

PROFESSION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PARENTAL WELL-BEING IN JAPAN AND GERMANY

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how Japanese and German mothers and fathers of young children navigate the balance between work and life through their early childrearing years, with a particular focus on how Japanese and German households adjust their employment to childcare and childrearing, taking into consideration the different labor market conditions, laws, as well as family policies. A detailed look at work conditions in each country is necessary as background information, before asking whether certain work patterns of husbands and wives have an effect on their satisfaction with different elements of their lives as well as with their overall life satisfaction.

The comparison of patterns in labor market participation of couples in Germany and Japan is of much interest, as both countries have been recognized as following the male breadwinner model of social policy in the 1990s (Daly 2000; Gottfried and O'Reiley 2002). For example, the provision of subsidized daycare had been low for infants, and the ratio of mothers staying at home to take care of the children was high in both countries. Germany and Japan both have been suffering from a long decline in fertility rate, and a strong gender division of labor at home is suspected to be one of the main causes of the decline in fertility (McDonald 2000). However, although the tax system is still following the male breadwinner model in both countries, Ferragina et al. (2014) point out that German family policy is becoming more social democratic. Japanese policy, too, is becoming more supportive of maternal employment (Nagase 2014, 2015). Public policies of both countries are offering a more generous family leave, leave allowance, as well as a larger supply of subsidized childcare. Yet the employment choices of couples not only depend on the social protection system but also on the labor market and labor practices. Nagase and Brinton (2017) point to the influence of labor practices on the strong gender division of labor within households in the case of Japan.

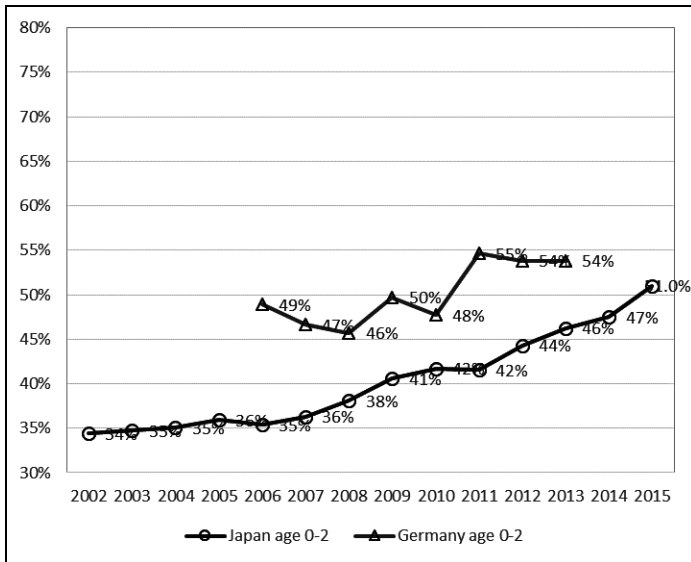
In the first part of this paper I focus on the descriptive analysis of how German and Japanese mothers and fathers modify their work patterns when children are small. The data I use comes from the Parental Well-

being Survey, conducted in Germany and Japan among 2000 mothers and fathers each from non-identical households (see Huber 2018 in this volume for more details), supplementing this throughout the paper also with findings from other surveys where applicable. I then look specifically into labor practices and the labor market structure, particularly for the case of Japan, in order to explain the employment environment Japanese parents have to operate within. In the second part of the paper, I focus on issues of employment and overall life satisfaction and compare the life satisfaction of dual-earner-couples with that of couples that follow the male breadwinner/full-time housewife-model.

WORK CHOICES OF PARENTS: COMPARING GERMANY AND JAPAN

Japan and Germany are known to place high importance on (full-time) motherhood. Since the 2000s, however, we see in both countries a rapid rise in maternal employment. Figure 1 shows the employment rate of

Figure 1: Employment rate of mothers with at least one child younger than age three, Japan and Germany

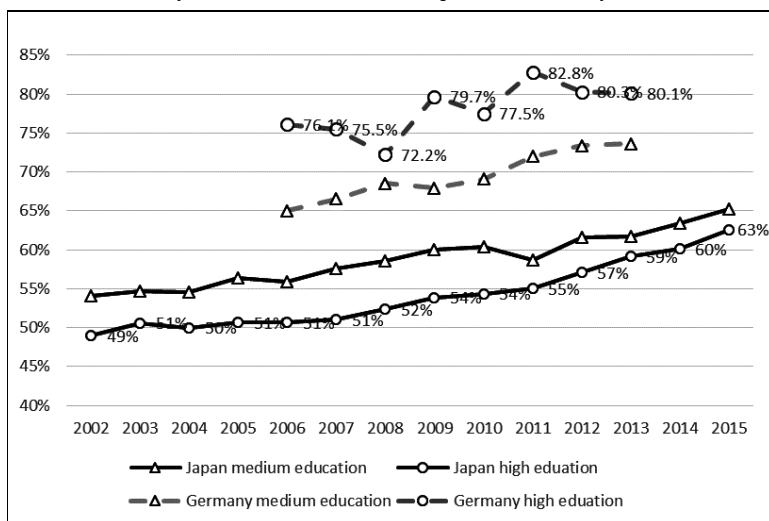


Source: Data for Germany comes from the European Labor Force Survey (OECD 2016b). Data for Japan uses author's own calculations using Labor Force Survey (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan 2017), mothers age 25 to 54.

mothers with at least one child younger than age three using OECD data (2016b) and Japanese Labor Force Surveys. We see that a majority of mothers with infants stayed out of the labor force in Japan in the early 2000s. Employment increased in the 2010s. Labor policies as well as child-care supply policies, as will be explained later, have much to do with this change. For the year 2006, for example, the level of maternal employment in Germany was 15 percentage points higher than in Japan; yet Japan has been catching up in recent years and the gap between the countries is slowly closing. Looking back, Albrecht et al. (2000), using ISSP data from the year 1988, reported that at that time, 70 percent of German mothers with preschool age children were out of the labor force, the ratio was higher than in the US or UK. In Japan, too, Nagase (1999) points out that maternal employment with one's first child at age one was as low as around 25 percent and continued to be low in the 1990s. I conclude that a majority in both countries once shared the view that mothers with infants were to stay home, but changes can be seen in recent years.

Figure 2 shows the trends in employment rate of mothers with their youngest child under age 15, by educational attainment. Also here, the ratio is higher in Germany. A very interesting difference between the two

Figure 2: Employment rate of mothers with at least one child under age 15, by educational attainment, Japan and Germany



Source: Data for Germany comes from the European Labor Force Survey (OECD 2016b). Data for Japan comes from the Japanese Labor Force Survey (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan 2017) (author's calculations).

countries is in particular the higher labor force participation among mothers of the higher educated (ISCED 2011 levels 5–8) in Germany, while it is the opposite in Japan. All other things being equal, if higher education provides better work opportunities, then the employment rate should be higher for the better educated. If so, the Japanese case implies that education alone does not transfer into better work opportunities.

