Babies, Work, or Both? Highly Educated Women's Employment and Fertility in East Asia[1]

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Highly educated women's likelihood of combining childrearing with continuous employment over the life course has increased among recent U.S. cohorts. This trend is less evident in many postindustrial countries characterized by very low fertility. Among such countries, Japan and Korea have exceptionally low proportions of women who remain employed after having children, despite aggressive government policies designed to encourage this. We draw on over 160 in-depth interviews with highly educated Japanese and Korean men and women of childbearing age to uncover the central incompatibilities between married women's employment and childrearing. Individuals' narratives reveal how labor market structure and workplace norms contribute to a highly gendered household division of labor, leading many married women to either forsake employment or to consider having only one child.

INTRODUCTION

Women's educational attainment has risen dramatically over the past 20 years throughout the postindustrial world, and female college graduation rates

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now surpass men's in nearly all OECD countries (Van Bavel 2012; Esteve et al. 2016; OECD 2017*a*). The employment and family formation patterns of highly educated women have also undergone substantial change. In the United States, recent cohorts of female college graduates show a greater propensity to marry than women at any other level of educational attainment (Goldstein and Kenney 2001). Once married, they spend much less time out of the labor market than did previous cohorts of highly educated women (Percheski 2008), and their completed fertility has risen to 1.7 children since the 1990s. These trends led the authors of a recent study to conclude that "highly educated women [in the U.S.] are increasingly choosing not to sacrifice their families for careers" (Shang and Weinberg 2013, p. 30).

Even so, the incompatibility of childrearing and employment for highly educated women and the motherhood wage penalty for women at different education levels remain prominent issues in the gender inequality literature (Blair-Loy 2005; Stone 2007; Budig and Hodges 2010; Williams 2010; Killewald and Bearak 2014; Collins 2019). Work-family incompatibility has also become a central theme in the extensive literature on postindustrial fertility (McDonald 2000*a*, 2000*b*; 2006; 2013; Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Goldscheider Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015). In particular, social demographers have found that while many highly educated women in countries with moderately low birth rates such as the United States and Sweden marry or enter stable cohabitations and engage in simultaneous employment and childrearing, their counterparts in very low-fertility societies in Europe and East Asia often appear to face starker choices between continuous employment and childrearing (Rindfuss and Brewster 1996; Ahn and Mira 2002; Adserà 2004; D'Albis, Greulich, and Ponthière 2017). While voluntary childlessness within marriage remains relatively rare, especially in East Asia, an increasing proportion of couples choose to have only one child. For postindustrial countries struggling with below-replacement fertility, rapidly aging populations, and looming labor shortages, how highly educated women make marriage, fertility, and employment decisions is of critical importance. As Klesment et al. (2014, p. 814) point out, "Recent evidence suggests that the behavior of women with high education may be related to overall fertility levels—in the countries where the latter have relatively high progression ratios to second births the total fertility rates tend to be higher."

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The central question of this article is why highly educated married women's continuous employment remains highly incompatible with childrearing in two East Asian cases: Japan and South Korea (hereafter, Korea). These are the only OECD countries that continue to demonstrate an M-shaped curve of female labor force participation across the life cycle (OECD 2017*b*), with large percentages of women exiting the labor force at the time of marriage or first birth. Yet despite this pattern, birth rates in both countries are at a historic low. This is the combined result of employment-childrearing incompatibility within marriage, rising age at marriage, and increasing rates of nonmarriage, including among the highly educated (Jones and Gubhaju 2009; Raymo et al. 2015; Hwang 2016).

Despite much government and scholarly attention to these aggregate patterns, the dynamics of highly educated women's decision making with regard to marriage, fertility intentions, and employment strategies in the two countries are not well understood. This is evidenced by the general ineffectiveness of the large raft of work-family reconciliation policies the governments of Japan and Korea have undertaken in the past few decades (Schoppa 2006; Boling 2008; Lee 2009; Chin et al. 2012; Ministry of Health and Welfare 2013; Brinton and Mun 2016). Compared to many European countries and to the United States, these policies are extensive and far-reaching. Yet they have yielded little in terms of results. This presents a puzzle.

Our article contributes both theoretically and empirically to an understanding of why married women's simultaneous employment and childrearing remains problematic in the two countries despite vigorous policy efforts to promote such a pattern. We theorize how the macrolevel context of work (labor market structure and workplace norms, especially long work hours) helps to perpetuate a highly gendered household division of labor. This likewise impacts fertility rates by making it unlikely that full-time dual-earner couples will have two or more children. While overwork and the ideal worker image have been highlighted in the comparative sociological literature as contributing to gender inequality both at home and in the labor market (Hook 2006; Cha 2010), the relationship between these labor market conditions and low fertility remains underexamined. We make this link.

Our research also makes an empirical contribution. In contrast to the bulk of comparative sociological research on employment and fertility, we employ a qualitative approach. Our analysis of original in-depth interviews with men and women in two cultures (Japan and Korea) who are in the life stage of making marriage and fertility decisions reveals how individuals anticipate and experience the macrolevel context of work and the impact it will have on their near-term decisions about the coordination of marriage, parenthood, and employment. While most qualitative analyses of married women's employment focus only on women's own narratives, we also elicit the viewpoints of married men and of single men and women. This provides us

with multiple prisms through which to see how married women's employment and family life are anticipated and lived. We also highlight some key points of difference between the cases of Japan and Korea.

We first outline recent trends in women's education, employment, and fertility in Japan and Korea. We then turn to the social demographic literature on how the relationship between women's employment and fertility is mediated by gender inequality in the household division of labor. We complement this by outlining how the Japanese and Korean labor market and organizational contexts exacerbate work-family conflict. We then analyze over 100 in-depth interviews with highly educated married men and women in both settings, supplemented with interviews of 48 highly educated single men and women. These additional interviews illuminate the anticipation and perceptions of marriage and family life held by unmarried individuals.

MACROLEVEL TRENDS: WOMEN'S EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND FERTILITY IN JAPAN AND KOREA

Women's educational attainment has increased dramatically in Japan and Korea in the past 20 years. As in most Western countries, women's rate of completing tertiary education in Korea now exceeds men's. This is true in Japan if all levels of tertiary education, including junior college, are included. However, the relationships between women's education, employment, and fertility in Japan and Korea present a strong contrast with the United States and many other postindustrial countries.

Life-cycle patterns of female labor force participation.—At the aggregate level, the so-called M-shaped age curve of female labor force participation, which disappeared in the United States and most of Europe by the 1980s, has continued to characterize Japan and Korea (Brinton 2001). The M-shape has flattened considerably in Japan in recent years, but this is less evident in Korea (fig. 1, with the United States included as a comparison). Nevertheless, the flattening age curve of female labor force participation is misleading because it reflects the experiences of *all* women, not just those who are married. (Unfortunately, national figures for female labor force participation by age, marital status, and education are not available from either the Japanese or Korean governments.) While a smaller percentage of Japanese and Korean women than in the past "retire" from the workforce upon marriage (Ma 2013; National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2016), nearly 60% of Japanese women exit the labor force in the year surrounding the birth of their first child (either while pregnant or soon after childbirth). This figure has gone down only slightly over the past 30 years (Brinton 2017). The probability of exit is also high in Korea. In short, if data on the age curve of female labor force participation for only married women were available, the M-

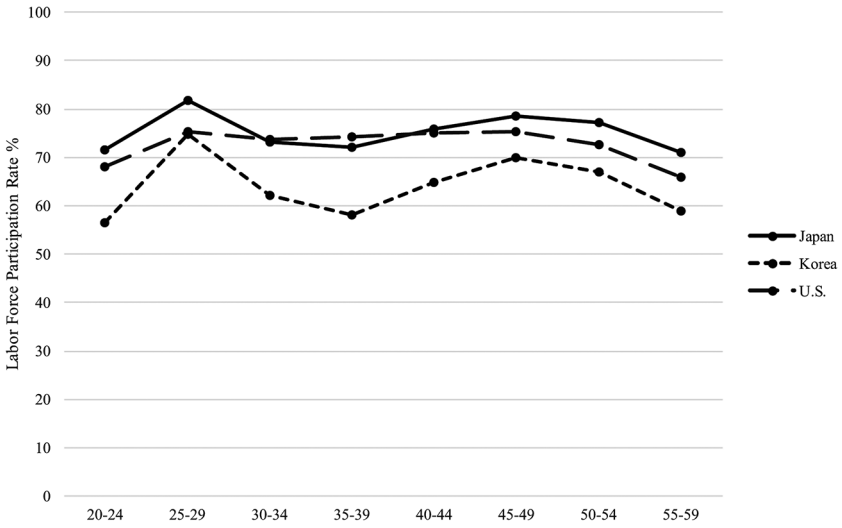

FIG. 1.—Female labor force participation rate by age group, 2016. Data are from OECD 2017*b*.

shaped curve in the two countries would doubtless be more pronounced and even more distinct from Western societies.

