></i>						
Below 1 year	27.8	41.4	30.9	162	87.0	.000
1–5 years	50.9	25.4	23.7	531		
6–10 years	51.0	19.7	29.2	147		
11–15 years	30.6	28.6	40.8	49		
16 years or over	5.3	23.7	71.1	22		
<i>Wife's then monthly earnings<sup>a</sup></i>						
Below NT\$10,000	55.3	19.9	24.8	206	27.7	.002
NT\$10,000–19,999	42.8	29.1	28.1	306		
NT\$20,000–29,999	41.5	28.4	30.1	229		
NT\$30,000–39,999	30.4	35.9	33.7	92		
NT\$40,000–49,999	34.3	34.3	31.4	35		
NT\$50,000 or above	25.0	20.0	55.0	20		
<i>Wife's then occupation</i>						
Manager/professional	45.0	17.5	37.5	80	5.56	.235
White-collar	43.9	28.6	27.5	483		
Blue-collar	44.4	27.4	28.2	358		
<i>Wife's then employment sector</i>						
Private	35.3	25.5	39.2	803	5.92	.205
Public	45.0	27.8	27.3	77		
Other sector	39.0	24.7	36.4	51		

*continued*

Table 2 Continued

Variables	Frequency by reasons to quit			Total number of cases	$\chi^2$ values	<i>p</i> -value
	MPB	Work reasons	Other reasons			
Husband's ethnicity						
Hokkien	51.7	23.7	24.7	592	7.20	.125
Hakka	39.3	29.8	31.0	84		
Mainlander	42.0	28.6	29.4	119		
Husband's education						
Primary	38.7	31.8	29.5	173	18.5	.018
Junior high	51.7	20.1	28.2	143		
Senior high	53.2	25.1	21.7	299		
College	51.9	24.0	24.0	104		
University	39.8	24.8	35.4	113		
Husband's then monthly earnings <sup>a</sup>						
Below NT\$10000	54.0	17.7	28.3	206	9.18	.328
NT\$10,000–29,999	50.8	24.0	25.2	246		
NT\$30,000–49,999	48.0	29.1	22.9	227		
NT\$50,000–99,999	42.6	24.8	32.6	129		
NT\$100,000 or above	47.1	23.5	29.4	17		
Husband's then occupation						
Manager/professional	44.6	21.5	33.9	130	8.60	.072
White-collar	48.2	30.2	21.6	222		
Blue-collar	50.1	23.6	26.3	407		
Husband's then employment sector						
Private sector	48.9	25.1	26.0	423	.850	.932
Public sector	47.7	25.4	26.9	130		
Other sector	52.2	22.9	24.9	205		
Wife's satisfaction at then work						
Satisfied	49.3	25.3	25.4	126	47.7	.000
Unsatisfied	37.4	31.2	31.4	303		
Gender-role attitudes ('when wife has a full-time job, it will hurt family life')						
Highly agree	58.2	16.4	25.4	67	17.1	.029
Agree	52.0	24.9	23.2	406		
Disagree	40.8	29.9	29.3	311		
Highly disagree	45.4	22.7	31.8	22		
Don't know	42.6	19.2	38.3	47		

<sup>a</sup> Used as continuous variables in the multivariate analysis.

among occupations or employment sectors. As to husbands' attributes, even though married women with husbands coming from Hokkien backgrounds tend to have a higher probability of leaving their job upon MPB, ethnic differences as a whole are not statistically significant. Husband's earnings and employment sector differences do not have significant effects either. Married women with husbands possessing primary school education or working as lower white-collars tend to be more likely to quit for work-related reasons. Most of the married women in the survey indicate dissatisfaction with the job at the time they quit. And level of job satisfaction is positively related to quitting because of work-related reasons. Gender-role attitude is the only variable which cannot reflect husband/wife characteristics since the survey asks the respondents about their own attitudes only. The last rows in the table shows a split of the gender-role attitudes in the sample. While more than 400 respondents agree with the statement that 'when a wife has a full-time job, it will hurt family life', a slightly smaller number disagree with it. There is a positive relationship between traditional gender-role attitudes and leaving the job upon MPB.

### **Multivariate Analyses**

The results of multinomial logistic analyses are listed in Table 3.<sup>2</sup> The dependent variable contains three categories and MPB is used as the reference group. Model A includes variables representing the labour market outcomes of married women's previous job, age and educational background. Educational levels, earnings, tenure and occupation all have significant effects. Women with junior or senior high school degrees are less likely to quit upon MPB compared with other reasons. Earning a higher salary discourages married women from giving up the job as a result of MPB.