In Japan, not only the educational level but also the type of employment contract is known to have a significant influence on earnings. The contracts of *seishain*, permanent full-time employees, are the “typical” type of employment contract in Japan. Under this type of contract employees enjoy indefinite, permanent employment with wages that typically increase over time. This type of employment, however, comes with long, inflexible work hours. And it is exactly these inflexible work hours that are the main cause for about 40 percent of all Japanese women to quit such work at marriage and another 40 percent at their first childbirth (Nagase 1999; Nagase and Moriizumi 2013). Returning to permanent full-time employment after having left the labor market for a certain period of time is difficult, especially for women after a break for their childrearing years. Therefore, many women re-enter the labor force after a while as “part-time”, “*arubaito*” (temporary jobs), “fixed term contract” and “dispatched” workers. The *White Paper on Gender Equality 2013* writes that high school graduates predominantly re-enter employment as part-time and other forms of non-standard employment, while university graduates are less likely to re-enter at all (GEBCO 2016). This resulting severe wage gap between the different employment contracts can be seen in Table 4, showing data from the Parental Well-being Survey. Less educated mothers in Japan nonetheless often re-enter the labor force after having quit working for their childrearing years out of economic necessity – whereas higher educated women might have also married higher educated and better earning men and thus can afford not to reenter the labor market.

Now looking at the in total more than 4,000 mothers and fathers with at least one child under the age of six surveyed in Germany and Japan and who are the basis of this paper, Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of their work choices. The percentages of full-time mothers is high in both countries: 41 percent in Germany and 61 percent for Japan. On the other hand, the percentage of full-time employees is low in both countries (11 % in Germany, 8 % in Japan). Nearly half of the mothers in Germany are in part-time employment, while the figure is around 30 percent in Japan. Regarding the employment of fathers, the overwhelming majority of fathers are full-time employees in both countries, but we do see more unemployment in Germany, at 9 percent of all surveyed fathers, as compared to only 2 percent of fathers in Japan.

Table 1: Work choice of mothers and fathers in Germany and Japan

	Germany		Japan	
	fathers	mothers	fathers	mothers
Full-time Employed	83%	11%	88%	8%
Part-time or Temporary Employed	8%	48%	11%	30%
out of labor force	9%	41%	2%	61%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	1,001	1,041	1,029	1,101

The Japanese data allows cross tabulation of parents by type of work contract, since the work status of both the interviewee and the spouse was surveyed (see Table 2). In Japan, about half of all households with children under six has the father as the single wage earner. About 25 percent of mothers earn only an additional income as part-time or temporary workers, while nearly 90 percent of fathers in Japan are full-time employed. This is in accordance with the findings of Nagase and Brinton (2017), arguing the high specialization within households in Japan. Unfortunately, we do not have comparable spousal work status data for the case of Germany, yet we can conclude from the figures in Table 1 that there should be fewer single earner couples and more couples where wives work part-time.

Table 2: Work status of couples with children in Japan

		husband			Total
		Full-time Employed	Part-time or Temporary	Out of Labor Force	
wife	Full-time Employed	12%	2%	0%	261
	Part-time or Temporary Employed	23%	6%	0%	622
	Out of Labor Force	52%	5%	1%	1,200
	Total	86%	12%	1%	100%
		1,797	259	27	2,083

In addition, Germany has a significantly higher percentage of single mothers than in Japan, even though to a lesser degree than the single parent rates we see in the US or the UK. National statistics show Germany's rate of single parents to be at 20 percent (based on data from the Micro-census 2013; Deutsche Welle 2014). 90 percent of these are single mothers. In Japan, on the other hand, census data from 2015 shows 8.9 percent of all households to be single parent households (Statistics Japan 2015). Single parenthood also influences the employment options for the parents. In Japan, in particular, a high proportion of single parents work, yet the poverty rate among them is exceptionally high.

WORK ADJUSTMENT OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS FOLLOWING CHILDBIRTH:
LABOR PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

In the following section, I further compare the labor participation of German and Japanese mothers and fathers with small children, using our survey data. Figure 3 shows that the labor participation rate of German mothers increases from 24 percent to 53 percent between mothers with their youngest child age one and two, to 65 percent at age three, and as high as 77 percent when their youngest child is age four. On the other hand, in Japan, the percentage is 32 percent for mothers when the youngest child is age one, and increases only to a little over 40 percent when the youngest child is age four to five. This substantiates national statistics indicating that the labor force participation of mothers is significantly lower in Japan – except for the first year of the child's birth, as an overwhelming majority of German mothers are taking childcare leave for at least the first 12 months of their child's life.

The difference between the fathers of the two countries is smaller but still substantial – and exactly the reverse compared to the mothers: For German fathers there is some decline in labor participation for those with children up to age 1 down to 85 percent, climbing back to a rate of 94 percent until the children are age 3. The labor force participation rate of Japanese fathers, however, holds steady at 98 to 99 percent, irrespective of their children's age. These numbers alone tell us about the usage and availability of substantial parental leave periods for German fathers.

Figure 3: Employment rate by age of youngest child

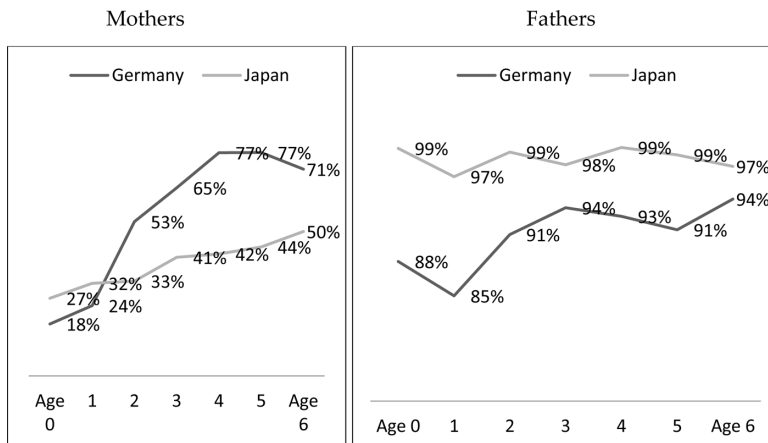


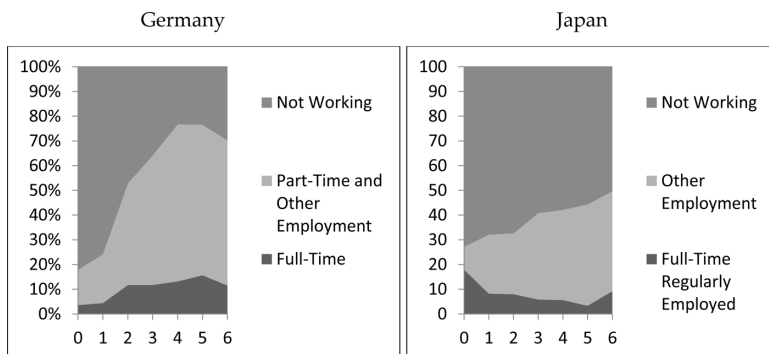
Figure 4: Mothers' employment by age of youngest child

Figure 4 shows the employment status of mothers by the age of their youngest child.¹ Even though the labor participation rate of mothers rises much more drastically with the age of children in Germany, a majority of mothers participate as part-time workers.² In fact, 60 percent of German mothers work as part-time workers when their youngest child is six years

¹ In Japan, I counted leave takers as being in full-time regularly employed position, as most leave takers are those who have full-time regular work position called *seishain*.

