Is Japanese Mothers' Re-entry into the Labor Market as Part-timers Associated with Lower Socioeconomic Status?: A Comparison between the 1995 and 2005 SSM Surveys

Reiko Yamato
(Kansai University)

Abstract

The labor force participation rates of Japanese women by age group show an M-shape curve, indicating that Japanese women quit employment when they have small children and re-enter the labor market when the youngest child reaches school age. Previous analyses, using data obtained from the 1995 Social Stratification and Mobility (SSM) Survey, found that first, Japanese mothers' re-entry into the labor market as part-timers increased from older cohorts to younger cohorts, and second, this pattern of re-entry behavior became increasingly observed mainly in mothers with lower socioeconomic statuses. The present study, analyzing data obtained from the 2005 SSM Survey, has three main findings. First, mothers' re-entry into the labor market after child-rearing has not significantly increased in younger cohorts. Second, their re-entry as part-timers differs little by socioeconomic class and is thus no longer behavior that should be associated with lower class statuses. Third, however, the timing of re-entry and the kinds of job mothers take at re-entry are closely related to their class status. Lower class mothers are more likely to re-enter the labor market earlier and take manual or sales jobs, while higher class mothers are more likely to re-enter later and have professional or clerical jobs. The background to and implications of the results are discussed.

Key words and phrases: mother's re-entry into the labor market, social class, birth cohort, employment status, job, timing of re-entry

1. Women's Labor Participation Rate Curves

1-1. Three types of women's labor participation rate curves in Asia

Ochiai, Yamane, and Miyasaka (2007) argue that, in Asian countries, there are three

types of women's labor participation rate curves by age group. The first is a reversed U-shape curve, which is apparent for countries such as China and Thailand. The second type of curve reaches its peak when women are in their late twenties to early thirties and begins to fall thereafter, as is observed in countries including Taiwan and Singapore. The third type is an M-shape curve, which has two peaks when women are in their late twenties and fifties, and which typifies the women's labor participation profile in Japan and South Korea. The M-shape curve in Japan reflects that Japanese women quit employment when they have small children and re-enter the labor market when their youngest child reaches school age (OECD 2003; Tanaka 1996).

1-2. Changes in patterns of women's re-entry into Japan's labor market

Studies in Japan have found that patterns of women's re-entry into the labor market changes across cohorts. Analyzing data from women who were born in the period 1913-32, the Japan Institute for Labor Research found that the labor participation rate curve for women in the 1913-17 birth cohort showed no M-shape, whereas it did for women in the 1918-22 birth cohort (*Koyo Shokugyo Sogo Kenkyusyo* 1988). The former cohort of women spent their early to mid-adulthood in agricultural society, continuing to participate in the labor market as agrarian workers even when they had small children. In contrast, the latter cohort experienced, in their early to mid-adulthood, a rapid postwar transformation from an agricultural to industrial society. In postwar industrial Japan, on the one hand it was difficult for married women with small children to continue employment outside the home, while on the other companies employed middle-aged married women after childrearing as cheap and flexible part-time labor.

Using data obtained from the 1995 Social Stratification and Mobility (SSM) Survey, Yamato (1998, 2005) analyzed changing patterns of married women's re-entry into the labor market for women born in 1926-1935 (aged in their 70s as of the year 2005), those born in 1936-45 (aged in their 60s), and those born in 1946-55 (aged in their 50s). The results revealed three characteristics of Japanese mothers' re-entry into the labor market: *an increase*, *a consistency*, and *changes*. First, married women's re-entry into the labor market increased from older cohorts to younger cohorts. Second, consistently across cohorts, married women re-entered the labor market due to family economic necessity. Third, diversity was seen in the socioeconomic background and employment status of women in the older cohorts at re-entry, whereas progressing uniformity was observed for women in the younger cohorts at re-entry; most had lower

socioeconomic backgrounds and re-entered as part-timers. In other words, according to the 1995 survey, married women's re-entry into the labor market became increasingly a life event that mostly lower class women experienced. Fourth, on the basis of the analyses of the youngest cohort born in 1956-65 (aged in their 30s at the time of the 1995 survey, and in their 40s at the time of the 2005 survey), Yamato (2005) pointed to the possibility that this cohort would re-enter the labor market earlier than preceding cohorts, which indicated that the norm for mothers of pre-school children to stay at home was weakening (see also Noguchi 2004).