Fertility.—Japanese birth rates fell below population-replacement level (2.1 children per woman) by the late 1970s and there has been no sustained recovery since then (fig. 2). Korea, a latecomer to industrialization, experienced a dramatic and nearly continuous drop in fertility from the early 1970s on. Starting at around 4.5, the total fertility rate dropped below replacement level by the mid-1980s and fell to just 1.05 in 2017, rendering Korea a prime example of a "lowest-low" fertility country (defined as having a total fertility rate of 1.3 or lower; Billari and Kohler 2010).

Linkage between marriage and fertility.—In the cultural contexts of Japan and Korea, childbearing remains inextricably linked to marriage, and rates of nonmarital childbearing are extremely low (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2013; Hwang 2016). Voluntary childlessness within marriage in both countries is also rare. Marriage in each country tends to translate quickly into parenthood, with most couples having their first child after a short interval (Shirahase 2000; Ma 2013). The length of the first birth interval does not vary by women's educational level in Japan, and in Korea it is shorter for highly educated than it is for less educated women (Ma 2013). Completed fertility is only slightly lower for highly educated than it is for less educated married Japanese and Korean women (Yoo 2014; National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2016). As Yoo (2014, p. 1483) points out, "Although marginal differences still re-

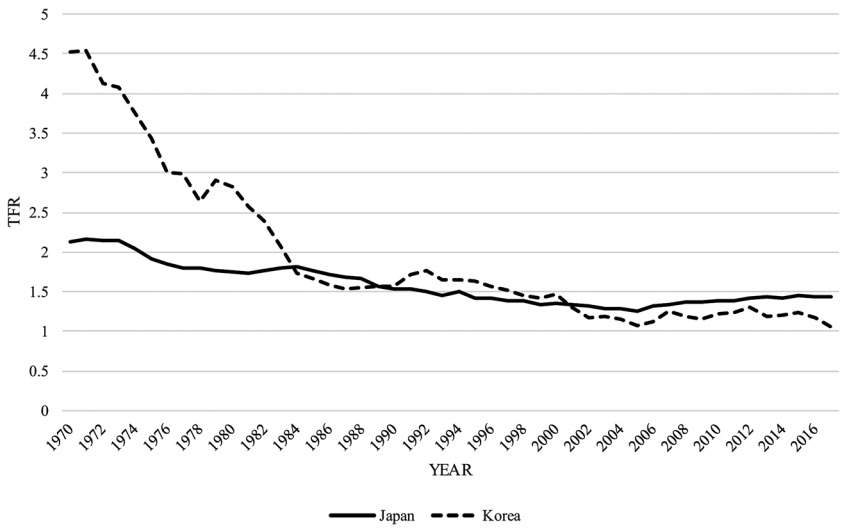

FIG. 2.—Total fertility rates: Japan and Korea, 1970–2017. The total fertility rate is the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her reproductive life span and bear children in accordance with the age-specific fertility rate in the specified year. Data are from the World Bank 2019.

main, the once-obvious gaps in [Korean] lifetime fertility by level of education disappeared among the birth cohorts of women who just ended their reproductive periods."

Given the nearly universal transition to parenthood among married couples in Japan and Korea, low aggregate fertility can be traced to two principal reasons: (1) the rising probability of singlehood (never-married) among individuals in their late thirties; and (2) the declining probability that married couples will proceed to two or three children. The proportion of never-married women ages 35–39 in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore increases in a linear fashion with education level (Hwang 2016). Recent figures demonstrate that nearly 20% of Japanese and Korean women in this age group with a two- or four-year degree are never married. Moreover, there is some evidence that the marriage gap with noncollege graduate women may have increased in recent cohorts, which is the reverse of U.S. trends (Bertrand et al. 2018).

Very low rates of nonmarital childbearing mean that selection out of marriage almost always translates in the two countries to selection out of parenthood itself. While Japanese and Korean policymakers are concerned with the effect of increasing rates of singlehood on the persistence of low total fertility rates, their policy efforts have focused heavily on encouraging married women to have more than one child and to continue working. We thus turn next to social demographers' theorization and empirical examination of the transition to second child in very low-fertility postindustrial so-

cieties. In doing so, we address the neglected role of labor market structure and workplace norms.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: MARRIED WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND FERTILITY IN POSTINDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES

The relationship between women's employment and fertility has become a central focus of social demographers interested in fertility variation in the postindustrial world. At the country level, the relationship between the female labor force participation rate and total fertility rate reversed direction in the 1990s, shifting from a negative to a positive association (Rindfuss and Brewster 1996; Ahn and Mira 2002; Sleebos 2003; Brehm and Engelhardt 2015).

At the individual level, the relationship between women's employment and fertility is more variable across country contexts (Oláh 2003; Kravdal and Rindfuss 2008; Klesment et al. 2014; Brehm and Engelhardt 2015). Social demographers have focused on how the incompatibility between paid work and childrearing for married women may be lessened by greater gender equity within households (McDonald 2000*a*, 2000*b*, 2006, 2013). Accordingly, a number of empirical studies have examined how men's contribution to household labor influences fertility intentions and the transition to second birth (Oláh 2003; Torr and Short 2004; Cooke 2004, 2009; Mills et al. 2008; Nagase and Brinton 2017). For instance, Oláh (2003) compares Sweden, which has had a long-standing dual-earner/dual-carer family model, with Hungary, a country that has emphasized paid work for men and women but has had a more traditional division of labor at home. She finds that fathers' involvement in household work increases the probability of second birth in both countries.[2] Using U.S. data, Torr and Short (2004) find a U-shaped relationship between couples' distribution of household labor and the transition to second birth, with a higher probability of second birth for couples where the wife does most of the housework (the "traditional" model) as well as for couples where housework is shared relatively equally between spouses.

Empirical studies of countries such as Germany, Italy, and Spain that have traditionally had a male-breadwinner ideology suggest that men's greater household work contribution is particularly important for fertility decisions in couples where the wife is employed (Cooke 2004, 2009). Cooke finds that among Italian couples where the wife works part-time, the probability of a second birth only increases when the husband's contribution reaches around 30% of total childcare time. And fathers' childcare contribu-

[2] For Sweden, Oláh measures this as fathers' use of parental leave after the first birth. For Hungary, father's involvement is measured as a deviation from the situation where the wife reports doing all of the household tasks.

tion needs to be much higher (around 60%) to affect the probability of a second birth in couples where the wife works full-time; cases where husbands' contribution is this substantial are extremely rare in Italy. Empirical studies in Japan also generally find a positive relationship between husbands' housework share and fertility outcomes (Yamaguchi 2005; Mizuochi 2010).

Little research on household gender equity and fertility has taken a step back to consider how labor market structure and organizational norms such as number of working hours affect gender specialization in households and consequently impact fertility. In other words, the social demographic literature has not considered labor market conditions as an important distal determinant or input to fertility, operating through household gender specialization as a mediating variable. A recent exception is Nagase and Brinton (2017). Using nationally representative data, they found that Japanese male university graduates working in large firms (with 5,000 or more employees) contributed the lowest share of household labor (13%) among men of all educational levels and firm sizes. Furthermore, when men move into such an environment, their household work hours appear to be affected by their peers. This subsequently lowers the probability of transition to second birth, but only in dual-earner couples. Conversely, husbands' adaptation to norms for shorter work hours in their workplace appears able to slightly mediate the negative effect of wives' employment on the transition to second birth. While not focused on fertility, research by Moon and Shin (2018) also demonstrates the negative influence of long work hours on Korean fathers' active participation in childrearing and, conversely, the positive effect of supervisors' support for work-family balance.