² One thing to be noted for the above graphs. In our German survey, whether one is currently on "*Elternzeit*" (leave) or not was asked in a question separate from the status of current employment. In Japan, on the other hand, leave taking was asked as one of the choices among the current employment status. In Figures 3, 4, and 6, therefore, I counted leave taking as "in labor force" in Japan following the usual definition of labor participation. I also treated those who replied that they are on leave as "*seishain*" or full-time regular position in the Japanese survey as shown in Figure 6, since the majority of mothers taking leave are in "*seishain*" positions (see Ikeda and Takami 2012; Nagase 2014). This is the reason why the percentage of "full-time regularly employed" is high when the child is age zero in Figure 6 for Japan. In the case of Germany, the numbers in Figure 3 to 5 mostly do not include those taking leave or *Elternzeit*. In our survey, in the cross tabulation of current labor force participation and leave taking, we found that only 24 percent of German mothers and 31 percent of German fathers replied that they are employed when they were taking the leave. The average weekly work hours of German mothers in leave was 15.9 while of those not on leave it was 25.3, and the average weekly work hours of German fathers on leave was 33.1 while it was 44.1 hours for those not on leave. Therefore, German parents taking leave replied that they are currently employed only when they are actually providing some positive work hours at the time of the survey.

old. Using a larger national dataset, the OECD Family Database (2016b), one can see that the percentage of part-timers is 57 percent among German mothers when the youngest child is under age 15 in 2013. Using Eurostat data (2017), the average hours worked per week of part-time employment in Germany were 17.9 hours in 2008 and 19.0 hours in 2015. Those in full-time employment worked 41.7 hours in 2008 and 41.4 hours in 2015.

In Japan, however, “part-time” employees work much longer hours on average. Based on the Japanese Labor Force Survey data (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan 2017), the average weekly work hours for married females with “part-time or *arubaito* jobs” was 24.0 hours, “fixed-term contract workers and dispatched” worked 31.4 hours, and “permanent full-time” employees worked 37.0 hours on average between 2002 and 2017 (Nagase 2017). The average annual income for the comparable groups was 110 million yen, 179 million yen, and 330 million yen, showing that in Japan the “part-time” and “*arubaito*” wage rate is low compared with that of permanent full-time employees. The expected lower wages upon return into the labor market contribute to the fact that the return to work in Japan is slower than in Germany. This contrasts with Germany where EU directives regulate that part-time workers earn the same wage for the same work. In the case of Japan, part-time workers are often considered to engage in different work compared to *seishain*. And importantly, whereas German part-time employees enjoy the pro-rata but same benefits as full-time employees, such as social security, etc., this is not often the case in Japan.

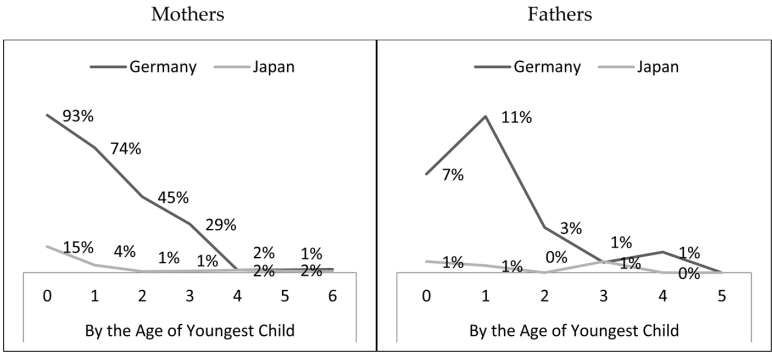
UTILIZATION OF PARENTAL LEAVE BY MOTHER AND FATHERS IN BOTH COUNTRIES

Figure 5 below shows the current use of leave³ by age of the youngest child. In our data, in Germany, a surprisingly high percentage, namely 93 percent of mothers and 7 percent of fathers with at least one child below the age of one were on leave (*Elternzeit*). The respective numbers are 15 percent and 1 percent in Japan, using our data. Even when the child was two years old, 74 percent of mothers and 4 percent of fathers in Germany were taking childcare leave, while the respective number is 4 percent and 1 percent in Japan. When the youngest child is age three, the percentage is still at 29 percent for mothers in Germany while

³ The leave is either for maternity leave or parental leave.

in Japan, only 1 percent of parents take or even can take childcare leave when their child is age three.

Figure 5: Current use of leave by age of youngest child



One of the reasons in the difference between the countries in the use of leave is the regulation concerning the coverage and the length of the leave. As Bertram (2018 in this volume) describes, in Germany, unpaid leave from work within the first three years after childbirth is a legal entitlement. Also, up to 12 months of parental leave can be transferred to the period between the child's 3rd and 8th birthday with the agreement of the employer. In Germany, the former child allowance (*Erziehungsgeld*) which gave allowances for two years, was replaced by the so-called parental allowance (*Elterngeld*) in 2007, which amounts to 67 percent of the previous salary for 12 months, or 14 months if both parents take the leave. Even when the parents have not been working before childbirth, *Elterngeld* can be claimed as social assistance, then amounting to 300 euro per month. Most parents with children, therefore, are covered in some way with this program in Germany.

In Japan, on the other hand, the situation is less generous for parents with young children. While maternity leave for six weeks prior and eight weeks after the birth of a child had long been a legal entitlement for any employed worker, the entitlement of parental or family leave is more restrictive. It was initiated as legal entitlement to full-time workers without termination of contract, *seishain*, with more than one year of tenure in the year 1992. The entitlement was extended to workers with fixed-term employment contracts in 2004, but only under the condition that the employer and worker both expect that the work contract will be renewed to last for at least one year after the worker's return from the leave. The numbers

of fixed-term contract workers, whose leave entitlement is weak, has steadily increased in the 2000s.⁴ Yet the leave allowance for those who are able to take leave has steadily improved, amounting since 2014 to 67 percent for the first six months and 50 percent thereafter during the legal leave.⁵ The legally entitled length of the leave is usually until the child's first birthday, but since 2010 this can be extended by two months if the father also takes the leave. Since 2004, it also can be extended by another six months when the registered childcare facilities are full and cannot provide care for the child. Longer leave is available only for public servants, until the child reaches age three, or when offered voluntarily by companies.

Sticky work norms may also have a strong influence on Japanese mothers. Among *seishain* workers who are covered by the leave, the tendency to quit work among women upon marriage and upon childbirth remained more or less unchanged in the 1990s and early 2000s. It was not until 2010 that an increase in work continuation could be observed in Japan. The National Fertility Survey of Japan (NIPSSR 2016) has also shown that around 40 percent of women with *seishain* contracts quit work at marriage and another 40 percent of the remaining women quit upon first childbirth. The high tendency to quit work at marriage or childbirth may come from a combination of the high social acceptance and desirability of stay-at-home mothers, long work hours, and the resulting difficulty of balancing work and family, with the comparably stable employment of husbands. Not only the lower coverage in parental leave and the difficulty of balancing work and family, but also work culture and work norm discourage mothers to continue work after childbirth. Nagase (2014), using data from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare's (MHLW) Lon-

⁴ The entitlement rarely covers women who are employed at fixed-term contract workers, including the majority of part-time workers, dispatched workers, *arubaito* workers, and contract workers. In Japan, even though around 70 percent of married women work prior to giving the first birth, around 30 percent of them are in temporary employment lacking the entitlement to take the leave.