2. Research question

The aims of the present study, using data obtained from the 2005 SSM Survey, were three-fold: analysis attempted to determine whether mothers' re-entry into the labor market continued to increase from older cohorts to younger cohorts, whether the timing of re-entry became earlier for women aged in their 40s as of the year 2005 than for older cohorts, and whether re-entry into the labor market after child-rearing continued to be a behavior of mainly lower class women.

3. Data analysis

Data from the 2005 SSM Survey conducted between November 2005 and April 2006 were analyzed. Respondents were those aged 20 to 69 years as of September 30, 2005. Through stratified systematic sampling, 13,031 respondents were chosen. The same numbers of surveys were distributed and 5,742 (44.06%) surveys were collected.

Female respondents were divided into 5 birth cohort groups: women born in 1936-1945 (aged in their 60s as of September 30, 2005), those born in 1946-1955 (aged in their 50s), those born in 1956-1965 (aged in their 40s), those born in 1966-1975 (aged in their 30s), and those born in 1976-1985 (aged in their 20s). In the present study, these cohorts are referred to as "those aged in their 60s," "50s," "40s," "30s," and "20s," respectively.

The present study focuses on married women's re-entry into the labor market after child rearing. According to Table 1-a, 67.7% of women in their 20s were not yet married and thus were excluded from the main analyses. According to Table 1-b, percentages of mothers whose youngest child had reached 7 years old (primary school

age) were 100% for those in their 60s and 50s, 89.6 % for those in their 40s, but only 24.7% for those in their 30s. This indicates that the majority of mothers in their 30s were still rearing pre-schoolers. Thus, women in their 30s were also excluded from the main analyses. This study, therefore, focuses on married women in their 40s and older who have at least one child. According to Table 1-b, percentages of mothers whose youngest child had reached 13 years old (junior-high school age) were almost 100% for those in their 60s and 50s, but only 59.8% for those in their 40s. It should be noted, therefore, that the majority of mothers in their 40s were still rearing primary-school children.

As shown in Table 2-d, percentages of *mothers who had retired and had no employment when they bore their youngest child* were 47.3% for those in their 60s, 55.6% for those in their 50s, and 60.9% for those in their 40s. Since this study focused on the pattern of mothers' re-entry into the labor market after bearing the children, it is data from this specific category of mothers that were analyzed in the main analyses.

Variables used for the following analyses and their measures were as follows.

Cohort: Currently married women born in or before 1965 with at least one child were divided into three cohorts: those who were "born in 1936-1945 (aged in their 60s)," "born in 1946-1955 (aged in their 50s)," and "born in 1956-1965 (aged in their 40s)."

Educational level and education years: The educational level and number of education years of women and their husbands were divided and coded as follows: "junior-high school graduate" (9 years), "high school graduate" (12 years), and "higher education graduate" including "junior college and technical college graduate" (14 years), "university graduate" (16 years), and "graduate school graduate" (18 years).

Employment status: Women's employment status was classified as follows: "full-time employee" (including management), "part-time employee" (including temporary staff, contract worker, and contract worker at home), "self-employed" (including family business employee), or "not employed" (full-time housewife). The category of "not employed" (full-time housewife) was further divided into three categories: "those who had retired and were not employed at the life event in question" (e.g. marriage, bearing the first child, and so on), "those who had not been employed until the life event in question but were employed thereafter," and "those who have never been employed yet."

Job: Women's jobs were classified into five categories: "management," "professional",

"clerical", "sales," and "manual."