Before turning to the analysis of our qualitative data, we outline the labor market structure, general work norms, and household division of labor in the two countries as well as the ways that formal policies and informal support from kin only partially address the strains imposed on dual-earner families by workplace demands.

THE CONTEXT OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT IN JAPAN AND KOREA

Labor market structure.—The large majority of male and female employees in Japan and Korea work in the private sector, with the public sector comprising less than 10% of total employment in each country (OECD 2017*b*).[3]

[3] The public sector tends to be more hospitable to women (Raymo and Lim 2011; Ma 2014). Similar to other countries, women employed in the public sector in Japan and Korea are less likely to leave the labor force (Ma 2013; Raymo and Lim 2011). This is reflected in Raymo and Lim's (2011) finding of two distinct work patterns among highly educated Japanese married women. One group is composed of women in regular full-time jobs in the public sector or in professional occupations, who demonstrate strong labor force at-

Private-sector workplace conditions are therefore of central importance in men's and women's lives.

Seniority wages have traditionally constituted the principal payment system for regular full-time workers, especially in large firms. The system has generally predisposed companies against hiring women into managerial-track jobs, as employers predict that women are more likely than men to have intermittent employment because of childrearing responsibilities (Rovny 2011; Yashiro 2011). Seniority wages are also coupled with a much higher degree of employment protection for regular workers in the two countries than in the United States (OECD 2017*b*). Rates of interfirm mobility, especially for employees of large firms, remain low. Employees who voluntarily leave a firm to enter the external labor market are often stigmatized, with potential employers tending to associate such behavior with a lack of company loyalty and an inability to get along with one's coworkers.

The absence of a vibrant external labor market accentuates the general inability of employees to negotiate their work hours, overtime hours, or other conditions of employment. As Yashiro (2011) points out, "While Japanese employment practices are useful for producing skilled workers through intensive on-the-job training, they also impose a heavy burden on employees in the form of long working hours and forced job placements. Of course, even in Japan, disgruntled employees can quit their jobs, but with such an inflexible labor market, the possibility of finding another job with similar conditions is low. Thus, in Japan, the opportunity costs of leaving a firm are especially high. This makes it difficult for many employees to seriously consider changing jobs mid-career" (Yashiro 2011, p. 144). Successive decisions by the Japanese Supreme Court have upheld employers' authority over regular employees' job content, overtime work, and transfers to other parts of the country or internationally, regardless of employees' family obligations (Nagase and Brinton 2017).

Interfirm mobility in Korea also continues to be relatively low compared to other societies, although it has increased since the 1997 financial crisis (Kim 2014). Among men who change firms, most remain in the same industry doing similar jobs, experiencing a workplace culture where the ideal worker is expected to make personal sacrifices and to work long hours (Ko 2007).

Workplace norms.—The negative career implications of interfirm mobility and the emphasis on being rewarded with seniority wages mean that the "ideal" Japanese or Korean worker is one who can consistently work long hours and can engage unquestionably in continuous labor force participation over the life cycle (Schoppa 2006; Cha 2010; Estévez-Abe 2013; Brinton

tachment. The other group includes women in all other jobs, who tend to exit the labor force and not reenter at a later time. This demonstrates the existence of considerable heterogeneity in highly educated women's life-cycle employment patterns.

and Mun 2016). In both Japan and Korea, long working hours have conventionally been considered a demonstration of loyalty to the employer (Choe, Bumpass, and Tsuya 2004). In point of fact, the two countries have the highest percentage of employees (over 20%) who work long hours—defined by the OECD as 50 hours or more per week—among all postindustrial nations (OECD 2017*b*). Data from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare in Japan show that employees who work more than 60 hours a week are concentrated in the peak childrearing ages of 25–44 (Yashiro 2011).

Consistent with the findings of Cha (2010) in the United States, long work-hour norms present strong challenges for women who try to combine employment and motherhood. While managerial-track jobs have gradually opened up for highly educated Japanese and Korean women, long work hours and the tendency to measure white-collar productivity through "effort" and face time (Yashiro 2011) render it extremely difficult for young mothers in such jobs to fulfill employers' expectations. Cutting back to part-time hours is not permitted in managerial-track jobs in either country. This means that women with children either leave the labor force entirely, move to a subsidiary part-time job with short work hours, or remain employed full-time and try to forge a balance between work and childrearing.

The long work hours of men are also central in affecting wives' employment and couples' fertility goals. Before turning to this, we consider how government policies, kin support, and gender-role ideology impact whether women engage simultaneously in full-time employment and childrearing.

Work-family policies and childcare arrangements.—On the face of it, inadequate parental leave policy in Japan and Korea does not stand out as the most obvious reason behind highly educated women's propensity to leave the labor force at childbirth. In Japan, 14 weeks of paid maternity leave have long been guaranteed by the Labor Standards Law; women typically take six weeks of leave before childbirth and the remaining eight weeks after childbirth. Ninety days of paid maternity leave are guaranteed in Korea.

Both countries have enacted successively more generous childcare leave policies in recent years. Although childcare leave is available to men in both Japan and Korea, less than 5% of men in either country take it. Japanese employees are entitled to take childcare leave at 67% of their preleave wages until their child's first birthday (Zhou 2015). Couples can extend the leave until their child is 14 months old if the father takes some of the leave. In Korea, childcare leave of up to one year can be taken until the child turns six. The wage replacement rate is 40% of monthly salary, with the minimum set at 500,000 Korean won (approximately U.S. $425) and the maximum at 1 million Korean won (approximately U.S. $850). All figures apply to 2012, when we conducted the interviews for the present study.

These childcare policies in the two countries are only guaranteed for regular full-time workers—precisely those workers who are subject to the pressures of

long work hours. Some Japanese managers actively encourage women in career-track jobs to take childcare leave so that the company's investment in them will pay off when they return to work. But interviews with managers in large firms reveal that many of them implicitly expect women to "work like men" once they return to the workplace, almost as if the event that caused their absence (childbirth) had not impacted their daily lives (Brinton and Mun 2016). Moreover, many women in Japan and Korea who take childcare leave report feelings of guilt vis-à-vis their colleagues; other employees are generally required to take up the slack while a new mother is on maternity or childcare leave (Takahashi et al. 2014; Oh and Mun 2018).

Both countries have a publicly funded daycare system. The Japanese government maintains an extensive system of high-quality, affordable, licensed childcare centers (Boling 2015). However, waiting lists for childcare spaces tend to be long in large cities, and it is not unusual for mothers to ask that their childcare leave be extended for an additional six months while they wait for a space. In Korea, the government has dramatically expanded publicly funded daycare services for children under three years of age since the early 2000s. Government-run childcare centers are generally regarded positively by the Japanese public but some studies suggest that this is not necessarily so in Korea (Lee and Bauer 2010). In any case, dual-earner couples who work long hours often must opt for private daycare if they can afford it, given that public daycare hours do not match the long work-hour norms in the two countries.

Childcare help from the older generation often supplements paid childcare services in the two countries. Over half of Japanese couples with a child under three years old receive some childcare assistance from one or both grandmothers (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2016), and national statistics for Korea are similar (Ministry of Health and Welfare 2009). However, there is a paucity of reliable statistics on how often or for how many hours per week such assistance is given. A number of studies report a positive influence on maternal employment from co-residing or living close to grandparents (for Japan, see Oishi and Oshio [2006]; for Korea, see Lee [2011]).

In sum, parental leave provisions assist new mothers in regular full-time jobs in returning to work, but generally under the same long-hour work conditions they experienced before leaving. Childcare arrangements in the two countries appear relatively conducive to mothers' continuous labor force participation. But the combination of the long work-hour culture and a gender-role ideology that prioritizes a male breadwinner-female caregiver model creates a powerful set of countervailing pressures.

Gender-role ideology and the household division of labor.—Both Japan and Korea are characterized by gender-role attitudes emphasizing the importance of women's role as mothers (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004; Ochiai and

Molony 2008). A recent analysis of gender-role attitudes in 24 OECD countries shows that in Japan and Korea, larger percentages of the population than in other countries believe in a "prowork conservative" model of women's lives. This ideology sees women's primary role as being in the household, to be supplemented by their role in the workplace (Brinton and Lee 2016).