⁵ Starting in April 1995, the government gave 25 percent (5 % withheld) equivalent of daily salary from employment insurance, which was raised to 40 percent (10 % withheld) in January 2001 and to 50 percent (20 % withheld) from October 2007 to 2010. The withheld portion of the allowance was to be given 6 months after the leave takers returned to their workplace, to give incentives to return to their pre-birth employer. Because the birth rate continued to stagnate, from April 2010, the government abolished the withheld portion, and the monthly replacement rate became 50 percent and then 67 percent for the first 180 days after April 2014.

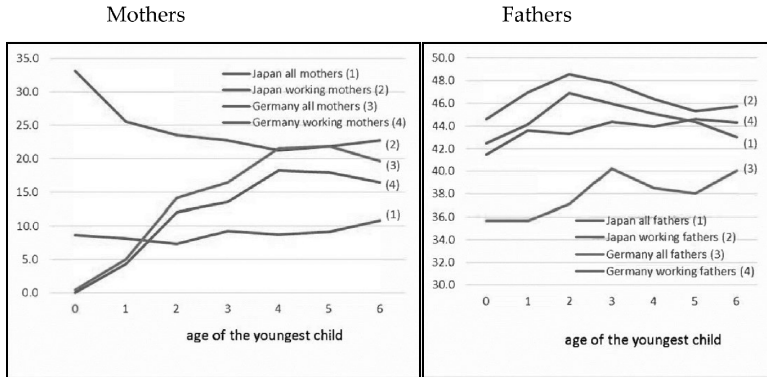
gitudinal Survey of Adults in the 21st Century (2002 cohort), a national survey of Japanese adults born between 1968 and 1982, found that the ratio of working women without children who replied that they are covered by their employer's family leave policy went up from 40 percent in 2003 to 50 percent in 2010. Yet those women who replied that the use of the leave was easy remained at around 30 percent in 2010. Among the group of female employees without termination of contract, *seishain*, even 70 percent stated that their employers would cover their leave in 2010⁶, but those who thought it easy to claim the benefits remained around 40 percent. Nagase (2014, 2015) found that work continuation among Japanese mothers has risen substantially only after 2010 when the use of the short hour option, basically six hours a day till the child reaches age three, was legalized and mandated in 2010 to firms with 100 or more employees and to the rest of the working population in 2012. Yet, in 2010, around 60 percent of mothers were still found to be out of the labor force when they had their first child. Maternal Labor participation has further increased since 2013 (Nagase 2018).

The Japanese numbers in Figure 5 can be considered representative of national Japanese statistics, whereas the German figure in our Parental Well-being Survey is about 10 percentage points higher for mothers than national statistics show, and 3 percent higher for fathers⁷. However, the

⁶ Mothers in Japan go through the bureaucratic process of filing the necessary papers for parental leave through the personnel office of their employer, yet pregnant women can be discouraged to take the leave when their boss and their colleagues are not supportive and thus quit work. According a 2014 survey by the MHLW (2015b), directed at branches and firms with more than five workers, use of family leave by entitled women was 49.1 percent in 1996, 72.3 percent in 2005, and 89.7 percent in 2007. It levelled off thereafter and was at 86.6 percent in 2014. For males, the percentage was 0.12 in 1997, 1.56 in 2007, and 2.30 in 2014. The number exclude temporary workers and those workers who quit work at pregnancy.

⁷ To confirm whether the difference as shown in Figure 5 is supported by the national data: *Statistisches Bundesamt* 2016 shows that the share of mothers taking leave of all working parents age 20–49 with the youngest child under age three is 41.5 percent for mothers and 2.0 percent for fathers, and 20.2 percent in total (see Bertram 2018 in this volume). Our German data surveyed in 2009, when calculated in the same way, shows the figure is 51.9 percent for all mothers and 5.4 percent for all fathers, and 28.8 percent in total among the population with children under three, so the figure is a little higher for our sample. For Japan, according to the National Fertility Survey of 2010, the use of maternity leave was 20.5 percent, and the use of family leave by mothers was 14.2 percent, and fathers 0.2 percent. This is comparable to the numbers for Japanese parents with newborn children, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 6: Weekly work hours by age of youngest child



very large difference between the two countries cannot be negated in any way. The prevalence of the use of parental leave and parental allowance reception is much higher in Germany.

Figure 6 below provides a more differentiated view of the weekly work hours of mothers and fathers in the two countries. Line (2) on the left side shows that when limited to those in the labor force in Japan, mothers with very young children work nearly full-time, and the work hours decrease when the children get older. This might seem strange, but this bifurcation of maternal employment is due to the fact that Japanese mothers are used to working either long hours in *seishain* positions or they quit work completely when a child is born. Only a few mothers with infants work in low wage “part-time” positions, since the wage may not even be enough to cover the daycare costs. When children grow, more mothers who had been out of the labor force re-enter as part-timers, which lets average working hours decline with the age of children in Japan. On the right hand side of Figure 6, it is clear that, on average, Japanese fathers work longer hours than German fathers. There are more fathers who do not report work hours in Germany; by including the non-employed fathers in calculating the work hour average significantly affects a decline in the average work hours of fathers in Germany.

CHILDCARE POLICIES AS SUPPORTING FACTOR IN MATERNAL LABOR
PARTICIPATION

A quick return to work is generally also supported by the provision of daycare centers. In Germany, particularly since 2007, policy changes led to an increase in the ratio of children being cared for in daycare centers, from 20.4 percent of children under the age of three in 2009 to 34.2 percent in 2013 (Saito 2011). For more details on family policies in Germany and Japan, see the respective chapters by Bertram and Holthus (2018 in this volume). Japan has a comparatively longer history of the provision of subsidized daycare facilities. The system developed after WWII for the war-stricken children, and the network of subsidized daycare developed throughout the country in 1970s. The rapid economic recovery in the 1960s, however, directed the national government to limit the provision of subsidized daycare for infants. By 1995, the provision of subsidized daycare under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare became more prevalent in rural areas where more women historically worked as family workers. On the other hand, in the urban area, non-working mothers increased, and kindergarten as educational facilities for children over three years of age became more prominent, supervised by the Ministry of Education and targeting families with non-working mothers (Nagase 2003a).⁸

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) policy to limit infant care reversed when the total fertility rate dropped below 1.6 in 1989. This prompted the government to accommodate policies to the needs of working women. The “Angel Plan” of 1994, the “New Angel Plan” of 1999, and many other plans followed. The increase, however, went slow especially in urban centers for three reasons. The infant care was subsidized so heavily by local municipalities in urban areas that the local governments feared an increase of the local governmental deficit. Secondly, daycare places were fewer in metropolitan areas where demand for young female workers increased at a rapid pace. Lastly, the government had been slow in securing a national budget for childcare (Nagase 2007).

In the year 2002, the percentage of children below age three going to daycare was higher in Japan than Germany with a ratio of 16.3 percent in Japan. Germany eventually caught up with Japan and surpassed the ratio of 27.6 percent. Thus the ratio of children in institutionalized childcare is by now very similar in both Germany and Japan.