Annual income: Husband's annual income was coded as follows (1=JP¥10,000): "0" (0), "less than 25" (12.5), "25-49" (37.5), "50-74" (62.5), "75-99" (87.5), "100-124" (112.5), "125-149" (137.5), "150-199" (175), "200-249" (225), "250-299" (275), "300-349" (325), "350-399" (375), "400-449" (425), "450-549" (500), "550-649" (600), followed by further response categories at intervals of 100 up to "2050 or more" (2050).

4. Results

4-1. Comparisons between cohorts of women who had experienced selected life events

The results of analyses presented in sections 4-1 and 4-2 are preliminary to the main analyses (reported in sections 4-3 and 4-4), and therefore include women in their 20s and 30s. In this section, the percentages of women experienced selected life events such as marriage and having children were determined.

Table 1-a presents the marital status of respondent women by cohort. The majority of women in their 20s (67.7%) had not yet married, while the majority of women in their 30s and older were currently married.

Table 1-a. Women's marital status by cohort

		Never been married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort	60s	1.8%	76.5%	5.0%	16.7%	796
	50s	3.6%	86.6%	5.7%	4.1%	786
	40s	4.0%	88.0%	6.7%	1.2%	594
	30s	19.4%	75.1%	5.6%	.0%	558
	20s	67.7%	31.1%	1.2%	.0%	344
Total		13.2%	76.0%	5.2%	5.6%	3078

Table 1-b shows the percentages of married women who had children and whose youngest child had reached 4, 7, 13, or 16 years old. Percentages of mothers whose

youngest child had reached 7 years old (primary school age) were 100% for those in their 60s and 50s, 89.6 % for those in their 40s, and only 24.7% for those in their 30s. This indicates that the majority of mothers in their 30s were still rearing pre-schoolers. Looking at mothers whose youngest child had reached 13 years old (junior-high school age), this was almost 100% for those in their 60s and 50s, but only 59.8% for those in their 40s. This indicates that the majority of mothers in their 40s were still rearing primary-school aged children, and these women may re-enter the labor market at a later stage when the youngest child is older.

Table 1-b. Percentages of married women having children and whose youngest child had reached 4, 7, 13, and 16 years old (by cohort)

		Married		Having children				
		Married *n* (100%)	% of *n* having children	Having children *n* (100%)	% of *n* with a youngest child aged			
					4 years or older	7 years or older	13 years or older	16 years or older
Cohort	60s	609	96.1%	583	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	50s	681	95.7%	647	100.0%	100.0%	98.8%	96.6%
	40s	523	90.8%	470	96.6%	89.6%	59.8%	39.4%
	30s	418	88.0%	365	53.2%	24.7%	1.6%	0.0%
Total		2231	93.2%	2065	90.9%	84.3%	73.1%	67.5%

4-2. Women's employment status in selected life stages

Tables 2-a to 2-g present the employment status of married mothers in the selected seven life stages: two years before they married their present spouse, at the time of marriage, times when they bore their first and youngest children, when their youngest child reached 4, 7, or 13 years old.

Across cohorts, the majority of women worked fulltime when they were single (see Table 2-a), whereas the majority had retired and were not employed when they got married and when they bore children (see Tables 2-b, 2-c, 2-d, respectively).

When the youngest child reached 4 years old, however, percentages of retired-and-not-employed mothers decreased across cohorts compared to earlier life stages. At the same time, percentages of part-time workers increased, whereas those of full-time workers did not increase (see Table 2-e). This tendency continued to the life

stage where the youngest child had reached 13 years old (see Tables 2-f and 2-g). Distributions of employment status when the youngest child had reached 16 years old were almost the same as when the youngest child had reached 13 years old (data not shown).

These results reveal that the Japanese women's employment profile, where they quit employment when they have small children and re-enter the labor market as part-timers, is maintained across cohorts.

