CHAPTER ONE

Gender Inequality and Social Change in Japan and Taiwan

The past century has witnessed dramatic changes in women's work outside the home across a wide range of societies. Despite its initial negative effect on female labor force participation, industrialization has nearly universally increased women's involvement in nonagricultural work over the long run (Goldin 1995; Pampel and Tanaka 1986). This overall impact of industrialization, however, has not led to an equivalent degree of improvement in women's socioeconomic status in all countries. There remain significant differences in the gender wage gap, women's employment rates and trajectories, as well as gender distributions across occupations and employment status among countries with similar levels of economic development (Charles and Grusky 2004; Rosenfeld and Birkelund 1995; Stier, Lewin-Epstein, and Braun 2001; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995). The discrepancy between economic development and gender inequality is well illustrated in the global ranking of gender gaps published by the World Economic Forum (Zahidi 2007). In 2006, less industrialized countries such as Tanzania, the Philippines, and Ghana outranked a few advanced economies (including Sweden, Norway, and Canada) in terms of women's economic opportunities relative to men's. The same report indicates that despite being one of the wealthiest countries in the world, Japan ranked 79 among the 115 countries included with respect to the overall gender gap—far behind many low- and middle-income countries.

Why does women's economic status improve rapidly with industrialization in some countries but slowly in others? Answering this question requires a careful comparison of the evolution of women's employment opportunities as broader economic shifts take place in different countries. Previous research on the long-term development of the opportunity structure for women's gainful employment, however, has disproportionately focused on the U.S. context (e.g., Goldin 1990; Rosenfeld 1996; Thistle 2006). Knowledge of how macroeconomic changes shape the transformation of women's employment opportunities is particularly scarce outside of Western Europe and the United States (Van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2002). Also rare are comparative–historical analyses of gender inequality in the labor market. The shortage of systematic comparisons of the development of women's labor market opportunities makes it difficult to identify the social and institutional forces that account for changes in women's economic roles and opportunities across the industrialized world.

This book addresses how social institutions affect women's employment during economic development by comparing changes in women's job opportunities in Japan and Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century. Although these two East Asian countries differ in their levels of development, they share several important features that make such a comparison particularly relevant. Many of the similarities between Japan and Taiwan can be traced back to the historical, political, and cultural intermixing in the region. Japan's fifty-year colonial rule in Taiwan (1895–1945) shaped Taiwan's modern bureaucratic institutions and educational system, and contributed to a convergence in the two countries' paths of economic development (Gold 1988; Hamilton and Biggart 1988; Mizoguchi and Yamamoto 1984). Among their shared features of economic development is a history of patriarchal policies, particularly the exploitation of female labor (Brinton 1993; Cheng and Hsiung 1994; Cumings 1987; Hsiung 1996). Culturally, aspects of the Confucian and Buddhist traditions have influenced both societies, leading to similar gender ideologies (Brinton 2001; Greenhalgh 1985). Also notable is that both educational systems are highly stratified and standardized (see Chapter 7), resulting in a strong emphasis on educational credentials in both labor markets (Brinton 1993; Huang 2001; Ishida 1993; Rohlen 1983; Yu and Su 2008).

What makes these two cases interesting is that, despite their many similarities, by the end of the twentieth century they differed substantially in their levels of gender inequality in the labor market. Although closely following Japan's steps in economic development, Taiwan has seen more drastic changes in women's employment opportunities than Japan during the past several decades. This different pace of change has led Taiwan to have a smaller gender gap in economic status than Japan. As the following section shows, the discrepancy in gender inequality between these two countries today is not easily attributable to their differences in macroeconomic conditions, demographic characteristics, social norms, or even policies and legislation. Using a comparative–historical approach, this book specifically addresses how Japanese and Taiwanese women came to their current places. The story I tell links macrolevel institutions to individual experiences and elucidates how individuals' decisions and actions at key moments in their lives contribute to broader changes in women's status in society. In telling such a story, this book aims not only to explain the puzzling difference in gender inequality between Japan and Taiwan, but also to provide a general understanding of gender and social change in industrial societies.

WHY COMPARE JAPAN AND TAIWAN?

Japan and Taiwan are both known for their phenomenal rates of economic growth during the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, both countries achieved their postwar economic success through exports under single-party dominance (Johnson 1987). Nevertheless, Japan began its industrialization long before World War II and experienced the transition to a postindustrial economy beginning in the mid 1970s, whereas Taiwan's trajectory of industrialization started later and was more condensed (Brinton 2001; Cumings 1987). Considering their different stages of economic development, one may question whether Japan and Taiwan are indeed comparable. This book, however, does not focus on the different levels of gender inequality between Japan and Taiwan at the *present.* Rather, the puzzle I intend to explain concerns the fact that Taiwan has veered away from Japan's path in terms of gender inequality in the labor market, despite following Japan closely in the trajectory of industrialization. As later chapters in this book show, Taiwanese women did not start from a much different place, as far as their employment opportunities are concerned, from that of Japanese women. Yet, while still catching up with Japan economically, Taiwan has experienced greater changes in women's economic roles and status than Japan. In this sense, the two countries' different economic stages actually make the comparison of gender inequality in the workplace more interesting.

