

Do full-time housewives and their husbands have
higher social status identification than working wives
and their husbands in present-day Japan?

Reiko YAMATO

「専業主婦であること」は女性の階層帰属意識を高めるか？
「専業主婦の妻を持つこと」は男性の階層帰属意識を高めるか？

大 和 礼 子

Abstract

Two hypotheses can be identified regarding the effect of a wife being a full-time housewife on the social status identification of the wife herself and of her husband. One hypothesis is that when the woman is a full-time housewife as opposed to a working wife, she or her husband has higher social status identification than others. If this hypothesis is supported, it can be argued that Japanese people even today regard the wife being a full-time housewife as a higher-class lifestyle, and that this notion, at least partially, hinders Japanese women's labor participation. The alternative hypothesis is that the wife being a full-time housewife raises neither the wife's own nor her husband's social status identification. If this hypothesis is supported, it would indicate that the aforementioned notion no longer prevails in present-day Japan, and that stagnant rate of Japanese women's labor participation should not be attributed to that notion but to other factors. Using data from the *2005 Social Stratification and Social Mobility Survey* conducted in Japan, this study analyzes the relationship between the wife being a *full-time housewife* and the social status identification of the wife and the husband.

The findings are as follows. With the husband's class status being controlled for, the wife being a *full-time housewife* does not raise either the wife's or her husband's social status identification, whereas the *wife seeking employment* (i.e., not being employed but seeking employment) consistently lowers them, although the two types of wives are same in that they are not employed. Further analysis reveals that although wives seeking employment and full-time housewives are also similar in terms of their socio-economic status and gender role attitude, they are different in their subjective sense of life satisfaction and their orientation to working in terms of both attitudinal and behavior levels. Namely, wives seeking employment are more likely than full-time housewives to have a lower level of life satisfaction but a positive attitude toward continuous employment and actually have had such a life course. On the basis of these findings, it is argued that for wives with a stronger work orientation like wives seeking employment, being out of work has a stronger negative effect on their social status identification and life satisfaction than for other wives.

The conclusion is twofold. First, Japanese people no longer have the notion that the wife being a full-time housewife is a higher-class lifestyle; therefore, the stagnant rate of Japanese women's labor participation should not be attributed to that notion. Second, the demoralizing effects of unemployment are observed even among married women in present-day Japan.

Key words: social status identification, full-time housewife, seeking employment, effect of unemployment, Japan

抄 録

女性自身あるいは自分の妻が「専業主婦であること」が、その人の階層帰属意識に及ぼす影響については、2つの仮説を立てることができる。第1は、自分あるいは妻が「専業主婦であること」は「働いていること」に比べて、その人の階層帰属意識を高めるという仮説である。この仮説が支持されると、日本では「専業主婦は高い階層のライフスタイル」とする社会意識があり、それが女性の労働参加を阻む要因の1つとなっていると考えることができる。第2は、「専業主婦であること」が階層帰属意識を高めることはないという仮説である。この仮説が支持されると、現代の日本には先に述べたような意識はなく、女性の労働力化が進まないことの原因をそれに帰すことはできないと考えることが可能である。

本研究は2005年SSM日本調査のデータを用いて、妻が「専業主婦であること」(＝無職だが求職中ではないこと)と、妻本人およびその夫の階層帰属意識との関係を検討した。その結果、夫の階層的地位をコントロールすると、妻の従業上の地位が、妻本人あるいは夫の階層帰属意識に影響を及ぼすことはなかった。つまり妻が「専業主婦」であることが階層帰属意識を高める効果はなかった。ただし唯一の例外が、妻が「無職だが求職中」という場合であり、この場合は他の変数(夫の階層的地位を含む)をコントロールしても一貫して、妻・夫双方の階層帰属意識を低下させる効果があった。また求職中と専業主婦の比較をさらに進めた結果、求職中の女性は、実際の階層的地位(自分や夫)や性別役割意識の点では専業主婦と違いはないが、生活満足感においては専業主婦より低く、労働指向性(意識・行動の両面)という点では専業主婦より強いことがわかった。このことから、労働指向性の強い女性が、就業することができない場合、階層帰属意識や生活満足感が低下すると考えられる。この結果から、第1に、今日の日本では「専業主婦は高い階層のライフスタイル」という意識は弱いこと、第2に、失業がモラルを低下させるという効果が、現代日本で既婚女性にもみられる可能性があること、の2点について論じた。

キーワード：階層帰属意識、専業主婦、求職中、失業の効果、日本

1. Research Question

A lifestyle with the wife being a full-time housewife has been seen not only as desirable but also one of higher class in Japan since the period between the First and the Second World Wars. Is such a notion, however, still alive in Japan at the beginning of the twenty-first century? This study analyzes what kinds of effects a lifestyle of the wife being a full-time housewife have on the subjective social status identification of the wife herself and of her husband. On the basis of the results, it is explored whether Japanese people today still regard such a lifestyle as one of higher class.