⁸ See also Holthus (2018 in this volume) for regional differences in institutionalized childcare and the resulting differences in parental well-being.

LABOR PRACTICES BEHIND THE GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOR: GENDER WAGE GAP AND WAGE GAP BETWEEN FULL-TIME AND HOURLY WORKERS IN JAPAN

The question how labor practices influence the lives of mothers and fathers both in Germany and Japan is the focus in this section. In particular, I examine in a first step the wage regression of Japanese males and females with children under six, using data from the Parental Well-being Survey. Following, I examine the occupational distribution in Germany, as our German data does not have individual income data. Table 3 below shows the income distribution in Japan: 53 percent of Japanese mothers with children under six have no income, and an additional 28 percent have an annual income of less than 1 million yen. Only 11 percent of mothers with children under age six earn over 2 million yen. On the other hand, the majority of husbands earn an annual income of over 3 million yen, and nearly 40 percent of Japanese husbands earn more than 5 million yen. We see that the income gap between husbands and wives is quite large.

The large earnings gap is partly due to the Japanese labor market practice. Wages are much higher under the implicit long-term employment contract, or *seishain* contract, as discussed above, yet work hours for long-term employees are inflexible and once out of labor force, or once in fixed-term employment, re-entry to such long-term employment contracts is not easy (Nagase 2003b). Many mothers who once quit work at pregnancy, do not return to work as *seishain*. Non-standard employees however are penalized by often being paid by the hour and low wages.

Table 4 shows the log hourly wage regression I made for the Japanese data. Educational attainment, potential work experience, as well as occupation, firm size, and regular full-time work status are used as explanatory variables for parents' hourly wages. Since years of actual work experience was not surveyed, I calculated the potential experience years by sub-

Table 3: Income distribution of husbands and wives in the Japanese data

		in 1000 yen					sample size
		wife's earnings					
		none	less than 1000	1000-1999	2000-2999	over 300	Total
h	less than 2000	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	5%
u	2000-2999	6%	4%	1%	1%	0%	13%
s	3000-3999	15%	9%	2%	1%	1%	27%
b	4000-4999	11%	5%	2%	1%	2%	20%
a	5000-5999	6%	4%	1%	1%	1%	13%
n	6000-6999	5%	2%	1%	0%	1%	9%
d	7000-7999	4%	1%	0%	0%	1%	6%
	8000-8999	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%
s	over 9000	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Total		53%	28%	7%	4%	7%	100%
sample size		1,109	588	156	79	149	2,081

Table 4: Wage regression of Japanese parents

	ALL		Males		Females	
	coefficient	t values	coefficient	t values	coefficient	t values
education years (base 12 years)						
9 years	0.3540	1.49	0.3994	1.81 *	0.2684	0.29
14 years	0.0076	0.13	-0.0494	-0.70	0.1293	1.10
16 years	0.1608	2.83 ***	0.0957	1.60	0.2987	2.08 **
more than 16 years	0.2618	2.90 ***	0.2046	2.40 **	0.2387	0.26
experience	0.0535	2.98 ***	0.0659	3.54 ***	0.0239	0.51
experience ²	-0.0012	-2.29 **	-0.0015	-2.95 ***	-0.0003	-0.22
regularly full-time employed dummy	0.3871	5.66 ***	0.3112	4.04 ***	0.4380	2.82 ***
firm size (base firms with 1-9 employees)						
10-99	-0.0151	-0.24	-0.0467	-0.66	0.0813	0.61
100-299	0.1094	1.51	0.0419	0.53	0.3181	1.86 *
300-499	0.2352	2.60 ***	0.2257	2.37 **	0.2072	0.89
500-999	0.3264	3.25 ***	0.3927	3.87 ***	-0.0952	-0.31
more than 1000	0.3862	5.93 ***	0.3761	5.26 ***	0.3621	2.28 **
public sector	0.3443	3.59 ***	0.3474	3.55 ***	0.1905	0.70
female dummy	-0.3059	-4.52 ***				
be on leave	-0.6468	-4.97 ***	-0.7545	-2.14 **	-0.6321	-2.96 ***
occupation(base manual workers)						
professional	0.2516	3.94 ***	0.2349	3.87 ***	0.4289	2.02 **
manegerial	0.3892	4.19 ***	0.3848	4.57 ***	0.5979	0.64
clerical	0.1270	2.06 **	0.1614	2.65 ***	0.2298	1.23
sales	0.0614	0.85	-0.1530	-1.90 *	0.4295	2.30 **
agriculture	-0.4318	-1.79 *	-0.8737	-2.81 ***	0.0997	0.22
others	-0.5219	-2.38 **	-0.7009	-2.25 **	-0.2219	-0.58
cons	6.3670	36.03 ***	6.4233	34.88 ***	5.9624	13.86 ***
Sample Size	1332		982		350	
adjusted R2	0.3179		0.2288		0.0643	

Note: ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1;

tracting education years plus six (the age of entry into the school system) from age. Education increases the log hourly wage, as do experience years for males where potential experience years are more likely to represent the actual work years.

Not surprisingly, the data clearly shows that the Japanese labor market rewards full-time regular employment, as we know it does: the wage gaps are as large as 44 percent for mothers and 31 percent for fathers between regularly employed full-time workers, compared with other fixed-term contract employees (see the significant positive coefficient for regularly full-time employed dummy in the second and the third column of the greyed cells). This development towards non-standard employment has intensified in the last decade, and concerns employees irrespective of educational attainment (Hommerich 2012). The large wage gaps are still evident after controlling for educational attainment, firm size, and occupation. Thus, the distinct advantages of the *seishain* system severely penalize most working mothers. The left column in Table 4 shows that even if women have the same educational attainment, work in the same occupation and firm size as a male regular full-time employee, a large hourly wage gap of around 30 percent remains. The variable entitled “female dummy”, however, partly may stand for the fewer years of experience of

women, meaning that they are paid less since their potential experience years include years out of the labor force.

The firm size effects on wages as shown in the wage regression for fathers is unique to the case of Japan. After controlling for educational attainment and occupation, Table 4 shows the wage level is 35 to 39 percent higher for males when one works for firms with more than 500 employees or in the public sector, as compared to firms with 1 to 9 employees. Since such a wage gap is known in the general population, university graduates compete fiercely to be hired by large firms upon school graduation, when the port of entry to this better labor market segment is largest.

One of the important factors causing Japanese wives to earn only up to a certain threshold as hourly workers is the income tax and social security tax levy rule. If one earns an annual wage income below 1.03 million yen, no income tax has to be paid. Moreover, husbands gain income deduction for their dependent spouse on their tax if the wife's earnings are below the 1.03 threshold. More than that, many firms add spousal allowance on the salary of husbands, and this often depends on whether their spouses earn enough to pay their own income tax. Not only do wives choose to work shorter hours but employers may explicitly give only short hour work opportunities to wives so that they may be exempted of social security tax levy on their part. Dependent spouses of wage earners are also exempted from social security tax if their yearly income is below 1.3 million yen.