Comparative research on the household division of labor also finds Japan and Korea to be outliers, with men doing the lowest share of housework across all postindustrial societies (Fuwa 2004; Knudsen and Wærness 2008; OECD 2012, 2015; Oshio, Nozaki, and Kobayashi 2013). Figures from separate data sources consistently report that Japanese women do 80%–100% of housework and childcare (Tsuya and Bumpass 2004; Brinton 2017; Nagase and Brinton 2017).

In sum, while work-family policies and public childcare availability in the two countries are generous by American standards, these are counterbalanced by a strong male-breadwinner/female-caregiver ideology that is reinforced by labor market structure and organizational norms that include long work hours. Long work-hour norms in the two countries not only impact women directly but also indirectly as well, as they dampen men's availability to be actively involved at home. Especially if husbands are highly educated and are employed in large firms, work hours are often over 60 hours per week. Coupled with long commuting times in large cities, this severely limits their available time at home.

Given these conditions, we expect the narratives of highly educated married men and women to strongly reflect the time constraints imposed by long work hours, especially on men. Furthermore, we expect it to be common for men and women alike to reference how wives have adjusted or will adjust their employment to the presence of children. And among couples where the wife works full-time and plans to continue doing so, we expect to find less certain intentions to have two children than in other couples.

DATA AND METHODS

Our data are from the Comparative Fertility and Gender Equality Project organized by the senior author. The project design included the parallel collection of structured in-depth interviews with highly educated native-born urban men and women ages 24–35 in Japan and Korea. In Japan, independent samples of men and women were drawn from the Tokyo and Osaka metropolitan areas. Samples in Korea were drawn from Seoul and Busan. Each sample is stratified by family formation stage, with one-third of the female and male samples respectively consisting of single (unmarried, noncohabiting) individuals, married individuals with no children, and married individuals with one child. For the present discussion, we utilize the interviews with married individuals as our main data and the interviews with

single individuals as supplementary data. The sample of married Korean interviewees is somewhat larger ($N = 65$) than the Japanese sample ($N = 50$), as we conducted additional interviews of Korean married women for a related project. Throughout the analysis, it is important to remember that each group in Japan and Korea (married men with no children, married women with no children, married men with one child, married women with one child, and single men and women) is an independent sample—that is, none of the sampled individuals are in relationships (either dating or married) with each other.

The inclusion of married men and also of single individuals is an advantage of our study. Studies of women's employment and fertility share a nearly exclusive focus on partnered females, despite social demographers' argument that fertility, especially in the context of marriage, is generally a couple-based decision (Thomson 1997; Thomson and Hoem 1998). Our data allow us to analyze married men's as well as women's reasoning about employment, household labor, and fertility intentions. By interviewing both men and women we are able to gain a sense of how members of each sex experience the workplace—especially the long work-hour culture—and its relationship to their personal life, including fertility intentions.

Our interviews with single individuals illuminate how currently unpartnered individuals in the same demographic group as our married samples (by education, age, and urban residence) articulate their marriage and fertility intentions and their expectations of employment and household life. These interviews address the secondary question of whether the experience of labor market conditions, workplace norms, and gender-role expectations may be dampening highly educated women's intentions to marry and have children.

We purposely sampled only individuals who had completed some form of tertiary education. While this renders it impossible for us to compare men and women across different educational levels, it allows us to minimize the social class heterogeneity in our overall sample and thus to maximize the comparisons we can make across individuals and across the two countries. More importantly, the purpose of our study is to understand the reasons behind Japanese and Korean highly educated married women's discontinuous labor force participation across the life cycle and their low probability of combining full-time employment with having two or more children. Our focus on the highly educated is consistent with McDonald's (2013) suggestion that these are the women who face the greatest opportunity costs in remaining out of the labor force. Some demographers also highlight the role of the highly educated as initiators of fertility trends (Skirbekk 2008).

In each country, we sampled so as to reflect the population percentages in the 24–35 year-old age group of two-year, four-year, and advanced degree graduates. We used snowball sampling, starting with a large number of "seeds" and proceeding outward. Each successive seed was allowed to intro-

duce a maximum of two individuals. This design minimized the main disadvantage of snowball sampling: the potential generation of clusters of homogeneous individuals in the final sample, resulting from a small number of initial seeds and limited network dispersion in referral chains.

To understand the structure of each country sample, we used post hoc cluster analysis to identify the potential existence of clusters of similar individuals. We analyzed the quantitatively coded responses to 10 World Values Survey questions embedded in the interview protocol by performing cluster analysis using both single-link and median-link methods. The absence of a hierarchical structure indicates that there is no clustering within either the Japanese or Korean sample. We also compared sample means on fertility intentions and gender-role attitudes with population means for the same demographic groups (highly educated men and women ages 24–35 in each country). The results (available upon request) indicate that our samples are highly similar to the underlying populations. While the purpose of qualitative research is not to create a representative sample, we nevertheless conducted these checks to assure ourselves that our samples are not biased in ways that are likely to affect our analysis.

Interviews were conducted by two highly educated female native speakers in each country and typically lasted between 1.5 and 2.5 hours. All interviewers were trained to follow the interview protocol and to use the same probes when interviewees hesitated or answered in unclear ways. The interview protocol for married individuals included the following: employment and daily life (work hours and conditions, commuting time, daily schedule for self and spouse [whether employed or nonemployed]); anticipated stability or change in own and spouse's employment or work hours in the near future; fertility ideals and intentions; ideal and actual household division of labor and childcare; attitudes toward various childcare arrangements; changes experienced in work and home life upon marriage and changes expected or experienced upon the birth of a child; gender-role attitudes, including 10 World Values Survey questions and additional questions related to attitudes toward working mothers and ideal childcare arrangements; definitions of the ideal man and ideal woman; and perceptions and attitudes toward work-life policies and government policies designed to boost the birth rate.

The interview protocol for single interviewees was similar, but also asked whether the individual aspired and intended to marry or not; what their reasons are; what type of lifestyle (work-life balance) interviewees anticipate if they marry; and (given that they hope to marry) what obstacles they anticipate, including finding a suitable partner. Most of the interview questions were close ended and were followed by a query asking why interviewees feel the way they do or hold the attitudes they expressed. We elicited individuals' reasoning in order to understand their rationale for current and anticipated near-term decisions about fertility and employment.

The first section of the interview, on the structure of a typical weekday for individuals (and their spouses, in the case of married interviewees), was designed as a "warm-up" section to facilitate rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. The questions in this section were objective and were not particularly sensitive. This section offered surprising insights, as it reveals the texture of everyday life including the time workers arrive home in the evening. We return to this point later in our analysis.

We structurally (topically) coded the interview transcripts using the qualitative software Dedoose. In reading and rereading the full transcripts and in writing interview summaries, we utilized this topical coding to extract excerpts. We hand-coded interview passages on each topic in order to identify themes (Glaser and Strauss 1967). When we encountered new themes, we developed additional codes and cross-checked them in all interviews.

Sample characteristics.—Table 1 summarizes the employment status and work hours of the married male and female samples in each country. Consistent with cross-national data, median weekly work hours for interviewees are longest for Korean married men (60 hours), followed by Japanese men (48 hours). The characteristics of our female interviewees reflect a key difference in the labor market structure of the two countries, despite their overall similarities: the relative availability of part-time work. Part-time jobs comprise nearly one-quarter of all employment in Japan but only about 10% of employment in Korea (OECD 2017*b*). Given the very limited possibilities for part-time employment, Korean female employees generally face similarly long work hours as men (Tsuya, Bumpass, and Choe 2000; Choe et al. 2004; Oshio et al. 2013). This is reflected in the characteristics of

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Married Interviewees

	Japan		Korea	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Mean age (years)	31.0	31.4	32.4	30.0
Employment status:				
Full-time employees (%)	91	46	100	66
Weekly work hours ≥ 50 (%)[a]	62	18	67	56
Weekly work hours = 40–49 (%)[a]	38	82	33	44
Part-time (<40 hours per week) (%)	9	37	0	13
Nonemployed (%)	0	17	0	21
Median weekly work hours (employed individuals)	48	40	60	50
Fertility ideals: mean number of children	2.3	2.2	2.0	2.2
Fertility intentions: mean number of children	1.8	2.0	1.7	1.8
Number of interviewees	26	24	27	38

Note.—Data are from project interviews.