The social status positioning of the full-time housewife within society has changed over time. In European countries and the United States, a lifestyle with the wife being a full-time housewife was gradually established as a lifestyle of urban bourgeois families from the late seventeenth century onwards. According to research on British family history, in the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, having a non-working wife came to be seen as symbolizing the social status of middle class men (Davidoff 1995; Davidoff, et al. 1999; Hall

1992[1980]; 1992[1981]; 1992[1982]). Later, in the mid-nineteenth century, working class people also aimed at achieving the same lifestyle because it raised the cultural status of the working class as well as justified their political claim for a “family wage” (i.e., a wage that was sufficient for providing a wife and children (Hall 1994; McClelland 1998)). It is from the 1970s, against the backdrop of both the end of the postwar economic boom and the rise of feminist movement, that the idea that being a full-time housewife was the most desirable life style for women weakened (Crompton 1997; Goldin 1990).

In Japan, a lifestyle with the wife being a full-time housewife appeared among the urban middle class in the interwar period of the early twentieth century (Chimoto 1990). The expansion of the wage-earning new middle class and the increasing influence of the nineteenth century’s Western culture which emphasized the domesticity of women lay behind this change. After the Second World War, against the backdrop of rapid economic growth in the 1960s, the lifestyle with the wife being a full-time housewife prevailed across classes, even in the countryside, while women’s labor participation rates declined (Ochiai 1997). This social transformation gave people the impression that being the full-time housewife of a salaried man signified a higher class status than being a working wife in a farmer’s household or in a self-employed household (Yamada 1994). After the end of economic growth in the mid-1970s, women’s labor participation rate began to bounce back up because husbands’ wages stop rising and households needed the supplemental income earned by wives (Ozawa, Kimura, and Ibe 1989; Sugino and Yonemura 2000; Ueno 1994). In the mid-1980s, however, new tax and social security systems were introduced that gave preferential treatment to full-time housewives than to working wives. These new systems gave married women a financial incentive to stay at home on the one hand, and implicitly supported the ideology that a full-time housewife is the most desirable lifestyle for women on the other (Shiota 1992; Osawa 1993). In present-day Japan, women’s labor participation rates are lower than in many Western developed countries (see Figure1), particularly in the life stage for family formation such as at marriage and childbirth (see Figure 2). This indicates that Japanese women are more likely than their counterparts in other developed countries to choose (or be forced to choose) the lifestyle of being a full-time housewife.

During and after the 1990s, however, Japanese people’s attitudes toward the lifestyle of the wife being a full-time housewife became mixed. On the one hand, according to surveys

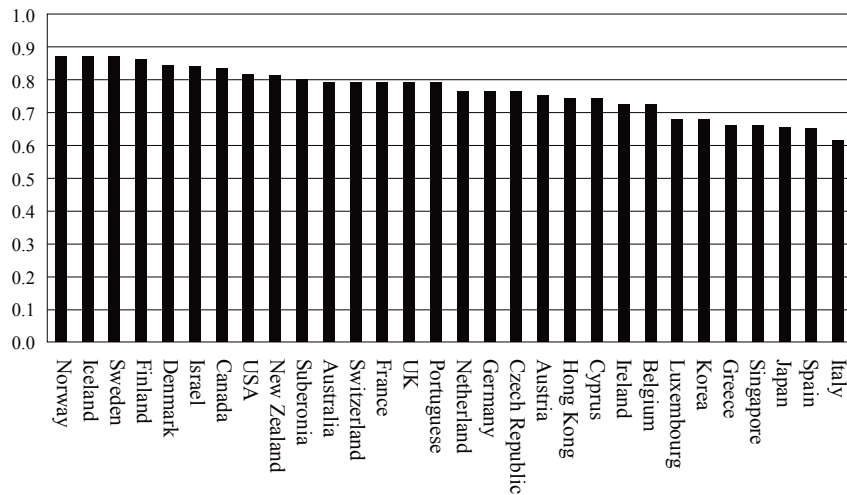


Fig. 1. Ratios between women's labor participation rate and men's labor participation rate in selected countries or regions (2004)

(Note) The top 30 countries according to the ranking of United Nations Human Development Index are selected. Men's labor participation rate is set as 1.

(Source) United Nations Development Program (2006) quoted from Kawaguchi (2008: p.8).

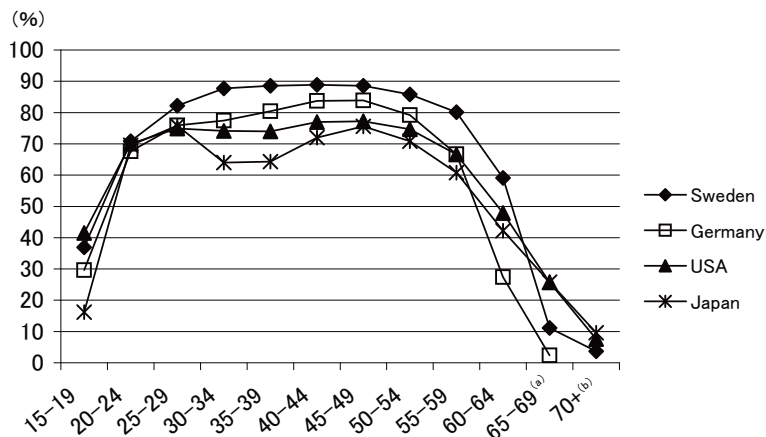


Fig. 2. Women's labor participation rates by age group in selected countries with different welfare regimes (2007)

(Note) ^(a) 65 and over for Germany.