LAWS THAT GOVERN WAGE TREATMENT BY GENDER AND TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT IN JAPAN

Even though the data above gives clear proof to the existence of the unequal treatment between the sexes and between full-time and part-time workers, Japan does have such laws but the power of these laws is limited. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) of 1985 and its revision and strengthening in 1997, 1999, and 2007 banned unequal treatment by gender if workers are in the same type of employment contract (for more information on the revisions of the EEOL, see Assmann 2014). However, the law does not ban the dual career track system, in which men usually were hired for the career track, whereas women were hired for the slow, non-career track. The labor practice of the career track course is based on the male breadwinner model, and often demands overtime work and relocation with short prior notice. This causes many female workers to shun career track positions. According to a small Japanese survey of around 100 firms

with dual track hiring, the ratio of women newly hired in the career track course was 22.2 percent in 2014, up from 11.6 percent in 2010, while it was 82.1 percent for the slow track course in 2014, down from 94.6 percent in 2010 (MHLW 2015a).

Araki (2011) has compared the EU and Japan in regards to their rules and regulations for equal treatment in the work environment and find that in the EU, the practice of paying wages by occupation and the industrial wage agreement coverage make it easier to provide a platform for the equal treatment between full-time and part-time workers in a similar occupation. In Japan, on the other hand, the determination of wages for long-term and part-time employees differs. For the former, wages are set by wage rules for long term employees. The amount of training and ability to do jobs are at the core of the wage setting. For the part-timers, wages are often determined on the spot by regional labor demand and supply. Under such circumstances, Araki (2011) says implementing rationally explainable equal wages or giving out explainable wage differences between the two categories is not easy. Yet in 2018 the Japanese government is preparing a new bill for “Equal Pay for Equal Work”.

Impacted by the recessionary economy, our Parental Well-being Survey data shows that 18 percent of Japanese fathers have annual incomes of less than 3 million yen. In such households, additional income by mothers should be of great help to the family finances – even though only less than 20 percent of wives have an income over 1 million yen.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EARNINGS AND OCCUPATION IN GERMANY

For Germany, because we lack individual income data from the Parental Well-being Survey, the question whether German mothers are successful in bridging the years of childrearing with the leave provision, the short work hours that follow after the leave years and the increased daycare centers for infants, and whether they are successful in achieving and attaining their own careers, remains incompletely answered. To substitute the quantitative data I conducted 18 interviews with working German mothers in the summer of 2016. I found many of them voluntarily choosing short working hours and more time at home, just as Japanese mothers. It could be that although leave provision and short work hours enable mothers to be kept in the labor force in Germany, they may miss out on promotion opportunities.

Even though more than 70 percent of mothers with children in the age group of three to six in Germany are in the labor force, as shown in Figure 4, the percentage of German mothers whose husband is the main income

Table 5: Occupational distribution of fathers and mothers in Germany

		Fathers		Mothers		sample size
		Present Occupation	Currently Not Working	Present Occupation	Currently Not Working	
manual	unskilled worker	2%	12%	3%	6%	65
	blue-collar worker	5%	14%	5%	5%	106
	operative	23%	33%	3%	9%	295
	foreman	2%	1%	0%	0%	23
clerical	worker	6%	6%	21%	23%	270
	service worker	19%	10%	41%	40%	590
	administrative worker	17%	12%	6%	7%	229
	headmaster	1%	1%	0%	0%	15
civil service	ordinary/civil service	1%	0%	1%	0%	10
	middle grade of civil service	2%	1%	2%	1%	36
	intermediate civil service	2%	4%	2%	2%	41
	higher civil service	3%	0%	1%	1%	33
self-employed	self-employed	1%	0%	0%	0%	9
	self-employed academics	3%	2%	4%	1%	60
	self-employee	11%	2%	6%	2%	146
	employee in family run business	0%	1%	2%	1%	18
trainee	trainee	2%	0%	3%	3%	43
sample size		910	83	609	387	1,989

Note: Occupation for those who are not currently working is their former occupation.

earner was just as high as the one reported by Japanese mothers. 85 percent and 86 percent of mothers in Germany and Japan have spouses who are the main income earner, while 6 and 5 percent replied that they themselves are the main income earners. Although the labor participation rate of German mothers with children under six was much higher than that of Japan, the same low percentage, that is, 8 percent of the respondents in both countries replied that both of the couples are the main income earners. These results imply that the income gap between husband and wife, and the gap in career prospects between husband and wife is not only large in Japan but also in Germany, despite the higher use of leave and higher labor participation rate among German parents. Figure 4 also shows that the majority of German mothers with young children work part-time and not full-time. Figure 6 shows that German mothers work about 15 hours on average when their child is two or three, and around 20 to 25 hours when their youngest child is four to six. Such short hours of work may not be adequate to build up their own careers.

Since we do not have income data for Germany, we made use of the occupational distribution to refer to the gender gap in income and income prospect (see Table 5 for details). Service work and non-manual work have the largest share among occupations for mothers. For fathers, operative, service work, and administrative work have a larger share. We do see a large difference in the occupational distribution between genders.

For the same work category, for example, for the manual and clerical occupational category, the ratio of those on a higher level of the career ladder is higher for males than females. In addition, those on the lower level of the career ladder are likely to be not currently employed, and this percentage is much higher for women.

THE CHOICE OF MOTHERS TO WORK FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, OR TO STAY AT HOME – COMPARING JAPAN AND GERMANY

Here I explore how the work choices of mothers differ between the two countries by conducting a multinomial logit analysis and look at the effect of the age of the youngest child (see Table 6 for details). To control for the husband's income, I added a dummy variable entitled "partner present dummy". To control for the women's wage level, I included educational attainment dummies as substitute for the missing income data.

One of the interesting results is that having a spouse significantly decreased labor participation in Japan, whereas that is not the case in Germany. It seems that having a partner significantly encourages Japanese women

Table 6: Multinomial analysis of full-time regular work, part-time work, and no work

	Japanese Mothers				German Mothers			
	Full-time Regular		Part-time Other Non-Standard		Full-time		Part-time	
German Schooling(base not graduation)								
still at school					0.67	0	1.103	0.59
8/9 years at school					12.67	0.02	0.313	0.35
8 years at school					13.38	0.02	0.496	0.43
10 years at school					13.65	0.02	0.682	0.77
technical school					13.93	0.02	0.818	0.87
high school graduation					14.63	0.02	1.226	1.36
Japanese Schooling (base 12 years of education)								
9 years	-12.205	-0.01	-0.908	-0.81				
14 years	0.484	1.47	-0.043	-0.26				
16 years	1.056	3.15 ***	-0.222	-1.17				
18 years	1.356	1.14	-0.815	-0.7				
partner present dummy	-2.650	-5.15 ***	-1.622	-3.78 ***	0.05	0.15	0.302	1.48
age group (base less than 25)								
age 25-34	0.517	0.63	0.719	1.08	-0.62	-1.2	-0.246	-0.7
age 35-44	0.644	0.78	0.556	0.83	-1.09	-2.02 **	-0.443	-1.21
age 45-59	1.691	1.51	1.327	1.58	-1.87	-1.96 *	-0.362	-0.68
Youngest Child age 0 to 1								
Youngest child age 2	-0.626	-1.63	1.010	3.14 ***	1.69	3.93 ***	1.354	5.55 ***
Youngest child age 3	-0.434	-1.19	1.017	3.2 ***	2.13	4.7 ***	2.005	7.78 ***
Youngest child age 4	-1.371	-2.41 **	1.266	3.8 ***	2.77	5.72 ***	2.653	9.09 ***
Youngest child age 5	-0.969	-2.44 **	1.512	5.13 ***	3.06	6.81 ***	2.637	9.69 ***
Youngest child age 6	-1.424	-3.07 ***	1.694	5.73 ***	2.56	5.37 ***	2.396	8.58 ***
Youngest child age 7	-0.218	-0.51	1.621	4.93 ***	3.45	4.61 ***	3.237	6.03 ***
constant	-0.070	-0.08	-0.929	-1.21	-16.3	-0.02	-2.256	-2.47 **
sample size	1096				1035			
log likelihood	-879.4687				-883.383			