[a] The two "weekly work hours" categories total 100% of the full-time employees in the sample.

our employed female Korean interviewees, who average 50 hours of work per week (compared to 40 hours for employed female Japanese interviewees).[4]

While it is somewhat unconventional to show percentages for small sample sizes, we do so in order to compare across the samples of married interviewees (which differ slightly in size in the two countries). As table 1 shows, nearly half of employed women in the Japanese sample and many fewer in Korea are in part-time jobs; several women in each country sample are not in the labor force. While we do not list occupations, a majority of the Japanese and Korean males and many of the Korean females are in professional and managerial occupations. This is somewhat less so for Japanese females, mainly because those who are employed part-time are in service or clerical support positions.

The fertility ideals of our married interviewees are consistent with the "two-child ideal" in postindustrial countries (Sobotka and Beaujouan 2014). Fertility intentions are slightly lower. While they still may seem high given Japan's and Korea's very low total fertility rates, interviewees' intentions are consistent with those for national samples of married individuals in each country (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2016; also see Nosaka 2012). As pointed out earlier, much of Japan's recent fertility decline is due to an increased proportion of individuals in their thirties who are not married (Ogawa 2003), with the rest attributable to a decline in mean number of children within marriage. An average fertility intention of 1.7 to 2 children among our married interviewees therefore does not contradict the much lower total fertility rate at the population level. Notably, none of the married interviewees in either Japan or Korea report the intention to remain childless.

Table 2 shows how married interviewees are distributed across single- and dual-earner households. Reflecting women's employment status in table 1 (and the structure of the Korean labor market), many fewer of the Japanese interviewees are in dual-earner couples where both partners work full-time. Instead, a larger number of Japanese than Korean married women either work part-time or had left the labor force entirely by the time of the interview.

We analyze how married female interviewees in the two countries explain their employment and childbearing decisions and how men's narratives contribute to the picture. We then consider whether the anticipation of work and family among highly educated single male and female interviewees in the same age group aligns with or differs from the lived experiences of married individuals. This provides a glimpse into whether single women's

[4] Self-employment serves as a somewhat more viable option for Korean than Japanese women seeking to balance work and family responsibilities (Keum et al. 2009), as Korea's rates of self-employment are much higher (26% of the overall labor force vs. 11% in Japan, and 24% vs. 10% for women; OECD 2017*b*).

TABLE 2
Japanese and Korean Couples' Labor Market Participation

	Japan	Korea
Dual-earner couples (%)	76	72
Both partners employed full-time (%)[a]	45	75
Wife employed part-time (%)[a]	45	19
Husband employed less than full-time or unemployed (%)[a]	10	6
Single-earner couples (only husband employed) (%)	24	28
Number of interviewees	50	65

Note.—While table 1 is based on the characteristics of individual male and female interviewees in each country (none of whom are married to each other), table 2 is based on the characteristics of interviewees and their partners. Data are from project interviews.

[a] The two "weekly work hours" categories total 100% of such couples in the sample.

work expectations in particular are so distinct from the lived experiences of married women in the same social class as to suggest that they are shying away from marriage and children. Likewise, it sheds light on single men's expectations of what marriage and employment are likely to mean for themselves and a future wife.

FINDINGS

Three key themes emerged in married women's depictions of a typical weekday schedule, their current employment and that of their spouse, their vision of an ideal man, and their intentions for childbearing and future employment. These were (1) tacit acceptance of men's overwork and consequently a highly skewed household division of labor, (2) women's articulation of a trade-off between their own full-time employment and the intention to have two or more children, and (3) a vision of employment as a way to remain connected to the world (especially common among Japanese women) and as a way to express one's identity (more common among Korean women).

Tacit acceptance of men's overwork and household gender specialization.—In the interviews with married women in both countries, a central mechanism linking the macrolevel labor market and organizational environment to the rhythms of daily life emerged: what we term the *tacit acceptance of men's overwork*. Nearly all interviewees stated that men must work the way they do, clocking over 50 work hours per week on average and returning home in mid- to late evening. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the median time husbands arrive home on a typical weekday in each country, based on what married women report for their husbands and what married male interviewees report for themselves. Very few men typically return home from work by 7 p.m. Instead, the majority arrive home at 8 p.m. or later. Relatedly, the majority of interviewees mentioned that family dinners on

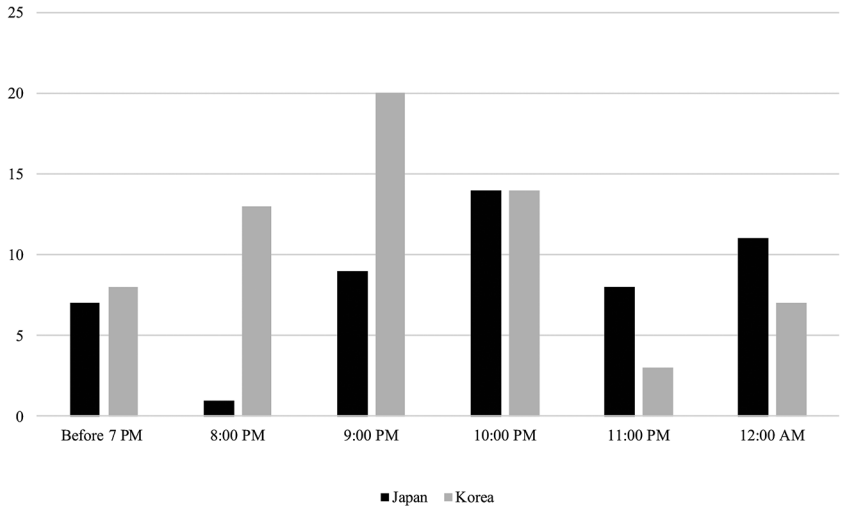

FIG. 3.—Average time husbands arrive home on weekdays. Bars show the number of couples in which the husband arrives home at each time. Data are from the project interviews.

weekdays are the exception. Nearly all women said that husbands' long work hours and late return home make it nearly impossible for them to participate in housework or childcare during the work week.

Both women's and men's explanations of the taken-for-grantedness of male employment conditions are heavily shaped by their perception of the ideal man and the ideal father. MinHa, a 32-year-old Korean woman with one child, comments, "I think an ideal father is a person who is responsible as the financial provider for the family. Regardless of how nice or smart a man is, if he can't support his family financially, he cannot sustain the family." Keiko, a 31-year-old research assistant at a prestigious private university in Kyoto, is even more adamant when asked how she would feel if her husband wanted to be a stay-at-home dad: "Honestly, I would feel like saying, 'Then why did you marry me? Why didn't you marry someone who will support you financially? Do you have the energy to get divorced and look for someone else?'"

Married men's definition of ideal manhood almost always centered on being the main economic provider for the family and achieving professional success through hard work. For instance, JiTae, a 32-year-old Korean man with one child, comments: "Basically, the meaning of leading the family well for a married man is that he feeds his family by earning enough money. If a man, as the head of the family, cannot provide financial support, he will lose his position in the family and will not receive respect from his wife." Similarly, Daisuke, a 31-year-old Japanese married man, defines the ideal man

as "someone who can carefully earn and save money. Someone who has a stable job and a good income."

In defining the central role of a husband in terms of his breadwinning capability, the majority of female and male interviewees said that this means accepting husbands' long work hours and very sparse contribution to household work. Only 2 of the 50 married Japanese interviewees and 2 of the 65 married Korean interviewees reported a household division of labor that was relatively equal. Many interviewees, male and female, mentioned feeling that it is unfortunate that men cannot participate more at home. Although some female interviewees who were employed full-time spoke negatively about their husband's very low level of participation in domestic labor, they were nevertheless quick to place the blame on society rather than on their partner. SunHee, a 28-year-old Korean mother of one child, explained, "I am frustrated that I have to do most of the housework and childcare, especially on weekdays. However, at the same time, I feel bad asking my husband to do the dishes or clean the house, because he comes home around 10 p.m. and is exhausted and stressed-out from working all day long. Technically, it is not his fault."