^(b) 70 to 74 for Sweden.

(Source) ILO Laborsta Internet (<http://laborsta.ilo.org/>).

by the Cabinet Office (and its predecessor, the Prime Minister's Office), the majority of men and women no longer agree with the idea that men are the breadwinners and women are housewives after the 1990s (see Figure 3). On the other hand, according to *the National Survey on Childbirth in Japan*, a life course of becoming a full-time housewife after childbirth had, up until 1992, been the most popular among unmarried female respondents. In surveys after 1992, although another life course (i.e., one involving reentry into the workforce after childrearing) became the most popular, as many as 20% to 30% of women with lower educational attainment (i.e., without a university degree) still thought the life course of being a full-time housewife as ideal (The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2007).

Two hypotheses therefore can be set up regarding the effect of the wife being a full-time housewife on the subjective social status identification of the wife herself and of her husband. The first hypothesis is that full-time housewives and husbands with full-time housewives have higher social status identification than working wives and husbands with working wives, respectively. If this hypothesis is empirically supported, it can be argued that Japanese people even today hold the notion that the wife being a full-time housewife is a higher-class lifestyle. If this is so, it can be further argued that it is this notion, at least partially, that hinders Japanese women's labor participation.

The alternative hypothesis is that in present-day Japan, the wife being a full-time

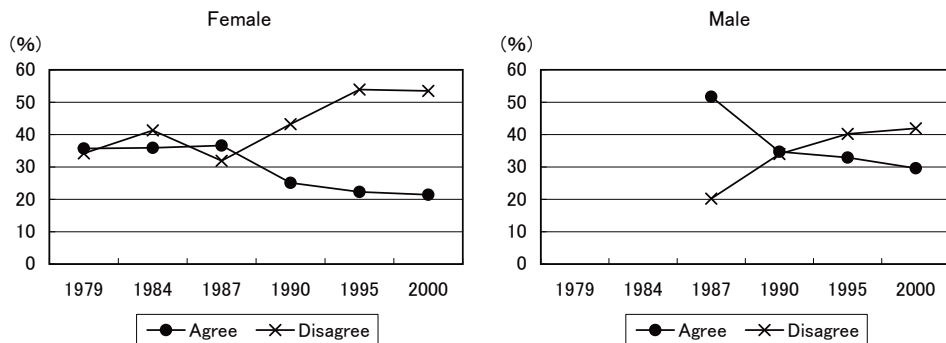


Fig 3. Historical change from the 1970s in the attitude that men are the breadwinners and women are housewives in Japan

(Source) *Monthly Public Opinion Survey in Japan*, February 1980; April 1985; September 1987; March 1991; December 1995; September 2000.

housewife does not raise the wife's or the husband's social status identification. If this hypothesis is empirically supported, it can be argued that most Japanese people no longer regard the wife being a full-time housewife as a higher-class lifestyle. If this is so, it can be further argued that the stagnation seen in Japanese women's labor participation is not caused by this notion, but by other factors including other ideological factors (e.g., ideology of motherhood regardless of social class) or structural factors (e.g., poor government support for childrearing and an unfavorable workplace environment that offers women neither rewarding work nor measures for balancing work and family responsibilities).

Which of these two hypotheses reflects the reality? Using the *2005 Social Stratification and Social Mobility Survey* (hereafter, the *2005 SSM Survey*), this study examines the effect of the wife being a full-time housewife on the subjective social status identification of the wife herself and her husband.

2. Examination of Earlier Studies

In previous Japanese research, an individual's subjective social status identification has been used mainly as an indicator of his or her *actual* class status (Akagawa 2000; Naoi 1990). The major question of this line of research has been how women's class status can be understood, or more specifically whether it should be conceptualized with their own social status or with the social status of the male head of the household to which they belong (Acker 1992).

In such research, the following have been examined as variables that possibly affect women's subjective social status identification: (1) their class-related attributes (e.g., educational qualification, income, and occupation), (2) the class-related attributes of their spouse (e.g., educational qualification, income, and occupation), (3) the class-related attributes of their parents (e.g., educational qualification, income, and main occupation before retirement), (4) the class-related attributes of their household (e.g., home ownership and the amount of consumer durable goods and cultural goods owned), and (5) a subjective sense of satisfaction with their life (Akagawa 2000; Naoi 1990). Akagawa (2000), for example, compares the effects of these factors on subjective social status identification between married men and women using data from the *1995 SSM Survey*. According to the results, for both husbands and wives, their households' class-related attributes and their own sense of life satisfaction significantly affect their subjective social status identification. For men, in

addition to these two factors, their own class-related attributes also have significant effects on their social status identification, but the attributes of their spouse have no effect at all on it. For women, contrary to men, it is not their own class-related attributes but their husbands' that significantly affect the women's social status identification.