To illustrate the similar trajectories of economic development in Japan and Taiwan, Figure 1.1 shows the annual economic growth rates of the two countries throughout time. There is a clear convergence in the two countries' experiences. Taiwan's rapid industrial expansion from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s roughly resembles Japan's period of high economic growth from the mid 1950s to the early 1970s, whereas Taiwan's slower economic growth since the late 1980s appears to have followed Japan's experience from the mid 1970s to the 1980s. Taiwan's "catching up" has resulted in a national income level approaching Japan's today. As Table 1.1 shows, Taiwan's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at purchasing power parity in 2005 was estimated to be $27,721 (in international dollars), about 90 percent of Japan's and higher than those of several other members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), including Spain, New Zealand, and South Korea. Other socioeconomic indicators presented in Table 1.1 also suggest that Taiwan has come to be comparable with Japan. The Gini indexes indicate that the two countries have similar levels of household income inequality. In addition, both countries have moderate

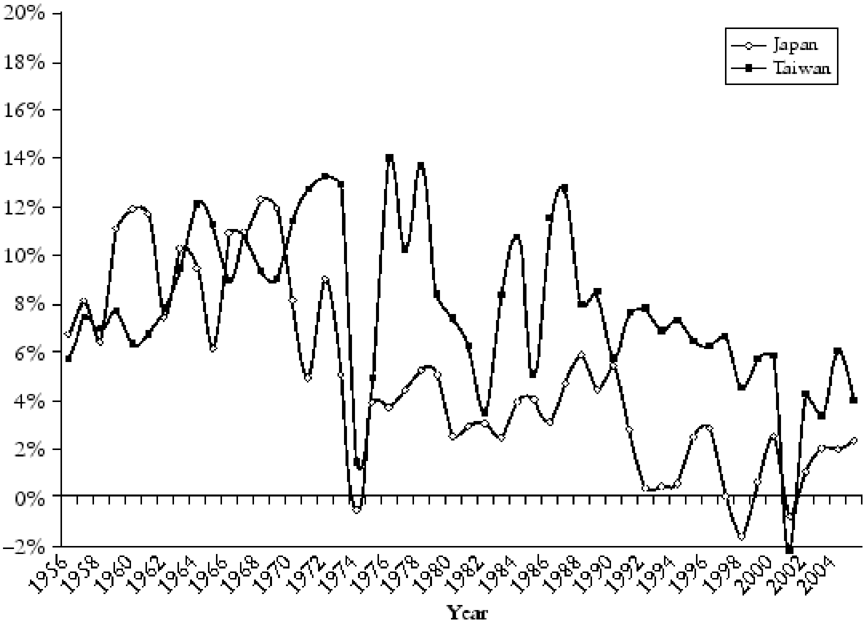

Figure 1.1. Annual economic growth rates in Japan and Taiwan, 1956 to 2005.

SOURCE: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, *Annual report on national accounts*, various years; Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS), Executive Yuan, Republic of China, *National income of Taiwan area, the Republic of China*, various years; Statistics Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency, Japan, *Historical statistics of Japan*, 1987.

rates of unemployment, a relatively high average age of first marriage and childbirth, very low fertility rates, and medium divorce rates compared with other industrialized countries (based on country statistics reported by the OECD [2006] and the United Nations [2007b]).

Despite their various similarities, Japan and Taiwan differ in women's educational attainment and economic status, as shown in the bottom half of Table 1.1. The educational opportunities for Japanese women appear to exceed those for their Taiwanese counterparts. The percentage of Japanese women whose highest educational level completed was the upper secondary level was nearly 20 percent more than that of Taiwanese women as of 2005. There was also a slightly greater proportion of the female population with tertiary education in Japan than in Taiwan.[1] The percentage of women with four years of university education, however, was nearly identical in the two countries.

Given Japanese women's somewhat higher educational attainment, it is rather surprising that they occupy a smaller share of managerial and administrative positions than their Taiwanese counterparts. Furthermore, the dif-

TABLE 1.1
Comparison of Japan and Taiwan.

	Japan	*Taiwan*
Selected socioeconomic indicators, 2005		
GDP per capita at purchasing power parity, in international dollars	$30,615	$27,572
Gini index[*]	31.4	34.0
Unemployment rate, per 100 people	4.3	4.1
Mean age at first marriage, y		
Men	29.8	29.7
Women	28.0	27.1
Mean age of mothers first giving birth, y	29.1	27.7
Crude marriage rate, per 1,000 people	5.7	6.3
Crude divorce rate, per 1,000 people	2.1	2.8
Total fertility rate	1.3	1.1
Women's education and economic status, 1995–2005, %		
Highest educational level[†][‡]		
Upper secondary	46.6	28.4
Tertiary	24.3	21.9
University and above	7.5	7.4
Female managers/senior officers, %		
1995	8.9	13.1
2005	10.1	16.5
Female-to-male wage ratio, %		
1995	62.5	70.0
2005	65.9	78.2
Percent of women with part-time jobs[‡]	36.1	6.3
Female share of part-time workers, %[‡]	73.8	46.7

SOURCE: Department of Household Registration Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Republic of China, Household registration statistics (http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/year/y02-02.xls). DGBAS, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, *Yearbook of manpower survey statistics, Taiwan area, Republic of China*, various years; Social indicators, 2005 (www.dgbas.gov.tw/public/Data/411711484071.xls). International Monetary Fund, World economic outlook database (www.imf.org/external/ns/cs.aspx?id=28). OECD, *OECD factbook 2006: Economic, environmental and social statistics*, 2006. Statistics and Information Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, Vital statistics database (www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hw/index.html). Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan, The 2005 population census, 2007 (www.e-stat.go.jp/SG1/estat/NewList.do?tid=000001007251), and Labour Force Survey, various years (www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/2.htm).

[*] Data for Japan from 2000.

[†] Among the population older than 15 years, excluding those in school.

[‡] Data from 2000.

ferences between 1995 and 2005 indicate that the pace of growth of women in managerial positions has been faster in Taiwan. The same can be said for the average wages of women relative to those of men. Not only were Taiwan's gender wage gaps smaller than Japan's in both 1995 and 2005, but Taiwan's wage gap shrank at a greater rate over time. By 2005, Taiwanese women received almost 80 percent of men's pay on average, whereas Japanese women were paid less than two thirds of men's wages.