Note: ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1;

to stay at home, but such a tendency was not found in Germany. The interesting result of the effect of young children is that in Germany, labor participation to full-time work and part-time work both increase when the youngest child gets older. On the other hand, in Japan, only part-time and other forms of non-standard work increase when children get older, but not the full-time regular employment. In fact, full-time regular, or *seishain* employment rather decreases than increases and the choice to stay out of the labor force increases when the youngest child reaches the age of four to six. At the same time, having a university degree increases the possibility to work as a full-time regular employee in Japan. The results seems to suggest that the choice of pursuing a full-time job is a decision that has long-term effects, since it is not easy to re-enter that path after dropping out due to childrearing obligations. On the one hand highly paid, on the other hand full of obligations to work overtime or resettle, full-time regular employment is a narrow path for working mothers in Japan. In Germany, it seems choosing full-time or part-time employment is a more continuous choice that can be selected by mothers more easily.

PARENTAL SATISFACTION WITH WORK AND FAMILY

As elaborated on above, the majority of Japanese mothers drop out of the labor force at childbirth, with little monetary support from the government, and that after some time they slowly return to the labor market as part-time employees working on an hourly basis. In Germany, on the other hand, the majority of mothers makes use of the parental leave entitlement when children are small, and receive some form of family leave allowance from the government, and the majority of mothers also slowly returns to work as part-time employees. The largest differences between mothers of the two countries are the prevalence of governmental income support and of use of leave. Because of the increased support by the government, the percentage of German mothers staying in the labor market is higher than that in Japan. However, in both countries mothers adjust their work hours much more than fathers after having children. Despite the difference in labor force participation when children are small, we can say that the breadwinner role of husbands is still strong in Japan as well as in Germany. The income gap between genders is also large, yet according to the OECD, the gender pay gap is more than 10 percent higher in Japan than it is in Germany (OECD 2016).

In this section, I explore as to how life satisfaction of German and Japanese parents differs dependent on having a full-time regular job and other types of jobs such as a temporary job, or not having any job. Our survey

has many measures of satisfaction. I believe looking solely at parental satisfaction with work may not be adequate when evaluating the satisfaction of staying-at-home mothers, as it is difficult to answer any satisfaction towards work when one does not have any work, or if the choice to stay out of the labor force may be their voluntary choice for childrearing. Therefore, in this section, I will look at the satisfaction with regards to work, but also parents' satisfaction with their household income, as well as other influences, such as the division of labor within the household, and their satisfaction with the spousal relationship.

Generally, I found "part-time workers" among the parents in Japan to be less satisfied while they are more satisfied in Germany. I analyze in particular how the general satisfaction towards life differs for mothers by their work status. Some might think that Japanese full-time mothers are driven out of employment. However, that may or may not be the case. In the Meiji Restoration, the idea of educating women to become good wives and wise mothers emerged among the higher social class. Even in the 1980s and 1990s, there were substantial numbers of junior colleges for women where women sought post secondary education, and the idea of the good wife and wise mother were still circulating in such schools. Becoming a full-time housewife was viewed by women as gaining status rather than losing independence as well depicted by Ogasawara (1998). Akagawa (2000) found that for women, their social status was mostly determined by the husbands's occupation and income, and to a smaller extent by the wife's native family and education, but not by her occupation. As such, being a full-time housewife had been a highly valued and a well accepted female social status in Japan for a long time.

However, changes due to globalization and resulting decrease of permanent employment opportunities throughout the 2000s have occurred, having led to husbands' income prospects to be no longer as stable and promising as they had been in the past. Furthermore, the value of household work might have also declined due to the increase in cheap substitutes: small 24-hour stores in every corner of densely populated areas offer easy access to food, banking, and shopping. Lastly, more women do wish to develop their own career.

I conducted one-way ANOVA to determine parents' satisfaction towards work and income by distinguishing the three groups: the full-time regularly working, the part-time or temporary workers, and those without employment. There are statistically significant differences between groups for some satisfaction levels. I used Bonferroni, Scheffe, and Sidak multiple comparison tests to identify which pairs of means were different. Results are presented in the following Tables 7 to 9. With respect to satisfaction with work and income, the differences between the employ-

ment-related groups were quite similar in Germany and Japan. For males, the regularly full-time employed have the highest means in satisfaction towards work. For females, too, the level of satisfaction with work is significantly higher when one has any employment, be it full-time or part-time, both in Germany and in Japan. This is easily explained, as it is difficult to find any positive satisfaction towards their own work when one does not have any work.

However, there are differences between groups of wives of the two countries with respect to satisfaction with their household income. Satisfaction with household income is lowest for the group of mothers in part-time or temporary employment in Japan, as compared with the group of regularly employed or with the full-time housewife group. On the other hand, in Germany, full-time housewives have the lowest satisfaction towards household income. While in Germany, female participation to part-time work increases the satisfaction of women in respect to household income, this is not the case for Japan. In Japan, it can be guessed that the lower level of income of their spouses is what pushes wives to enter the hourly wage labor market in Japan, and thus part-time or temporary employment is not an issue of choice and self-fulfillment but rather an economic necessity and therefore does not contribute to life satisfaction.

Table 8 shows the one-way ANOVA results for the differences in levels of satisfaction with housework share, with spousal support in childrearing, with spousal relationship, and with leisure time by employment groups. One could expect that if husbands did not do the due share of the housework and childrearing, it would be the time-constrained full-time working group of mothers that have the lowest satisfaction level. On the contrary, it was those mothers working part-time in Japan that had a lower satisfaction level concerning the share of housework between spouses. Satisfaction levels of spousal support in childrearing and satisfaction levels of spousal relationship were also significantly lower for the group of

Table 7: Satisfaction with work and income by employment situation

	Satisfaction with Work			
	Female		Male	
	Germany	Japan	Germany	Japan
full-time	7.14]***	5.11]***	7.54]***	5.08]**
part-time or temporary	7.12]***	4.86]***	6.37]***	4.52]***
out of labor force	5.69]**	4.11]**	3.76]***	1.75]***

	Satisfaction with Income			
	Female		Male	
	Germany	Japan	Germany	Japan
full-time	6.38	4.49]***	6.72]**	4.10]***
part-time or temporary	6.37]***	3.52]***	5.91]***	3.06]***
out of labor force	5.86]**	4.04]**	4.70]***	1.89]*

Note: ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1;

Table 8: Satisfaction with housework share and spousal support by situation in employment