Table 2-a. Married mothers' employment status two years before marrying the current spouse (by cohort)

	Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Retired and not employed	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort 60s	51.0%	6.2%	12.3%	7.8%	16.6%	6.1%	577
50s	72.5%	4.7%	3.9%	8.5%	8.7%	1.7%	644
40s	74.0%	11.3%	1.5%	6.0%	6.2%	1.1%	470
30s	70.2%	14.9%	3.0%	3.3%	6.6%	1.9%	363
Total	66.4%	8.4%	5.6%	6.8%	10.0%	2.8%	2054

Table 2-b. Married mothers' employment status when they got married (by cohort)

	Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Retired and not employed	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort 60s	22.5%	4.0%	18.2%	38.8%	10.5%	6.0%	582
50s	36.5%	3.7%	10.4%	44.0%	3.7%	1.7%	646
40s	36.7%	7.9%	5.7%	46.5%	2.1%	1.1%	471
30s	38.6%	13.4%	5.2%	39.2%	1.6%	1.9%	365
Total	33.0%	6.4%	10.6%	42.2%	4.9%	2.8%	2064

Table 2-c. Married mothers' employment status when they bore their first child (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Retired and not employed	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort	60s	15.6%	3.3%	19.6%	45.6%	9.9%	6.0%	583
	50s	22.9%	3.2%	11.9%	56.1%	4.2%	1.7%	647
	40s	23.5%	3.8%	8.1%	61.2%	2.3%	1.1%	472
	30s	26.8%	5.2%	4.9%	59.8%	1.4%	1.9%	366
Total		21.7%	3.7%	11.9%	55.0%	4.9%	2.8%	2068

Table 2-d. Married mothers' employment status when they bore their youngest child (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	**Retired and not employed**	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort	60s	12.3%	4.6%	21.6%	**47.3%**	8.1%	6.0%	583
	50s	19.3%	5.4%	14.4%	**55.6%**	3.6%	1.7%	647
	40s	20.0%	6.8%	9.1%	**60.9%**	2.1%	1.1%	471
	30s	21.9%	8.2%	5.5%	62.2%	.3%	1.9%	365
Total		18.0%	6.0%	13.6%	55.7%	3.9%	2.8%	2066

Table 2-e. Married mothers' employment status when their youngest child was 4 years old (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Retired and not employed	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort	60s	14.1%	6.7%	23.2%	43.3%	6.7%	6.0%	582
	50s	20.4%	13.2%	17.6%	44.1%	2.9%	1.7%	646
	40s	22.5%	17.4%	9.5%	48.7%	1.1%	.9%	454
	30s	21.6%	24.7%	7.7%	42.8%	.0%	3.1%	194
Total		19.1%	13.4%	16.4%	44.8%	3.4%	3.0%	1876

Table 2-f. Married mothers' employment status when their youngest child was 7 years old (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Retired and not employed	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort	60s	17.9%	10.7%	24.2%	35.6%	5.7%	6.0%	582
	50s	23.1%	20.2%	17.5%	35.8%	1.7%	1.7%	645
	40s	23.3%	25.9%	11.6%	37.1%	1.2%	1.0%	421
	30s	24.4%	38.9%	7.8%	25.6%	.0%	3.3%	90
Total		21.5%	19.3%	17.8%	35.5%	2.8%	3.0%	1738

Table 2-g. Married mothers' employment status when their youngest child was 13 years old (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Retired and not employed	Not employed but employed later	Never been employed	Total *n* (100%)
Cohort	60s	23.2%	17.2%	24.4%	27.1%	2.1%	6.0%	582
	50s	28.1%	27.5%	17.8%	24.2%	.6%	1.7%	636
	40s	26.8%	40.0%	11.4%	20.4%	.7%	.7%	280
	30s	16.7%	83.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	6
Total		25.9%	26.1%	19.1%	24.5%	1.2%	3.2%	1504

4-3. Did mothers' re-entry increase and occur earlier?

In the following sections, analyses were focused on currently married *mothers who were born in or before 1965 (aged in their 40s and older), had retired, and had no employment when they bore their youngest child* (see bold text in Table 2-d).