3. Data and Methods

3. 1. Analytical Framework

The present study, unlike the previous Japanese studies mentioned above, uses subjective social status identification as an indicator of to what extent people in society hold the notion that the wife being a full-time housewife is a higher-class lifestyle. This study assumes that when full-time wives and their husbands consistently have higher social status identification than working wives and their husbands, respectively, it is likely that people in such a society generally hold the notion that the wife being a full-time housewife is a higher-class lifestyle. In order to see if such a positive association exists in present-day Japan between the wife being a full-time housewife and the social status identification of the wife herself and of her husband, ordinary least square multiple regression model is estimated.

The explained variable is the subjective social status identification of the survey respondents, and the explanatory variable is the wife's employment status (i.e., whether she is a full-time housewife or has another employment status). For controlling variables, the four types of class-related attributes mentioned in the previous subsection (i.e. attributes of respondents, their spouses, parents, and households) are used since previous studies have reported that all or some of them have significant effects on social status identification. The subjective sense of life satisfaction, however, is not used as a controlling variable because for one thing, this variable is very similar to the explained variable of social status identification in that both of them measure respondents' subjective sense, and for another, it is also reported that the two variables have a strong association (Shirakura 2000). Age is also used as a controlling variable because age is expected to be related not only to the explained variable (i.e., social status identification) but also to other explanatory variables including educational qualifications, income, home ownership, and the amount of goods owned.

3. 2. Data

The data from the *2005 SSM Survey* are used. This survey was conducted in Japan, through interviews and forms, with 14,140 people aged 20 to 69 years as of September 30, 2005 who were selected nationwide based on stratified sampling. The number of valid responses was 5,742 (44.06%). The targets of the present study are men and women who, at the time of the survey, were married and who were themselves, together with their spouses, less than 60 years of age (i.e. before retirement age).

3. 3. Variables

Explained variable:

Social status identification: Respondents were asked “If the entire society is divided into ten classes from top to bottom, which class you think you belong to?” Based on the response, the value 10 is assigned to those whose social status identification is highest and the value 0 to those whose social status identification is lowest.

Explanatory variables:

Wife's employment status: Six dummy variables, namely, “manager” (manager, executive), “standard employee” (regular worker who is constantly employed), “non-standard employee” (part-timer, temporary worker, contract worker, home worker), “self-employed sector” (business owner, freelancer, family employee), “seeking employment” (not employed but seeking a job), and “full-time housewife” (neither employed nor searching for a job), are used with “full-time housewife” as the reference category. The reason why not-employed wives are divided into those “seeking employment” and “full-time housewives” is that social status identification is expected to differ considerably between the two categories.

Controlling variables:

Age: A preliminary analysis revealed that the 0-order correlation between age and social status identification was not statistically significant and that there was no linear relationship between them. Thus, dummy variables indicating 20s (reference category), 30s, 40s, and 50s are used.

Years of education: There have been two educational systems in modern Japan: an old system operated before and during the Second World War and a new system brought in after the war. On the basis of the highest educational level attained in each system, the following values are assigned. For educational institutions under the prewar system: elementary school (6), higher elementary school (9), middle school or girls' high school (10), vocational school (9), teachers' school (13), higher school, specialized school, or higher teachers' school (14), and university (16). For educational institutions under the postwar system: junior high school (9), high school (12), junior college or college of technology (14), university (16), graduate school (18).

Annual income: The following values are assigned to their corresponding category shown: no income (0), up to 250,000 yen (12.5), 250,000 to 500,000 yen (37.5), ... , 1.25 to 1.5 million yen (137.5) (with intervals of 250,000 yen up to this point); then, 1.5 to 2 million yen (175), 2 to 2.5 million yen (225), ... , 4 to 4.5 million yen (425) (with intervals of 500,000 yen); and finally, 4.5 to 5.5 million yen (500), 5.5 to 6.5 million yen (600), ..., 20.5 million and up (2050) (with intervals of 1 million yen).

Occupational prestige: Occupational prestige scores made by Tuzuki (1998: 230-236) are used.

Home ownership: The value 1 indicates ownership of a house or an apartment; the value 0 indicates no home ownership.

Number of goods owned: A value ranging from 0 to 20 is assigned according to the amount of goods owned for 20 items (e.g., bathtub, children's room, piano, dishwasher, DVD recorder, personal computer, sports club membership, art or antique objects, stocks and bonds, and holiday home).