Like SunHee, many women say that they understand men's experience of exhaustion from work and they acknowledge the severe time constraints men face because of their long work hours. Emiko, a 32-year-old Japanese woman, is typical in this regard; she describes the household division of labor with her husband as "90-10" (she does about 90% and he does 10%). But she is not particularly dissatisfied with this division of labor. Rather, she says that it makes sense because she is employed for fewer hours than her husband.

Underlying couples' general acceptance of men's long work hours is the recognition that these long hours and the implied face time are important for men's promotional and career prospects. In this way, labor market structure enters in as a macrocontextual feature that conditions white-collar employees' behavior in the two countries. Many sociologists have pointed out the importance of the "ideal worker" image and the accompanying work norms for highly educated Americans (Blair-Loy 2005; Cha 2010; Cha and Weeden 2014). Reid's analysis of the strategies used by men and women in a large consulting firm to uphold their reputation as ideal workers illustrates how some male employees find ways to put in less face time while maintaining their reputation as committed workers (Reid 2015). In the Japanese and Korean contexts, this is less possible. First, face time is considered a critical sign of commitment in white-collar jobs in the two countries. Second, the consequences of setting limits on the amount of face time one puts into the job are likely to be severe, both for one's possible promotion within the company and for one's chances of interfirm mobility. Our interviews revealed a strong awareness of these features of the labor market.

The absolute amount of time Japanese and Korean male interviewees spend in the workplace not only influences the way they and their wives rationalize their contribution to household labor but generates the default condition of a highly skewed division of labor at home. Nearly all women viewed this as just the way things are, employing the narrative of "it's not his fault" when referring to husbands' long working hours as the root of the unequal division of labor at home. In the interviews, discussion of the household division of labor was often punctuated by the expression *shikata ga nai* in Japanese and *eo-jjeol su eobs-da* in Korean, both of which mean literally "there is no other way." Thus our first expectation, that men's demanding work conditions and shortage of time at home would be frequently mentioned by interviewees, is borne out. Married interviewees' general assertion that men's principal role in the family is to earn money is accompanied by an implicit acceptance of men's overwork and an unequal division of labor at home.

Interdependence of fertility intentions and wives' employment.—The second dominant theme that emerged is the interdependence between fertility intentions and wives' current and anticipated employment. Although we asked about interviewees' own fertility intentions, it was very common for individuals to spontaneously discuss fertility plans as a couple-level process. In cases where they described disagreement between themselves and their spouse, men were likely to add comments such as "ultimately, it's up to her, as she is the one who will need to manage it" (the household and, if she is employed, the household-employment balance). In this way, women's employment and the couple's fertility plans were intimately interwoven in interviewees' narratives, demonstrating the strong endogeneity of these two aspects of married couples' lives. This is consistent with our second expectation.

Interviewees' narratives about fertility intentions and wives' employment clustered into two dominant types. The first and most common narrative referred to the wife's labor force withdrawal or her shift to less than full-time employment as a means of accommodating the couple's fertility intentions. About two-thirds of the interviewees in each country sample (31 of 50 in Japan and 42 of 65 in Korea) are in couples where the wife is what we call a "labor market adjuster;" she has already adjusted her employment or she plans to do so in accordance with the couple's fertility intentions. Such couples are basically adapting to the existing gender order, accepting the dominant gender-role ideology and the constraints imposed by long work-hour norms. In contrast, the remaining one-third of interviewees ("labor market challengers") describe a commitment to maintaining the wife's full-time employment.

Consistent with the decline in fertility to such a low level in both countries, very few interviewees state an intention to have three or more children. As mentioned earlier, the close connection between marriage and childbearing in East Asia also means that virtually no men or women get married with the intention to remain childless. Accordingly, the variation in fertility inten-

tions across our interviewees is not large, ranging from "one" to "two or three." Even so, there was some differentiation between the fertility intentions of interviewees in "adjuster" couples (where the wife is lowering her employment commitment) and interviewees in "challenger" couples (where the wife plans to maintain her full-time employment). In the latter couples, it was more common for interviewees to express uncertainty about having two children, with several commenting that they hoped to have "one or two" children or qualifying their intention to have two children by saying that it depends on how things work out. This is in line with our third expectation.

Table 3 shows the differences in working conditions (median work hours and median time arriving home on weekdays) for husbands in each group of couples. While caution should be exercised given that ours is a qualitative study with relatively small sample sizes, the figures show that husbands' work hours are longer and the median time husbands arrive home is later among the couples we categorize as "adjusters" (where the wife is lowering her commitment to the workplace). This is true for both countries. We turn now to illustrative cases of adjusters and challengers and describe the reasoning they offer for their employment and fertility decisions.

Labor market adjusters: Wives' plans to ramp down their employment.—Jun is a 32-year-old Korean married man who runs his own online shopping mall business. He describes himself as working 50–60 hours per week. He eats dinner at home just two to three times a week, usually coming home around 8 p.m. and often working on weekends. Jun states that both he and his wife assume that mothers are the primary caregivers. In his words, "My wife and I share the same perspective: that for the child, unless the family is starving, it is best for mothers to focus on childcare and fathers to financially support the family." Jun's wife does almost 100% of the housework and is expecting to do most of the childcare. She works at a local bakery on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. She plans to quit work as soon as she becomes pregnant. In contrast, Jun anticipates working longer hours to support his family after their children are born. Jun says, "We talk a lot about how our lives might change when we have a baby; most often, it

TABLE 3
Husbands' Working Conditions: Couples in Which the Wife Is a Labor Market Adjuster or Challenger

	Japan		Korea	
	Adjusters	Challengers	Adjusters	Challengers
Men's median weekly work hours . . .	60	48	60	55
Men's median time arriving home . . .	9:30 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	8:30 p.m.
Number of interviewees	31	19	42	23

Note.—Data are from project interviews.

comes down to talking about how my wife will be in charge, spending most of her time on childcare." Jun feels that this makes their intention to have two children very realistic. He also mentions that living close to his parents and parents-in-law will lessen the burden of having two children.

Ai is another example of a labor market adjuster. She lives with her husband and their one-year-old daughter in a Tokyo suburb. Although the couple would like to have three children, they plan to have two because they are worried about the cost of raising children. Before marrying, Ai worked as a wedding coordinator, helping couples select the venue for their wedding and planning the wedding schedule. She loved the job, but it involved working on weekends, which she sees as incompatible with having a family. As she puts it, "I guess what you want to do and what you *can* do when you have a family are different."

Ai switched to a clerical job in another company when she married. She then left the labor force when she had her first child. When asked to describe a typical weekday, she talks about taking care of her daughter during the day and fixing dinner for herself and her daughter in the late afternoon. The two of them eat at around 6 p.m., and she generally puts her daughter to bed at 8 p.m. Her husband typically gets home around 9 or 10 p.m., working on average about 55 hours a week. Both Ai and her husband feel that it's best if Ai does not work before their daughter goes to elementary school. At that point, Ai would like to get a part-time job. When asked what her most important criteria would be, she says "the working hours. . . . I would choose a job based on the time my daughter comes home." She goes on to say that she would like to work close enough to home that she could pick up her daughter if she gets sick. In answering whether there is anything she gave up because of marriage, she says, "The job. I needed to give up what I wanted to do."

Eiko is another example of a Japanese woman who chose to leave her job, although she did so upon marriage rather than waiting until she had a child. She is now 31 years old, has a young daughter, and has remained out of the labor force. Upon graduating from university, Eiko initially worked in sales for a large home security company. After three years she moved into a human resources position with a firm that provides staffing services to other companies. She worked there for two years and then got married and quit. Eiko's husband works long hours (about 60 hours per week on average), leaving the house around 7 a.m. and only rarely making it home for dinner. Laughing, Eiko says, "I barely see his face during the week." Eiko does all of the housework. When asked about her ideal division of household labor, she says, "It's fine the way it is. The only thing that would bother me is if he [her husband] were to take it for granted. As long as he is appreciative, it's fine. After all, he is working, so the way I look at it, we are dividing things up by specialty."