Table 3-a shows the percentages of three types of mothers: mothers who re-entered the labor market at any time before the survey, those who did so before the youngest child reached 16 years old, and those who did so before the youngest child reached 13 years old. Looking at mothers who re-entered at any time before the survey, and those who did so before their youngest child had reached 16 years old (namely mothers who re-entered relatively later), percentages were higher for a younger cohort

than an older cohort between those in their 60s and 50s, but were not so between those in their 50s and 40s. Focusing on mothers who re-entered before their youngest child had reached 13 years old (namely mothers who re-entered relatively earlier), there was little difference between mothers aged in their 50s and 40s.

These results show that it is true for those in their 60s to 50s that the younger the cohort was the more the mothers re-entered the labor market, but is not true for those in their 50s to 40s.

Table 3-a. Percentages of mothers who re-entered the labor market (by cohort)

			Out of *n*		
		n	% re-entered at any time before the survey	% re-entered before their youngest child reached 16 years old	% re-entered before the youngest child reached 13 years old
Cohort	60s	275	71.3%	54.9%	47.3%
	50s	359	85.0%	75.2%	69.1%
	40s	286	69.6%	68.9%	65.7%
Total		920	76.1%	67.2%	61.5%
χ^2			25.686**	29.649**	34.395**

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

Table 3-b shows the average timing of re-entry by cohort. The timing of re-entry was measured by the age of the youngest child at re-entry. Looking at mothers who re-entered at any time before the survey and those who re-entered before their youngest child reached 16 years old, the younger the cohort was, the earlier the mothers re-entered. However, in terms of mothers who re-entered before their youngest child had reached 13 years old (namely mothers who re-entered earlier), there were no significant differences in timing between cohorts.

These results indicate that the timing of re-entry became earlier from cohort to cohort not because mothers with small children began to re-enter in younger cohorts, but because older women in older cohorts, who had finished their childrearing long before, re-entered.

Table 3-b. Timing of re-entry (by cohort)

		Re-entered at any time before the survey			Re-entered before the youngest child reached 16 years old			Re-entered before the youngest child reached 13 years old		
		Mean	*SD*	*n*	*Mean*	*SD*	*n*	*Mean*	*SD*	*n*
Cohort	60s	10.79	7.48	196	7.50	3.92	151	6.50	3.23	130
	50s	8.27	5.34	305	6.87	3.75	270	6.22	3.18	248
	40s	6.35	3.53	199	6.24	3.38	197	5.91	3.10	188
Total		8.43	5.86	700	6.82	3.70	618	6.18	3.17	566
F		31.00**			5.04**			1.34		

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

4-4. Is re-entry into the labor market as part-timers a behavior of lower class women?

4-4-1. Class differences that disappeared

According to the 1995 survey, mothers' re-entry into the labor market as part-timers was behavior mostly seen in lower class women, particularly for women born in 1946-55 (aged around their 50s as of the year 2005). Was this tendency maintained in the 2005 survey?

Table 4-a shows the percentages of mothers who re-entered versus those who did not according to their educational level. Whether mothers re-entered or not was not correlated with educational level across the cohorts. Neither husband's educational level nor their annual income (another index of women's socioeconomic status) was correlated with whether mothers re-entered or not (data not shown).

These results differ from those of the 1995 survey where the socioeconomic background of mothers was significantly correlated with whether they re-entered or not.

Table 4-a Mothers' educational level and whether they re-entered or not (by cohort)

Cohort		Re-entered	Did not re-enter	Total *n* (100%)	χ^2
60s	Higher education	70.6%	29.4%	17	.200
	High school	70.4%	29.6%	169	
	Junior-high school	73.0%	27.0%	89	
	Total	71.3%	28.7%	275	
50s	Higher education	84.3%	15.7%	51	.019
	High and junior-high school	85.1%	14.9%	308	
	Total	85.0%	15.0%	359	
40s	Higher education	70.5%	29.5%	88	.046
	High and junior-high school	69.2%	30.8%	198	
	Total	69.6%	30.4%	286	

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

Table 4-b shows mothers' employment status at the time of re-entry. The younger the cohort was, the more mothers' employment status at re-entry was concentrated on part-timers. Table 4-c shows the relationship between mothers' educational level and their employment status at re-entry. Mothers' educational level and employment status at re-entry were not correlated; that is, irrespective of whether mothers had a higher education qualification or not, most re-entered as part-timers.