4. Results of Analysis

4. 1. Preliminary Analysis: Relationship between Social Status Identification and Other Variables

First, the relationship between social status identification (explained variable) and the wife's employment status (explanatory variable) is examined. Table 1, with the results of a one-way ANOVA, shows that the wife's or the husband's social status identification differs significantly depending on the wife's employment status. For both wives and husbands, social status identification is highest when the wife is a manager; it is lowest when she is seeking employment. Focusing on the comparison between a full-time housewife and others, the results of multiple comparisons reveal that for both wives and husbands, social status identification is higher when the wife is a full-time housewife, compared to when she is working in non-standard employment or is seeking employment (data not shown). Table 2 focuses on differences between the age groups. For both wives and husbands, there is no significant difference in social status identification between the age groups.

Next, the relationships between the explained variable and controlling variables are examined. As shown in Table 3, for both wives and husbands, the 0-order correlations between social status identification and all of controlling variables are significant.

To summarize, firstly, with other variables being not controlled for, for both wives and husbands, social status identification is higher when wives themselves are, or husbands have,

Table 1. Wife's and husband's social status identification by wife's employment status

Wife's employment status	Wife's status identification			Husband's status identification		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Managerial	6.8387	1.31901	31	6.6522	1.52580	23
Standard employee	5.9729	1.42141	332	5.6390	1.43990	241
Non-standard employee	5.5780	1.48978	481	5.3876	1.62767	356
Self-employed	5.7353	1.53109	136	5.6443	1.49356	149
Seeking employment	5.4795	1.68415	73	4.7963	1.60635	54
Full-time housewife	5.9186	1.48753	393	5.6682	1.62741	428
Total	5.7981	1.50087	1446	5.5604	1.59102	1251
<i>F</i>	7.319**			6.217**		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2. Wife's and husband's social status identification by wife's age

	Wife's status identification			Husband's status identification		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
20s	5.4712	1.45453	104	5.6296	1.48319	54
30s	5.8463	1.51869	410	5.4595	1.63440	309
40s	5.7923	1.46859	49	5.5516	1.56039	397
50s	5.8326	1.52649	442	5.6182	1.59886	495
Total	5.7968	1.50110	1447	5.5586	1.59030	1255
<i>F</i>	1.869			.669		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3. Correlations between social status identification and other variables for wives and husbands

		Wife	<i>N</i>	Husband	<i>N</i>
Wife	Years of education	.225**	1447	.210**	1238
	Annual income	.121**	1304	.122**	1019
Father	Years of education	.130**	1169	.063*	1013
	Occupational prestige	.138**	1274	.124**	1125
Household	Home ownership	.169**	1444	.088**	1253
	Number of goods owned	.228**	1447	.238**	1255
Husband	Years of education	.263**	1434	.216**	1255
	Occupational prestige	.258**	1377	.214**	1221
	Annual income	.339**	1070	.373**	1097

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

full-time housewives than when wives themselves are, or husbands have, wives working in non-standard employment or seeking employment. Secondly, social status identification is also significantly associated with all other controlling variables including class-related attributes such as education, occupation, and income of their own, their spouses, their households, and their fathers. The question then arises whether, with these variables being controlled for, social status identification for the wife herself and for her husband is higher when the wife is a full-time housewife than when she is in an unstable employment situation such as working in non-standard employment or seeking employment.

4. 2. Result for Wives: Does Being a Full-Time Housewife Raise the Wife's Own Social Status Identification?

In order to answer this question, ordinary least square multiple regression analysis is

Table 4. Descriptive statistics

	Wife (N =769)		Husband (N =733)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Wife				
Social status identification	5.814	1.543	5.589	1.556
Employment status				
Housewife (ref.)				
Managerial	.023	.151	.018	.132
Standard employee	.246	.431	.198	.399
Non-standard employee	.345	.476	.276	.447
Self-employed	.086	.280	.109	.312
Seeking employment	.043	.202	.046	.210
Years of education	12.822	1.677	12.847	1.761
Annual income (JPY10,000)	148.992	186.171	141.849	202.298
Age: 20s (ref.)				
30s	.302	.459	.252	.435
40s	.330	.471	.330	.471
50s	.285	.452	.379	.486
Father				
Years of education	10.446	3.113	9.982	3.182
Occupational prestige	52.178	9.046	52.319	9.326
Household				
Home ownership	.766	.424	.801	.400
Number of goods owned	10.779	3.117	10.850	2.941
Husband				
Years of education	13.282	2.288	13.379	2.327
Occupational prestige	53.381	9.181	54.400	9.725
Annual income (JPY10,000)	540.247	291.457	576.757	298.525

conducted with social status identification for the wife or the husband as the explained variable, the wife's employment status as the explanatory variable, and age and other class-related attributes as the controlling variables. Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in the following analysis.

In this section, the result for wives is examined. Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis for wives with their social status identification as the explained variable. In Model 1, only the wife's employment status, the explanatory variable, is included. The results show that compared to the reference category (being a full-time housewife), a wife's social status identification is significantly higher when she is a manager, but is significantly

lower when she is working in non-standard employment or is seeking employment.