Because the gender pay ratios shown in Table 1.1 are based on wages paid to regular full-time employees, the difference in such ratios between Japan and Taiwan represents only part of the difference in the gender wage gap. To be specific, although 36.1 percent of working Japanese women held part-time jobs in 2000, only 6.3 percent of Taiwanese working women did so. This difference is consistent with the fact that part-time workers are predominantly female in Japan (73.8% were women in 2000), but not in Taiwan (46.7%). Because part-time jobs generally pay lower wages even after taking women's skills and working hours into account (Houseman and Osawa 1995; Yu 2002), the difference in women's relative economic status between the two countries should be greater if part-time workers are included in estimating the gender pay gap. In other words, the fact that Japanese women are more likely to hold part-time jobs implies that their relative economic status lags behind Taiwanese women's even more than suggested by the levels of gender wage parity presented in Table 1.1.

In addition to differences in the economic gender gaps, women's employment trajectories in Japan and Taiwan also differ over their lifetimes. Figure 1.2 shows the female employment rate by age group in Japan and Taiwan, as well as in the respective major urban centers (the Tokyo metropolitan area and Taipei city).[2] The employment rates are lower among Japanese women in their thirties and early forties compared with those ages 25 to 29 years and 45 to 49 years, suggesting that women have a tendency to withdraw from the labor force during the early years of child rearing. The levels of employment are noticeably higher among Taiwanese women in their thirties than their Japanese counterparts. Interestingly, this difference cannot be explained by the possibility that Taiwanese women time their childbearing differently than Japanese women. Figure 1.3 presents the age distributions of brides and mothers who had live births in a recent year. The distributions are amazingly similar for Japan and Taiwan, especially when we contrast them with the age distribution of mothers in the United States (data on the U.S. age distribution of brides are unavailable). The mothers who gave birth recently in Japan and Taiwan were concentrated between 25 and 34 years of age, whereas their U.S. counterparts' age profile was clearly more diverse. Japanese and Taiwanese women appear to exhibit what Mary Brinton (1988, 1993) calls "condensed (rigid)" life cycle patterns, characterized by relatively little variation in the age at which individuals undergo major life course events, such as marriage and childbirth.

Given that the vast majority of women experience childbearing from their late twenties to early thirties in Japan and Taiwan, it is reasonable to argue that the difference in the employment rates among women in their thirties between these countries reflects women's different tendencies to remain in their jobs upon marriage and childbirth. That is to say, Taiwanese women seem more likely to continue their employment careers than Japanese women during their childbearing and early child-rearing years. It is noteworthy that U.S.-based research on female employment has suggested a

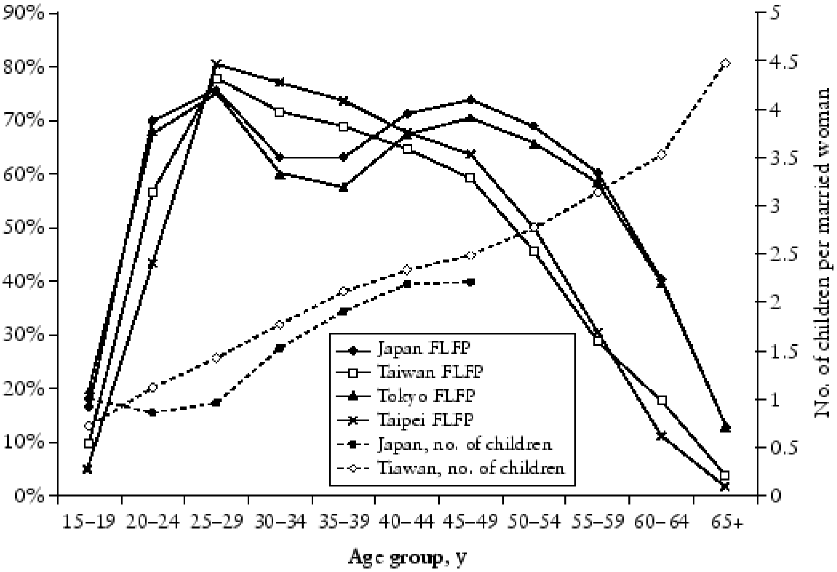

Figure 1.2. Women's labor force participation and number of children by age group.

SOURCE: DGBAS, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, Manpower Survey, 2005 (www.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=17286&ctNode=3246), and Women's Marriage, Fertility, and Employment Survey, 2003 (www.dgbas.gov.tw/public/data/dgbas04/bc4/wtable3.xls); National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan, *The processes of marriage and fertility among married couples in our country*, 2002, 2004; Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan, Labour Force Survey for 2005 (www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/2.htm).

Note: The female labor force participation (FLFP) rates are calculated for all women, whereas the average number of children is calculated for married women only. The Tokyo metropolitan area includes Tokyo city and the surrounding urban areas—specifically, the Yokohama, Saitama, and Chiba prefectures. The FLFP rates in both Japan and Taiwan are based on 2005 data. The number of children among married women is based on 2002 data for Japan and 2003 data for Taiwan.

decline in women's postmarital retreat from the labor force during economic development, particularly with a shift to a service economy (Goldin 1990; Oppenheimer 1970). Yet, despite its more advanced economic stage and larger service sector (see Chapter 3), Japan demonstrates a greater tendency for women's postmarital retreat from the labor force than Taiwan.