However, as to the effects of tenure, on the one hand the study finds that wives with longer work experience in their job are less likely to quit because of job status or unsuitable workplace and more likely to quit due to MPB. But on the other hand, married women with longer tenure are more likely to leave for other reasons than they are for MPB. According to the results in Table 1c, the category of other reasons includes personal health and taking care of family members. Thus putting these two results together, those married women with longer tenure are most likely to quit because of MPB and least likely because of work-related factors. This may suggest that long tenure means an acceptance of job status and only MPB would make these married women quit their job.

As to the impact of occupation, married women working in white- or blue-collar jobs are more likely to leave for work-related reasons than the professionals, which differs from the previous hypothesis. It might be due

**Table 3** Multinomial Logistic Analyses of Reasons to Quit Job by Married Women in Taiwan (Having Ever Quit upon Marriage, Pregnancy, or Giving Birth [MPB] = 0)

Variables	Model A: Wives' job status		Model B: + Husbands' job status		Model C: + Sociocultural factors	
	Quit due to work reasons	Quit due to other reasons	Quit due to work reasons	Quit due to other reasons	Quit due to work reasons	Quit due to other reasons
Respondent (wife = 1)	-.09 (.19)	.22 (.19)	-.12 (.20)	.18 (.21)	-.12 (.21)	.27 (.22)
Wife's age	.03 (.39)	.18 (.40)	.13 (.44)	.51 (.46)	.05 (.45)	.44 (.48)
Age <sup>2</sup>	.01 (.06)	.03 (.06)	.01 (.07)	.01 (.07)	.03 (.08)	.02 (.07)
Education (university = 0)						
Primary	.18 (.38)	-.57 (.37)	.10 (.48)	-.29 (.47)	-.07 (.51)	-.26 (.50)
Junior high	-.46 (.37)	-.58 (.34) <sup>+</sup>	-.36 (.43)	-.31 (.42)	-.47 (.46)	-.35 (.44)
Senior high	-.10 (.28)	-1.13 (.28) <sup>***</sup>	-.14 (.33)	-.83 (.34) <sup>*</sup>	-.16 (.34)	-.80 (.35) <sup>*</sup>
Monthly earnings	1.16 (.30) <sup>***</sup>	.76 (.30) <sup>*</sup>	1.16 (.33) <sup>**</sup>	.84 (.33) <sup>*</sup>	1.22 (.35) <sup>***</sup>	.81 (.34) <sup>*</sup>
Prior job tenure	-.26 (.11) <sup>*</sup>	.20 (.10) <sup>+</sup>	-.20 (.12)	.20 (.11) <sup>+</sup>	-.16 (.13)	.23 (.11) <sup>+</sup>
Prior job sector (public = 0)						
Others	-.51 (.59)	.49 (.53)	-.84 (.68)	.39 (.57)	-.78 (.71)	.25 (.60)
Private	-.23 (.36)	.24 (.37)	-.15 (.40)	.16 (.40)	.07 (.45)	.22 (.43)
Prior occupation (professional = 0)						
White-collar	.75 (.40) <sup>+</sup>	.01 (.35)	1.06 (.46) <sup>*</sup>	.05 (.37)	.99 (.47) <sup>*</sup>	-.03 (.39)
Blue-collar	.93 (.45) <sup>*</sup>	.15 (.41)	1.21 (.52) <sup>*</sup>	.16 (.44)	1.21 (.54) <sup>*</sup>	.15 (.46)
Husband's education (university = 0)						
Primary			.74 (.42) <sup>+</sup>	.43 (.44)	.71 (.45) <sup>+</sup>	.38 (.46)
Junior			.18 (.39)	.55 (.40)	.17 (.42)	.53 (.42)
Senior			.07 (.30)	.35 (.32)	.08 (.32)	.27 (.34)