Next, Model 2 controls for the wife's age, Model 3 controls for the wife's class-related attributes (i.e., years of education and income), Model 4 controls for the wife's father's class-related attributes (i.e., years of education and occupational prestige before retirement), and Model 5 controls for the household's class-related attributes (i.e., home ownership and the amount of goods owned). Even when these variables are controlled for, the wife's social status identification is lower when she is working in *non-standard employment*, *seeking employment*, or (to a less extent) working in the self-employed sector than when she is a full-time housewife.

Lastly, Model 6 controls for the variables of the husband's class-related attributes (i.e., years of education, occupational prestige, and income). Even with these variables being controlled for, the wife *seeking employment* significantly lowers her social status identification. Being in the other two types of employment status, however, results in having no or only weak effects on her social status identification: to be specific, working in the self-employed sector is no longer significantly associated with her social status identification and working in non-standard employment is only weakly associated with it.

Looking at the effects of the controlling variables, the wife's age (in Model 2), her years of education and income (in Model 3), and the number of goods owned by her household (in Model 5) all have significant effects. The effects of these variables, however, disappear in the final model of Model 6 where husbands' class-related attributes are controlled for. In Model 6, only home ownership and husband's income have significant effects on wives' social status identification: namely, home ownership and husband's higher income are likely to raise the wife's social status identification.

The findings for wives can be summarized as follows. First, the social status identification of the full-time housewife is higher than that of the wife working in non-standard employment or seeking employment as far as her husband's class-related attributes are NOT controlled for. Second, however, once her husband's class related attributes are controlled for, social status identification of the full-time housewife does not differ from that of other wives. Third, it is the husband's and the household's attributes—but not the wife's own attributes—that mainly determine the wife's social status identification. Fourth, the only exception to this is when the wife is *seeking employment*: the status of seeking

Table 5. Regression analysis predicting Japanese married women's social status identification (N=769)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
(Constant)	5.924**		5.469**		3.778**		3.641**		3.138**		3.095**	
Wife: Full-timehousewife(ref.)												
Managerial	1.076**	.105	.984**	.096	.408	.040	.409	.040	.302	.030	.183	.018
Standardemployee	.086	.024	.035	.010	-.368+	-.103	-.334	-.093	-.316	-.088	-.044	-.012
Non-standard employee	-.309*	-.095	-.370*	-.114	-.430**	-.133	-.422**	-.130	-.392**	-.121	-.254+	-.078
Self-employed	-.197	-.036	-.292	-.053	-.449*	-.082	-.464*	-.084	-.544*	-.099	-.315	-.057
Seekingemployment	-.773**	-.102	-.815**	-.107	-.866**	-.114	-.839**	-.110	-.808**	-.106	-.683*	-.090
Wife: 20s (ref.)												
30s			.478*	.142	.458*	.136	.479*	.142	.284	.085	.146	.044
40s			.621**	.189	.593**	.181	.670**	.204	.302	.092	-.022	-.007
50s			.532*	.156	.597**	.175	.705**	.206	.284	.083	.023	.007
Wife: Years of education					.131**	.142	.106**	.115	.092*	.100	.031	.034
Annual income					.001*	.130	.001*	.123	.001*	.105	.000	.058
Father: Years of education							.038+	.075	.030*	.060	.022	.043
Occupational prestige							.000	.001	.000	-.001	-.006	-.036
Household: Home ownership									.299+	.082	.346*	.095
Number of goods owned									.079**	.159	.038+	.076
Husband: Years of education											.033	.049
Occupational prestige											.013+	.075
Annual income											.001**	.235
Adjusted R^2	.027		.034		.065		.067		.103		.162	
Change in R^2	.033**		.011*		.033**		.004		.038**		.062**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6. Regression analysis predicting Japanese married men's social status identification (N=733)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
(Constant)	5.691**		5.807**		3.283**		2.796**		2.618**		3.089**	
Wife: Full-time housewife (ref.)												
Managerial	1.078*	.091	1.108*	.094	.725	.061	.723	.061	.512	.043	.626	.053
Standard employee	-.043	-.011	-.053	-.014	-.460*	-.118	-.438*	-.112	-.387+	-.099	-.288	-.074
Non-standard employee	-.216	-.062	-.216	-.062	-.264+	-.076	-.245+	-.070	-.194	-.056	-.093	-.027
Self-employed	-.141	-.028	-.163	-.033	-.238	-.048	-.224	-.045	-.234	-.047	-.058	-.012
Seeking employment	-.809**	-.109	-.812**	-.110	-.820**	-.111	-.805**	-.109	-.719**	-.097	-.564*	-.076
Wife: 20s (ref.)												
30s			-.164	-.046	-.091	-.025	-.079	-.022	-.205	-.057	-.396	-.111
40s			-.186	-.056	-.099	-.030	-.056	-.017	-.292	-.088	-.655*	-.198
50s			-.023	-.007	.162	.050	.233	.073	-.007	-.002	-.427	-.133
Wife: Years of education					.187**	.211	.169**	.191	.133**	.151	.037	.042
Annual income					.001*	.105	.001*	.103	.001+	.084	.001+	.095
Father: Years of education							.011	.022	.005	.010	-.015	-.029
Occupational prestige							.011	.064	.009	.057	.004	.026
Household: Home ownership									-.215	-.055	-.134	-.034
Number of goods owned									.104**	.197	.057*	.107
Husband: Years of education											.093**	.139
Occupational prestige											-.002	-.012
Annual income											.001**	.258
Adjusted R^2	.016		.015		.068		.070		.094		.159	
Change in R^2	.023**		.002		.055**		.005		.026**		.068**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

employment significantly and consistently lowers her social status identification.