MinKyoung is a 31-year-old Korean interviewee who, like Eiko, left her job when she got married. MinKyoung's case illustrates not only the indirect effect of men's long work hours on wives but also the direct effect of long work hours on women who try to continue to work such hours after marrying. MinKyoung worked as an analyst in the finance industry after graduating from university. She worked for four years, then left the job three months after getting married. She explained in the interview that she did not expect to stay at the company once she had a family because she knew it would be impossible to do both. She said, "I went to work at 7 in the morning and worked until 11 p.m. or midnight. I always thought that I could not be employed and take care of a child, and I felt that I would need to quit when I got married." When the interviewer asked her about workplace leave policies, she answered, "In theory, yes, there is maternity leave and childcare leave, but in reality, I wouldn't have been able to use childcare leave because I would have received a 'zero' for the annual evaluation. What that means is 'get out of this office.'" She currently has a young daughter and is concentrating on childrearing and on supporting her husband emotionally, as he works over 60 hours per week. She and her husband intend to have their second child within a year.

These cases graphically illustrate the effect of the long work-hour culture on highly educated couples in the two countries. When husbands work long hours, nearly all housework and childcare become the wife's responsibility, prompting many women to leave the labor force by the time they have their first child. Long work hours also exert a direct effect on women, leading them to sense a profound incompatibility between the normative demands of full-time employment and childrearing. As the example of MinKyoung illustrates, some women in male-dominated industries such as finance also fear that using childcare leave will significantly harm their career prospects.

Throughout our interviews was the sentiment that men *have* to work hard—it is a given. This leaves two options: the wife needs to adjust her employment (switching to a less demanding job or leaving the labor force) or the couple lowers their fertility intentions, generally from two children to one child. We turn now to couples where the wife is what we call a "challenger" (about one-third of our cases), intending to remain continuously employed full-time.

Labor market challengers: Wives' continuous full-time employment.—In contrast to the majority of Korean and Japanese wives in our sample who adjust their employment to take care of the family and household, a minority of interviewees in both countries are in couples where the wife does not plan to switch from full-time employment status in order to accommodate family demands. These couples differ in several ways from the majority of interviewees who are in adjuster couples. Our first example illustrates how the combination of wives' more reasonable full-time work conditions

and extensive childcare help from relatives can render work and family manageable for some full-time dual-earner couples.

Pilsoung is a 32-year-old Korean architect who works for a large firm of about 2,000 employees. He generally works about 70 hours a week, which he describes as common in the architecture industry. Pilsoung's wife is a public school teacher who works about 40 hours per week and arrives home around 4 p.m. At the time of the interview, Pilsoung had been married for two years and had a nine-month-old son. Pilsoung took three days of paternal leave and considers taking any more leave "an inappropriate thing [for a man] to do." On the other hand, as a public school teacher his wife can use up to three years of partially paid childcare leave in addition to three months of paid maternal leave. Pilsoung described the process of his wife deciding on the length of leave and the timing of returning to her work:

Pilsoung: My wife was on leave for three months, and became bored and tired of doing all the routine work with an infant. I was a bit surprised because she had often said that she wanted to quit and it was always me who would try to persuade her not to. I genuinely felt that she had spent so much time studying and had accomplished a lot, including passing the exam [the licensing test for public school teachers, which is very competitive in Korea]. But I think that when she actually had the chance to stay home, she felt kind of depressed and really wanted to go back to work.

Interviewer: When did she go back, and who started taking care of the baby?

Pilsoung: She went back after six more months, so in total she used nine months of leave. Childcare was not a big problem since we were already living very close to my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was doing some part-time work, and when we asked her to move in to our house, she quit her job and started taking care of our son.

Pilsoung reports doing just 10% of the housework and childcare himself. He knows that the division of labor is skewed, but he doesn't see this as a problem in terms of his wife continuing to work. The majority of housework and childcare is done by his mother-in-law. Also, given that his wife gets home around 4 p.m., she has much more time to engage in housework and childcare than he does. Pilsoung describes his wife's job as "a perfect job for people who want to be professionals and have a family." Both he and his wife plan to continue working in their respective workplaces, and he expects that their working hours will remain roughly the same—he will work 70 hours a week and his wife will work 40 hours.

Three conditions make it possible for Pilsoung and his wife to envision her continuous full-time employment: his live-in mother-in-law, who can do a significant amount of housework and childcare; his wife's less-demanding full-time employment; and a flexible and long childcare leave

policy. Because public school teachers are in the public sector and are in jobs that are heavily female dominated, long childcare leaves are much more accepted than in the private sector, especially in male-dominated jobs. Such a setting, Pilsoung argues, "makes it possible to have children and work, forming an ideal familial situation." As the interview progressed, he talked about the couple's plans for children. He described seeing it as totally feasible to have two children, and he and his wife would both like to do so. Since they have a son, they really want to have a daughter and they hope that the two children will support each other and not be lonely as they grow up. When asked why he sees having two children as a realistic plan, he explained the important role that mothers' working conditions play:

Pilsoung: People say children cost a lot, which I think is not true. For us, I do not think it will cost a fortune to have two children. I think it is more related to what kind of work mothers do outside the home. My wife has a really good job since she can come home early without sacrificing her work. Also, being a public school teacher is a highly respected job, so she has achieved both [work and home life], not letting go of either one.

Interviewer: What if she worked at your company?

Pilsoung: My firm? Oh my . . . working until 9 p.m. or sometimes staying up all night when there is a construction deadline is very, very tough for married women. I think that is why we have so few women in the first place, because architecture companies are known for having long working hours. My female colleagues struggle a lot once they get married. Usually, they quit when they are trying to get pregnant.

Interviewer: Are there mothers in your workplace?

Pilsoung: Yes, but very few. They totally depend on their mothers or mothers-in-law for childcare and yet they still have a really tough time. I think most of them intend to have only one child because they know that if they have two children, either their career will end or they will go crazy!

Pilsoung repeatedly expressed his view that getting married and having children in Korea always negatively influences women's lives. Although his wife seems to be the kind of woman who "has it all," Pilsoung nevertheless expressed some sadness for his wife because "all she does is work—either at home or at school." He went on to say that he tells his unmarried female friends and colleagues to postpone marriage for as long as they can. In contrast, he advises his male friends to go ahead and get married.

Among the families where both wives and husbands work full-time and strongly desire to continue, wives' concrete working conditions—work hours and leave policy—and childcare support from grandmothers often work to-

gether in harmony, as in the case of Pilsoung and his wife. However, even for couples where wives work in family-friendly workplaces and where there are potential resources for childcare, having a second child is sometimes described as a more tentative plan. Yui represents such a case.

Yui is a 33-year-old Japanese woman who is currently on childcare leave from her sales support position in a large company. When asked how long she would like to work, she replies, "For as long as I can. It is not like this is my dream job, but it gives me a sense of fulfillment. I have been working in the main headquarters for the last four years, and I think I have been able to establish a good sense of things, of what the issues are. I think I know how to make improvements to satisfy our customers. Also, this is a small thing, but due to my presence in the company, the number of female employees is increasing. I think this is a very good thing." She explains this in more detail by saying, "It's not like I am doing something great at work, but by being here for 10 or 20 years, I can make a big difference in young female employees' lives." Yui originally worked in the sales department and asked to switch positions when she got married, as the hours were unpredictable and very long and, as she puts it, the sales department was very "male-centered." Her boss asked her to wait about four months (until April, when personnel shifts usually occur) and then moved her to the clerical job in the main headquarters that she now occupies. "He half-jokingly told me 'don't get pregnant immediately; we made this position for you because you requested it.'" So she and her husband delayed having children until her position was more stable.

Yui and her husband hope to have a second child in the future, but she is not sure about it: "After returning to work, if I have a good boss [manager], he/she might be supportive about me having another child, and that might help me do so. But if the atmosphere makes it difficult, I may not have a second child. I'm just not sure."

In Yui's case, the work conditions are quite favorable and furthermore, she estimates that her husband does about 30% of the housework—considerably more than the majority of Japanese men. He works about 50 hours a week but has a short commute of 20–30 minutes. The couple is currently on the waiting list for a space in public childcare for their one-year-old son, and Yui is able to extend her leave for another six months in hopes of getting a spot. Her situation represents a convergence of factors that lead her to feel that she may be able to have the two children she and her husband desire. But she readily admits that this may or may not work out.