The patterns of female employment by age group are generally similar in the major urban area and in the country as a whole for both Japan and Taiwan (Figure 1.2). The tendency of continuous employment, however, appears to be particularly strong among urban Taiwanese women, as the employment rate among women in their thirties is particularly high in Taipei. Conversely, women in the Tokyo metropolitan area have lower employment

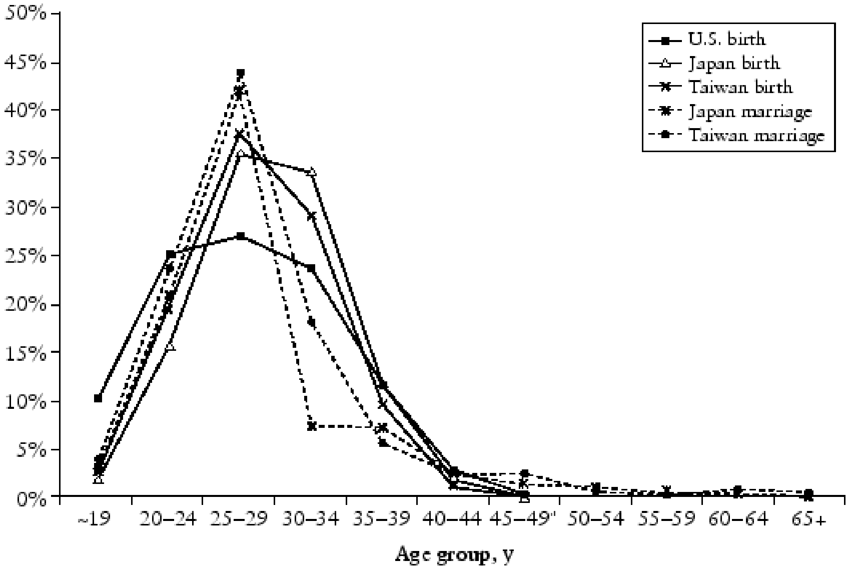

Figure 1.3. Age distributions of brides and mothers giving live birth in 2004/2005.

SOURCE: Department of Household Registration Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of China, Household registration statistics (www.ris.gov.tw/ch4/static/st10-10.xls; www.ris.gov.tw/ch4/static/st10-17.xls). United Nations, *Demographic yearbook 2004*, 2007.

Note: The data for the United States and Japan are from 2004, whereas the data for Taiwan are from 2005.

[a] The category includes all women 45 years of age and older for the statistics regarding age at giving live birth.

rates during their child-rearing years than the national average. Such opposite urban–rural gaps in female employment rates add further to the list of the two countries' striking differences regarding women's employment.

Figure 1.2 seemingly indicates that Taiwanese women's labor force participation only continues until their mid forties, given the female employment rate declines among older women. An analysis in Chapter 6 that uses life history data nevertheless shows that this is not the case. Therefore, for now, I focus on Taiwanese women's greater tendency than Japanese women to participate in the labor force after marriage. This Japan–Taiwan gap cannot be easily explained by differences in women's family responsibilities. First, the two countries are similar in terms of the availability of domestic labor for hire. Unlike in countries with extremely high levels of urban–rural inequality (e.g., China) or relatively open immigration policies (e.g., Singapore), there has been limited reliance on cheap domestic labor supplied by women from rural areas or lower income countries in Japanese and Taiwanese households (Loveband 2006; Mori 1997).[3] In the vast majority of these households, the wife shoulders nearly all responsibility for domestic chores (Gender Equality Bureau 2003; Lee, Yang, and Yi 2000; Tang and Parish 2000; Tsuya and Bumpass 1998). Second, as Figure 1.2 shows, married women in all age groups have fewer children in Japan than in Taiwan. Although having fewer children should enable Japanese women to participate in more labor force activities than Taiwanese women, the employment rate is higher among women in their thirties and early forties in Taiwan. Thus, despite the relatively low fertility rate, Japanese women appear to have difficulty continuing their careers upon marriage and childbirth.

Another possible explanation for the differences in women's economic status and employment trajectories between Japan and Taiwan has to do with the prevalent gender roles and attitudes in the two societies. While the historical and cultural intermixing in East Asia is conducive to the development of shared norms and values in Japan and Taiwan, their cultures are certainly not identical. Therefore, it might be that Taiwanese women are less likely to believe in the "separate sphere" ideology, which prescribes men's primary role to be market workers, with women acting as caretakers for their family members. Such a difference would explain why Taiwanese women participate more continuously and achieve higher status in the labor market than Japanese women.

To demonstrate gender beliefs in the two countries, Figure 1.4 shows the distributions of responses toward a series of questions regarding gender roles among Japanese and Taiwanese adults in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) conducted during 2002. The responses suggest that the predominant gender attitudes in Taiwan are actually more consistent with the separate sphere ideology than those in Japan. A greater proportion of Taiwanese people reported agreeing with the statement that a man's job is to earn money whereas a woman's job is to look after the home and family. Similarly, a greater percentage of Taiwanese respondents expressed that a preschool child will suffer if his or her mother works, even though mothers of preschool children appear to work more frequently in Taiwan than in Japan. The notion that what women really want is a home and children was also more popular in Taiwan. Nevertheless, Taiwanese respondents were more likely than Japanese respondents to consider employment as the best way for women to gain independence. This difference might result from the fact that there is more gender inequality in the workplace in Japan. Hence, women's employment is considered less beneficial in that country. Although the responses shown in Figure 1.4 are from both men and women, examining women's responses alone does not alter the differences between Japan and Taiwan.[4] Overall, contrary to the speculation that Taiwanese women might hold less traditional gender beliefs, they show greater support for the separate sphere ideology than their Japanese counterparts.