4.3. Result for Husbands: Does the Wife Being a Full-Time Housewife Raise the Husband's Social Status Identification?

This section examines husbands' social status identification. Table 6 shows the result of multiple regression analysis for husbands with their social status identification as the explained variable.

In Model 1, only his wife's employment status, the explanatory variable, is included. The results show that compared to the reference category (his wife being a full-time housewife), the husband's social status identification is significantly higher when his wife is a manager and is significantly lower when she is *seeking employment*. The difference from the wife's case (Table 5) is that having a wife working in *non-standard employment* does not have any significant effect on the husband's social status identification.

Next, Model 2 controls for his wife's age, Model 3 controls for his wife's class-related attributes (i.e., years of education and income), Model 4 controls for his father's class-related attributes (i.e., years of education and occupational prestige before retirement), and Model 5 controls for his household's class-related attributes (i.e., home ownership and the amount of goods owned). Even when these variables are controlled for, the husband's social status identification is lower when his wife is working in *standard employment* or is *seeking employment* than when she is a full-time housewife. A very interesting difference from the wives' case (Table 5) is that for wives, working in *non-standard* employment has a negative effect on their own social status identification, whereas for husbands, it is the wife working in *standard* employment (but not in non-standard employment) that has a similar negative effect on husbands' social status identification. In other words, for wives themselves, working in an *unstable* condition like non-standard employment has a negative effect on their social status identification, whereas for husbands, having a wife working in a *stable* condition like that for men, such as standard employment, has a negative effect on it.

Lastly, Model 6 controls for the variables of the husband's own class-related attributes (i.e., years of education, occupational prestige, and income). Even with these variables being controlled for, having a wife *seeking employment* significantly lowers the husband's social status identification. The negative effect seen in previous models of having a wife working in

standard employment disappears, however, in this final model.

Looking at the effects of the controlling variables, his wife's years of education and income (in Model 3) and the number of goods owned in his household (in Model 5) have significant effects on the husband's social status identification. However, the effects of these controlling variables, except for goods owned in his household, disappear in Model 6 where the husband's own class-related attributes are controlled for. In Model 6, only the husband's own income and the number of goods owned in his household have significant effects on the husband's social status identification: namely, earning a higher income as well as owning more goods raises his social status identification.

The findings for husbands can be summarized as follows. First, with other variables being controlled for, having a full-time housewife does not raise the husband's social status identification, but having a wife who is *seeking employment* consistently lowers it. Second, except for the effect of the wife seeking employment, it is the husband's own and the household's attributes that mainly determine the husband's social status identification. These findings are similar to those in the wife's case (see section 4.3. and Table 6).

4.4. What Kinds of Socio-Economic Background Do Wives Seeking Employment Have?

The analysis described above reveals that, for both the wife and the husband, subjective social status identification is significantly lower when the wife is seeking employment than when she is a full-time housewife, although the two types of wives have the same status in that they are not employed. We next compare several other characteristics of wives seeking employment with those of full-time housewives and explore what kinds of socio-economic background the wives seeking employment have. The sign '**' indicates $p < 0.01$, '*' $p < .05$, and '+' $p < .10$ in this section.

Further analysis reveals that wives seeking employment and full-time housewives differ in another subjective class-related variable, namely, a sense of satisfaction with their lives. The *2005 SSM Survey* asks respondents to report the level of their subjective life satisfaction. A value of 5 is assigned to those who report the highest level of satisfaction and a value of 1 to those who report the lowest. Wives seeking employment have significantly lower life satisfaction than full-time housewives (3.73 and 4.09 in average, respectively; $F = 8.564^{**}$).

On the basis of these results, three hypotheses can be set up that could explain why wives seeking employment are more likely than full-time housewives to have lower social status identification and life satisfaction. The first hypothesis concerns *actual socio-economic status*, the second *gender role attitude*, and the third *orientation to work*.

The first hypothesis is that wives seeking employment are more likely than full-time housewives to have lower positions in *actual* socio-economic strata, and their lower level of *subjective* social status identification and life satisfaction is just a reflection of their lower position in actual socio economic status. This hypothesis, however, is not empirically supported because no significant difference exists between wives seeking employment and full-time housewives in terms of their actual socio-economic status (i.e., their own educational attainment as well as their husband's educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige).