*continued*

Table 3 Continued

Variables	Model A: Wives' job status		Model B: + Husbands' job status		Model C: + Sociocultural factors	
	Quit due to work reasons	Quit due to other reasons	Quit due to work reasons	Quit due to other reasons	Quit due to work reasons	Quit due to other reasons
Husband's then occupation (professional = 0)						
White-collar			.31 (.31)	-.22 (.31)	.26 (.32)	-.11 (.32)
Blue-collar			-.23 (.34)	-.42 (.32)	-.22 (.35)	-.36 (.34)
Husband's then job sector (others = 0)						
Public sector						
Family business			-.27 (.26)	-.10 (.25)	-.24 (.27)	-.21 (.27)
Husband's then earnings			.04 (.05)	.08 (.04) <sup>+</sup>	.01 (.05)	.08 (.05) <sup>+</sup>
Husband's ethnicity (Hokkien = 0)						
Mainlander					.40 (.32)	-.03 (.35)
Hakka					.49 (.40)	.87 (.41) <sup>+</sup>
Wives' ethnicity (Hokkien = 0)						
Mainlander					.11 (.33)	.10 (.34)
Hakka					-.15 (.37)	-.37 (.40)
Liberal gender-role attitude					.37 (.22) <sup>*</sup>	.47 (.22)
Satisfaction with work (satisfied = 0)						
Unsatisfied				1.29 (.28) <sup>***</sup>	.70 (.32) <sup>*</sup>	
Constant	-1.85 <sup>**</sup>	-2.36 <sup>**</sup>	-2.90 <sup>*</sup>	-3.73 <sup>***</sup>	-3.24	-4.08 <sup>**</sup>
Log likelihood		-731.0		-636.6	-589.0	
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>		0.061		0.080	0.109	
		743		666	665	

<sup>+</sup>*p* < .10, <sup>\*</sup>*p* < .05, <sup>\*\*</sup>*p* < .01, <sup>\*\*\*</sup>*p* < .001.



to the poorer working conditions that the lower white-collar workers have to face in comparison to professional or managerial employees.

In Model B, the analysis brings husband's socioeconomic characteristics, including educational achievements, earnings, employment sector and occupation, into the equation. Most of the results of Model A remain the same except that the differences between wives with junior high or university degree become non-significant, and tenure does not affect decisions between work-related reasons and MPB any more. Husband's education and earnings have significant effects in Model B. Married women with husbands earning better salaries tend to quit because of reasons other than MPB. This effect is similar to what the study finds for wives' earnings. However, in contrary to the hypothesis, married women with husbands of primary school education are more likely to leave their job for work-related reasons than because of MPB. The explanation might be that husbands in a relatively inferior socioeconomic status would make it difficult for wives to quit their current job simply because of MPB.

The final model adds sociocultural variables: gender-role attitudes and the ethnic backgrounds of the couple. The effects found in Model B generally remain stable after the new inclusions in Model C. The results show that married women with husbands coming from a Hakka family are more likely to quit their job for reasons other than MPB compared to those of a Hokkien background. Respondents (men or women) with liberal gender-role attitudes are less likely to quit because of MPB. As job satisfaction is used as the controlling variable, the findings show that married women who are satisfied with their job are more likely to quit because of MPB. It is a predictable result.

## **Discussion**

Previous studies have shown marriage or childbirth to be the main factors behind a woman's retreat from the formal labour market (e.g. Brinton, 2001b). In many cases, women's leaving their job equates with labour force withdrawal per se. By concentrating on the MPB factors, we may have overlooked the negative impacts of workplace conditions on women's decision to quit. This article takes the analysis of married women who have left their job a step further by studying the background to their various decisions to leave. Getting married or giving birth are important life events for many women. However, not all women leave their former jobs because of MPB. Since for many married women, quitting the job is equal to quitting the labour market (Barnes and Jones, 1974), by analysing the data about the decisions to quit and the explanations given by the married women, the current study also reveals why married women withdraw from the labour force altogether.

Results of the multinomial logistic analysis show earnings of married women to have consistent effects in all comparisons among the three reasons for quitting. High earnings make MPB the least likely reason to quit for married women. Women who have been working in professional jobs are more likely to quit because of MPB than for work-related reasons. Married women with senior high school education are more likely to leave a job because of MPB (in comparison to having a university degree), but women whose husband earns a higher income or comes from a Hakka family are less likely to give up their job because of MPB. Job status and sociocultural background, including ethnicity and attitudes towards motherhood, have important effects on the various decisions made by women to give up their job.

