How Family Works?:
Childcare Support Networks in Taiwan and Japan

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（PP1）I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to talk to you today. I would like to consider the relationship between family and work.

The significant rise of female's labor force participation in recent decades has become a focal topic worldwide. The linkage between family and employment has come to our attention, especially, in East and Southeast Asia, which are confronting the aging society with fewer children.

Taiwanese and Japanese welfare regimes are said to be classified under a so-called "familism" regime[1] .

（PP2）Please take a look at my file No.2. This chart indicates a labor force participation rate of the contemporary female by age group. As you can see, there are three types of women's life-course[2] .

Taiwanese women's participation rate has one peak and is decreasing with age. Japanese one represents a M-shaped pattern, which has two peaks, one in the early twenties and the other in the late forties.

The next chart No.3 proves that the Taiwanese women's participation rate was also in a M shaped pattern in 1980[3] . There has been a rapid expansion of education for women in the last two decades in Taiwan. The 2004 survey shows that 70% of highly educated women have chosen the life-style of dual-earner households[4] . This shift from 1980 to 2000 comes from the participation of the well educated marriage women.

But about 70% of women in Japan quit their jobs when they are going to have a baby. They re-enter the labor market after they complete child-rearing stage, but most of them are employed as

part-time workers.

Let's take a look at some key factors which would make these considerable differences between Taiwan and Japan?

(PP4) Please look at the next chart No. 4, which is based upon the recent study on support networks for childcare in Asian societies[5] . The important point here is a multi-layered support pattern of Taiwan. In Japan, grandparents are unavailable to offer care not only because they live far apart from their grandchildren, but also because they are more likely to continue working. The Japanese kin network is poorer than the Taiwanese one.

(PP5) Please take a look at the slide No.5. In 1992, the Japanese government passed the law concerning the welfare of workers who take care of children or other family members. This law permits childcare leave for either a male or a female partner when his/her child is less than one year old. According to the survey in 2007, only 1.5% of fathers take the childcare leave, in contrast to more than 70 % of women when they are going to have a child[6] . There is a traditional Japanese proverb: the soul of the 3-year-old lasts till 100. What children learn for their first three years effectively remains to the rest of their lives. Consequently, the Japanese prefer keeping in touch with their children especially when they are young. Although there are many women who have voluntarily chosen to stay at home and raise their children, the responsibility for nursing alone and the isolation from the society can be a big source of stress for Japanese young mothers. On the contrary, mothers who choose careers also have to struggle with fulfilling two demanding roles of a good mother and a successful career woman.

(PP6) Look at the slide No. 6. When we look at some surveys in contemporary Taiwan, the kin-network is still strong, since not only grandfather and grandmother but also uncles, aunts, and cousins are supportive for any isolated nuclear family, although

young couples do not want to live with a husband's family as much as they used to[7] . Besides these various kinship relations, the Taiwan government officially announced the importance of foreign domestic-workers in 1992. Since then, many upper- and middle- class families have depended on foreign maids as a source of keeping house and nursing. This custom has changed the sphere of domesticity into the workplace, and a role of housewives into a household manager. Multiple networks for the employed women seem very helpful to the Japanese women. However, it turned out that many of the Taiwanese females depending on the domestic workers feel constant anxiety about playing the three different roles: a woman, a wife, and a mother. They are now confronting an identity crisis[8] .

There are several other minor differences concerning Asian families. The efforts made by female to reconcile work with the child and family care have caused low fertility in an aging society. The equal responsibilities between women and men in childcare and household matters should be the important factor now.

(PP7)Additionally, the chart on the slide No.7 tells us that the new generation of the low fertility rate will become parents in the near future[9] . The nuclear families in Asia require a new network replacing a traditional kinship.

Today I've talked about the different childrearing patterns in terms of the roles which females are forced to play in Taiwan and Japan. (PP8)The last slide shows my question. Would you give us suggestion how to construct a new support network in Japan, since your country has a strong bond between relations? Would you also some suggestion about my views on the female's identity crisis in Taiwan?

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