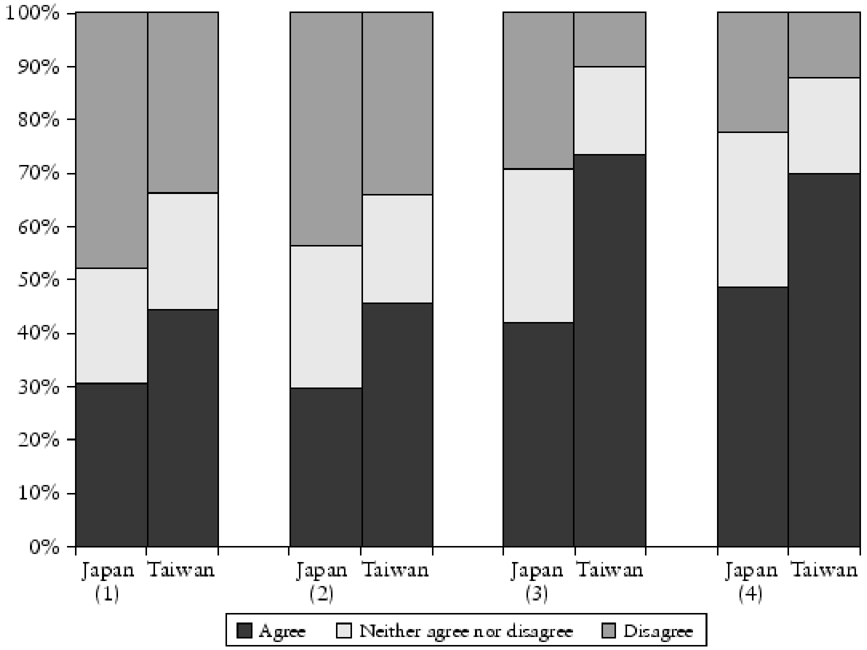

Figure 1.4. Attitudes regarding gender roles in Japan and Taiwan.

SOURCE: ISSP, 2002.

Note: The bars indicate the percentage of respondents who agree/disagree with (1) "a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family"; (2) "a preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works"; (3) "a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children"; and (4) "having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person."

In addition to gender beliefs, national policies and legislation are also potentially important to explaining cross-national differences in gender inequality in the labor market (Chang 2004; Gustafsson 1995; Van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2002). For example, countries that provide childcare subsidies make new mothers' employment less costly than in other countries, resulting in a greater likelihood for women to continue their jobs after childbirth (Gustafsson 1995). At the same time, job retention for married women is likely to be lower in countries that require husbands and wives to pay income tax jointly (Eissa 1996; Feldstein and Feenberg 1996; Gustafsson 1992; Pyle 1990). Moreover, employment policies ensuring equal access to jobs for men and women and permitting relatively lengthy leave for childbirth are thought to enhance the labor supply of married women, particularly those with young children (Glass and Estes 1997; Glass and Riley 1998).

There is, however, little evidence showing that government policies and regulations have made it easier for women to continue their jobs after marriage and childbearing in Taiwan than in Japan. First, while the critics often charge the Japanese government with providing insufficient childcare facilities, public childcare centers are even scarcer in Taiwan. Childcare provided by public facilities has been the primary alternative to maternal care in Japan, whereas it has played a relatively small role in relieving the childcare burden of Taiwanese mothers (Chen 2000; Yi 1994; Yu 2001a). As discussed in Chapter 5, the lack of public childcare centers does not necessarily mean that Taiwanese mothers are short of childcare options. As far as state childcare subsidies are concerned, however, the Japanese government has been providing more for working mothers of young children than the Taiwanese government.

Second, the two countries currently share similar tax systems, according to which husbands and wives can file wages apart, but must file property income together.[5] A "marriage penalty" nevertheless existed in Taiwan before the revision of the tax law in 1990. Until the revision, Taiwanese wives were not allowed to separate their wage income from their husbands' for tax purposes, resulting in higher tax rates among dual-income families. Although such a marriage penalty is thought to discourage married women's employment, it appears not to have been the case in Taiwan. As Chapter 2 shows, Taiwanese women began to increase their postmarital participation in the labor force around the mid 1970s, long before the government lifted the marriage penalty in the tax system. More important, because Taiwan's tax law actually provided a disincentive for married women to work, differences in tax regulations cannot account for the divergence in women's economic opportunities between Japan and Taiwan.

Third, with regard to regulations for workplace gender equality, Japan passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEOA) in 1986, whereas there was no similar legislation in Taiwan until 2002. Although Japan's EEOA has been criticized for being ineffective, it does prohibit blatant forms of gender discrimination, such as reserving certain jobs for men only (Lam 1993; Upham 1987). By contrast, Taiwan had no law against any form of gender discrimination through the twentieth century (Chen 2000). Last, Japanese women are entitled to fourteen weeks of maternity leave (six weeks before delivery and eight weeks after), but Taiwanese women are given only eight weeks of maternity leave in total. In fact, until 1985, Taiwan had no legal provision for maternity leave; hence, most women were unable to take such leave for more than four weeks. Even after Taiwan's Labor Standard Law mandated eight weeks of maternity leave in 1985, not all industries had to comply with this law. For example, until 1998, the Labor Standard Law did not apply to tertiary industries, such as finance and services industries (which are highly feminized). In addition, while the EEOA has enabled Japanese employees to take unpaid childcare leave for at least one year since

1986, it was not until sixteen years later that this leave became possible for Taiwanese employees.[6] Thus, whatever small effect Japan's policies may have on gender equality, Taiwan's provisions to advance working women's welfare are worse. The policy differences between the two countries only make it more surprising that Taiwanese women seem to have higher economic status and more continuous employment careers.