Table 4-b. Women's employment status at re-entry (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Total *n* (100%)	χ^2
Cohort	60s	32.1%	53.1%	14.8%	196	22.105**
	50s	20.0%	66.9%	13.1%	305	
	40s	20.1%	73.4%	6.5%	199	
Total		23.4%	64.9%	11.7%	700	

Note: * $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$.

Table 4-c. Mothers' educational level and employment status at re-entry (by cohort)

		Fulltime	Part-time	Self-employed	Total *n* (100%)	χ^2
Cohort 60s	Higher education	25.0%	66.7%	8.3%	12	2.769
	High school	29.4%	55.5%	15.1%	119	
	Junior-high school	38.5%	46.2%	15.4%	65	
	Total	32.1%	53.1%	14.8%	196	
50s	Higher education	14.0%	69.8%	16.3%	43	1.359
	High and junior-high school	21.0%	66.4%	12.6%	262	
	Total	20.0%	66.9%	13.1%	305	
40s	Higher education	16.1%	74.2%	9.7%	62	2.078
	High and junior-high school	21.9%	73.0%	5.1%	137	
	Total	20.1%	73.4%	6.5%	199	

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

These findings indicate that while re-entry into the labor market as part-timers used to be a behavior observed mostly in lower class women, recently this is now seen across classes.

4-4-2. Class differences that were maintained

According to Table 5-a, mothers' educational level did effect the kinds of jobs they took at re-entry. Mothers with higher educational levels, across cohorts, were more likely to have management, professional, or clerical jobs, while mothers with a lower educational level were more likely to have sales and manual jobs.

Also, mothers' socio-economic background was associated with the timing of re-entry, especially in mothers in their 40s. Table 5-b shows that husbands' educational level was moderately associated with the timing of mothers' re-entry for those in their 60s and was strongly associated for those in their 40s. Although similar associations were observed between mothers' own educational level and their timing of re-entry, the associations were stronger when one looked at their husband's educational level.

Mothers' timing of re-entry was also associated with their husband's income. Table 5-c shows the correlation between husbands' annual income and their wives' timing of re-entry. Since there was no information about husbands' income at their wife's

re-entry, husbands' income at the time of the survey was used in place of it. In order to exclude retired husbands, only wives whose husbands were aged 59 years and under were analyzed. Similar to the results concerning educational level, there was no correlation for mothers aged in their 50s, but strong correlations for mothers aged in their 40s.

Table 5-a. Women's educational level and job at re-entry (by cohort)

		Management, Professional	Clerical	Sales	Manual	Total *n* (100%)	χ^2
60s	Higher education	8.3%	50.0%	33.3%	8.3%	12	40.584**
	High school	6.8%	35.9%	17.1%	40.2%	117	
	Junior-high school	4.6%	6.2%	7.7%	81.5%	65	
	Total	6.2%	26.8%	14.9%	52.1%	194	
50s	Higher education	25.6%	25.6%	18.6%	30.2%	43	30.769**
	High and junior-high school	4.4%	23.8%	25.8%	46.0%	252	
	Total	7.5%	24.1%	24.7%	43.7%	295	
40s	Higher education	27.1%	42.4%	13.6%	16.9%	59	13.526**
	High and junior-high school	7.3%	24.1%	27.7%	40.9%	137	
	Total	13.3%	29.6%	23.5%	33.7%	196	

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

Table 5-b. Husband's educational level and wife's timing of re-entry (by cohort) for wives who re-entered before their youngest child reached 13 years old

		Husband's educational level	*n*	*Mean*	*SD*	*F*
Cohort	60s	Higher education	25	7.56	3.18	4.12*
		High school	57	6.84	3.16	
		Junior-high school	44	5.45	3.19	
		Total	126	6.50	3.25	
	50s	Higher education	65	6.35	3.16	.13
		High school	135	6.22	3.22	
		Junior-high school	48	6.04	3.18	
		Total	248	6.22	3.18	
	40s	Higher education	84	6.76	2.96	12.04**
		High and junior-high school	104	5.23	3.04	
		Total	188	5.91	3.10	