	Satisfaction with Housework and Child Care Sharing			
	Female		Male	
	Germany	Japan	Germany	Japan
full-time	7.32	6.16	8.75	7.36
part-time or temporary	7.36	5.22	8.35	7.14
out of labor force	7.10	5.71	8.10	7.94
		***	***	

	Satisfaction with Spousal Support in Child Rearing			
	Female		Male	
	Germany	Japan	Germany	Japan
full-time	7.95	6.53	9.31	7.97
part-time or temporary	7.70	5.91	8.96	7.65
out of labor force	7.57	6.34	8.87	8.31
		***	*	**
			**	
	Satisfaction with Spousal Relationship			
	Female		Male	
	Germany	Japan	Germany	Japan
full-time	8.26	6.30	8.78	7.17
part-time or temporary	8.26	5.92	8.56	7.02
out of labor force	8.44	6.44	8.36	7.44
		***	**	
	Satisfaction with Leisure Time			
	Female		Male	
	Germany	Japan	Germany	Japan
full-time	6.03	6.02	6.80	5.74
part-time or temporary	6.64	5.67	7.21	5.62
out of labor force	6.36	5.76	6.62	4.88

Note: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$;

part-time employed in Japan as compared with full-time housewives. Satisfaction concerning the interaction with the spouse in the family repeatedly showed lower results for part-time working mothers in Japan.⁹ Such differences however were not evident for German mothers. Only in regards to the satisfaction level of leisure time, the part-time working group showed higher levels than the full-time working group in Germany.

In the final analysis, seen in Table 9, we will look at the effect of “part-time or temporary work” and “full-time work” versus “out of employment” on the overall life satisfaction for mothers in Germany and Japan, after controlling for household income level. We know from prior research that in Japan more women return to part-time work when their spousal income is not adequate. Therefore, it is interesting to know if the negative effect of part-time work on satisfaction, that we witnessed above for the case of Japanese mothers, is still evident when controlling for family income in the regression analysis, in addition to controlling for the age of the youngest child, women’s educational attainment, the presence of a

⁹ For more details about the relationship between employment and happiness for Japanese women see also Brinton (2017).

Table 9: Satisfaction with life by mothers of both countries

	Japanese Mothers		German Mothers	
	coefficient	t value	coefficient	t value
German Schooling(base not graduation)				
still at school			0.196	0.13
8/9 years at school			0.933	1.13
8 years at school			1.788	1.77 *
10 years at school			1.098	1.34
technical school			1.159	1.35
high school graduation			1.196	1.45
Japanese Schooling (base 12 years of education)				
9 years	0.965	1.03		
14 years	0.227	1.37		
16 years	0.271	1.43		
18 years	0.602	0.64		
partner present dummy	1.158	3.08 ***	1.448	8.28 ***
age group (base less than 25)				
age 25-34	-0.510	-1.05	-0.062	-0.2
age 35-44	-0.835	-1.69 *	0.162	0.51
age 45-59	-1.436	-1.99 **	-0.632	-1.25
Youngest Child age 0 to 1				
Youngest child age 2	0.200	0.76	-0.298	-1.39
Youngest child age 3	0.074	0.28	-0.866	-3.85 ***
Youngest child age 4	0.159	0.55	-0.704	-2.83 ***
Youngest child age 5	0.058	0.24	-0.784	-3.36 ***
Youngest child age 6	0.288	1.16	-0.611	-2.55
Youngest child age 7	-0.241	-0.84	-0.713	-1.73 *
Work (base not working)				
par-time working	0.188	0.7	0.105	0.48
full-time regularly working	-0.278	-1.77 *	0.228	1.54
Household Income (base low)				
Income Medium	1.015	6.39 ***	0.273	1.92 *
Income High	1.570	4.31 ***	0.156	0.56
constant	4.614	7.8 ***	5.262	6.1 ***
sample size	1,095		815	
adj r2	0.0717		0.1132	

Note: ***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1;

partner, and household income, in order to look at the effect of mothers' work on her overall life satisfaction.

The analysis shows that higher family income is an important explanatory variable of life satisfaction for Japanese mothers. Having a partner is an important explanatory variable for both countries. Here, where household income is controlled for, working part-time no longer has a negative effect on overall life satisfaction of mothers in Japan. Though barely significant, working long hours might negatively influence life satisfaction of mothers.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I compared maternal and paternal employment behavior following childbirth between Germany and Japan. German mothers return to work quickly when their children become two to four years old, which must be partly due to the high prevalence of leave-taking, and therefore a comparative ease of returning to the workplace. Data showed that in Germany, around 90 percent of women who have a child take maternal leave and that most receive *Elterngeld* in the year when the child is born. More than 70 percent of German mothers take leave the following year as well. The percentage of fathers taking leave is around 7 to 11 percent, which is much higher than the rate of Japanese fathers. On the other hand, in Japan, only about 15 percent of mothers take child care leave in the first year following childbirth, while the percentage of fathers taking leave is around 1 percent. This is firstly because 30 to 40 percent of entitled mothers quit work at pregnancy, either because they want to take care of their child, or because they do not feel they can meet both, the demand of childrearing and outside employment, and secondly because the majority of temporary workers are not entitled to leave.

Germany changed its family policy to facilitate maternal employment along with childrearing in recent years, and the country has been rapidly building up subsidized daycare facilities for infants, and the speed of build-up having exceeded now that of Japan. Germany's fathers' quota on parental leave also seems to show fathers' positive leave taking results. Nevertheless, the survey results seem to indicate that mothers are still only additionally contributing earners within households in Germany and not the main income earner, just as is the case in Japan. 85 percent of fathers were the main income earner for both Germany and Japan when children are under six. One explanation for the differences in parents' labor market activities is the change in attitudes in Germany, as having earnings responsibilities for the family is now more accepted as part of a good mother norm in Germany, while it is not yet so in Japan. In addition, taking leave from work to take care of the child is also more accepted and made possible by employers for fathers in Germany than it is in Japan, where the wish for change among fathers is there, but workplace norms remain rather inflexible.

When we looked at the satisfaction scores on work, we found higher levels of satisfaction with work for mothers with any work in both countries. However, when looking at the satisfaction with income, spousal relationship, housework, and childcare sharing with spouse, the satisfaction levels were significantly lower in some cases for part-time employed mothers in Japan as compared with stay-at-home mothers and full-time

regular workers. Such differences were not significant for the case of German mothers.

Some reasons for the difference between mothers and fathers we have identified in the data, as well as between the countries and between different employment situations, may lie in the labor market. In Japan, *seishain* is the long term employment contract which offer better income but requires high commitment and long hours and is held mostly by men and women without children. On the other hand, although work hours of part-time and temporary employment are more flexible in Japan, pay for these positions is low.

Finally, in the last part of the paper, I looked at whether overall life satisfaction differed for mothers by their work choice, yet no statistically strong conclusions could be drawn. However, when household income level is controlled for, working long hours may decrease life satisfaction of mothers with children under six in Japan. Thus, we see a clear connection between work, life satisfaction, and a parent's socio-economic background. Distinguishing between work as necessity or as tool for self-development and personal fulfillment seems to be at the core of understanding how well parents are doing and how satisfied they are with their lives during the time when their children are young – and require a significant level of care. The paper also hinted at how laws and family policies in Japan and Germany differ and their potential impact on the well-being of the parents.

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