In summary, the comparison of Japan and Taiwan poses an interesting puzzle that needs to be explained. Despite their similar patterns of economic development, demographic trends, and social norms, women's employment opportunities have clearly diverged between these two countries. Compared with their Japanese counterparts, Taiwanese women have more equal economic status in relation to men, and they also appear to participate in the labor force in a more continuous fashion. Such differences are particularly puzzling given that Japanese women, on average, have higher educational levels, fewer children, and less traditional views toward women's involvement in the labor market than Taiwanese women. Moreover, although the Japanese state is thought to put little effort into enhancing gender equality (Chang 2000; Edwards 1988; Schoppa 2006), its welfare provision for working mothers is still more extensive than that in Taiwan. Because of all the commonalities and discrepancies between Japan and Taiwan, comparing the development of women's market opportunities in these countries is not only relevant, but also important for understanding differences in gender inequality across industrial societies.

GENDER INEQUALITY AS A DYNAMIC SOCIAL PROCESS

A central focus of this book is social change. Although Japan and Taiwan both have experienced rapid economic and demographic changes since World War II, women's employment opportunities in these two countries have evolved at remarkably different rates. As later chapters in this book demonstrate, Taiwanese women's employment trajectories have become increasingly similar to men's over time, leading to greater gender equality in the labor market in that country. Conversely, changes in Japanese women's employment careers have been less dramatic and hence less consequential for workplace inequality between men and women. Although each generation of Japanese women generally spends more years of their lives in the labor force than the previous one, women's employment trajectories in Japan remain distinctively different from men's. This lack of convergence between men's and women's employment careers largely contributes to Japan's relatively wide gender gap in economic status.

Why do the two countries differ in the rates at which they reduce gender inequality in the workplace? What happened? I seek answers to these questions by conducting a comparative analysis of women's employment throughout the past half century. I argue that gender inequality in the labor market is a result of a long-term social process that involves both market forces and institutional responses to the market. Previous attempts to explain cross-national differences in gender inequality have predominantly relied on comparisons made at a single time point, and have considered the institutional arrangements and social conditions affecting women's economic opportunities as fixed (e.g., Chang 2004; Stier et al. 2001). My study will broaden our understanding of worldwide differences in gender inequality by considering such differences as results of dynamic social processes. As social values and institutions change over time, the gender gap in economic opportunities may also narrow or widen. The analysis results presented in this volume show that the pace and direction in which a society transforms often depends on preexisting institutional arrangements. Moreover, the outcomes of social change can then become part of the social forces that either accelerate or hamper further transformations of women's labor market opportunities. Thus, only by comparing the long-term development of women's employment opportunities across countries can we accurately identify the factors contributing to worldwide differences in gender inequality in the labor market.

While there is no shortage of studies documenting the evolution of women's economic lives (e.g., Goldin 1990; Oppenheimer 1970; Rosenfeld 1996; Thistle 2006), few of these studies are based on non-Western societies, and even fewer adopt a comparative perspective. Contrasting the pace and direction of changes in women's employment in Japan and Taiwan during the past half century enables me to reveal an untold story regarding gender and social change. Specifically, this story tells how change is possible even in societies in which cultural values and social policies tend to deter gender equality. Thus, this is a story that cannot be told by previous studies that compare Western and East Asian countries (usually Japan) (e.g., Brinton 1993; Chang 2000; Esping-Anderson 1990). Moreover, the similar trajectories of socioeconomic development in Japan and Taiwan make it possible to isolate what precisely motivates or impedes changes in gender inequality in a way that an East–West comparison cannot. Finally, although there has been increasing attention paid to differences within East Asia, rather than East–West discrepancies (e.g., Brinton 2001), this book is the first to offer a systematic analysis of the historical change in women's employment behavior in two East Asian countries. By taking into account changes in women's economic opportunities over time, this analysis extends beyond research focusing on cross-sectional differences and uncovers the broader dynamics that shape gender inequality and social change in Japan and Taiwan.

LINKING MACROLEVEL FACTORS TO WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT OVER THEIR LIFE COURSE

Historical time is not the only temporal dimension emphasized in this study. The individual's lifetime constitutes another temporal dimension on which this book focuses. Women's decisions about employment at key moments of their lives make up the patterns of female employment at the aggregate level. Explaining the divergence in women's employment patterns between Japan and Taiwan therefore requires a comparative analysis of the constraints and opportunities women face at different points of their life course. Furthermore, because women's employment opportunities vary substantially throughout their lifetimes, examining these opportunities at a single point in their lives provides only partial evidence of the differences in the gender gap in economic status between Japan and Taiwan. As Chapter 2 shows, the gap between men's and women's economic conditions varies throughout their life course in both countries, but the extent to which it changes differs by country. Specifically, Japan's gender gap in wages widens at a faster pace than Taiwan's as individuals move further along their life course. A thorough understanding of the differences in women's economic opportunities between Japan and Taiwan thus requires an explanation for why they differ in the rates at which gender inequality increases or decreases with various life course stages.