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

Table 5-c. Pearson's correlations between husband's annual income and wife's timing of re-entry (by cohort)

	Wives who re-entered before the youngest child reached 16 years	(*n*)	Wives who re-entered before the youngest child reached 13 years	(*n*)	Wives who re-entered before the youngest child reached 7 years	(*n*)
Cohort 50s	.035	(130)	-.031	(122)	-.176	(70)
40s	.361**	(147)	.359**	(140)	.253**	(83)

Note. Wives whose husbands were aged 59 years and younger were analyzed. Significance level was determined by one-tailed test. * $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$.

These results indicate that mothers' re-entry into the labor market as part-timers is of itself no longer a behavior related to lower socioeconomic statuses, but the timing of re-entry and the kinds of job they take have recently become related to their class status.

5. Conclusion

The results of the present study reveal that first, a greater percentage of mothers re-entered the labor market in their 50s compared to those in their 60s, but not markedly so in their 40s compared to those in their 50s. As far as the 2005 survey is concerned, women aged in their 50s seemed to re-enter the labor market most actively. This cohort of women spent their 30s to 40s in a booming economy, which may have led to their active re-participation in the labor force, whereas the younger cohort spent the same ages in an economic recession, which may have resulted in the fact that their re-participation did not significantly increase.

Second, the timing of re-entry became earlier from the older cohorts to the younger cohorts. The reason for this is not because mothers with small children began to re-enter in the younger cohorts, but because older women who had long since finished their childrearing began to re-enter in older cohorts. This expanded and delayed re-entry in older cohorts made their timing of re-entry on average later than that in younger cohorts. Thus, re-entry into the labor market is not a life event associated with a specific life stage (such as just after the youngest child reaches school age), but rather is an event that can occur at any time even among comparatively older women (such as those in their 50s and early 60s).

Third, although re-entering the labor market after child-rearing as a part-timer used to be behavior observed mostly in lower class women, according to the 2005 survey data, this is no longer a behavior differentiating the classes as such behavior is observed to almost the same extent across classes. The present study did, however, find that different kinds of class-related patterns of re-entry have emerged. Lower class mothers are more likely to re-enter the labor market earlier and hold manual or sales jobs, while higher class mothers are more likely to re-enter later and hold professional or clerical jobs. This finding indicates that in recent times it is not the mothers' re-entry itself, but the timing of the re-entry and the kinds of job they have which are closely related to their socioeconomic status.

References

Koyo Shokugyo Sogo Kenkyusyo [Japan Institute for Labor Research]. 1988. *Josei no Syokugyo Keireki* [Japanese women's work career], 52-101.

Noguchi, Y. 2004. *Nenshu Ni-bun no Ichi Jidai no Sai-syushoku* [Mothers' re-entry into the labor market in the era of annual income reduced by half], Tokyo: Chuo-koron-shin-sha.

Ochiai, E., M. Yamane, and Y. Miyasaka.(eds.) 2007. *Asia no Kazoku to Gender* [Families and gender in Asian societies]. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo.

OECD. 2003. *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life, Volume 2, Austria, Ireland and Japan.* Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development.

Tanaka, S. 1996. The changing sexual division of labor in postwar Japan: The double barrier against employment of women. *Japanese Journal of Family Sociology, 8*, 151-61.

Yamato, R. 1998. "Changes in women's reentry into the labor market in the post-war Japan," Pp. 47-70 in *Gender and Life-Course*, edited by Iwai Hachiroh. 1995 SSM Research Group.

Yamato, R. 2005. "How Japanese women have accommodated their work career and family careers: focusing on re-entry into the labor market after child-rearing," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Sociology, Kansai University* 37(1), Suita, Osaka: The Faculty of Sociology, Kansai University: 57-78.