Sixth Family Research Network (FRN) Forum:
“Singlehood in Singapore: Issues and Challenges”

Monday, 23 May 2011
Auditorium, Level 3, Faculty of Law
Understanding Singlehood: The Japan Case Study

Dr. Mika TOYOTA
Department of Sociology
National University of Singapore
Outline

Key question:
Is delayed and non-marriage due to non-traditionalistic individualism or due to traditionalistic attitude toward marriage and family?

Structure of the talk:
• Trends in late and non-marriage in Japan
• Reasons for the increasing singlehood
• Social and policy Implications
Never married Japanese women
(30-44 years old) (%)
(source: National Institute of Population and social Security Research)

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## Never married Japanese Men
*(40-54 years old) (%)*
*(National Institute of Population and social Security Research)*

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### Proportion of those who are never married at the age of 50

(日本の世帯数の将来推計より)

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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>15.96</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>28.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>20.8</td>
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Changing attitudes toward marriage? (1)

- “Japanese women are more skeptical than Japanese men about the benefits of marriage”
  (Tsuya, Mason and Bumpass 2004:46)

- “Is marriage necessary?” (2011)
  (Internet Survey: n=264 among working women in their 20s -40s)
  15.9 %: Yes, it is absolutely necessary
  35.6 %: Yes, it may be necessary
  43.9 %: No, it may not be so crucial
  2.7 %: No, it is not necessary
  1.9 %: I do not know
Changing attitudes toward marriage? (2)

• Financial stability
  • Japanese men without life-time employment are hesitant to get married
  • The phenomenon of “parasite single”

• “marriage package”:
  • Marriage is not simply a matter between two individuals, but it encompasses complex issues of child bearing, child rearing, and care for the elderly, especially parents-in-law
Acceptance of pre-marital sex:
- Sex is longer solely associated with reproduction purpose
- However, pregnancy is likely to lead to marriage. The proportion of births by unmarried women is as low as 1-2% in the past 40 years.
- Marriage is regarded as essential for childbearing in Japan

“shot-gun wedding”:
- 25.3% of birth in Japan were from “shotgun marriages” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2009)
- 63.6% of birth among 20-24 years old are “shotguns”
Implications of singlehood

- **Increasing number of international marriages**
  - Japanese male married to foreign brides (79%)
  - Japanese female married to foreign glooms (21%)

The numbers of Japanese married overseas:
- Japanese female married to foreign glooms (67.8%)
- Japanese male married to foreign brides (13.7%)

- **Smaller size of household**: 2.46 persons per household (2010 Census)

- **Increasing number of single elderly**, which poses new challenges in elderly care
  - International retirement migration to Southeast Asian countries