I therefore use a life course approach to examine women's employment decisions and their economic consequences, instead of assessing women's occupational status at a single point in their lives. In particular, I compare Japanese women's employment trajectories with those of women in Taiwan and highlight the cross-national differences in the factors affecting women's decisions to participate in the labor force at crucial points in their lives. At the same time, I emphasize the mechanisms linking macrolevel influences to the microlevel decision-making processes that women face. I argue that country-specific organizational arrangements, industrial policies, social norms, and labor market conditions affect women's employment decisions by shaping their work and home environments, and hence their assessments of the feasibility of combining work and family life. Prior studies comparing women's employment in East Asia and elsewhere have paid insufficient attention to these microlevel social dynamics that directly influence women's lives (e.g., Brinton 1993; Esping-Anderson 1990; Schoppa 2006). As a result, not only do the mechanisms translating macrolevel barriers into microlevel behavior remain unspecified, but the implicit assumption of an automatic macro–micro link generally leads researchers to neglect the variation in women's responses to macrolevel constraints within a country. My analysis expands previous research on gender and work by showing how macrolevel conditions shape within-country differences in women's employment decisions and how such within-country patterns then account for the aggregate-level discrepancies between Japan and Taiwan regarding women's employment.

As my analysis unfolds, it should become clear that telling a complete story about gender and social change in Japan and Taiwan requires taking into account both macro- and microlevel dynamics, as well as the span of individuals' lifetimes and historical time. Although macrolevel conditions such as aggregate labor demand and industrial policies shape women's decisions about labor force participation at the microlevel, women's employment behavior throughout their life course also forms social patterns at the aggregate level. Such aggregate patterns can further shape country-level norms, discourses, and even institutional arrangements, which then become an important part of what women of the next generation must consider when making decisions about their employment careers. That is to say, not only do opportunities and constraints existing in the social context shape individuals' decisions and behaviors, but the aggregate result of individuals' actual behaviors can also influence the directions of social change.

A NOTE ON WOMEN'S WORK AND ECONOMIC STATUS

This study is about women's employment, or women's participation in market work. For simplicity I use a rather narrow definition of work throughout this book. Unless otherwise specified as, for example, domestic work, the term *work* refers exclusively to market work. This does not mean to imply that women perform work only in the market. Women across the world devote a tremendous amount of time and labor producing goods and services at home, to the extent that unpaid domestic work constitutes the "second shift" for those who also participate in the labor market (Hochschild 1989). In fact, as this book shows, it is precisely because women work so hard at home that the conflict between their jobs and family obligations seems inevitable.

Market work in the contexts of Japan and Taiwan is not necessarily paid work or work outside the home. For example, women might perform piecework at home for pay (Hsiung 1996). This job option has nevertheless become increasingly unavailable with the shrinking of the manufacturing sector in both countries.[7] Still relatively common is for married women to work at family-owned (usually their husbands') enterprises with either irregular or no pay (Yu 2001b, 2004). Despite their lack of regular wages, such women's labor contributes directly to the production of the family enterprise. My definition of work considers all that involves a person's direct participation in economic activities, since such participation has the potential to enhance a woman's marketable skills and expand her social contacts beyond the domestic realm.[8]

Because I am primarily interested in gender inequality in the workplace, women's economic opportunities in this book generally refer to their chances of obtaining higher income and occupational status in the labor market. Similarly, my assessment of women's economic status is based on their own jobs, regardless of what their husbands do. Some of the people I spoke with in Japan and Taiwan expressed the sentiment that nonemployed women with husbands who have high earnings are truly better off than married women with jobs. Indeed, nonworking wives of relatively wealthy men may enjoy better economic conditions than many women who do work. Using family as the unit to assess women's economic well-being seems to make sense, especially in these countries, since they traditionally have low divorce rates. My ultimate concern, however, is with the opportunities the economy affords women to pursue labor market achievement as individuals. A statement from one Japanese woman I interviewed, who held a clerical job at a large firm, illustrates just how much women's own job opportunities and economic achievements mean to them:

> The reason I decided to come back to work after giving birth—it is hard to explain. How do I put it? I am always part of my social relations on other occasions. I am my husband's *wife* for my neighbors and other relatives. When I send my child to daycare, I am the *mother*. It is only at work I am *Tanaka Keiko* [name changed], myself. I continue this job because I want to maintain being myself.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The analysis presented in this book is based on data from multiple sources, including aggregate statistics published by government offices and related agencies, individual-level surveys, and in-depth personal interviews. Generally speaking, I use aggregate statistics to show macrolevel trends, and survey and interview data to demonstrate microlevel responses to macrolevel conditions. With the individual-level survey data, I compare the work and life experiences of women born during various decades since 1935. Most chapters of this book focus on changes in women's employment from the 1950s to the mid 1990s—the period when Japan and Taiwan both underwent remarkably rapid and constant economic growth. By focusing on this period, I am able to demonstrate the conditions that mediate the effects of industrial expansion on gender inequality in the labor market. In addition, the period through the mid 1990s was one in which women's employment opportunities diverged between Japan and Taiwan. As the final chapter of the book shows, the development of workplace inequality between men and women in the decade since the mid 1990s is largely a continuation of that of the previous decades in both countries. Separating the past decade from the previous period, however, allows me to differentiate the effects of Japan's unprecedented economic recession (and its associated reforms) since the 1990s on women's employment from those of other structural factors that play key roles in explaining the divergence in gender inequality between the two countries.

Throughout this book I seek to combine statistical analysis with ethnographic observations and women's life stories that I obtained through in-depth personal interviews conducted in major metropolitan areas in Japan and Taiwan.[9] Such qualitative material not only helps substantiate my arguments, but also adds meaning to the social patterns observed with survey data. To learn about how women's family concerns shape their employment trajectories, the women I interviewed were all married with children, held a job at the time of their interview, and had premarital employment experience. Most of them were in their mid-thirties to mid-forties. The interview topics generally included their detailed job experiences and their reasons for making employment- or family-related decisions at different points of their lives. I also conducted interviews with firm managers, labor union officers, government officials, and workers at daycare centers to understand the difficulties women face in managing work and family life. All these informants were located through snowball sampling, with the help of my acquaintances (to start). Altogether, I conducted intensive interviews with more than eighty individuals. My personal observations and others' views that were revealed to me on informal occasions are also used to illustrate the conditions that working women often confront in Japan and Taiwan.