As the study focuses on the explanations behind giving up one's job for MPB or for other reasons, more discussion is needed in this respect. Both descriptive and multivariate analyses show that MPB does not always account for married women's decision to resign. Work-related and other reasons cannot be ignored. Specifically, higher earnings seem to provide married women with a shield against being forced to give their job up upon MPB, which appears consistent with the opportunity cost projection of new home economics theory, as Lee and Hirata (2001) also find in their paper. However, higher earnings may also reflect better bargaining power for women, in the family or on the labour market. As some women indicate in the survey that they resigned because they couldn't earn enough to pay for childcare, better salaries would certainly help them to stay at work. Why professional or managerial women are more likely to leave their jobs due to MPB than for a work-related reason can be interpreted as indicating that women in blue- or lower white-collar jobs are more likely to experience bad treatment at work than those in higher white-collar jobs. Thus, they are more likely to resign for work-related causes.

The results of earnings and occupation clearly show the importance of job status in the determination process. As this article argued earlier, women still earn much less than men and are more likely to hold lower white-collar jobs than men. Labour market gender segmentation continues to exist in Taiwan and has an impact on women's employment stability. The research findings clearly show a complex linkage in family sociology with the perspective of labour markets. The study of married women quitting their jobs does need input from the gender perspective because life events, such as getting married or giving birth, produce different results in employment stability between husbands (fathers) and wives (mothers). However, when married women are employed under friendly or even encouraging working conditions, marriage or having children do not necessarily drive them to leave the labour force. Even

though the research question is addressed to why married women leave their jobs, the answers equate with their withdrawing from the labour force *per se*. The article may also help to find how to increase the female labour force participation rate in Taiwan.

Some hypotheses are not supported by the analyses. In general, husbands' job status and wives' ethnic background have weak relationships with the reasons for quitting. Apparently, wives' job status is the major consideration and sociocultural factors function to a minor degree. That the public sector provides more stable employment opportunities is not supported either. The reason that we find non-significant effects of being employed in the public sector might be due to the sample chosen for the study. The analysis focuses on married women who have ever resigned from a job and within the sample comparatively few resignations had occurred in the public sector, so the sample is already 'biased' towards those in the private sector. As the statistics in Table 2 show, among those who have ever quitted their job only 8 percent of the sample in the analysis are employed in the public sector.

As to policy implications, to avoid making marriage or giving birth 'a woman's problem', men and their employers should take more responsibility. In 2002, the Legislative Yuan passed the Gender Employment Equality Act. The Act not only declares the promotion of equal gender rights, but also sets forth some regulations prohibiting employers from rejecting or punishing women for pregnancy, maternity leave, parental leave to care for young children or for requiring occasional flexible work schedules to take care of family matters. The Act also gives male employees the right/responsibility to apply for parental and family leave. The Act stipulates that the state adopt more measures to establish childcare centres and to encourage private employers to provide similar facilities to relieve women's childcare burden. It is worth examining how many men actually apply for parental leave to verify the effectiveness of the law. As Japan and Korea also passed similar acts earlier than Taiwan (Brinton, 2001a), a comparison between the three countries about the effects of such legislation on gender equality in the workplace will be an important task.

### **Acknowledgement**

This paper utilizes the data of 2002 Taiwan Social Change Survey, sponsored by the National Science Council. The author appreciates the comments from Chin-chun Yi, Nan Lin, and Bernhard Nauck on the earlier draft of the paper. I also thank Yin-lan Yeh and Yi-ping Chang for their help in preparing tables and the graph and for other assistance.

## Notes

1. Common practices used by employers or supervisors to force married or pregnant women to leave their jobs 'voluntarily' include assigning them physically demanding job duties (e.g. carrying heavy boxes) or offering year-by-year contracts that are not renewed if female workers get married or become pregnant.
2. To designate the sources of responses, a dummy variable, respondent, is used in the equation. If the wives are the respondents themselves in the survey, it is coded as 1. If the information about the wives comes from the husbands, then the coding is 0.