The second hypothesis is that since wives seeking employment have a more egalitarian attitude to gender roles than full-time housewives and the actual situation of not being employed has a stronger negative impact on wives seeking employment than on full-time housewives in terms of their social status identification and life satisfaction. The *2005 SSM Survey* asks respondents to report to what extent they agree to each of three statements on gender role attitudes: "men should work outside the home and woman should stay at home," "boys should be raised differently from girls," and "women are better at handling household chores and childrearing than men." A comparison of these responses reveals that this hypothesis is not true either: there is no significant difference between wives seeking employment and full-time housewives in any of these gender role attitudes.

The third hypothesis is that the two types of wives are different in terms of orientation to work even though they are similar in terms of gender role attitudes in a more general sense like above. According to this hypothesis, since wives seeking employment have a stronger orientation to work than full-time housewives, the actual situation of not being employed has a stronger negative impact on wives seeking employment than on full-time housewives in terms of their social status identification and life satisfaction. The third hypothesis seems to be empirically supported. With regard to attitudinal level, the *2005 SSM Survey* asks respondents to report what types of employment prospects they had and have at two points in time: when they started working for the first time and at the time of the

survey. According to the results, for both these points in time, wives seeking employment are more likely to choose the answer “Will continue to work until retirement,” whereas full-time housewives are more likely to choose the answer “Will stop working at times.”⁽¹⁾ Similarly, with regard to behavior level, first, wives seeking employment were more likely than full-time housewives to be working when they had a small child or children (i.e., at the times of the youngest child’s birth [$\chi^2 = 7.559^{**}$] and when the youngest child was 4 years old [$\chi^2 = 4.616^{*}$])⁽²⁾. Second, among those who were not employed at the time of the youngest child’s birth, wives seeking employment are more likely than full-time housewives to reenter the workforce after child rearing [$\chi^2 = 13.635^{**}$].

These results reveal that although wives seeking employment and full-time housewives are similar in terms of actual socio-economic status and gender role attitudes, they are different in terms of orientation to work, both in attitudinal and behavioral levels. Wives seeking employment are more likely than full-time housewives to have a positive attitude toward continued employment and actually to be working when they have a small child or children or to reenter the workforce after child rearing. On the basis of these results, it can be argued that when such women with a stronger work orientation are out of work, their social status identification as well as life satisfaction becomes lower than that of other women with a weaker work orientation, even if they are, as women, not socially expected to work in accordance with their gender role, even if they have breadwinner husbands, and even if they are quite similar to other wives in terms of actual socio-economic status.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows. First, in present-day Japan, the wife being a full-time housewife is neither positively associated with the wife’s own nor her husband’s social status identification. To be specific, regarding wives, full-time housewives do not have any higher social status identification than working wives when their husbands’ class-related attributes are controlled for. Similarly, husbands having a full-time housewife do not have any higher social status identification than husbands having a working wife when husbands’ own or their households’ class-related attributes are controlled for. For both wives and husbands, it is not the wives’ employment status of full-time housewife as part of the cultural lifestyle but the husbands’ and the households’ materialistic wealth such as income

and assets that mostly determine their social status identification.

It can be argued from this result that Japanese people today do not particularly hold the notion that the wife being a full-time housewife is a higher-class lifestyle. It is not appropriate therefore to attribute the stagnant labor participation rate of Japanese women to this cultural idea or ideology. Instead, we need to examine other ideological factors (e.g., the ideology of motherhood) or structural factors (e.g., women-unfriendly workplaces and social policies) that might inhibit women's employment.

Second, however, the wife seeking employment, which is the wife's employment status, is an exception of the first finding. Wives seeking employment consistently have lower social status identification and life satisfaction than full-time housewives, although the two types of wives are the same in that they are not employed. When looking for the reason for this, it was revealed that although the two types of non-employed wives are also similar in terms of actual socio-economic status and gender role attitudes, they are quite different in terms of orientation to work: wives seeking employment have a higher orientation to work than full-time housewives in both attitudinal and behavioral levels. On the basis of this result, it is argued that this difference in orientation to work between the two types of wives may lie behind the difference in their social status identification and life satisfaction. For wives with such a strong work orientation, when they cannot find work, their social status identification as well as life satisfaction becomes lower than for other wives. In Japan, not only ordinary people but also even scholars and policy makers tend to assume married women to be family oriented and therefore assume that unemployment does not exert any serious effect on their subjective sense of social status identification and life satisfaction. The results of the present study, however, reveal that in present-day Japan, the demoralizing effects of unemployment are observed not only for men (Grint 1997 [1992]), but also for married women too.

Notes

- 1) It should be noted that these results are statistically insignificant perhaps because the survey was designed so that the questions about orientation to work were asked of only half the respondents, with the other half being asked different questions. Therefore, the number of respondents for the questions about orientation to work was half of and thus far fewer than the number of respondents for other questions analyzed in this study.

- 2) It is worth noting that there is no significant difference between wives seeking employment and full-time housewives in terms of their labor participation rates at other life stages (i.e., 2 years before marriage, at the time of marriage and the first child's birth, and when the youngest child was 7 years old or older) nor in terms of employment characteristics of their first job (e.g., employment status, occupational type, and occupational prestige).

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