The central questions of this study are how and why Japan and Taiwan diverged with regard to women's employment opportunities during their life course. The remaining chapters of the book address these two questions with a series of comparative analyses utilizing the multiple data sources just described. I begin in Chapter 2 by documenting how women's employment trajectories have differed between Japan and Taiwan, as well as the consequences of these differences. Using survey data containing individuals' detailed work histories, I show changes in women's timing and duration of labor force participation, as well as their frequency of job shifts over time. This analysis helps establish the critical time points when women in these two countries began to diverge in their patterns of labor force participation. In the same chapter I compare men's and women's career processes in both countries. In particular, I examine the implications of the gender difference in work trajectories for women's income and occupational attainment over the long run. I find evidence that women's decisions to continue their jobs after marriage and childbirth play a crucial role in shaping their lifetime economic status.

In Chapter 3, I develop the explanations for the differences in women's employment trajectories in Japan and Taiwan. The emphasis of this chapter is to show how specific differences between the two national labor markets contribute to the different work environments women face in the two countries. The macrolevel differences I discuss center on the two countries' industrial strategies, predominant employment practices, and structures of business organizations. I pay particular attention to how preexisting structural conditions contributed to the different strategies that employers adopted in response to market shifts during the two economies' development. Such strategies had important implications for working women by shaping their job demands and workplace dynamics. I argue that women's working conditions and workplace atmosphere affect their perceptions of the feasibility of combining their job and family responsibilities. The perceived level of compatibility between work and family directly affects women's decisions about employment at key moments of their lives.

To examine systematically the theoretical framework just described, in Chapter 4 I provide an individual-level analysis of women's decisions to leave the labor force after marriage and childbirth. This analysis reveals that the factors contributing to women's exit from the labor force tend to differ between Japan and Taiwan. The differences in the dynamics of women's postmarital job exits are consistent with the discrepancies in working conditions that women with differing types of jobs in these countries experience. The evidence also supports the claim that, because of divergent labor market conditions, women generally face greater difficulties combining their family and job responsibilities in Japan than in Taiwan. I then link the individual-level results to aggregate-level changes over time. I demonstrate that the observed labor force exit dynamics, along with broader economic and demographic shifts, account for the historical change in women's employment behavior in the two countries.

I turn to the family side of the story in Chapter 5, where I discuss childcare options, maternal obligations, and women's domestic responsibilities. Using aggregate statistics and qualitative data, I show that the greater conflict between family and job responsibilities Japanese women experience also arises from their family's higher demand for their time and labor. An examination of the historical changes in family spending, gender attitudes, and child-rearing time presented in the second half of Chapter 5, however, suggests that the differing job demands and workplace atmosphere for women are primarily responsible for the different rates at which women's employment behaviors change between the two countries. Shifts in female employment behavior can nevertheless lead to other societal transformations that have reciprocal effects on women's employment.

Chapter 6 focuses on married women's decisions to return to the workforce. Not only does labor force reentry constitute a major transition in women's working and family lives, it is also closely associated with women's economic status at a later stage of their life course. I begin the chapter by analyzing the timing of women's reentry into the labor market, using work history data. This analysis reveals how the differing levels of conflict between job and family responsibilities for women shape the pace at which they return to the labor force in Japan and Taiwan. Additionally, I show that married women's timing of resuming employment also depends on how the labor market they face may penalize their work interruption. Based on whether their job opportunities decrease significantly with their time away from the labor force, women are likely to time their labor market returns differently. The second part of the chapter analyzes the types of jobs available for women returning to the labor force. I find striking differences between Japan and Taiwan in women's destinations upon employment reentry. I argue that Japan's rigid labor market practices, along with its dualist work structure that offers sharply different rewards to employees in regular full-time status versus those on a contingent or part-time basis, essentially account for married women's highly restricted job options upon labor force reentry.

I turn my attention to these countries' educational systems in Chapter 7 because they play a part in shaping workplace dynamics for women. The quality and composition of a country's labor supply largely depend on women's and men's educational opportunities. In particular, whether a country's labor supply consists of a sufficient number of qualified men is thought to affect the overall likelihood for managers to accommodate women in the workplace, since managers generally prefer hiring men over women given the same qualifications (Brinton, Lee, and Parish 1995; Reskin 2001). Chapter 7 shows that Japan and Taiwan differ in their educational opportunities for men and women, resulting in differing compositions of their overall labor queues. Specifically, the analysis demonstrates how a strong emphasis on vocational education and gender segregation in elite high schools actually enhanced women's access to higher education in Taiwan. This greater access, along with Taiwan's relatively restricted number of university students, compelled Taiwanese employers to utilize highly educated women more than in Japan. In addition, I discuss how the small differences in the design of the school entrance examinations between Japan and Taiwan had critical implications for girls' chances of entering prestigious universities. The remarkable discrepancy in women's representation in elite universities is among the key factors contributing to the gap in women's economic opportunities between the two countries.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes this study by first summarizing the findings and overall arguments presented in the previous chapters. Following this, I describe changes in women's employment opportunities since the mid 1990s using more recent survey data. I then assess whether a further divergence or a future convergence can be expected between the two countries by evaluating recent policy changes and their implications for gender inequality in the workplace. I pay special attention to how broader economic shifts, resulting from the slowdown of both economies since the late 1990s, may transform workplaces and gender inequality in the years to come. Last, beyond the specific cases of Japan and Taiwan, this chapter ends with a discussion of this study's general implications for understanding the different paces at which the economic gender gaps close across the industrialized world.