## References

- Badgett, M. V. Lee and Folbre, N. (2001) 'Assigning Care: Gender Norms and Economic Outcomes', in M. Fetherolf Loutfi (ed.) *Women, Gender and Work*, pp. 327–45. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Barnes, F. W. and Jones, E. B. (1974) 'Differences in Male and Female Quitting', *The Journal of Human Resources* 9(4): 439–51.
- Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Reinventing the Family: In Search of New Lifestyles*. London: Polity Press.
- Bernardi, F. (1999) 'Does the Husband Matter? Married Women and Employment in Italy', *European Sociological Review* 15(3): 285–300.
- Brinton, M. C. (2001a) 'Married Women's Labor in East Asian Economies', in M. C. Brinton (ed.) *Women's Working Lives in East Asia*, pp. 1–37. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Brinton, M. C. (ed.) (2001b) *Women's Working Lives in East Asia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chang, C.-F. (1995) 'A Comparison of Employment and Wage Determination between Full-Time Working Men and Women in Taiwan', in H.-H. N. Chen, Y.-L. Liu and M.-O. Hsieh (eds) *The Proceeding of Families, Human Resources and Social Development*, pp. 195–216. Taipei: Department of Sociology, National Chengchi University.
- Chang, C.-F. (2002) 'Bringing the Culture Back In: The Gendered Processes within Institutions and Structures in Taiwan Labor Markets', *Taiwanese Journal of Sociology* 29: 97–125.
- Chien, W.-Y. and Hsueh, C.-T. (1996) 'The Employment of Married Women in Taiwan: Its Patterns and Causes', *Journal of Population Studies* 17: 113–34.
- DGBAS (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan) (1991) *Report on the Manpower Utilization Survey, Taiwan Area*. Taipei: DGBAS.
- DGBAS (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan) (2001) *Report on the Manpower Utilization Survey, Taiwan Area*. Taipei: DGBAS.
- DGBAS (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan) (2003) *Research on International Comparisons of Gender Statistics and Women Living Status in Taiwan*. Taipei: DGBAS.
- DGBAS (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan) (2004) at: [www.dgbas.gov.tw/census~n/four/92ladyb.doc](http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/census~n/four/92ladyb.doc)

- Felmlee, D. H. (1995) 'Causes and Consequences of Women's Employment Discontinuity, 1967-1973', *Work and Occupations* 22(2): 167-87.
- Hochschild, A. and Machung, A. (1989) *The Second Shift*. New York: Avon Books.
- Kao, C.-S. (1999) *Owners' Wives: The 'Economic Activity' and Social Significance of Taiwanese Medium- to Small- Sized Enterprises*. Taipei: Lianjing (in Chinese).
- Lee, Y.-H. and Chang, C.-C. (2004) 'Conflicts between Gender Consciousness and Husbands' Participation in the Household Work: Changes and Explanations', unpublished manuscript.
- Lee, Y.-J. and Hirata, S. (2001) 'Women, Work, and Marriage in Three East Asian Labor Markets: The Cases of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea', in M. C. Brinton (ed.) *Women's Working Lives in East Asia*, pp. 96-124. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lewis, S. (1997) ' "Family Friendly" Employment Policies: A Route to Changing Organizational Culture or Playing about at the Margins?', *Gender, Work and Organization* 4(1): 13-23.
- Lin, H. (1998) 'Gender Culture as Economic Determinant: Household Resource Allocation Strategies among Ethnic Groups in Taiwan', *Journal of Social Sciences and Philosophy* 10(4): 611-59.
- Lin, H. and Lee, H.-C. (1999) 'The Crossroads of Ethnicity and Gender: Inter-generational Household Resource Allocation Strategies in Taiwan', *Journal of Social Sciences and Philosophy* 11(4): 475-528 (in Chinese).
- Lu, H.-H. and Hu, M.-C. (1997) ' Complementarity of Work and Fertility and its Effects on Mid-Life Income and Employment among Mothers in Taiwan', in L.-Y. Chang, Y.-H. Lu and F.-C. Wang (eds) *Taiwanese Society in 1990s*, pp. 41-86. Taipei: Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica (in Chinese).
- Small and Medium Enterprises Administration (2002) *White Paper on Small and Medium Enterprises in Taiwan*. Taipei: Ministry of Economic Affairs
- Tong, R. (1989) *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Boulder: CO: Westview Press.
- Yi, C.-C. and Chien, W.-Y. (2001) 'The Continual Employment Patterns of Married Women in Taiwan: A Compromise between Family and Work', *Taiwan Sociology* 1: 149-82 (in Chinese).
- Yi, C.-C. and Kao, S.-Q. (1986) 'Sex-Role Attitudes on Married Women's Employment', *Institute of the Three Principles of the People*, No. 70. Taipei: Academia Sinica (in Chinese).
- Yu, W.-H. (2001) 'Family Demands, Gender Attitudes, and Married Women's Labor Force Participation: Comparing Japan and Taiwan', in M. C. Brinton (ed.) *Women's Working Lives in East Asia*, pp. 70-95. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

*Chin-fen Chang* is a research fellow at the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan. Her current research interests and publications focus on gender and labour markets, work and family and privatization.

**Address:** Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, 128 Academic Road, Nankang (115), Taipei, Taiwan, ROC. [email: chinfen@gate.sinica.edu.tw]