The cases of Pilsoung and Yui demonstrate the conditions that have to be met in order for couples where spouses are both working full-time to maintain their fertility intentions of having two children. While many who are in the challenger group hope to have two children, most are not certain they will be able to. Instead, having a second child is often described as a tentative and uncertain plan.

The patterns we have found give rise to three additional questions. First, is Pilsoung's wife representative of women in public-sector jobs? It is hard to say from our limited sample whether women choose public-sector jobs because they are more family friendly, but the small number of women in each of our country samples who are in the public sector do talk about the "normalcy" of childcare leave, and some talk about shorter work hours than in other jobs. As MinHa says, "You are killing two birds with one stone. Jobs in the public sector have a system you can utilize so that you can focus on both work and family."

Second, are female interviewees leaving the labor force because of discrimination? Some women did mention discrimination, almost always in reference to frustration over longer waits for promotions than men because of the perception that they could not work as hard as men. This frustration led some female interviewees, especially in Japan, to decide to seek a part-time job rather than stay in a full-time managerial-track job.

Third, our data clearly show that work-family incompatibility is a major issue that leads Japanese and Korean women to question whether they can work full-time and simultaneously manage having more than one child. But government statistics indicate that high rates of singlehood, especially among highly educated women, also contribute to the two countries' very low birth rates. Is nonmarriage traceable at least in part to young women's desire to work throughout the life cycle and forgo the work-family choices our married interviewees described? This has been a highly popularized explanation for rising rates of nonmarriage, as demonstrated by numerous magazine and newspaper articles (see, e.g., the cover story of the August 20, 2011, issue of the *Economist* entitled "Asia's Lonely Hearts: Women Are Rejecting Marriage in Asia"). To briefly explore this concern, we turn to the nearly 50 interviews we conducted with single men and women in Japan and Korea.

The view from unmarried interviewees.—Our first finding from the interviews with singles is that the desire to marry is overwhelmingly present. This was the case for all of the Japanese females and for all but two of the Japanese males. None of the Korean interviewees said "I plan not to get married" or "Marriage is not an option for me."

Second, we were very surprised to find almost no evidence that women's anticipation of doing nearly all the housework inhibits them from wanting to marry. As with married female interviewees, men's breadwinning capacity is highly valued by single women, and they are quick to comment that this may compromise men's capacity to contribute very much to housework and childcare. For the large majority of women, this appears to be a bargain worth striking. Yukari, a 28-year old Japanese woman, says the following with regard to how she envisions a future spouse's work life: "Stable, professional work. Ideally, I would want him to leave the office by 5 or 6 p.m., but I don't think an employer would allow that." Asked about her ideal di-

vision of housework and childcare, she reiterates the workplace constraints she anticipates for a future husband: "I would like to share both housework and childcare 50:50, but realistically it would be difficult because he will not be allowed to go home early."

Third, we found some variation between Japanese and Korean single women's images of their anticipated postmarriage employment. When we asked Yukari about how she envisioned her life as a married person, she said, "I would change my job to nonregular or part-time work so that I can leave the office at 5 p.m. Otherwise [if she kept her current job, working full-time in the accounting department of a firm], I would be concerned that my family would complain and I would not be able to balance things." Nevertheless, she adds that "I will need him [her future husband] to allow me to work; it is important for me to work." Yukari's case is a powerful illustration of the very common attitude we found across both married and unmarried Japanese women in our study: the desire to work, but not to "work like men." Our Japanese married and single female interviewees overwhelmingly viewed work as a way of remaining connected to the world, not as a means toward building a career. This view is consistent with the dominant employment patterns of Japanese married women: discontinuous labor force participation, or a shift to part-time work once they are married or have children. As 28-year-old Rina states: "I will want to prioritize time with family and with my partner. If I have kids, I want to take care of them, so I don't want to work long hours. Ideally I can work 9-5 or so; part-time would also be fine."

A much larger number of single Korean than Japanese female interviewees articulate a desire to find a marriage partner who will understand their desire for full-time work and the development of a career. This desire is nevertheless accompanied, even in this group, by the requirement that a potential husband be a strong breadwinner. As in the interviews with Korean married women, descriptions of the ideal husband frequently include "ability," a term often used in Korean to refer to a person with high educational attainment or specific skills that ensure financial stability.

In short, like their married counterparts, unmarried women in Japan and Korea emphasize the importance of husbands providing for the family. Likewise, the postmarriage employment patterns they anticipate mirror the key difference in the two countries' labor markets: the degree to which part-time work is available. Just as many more married female interviewees in Korea than in Japan work full-time, some single Korean women in our sample express a desire to overcome the obstacles to being a full-time employed mother and to remain in jobs with long work hours. It is only among Korean women that we observe this pattern. Our single female Japanese interviewees show little evidence of strong career aspirations. This does not, however, indicate that they are passive. Rather, they typically explain the choice they expect to make as a rational one given men's workplace condi-

tions and the very unequal division of labor at home. Thus for women, the concept of "being employed" implicitly reflects the different labor market structures in the two societies.

Single men in both countries also demonstrate strong recognition that becoming a husband entails being able to support a family financially. Most express a willingness to "help" with housework or childcare, but none say that they anticipate changing their work or lifestyle significantly once they marry and have children. Notably, the only two single men in either country sample who do not intend to marry are employed as nonregular workers. The majority of Japanese single men express a desire for their wife to work, whether in a nonregular part-time job or a full-time job. But most state simultaneously that it is best for mothers to not be employed when children are preschool age. Single male Korean interviewees show less uniform expectations regarding their future spouses' employment. Some strongly expressed that they expect their wives to stay home, whereas others say they prefer their wives to have a 9–5 job so that they can balance work and childrearing well.

Overall, we are struck with the consistency between the actual employment patterns of married individuals and the postmarriage employment patterns anticipated among single individuals in our study. While the popular press in both countries has often blamed single women's career aspirations for their nonmarriage (Hwang 2016), we do not find evidence of this in our Japanese sample, and we see only slight evidence for it in the Korean sample. It is striking that running throughout all of the interviews, both female and male, married and single, is the theme that men's strong breadwinning capability is a necessity for marriage.

Finally, the norm of long work hours casts a distinct shadow even on our single interviewees: many state that they are too exhausted by their work schedule to meet and date potential marriage partners. As InJu, a single Korean female, puts it: "You are constantly busy and are pressured by your workplace to do a lot of work. So it is important to take care of yourself. For me, if dating brings more stress on top of all of this, I would rather just be alone." Coupled with the desire for a partner who is compatible on personality and other grounds, long work hours and lack of time for dating likely factor into the high rates of delayed marriage or nonmarriage (almost always translating into nonparenthood) in both countries.

CONCLUSION

Japan and South Korea are exceptional among postindustrial countries in continuing to demonstrate an M-shaped curve of female labor force participation. This tendency is becoming weaker over time, especially in Japan. But it is likely that much of the smoothing-out of the M-curve among women

in their thirties is due in particular to the increasing propensity for them to remain unmarried and to continue working; among women who do marry, it remains the case that over half leave the labor force by the time they have their first child. Reducing this high quit rate has become a policy goal for the governments of both countries, as the loss of women's labor—especially among the highly educated—coupled with the very low fertility rate is already leading to significant labor shortages. The question of why raising children and being employed (especially in a full-time job) appear to be so incompatible for women in these countries is thus regarded as a pressing problem by policymakers. The vexing nature of this issue is exacerbated by the apparent ineffectiveness of policies intended to increase the supply of public childcare, to extend childcare leave, and to encourage husbands to take leave. Childcare support from grandparents can be helpful, of course, but not all households have access to this and it can rarely compensate for the disadvantages of long work hours.

Through analyzing the narratives of highly educated married men and women in the childbearing stage in both countries, we find that couples divide into two groups: those where the wife forgoes full-time employment, at least for a period of time (the majority, whom we call adjusters) and those where the wife intends to continue working full-time (the minority, termed challengers). Interviewees in the latter group tend to express less certainty than those in the former group that they will be able to reach their commonly expressed fertility goal of two children.

Our qualitative data from married individuals reveal how labor market structure and workplace norms direct the rhythms of couples' daily lives and influence their childbearing plans. The pressure to put in long work hours means that husbands arrive home at 9:00 or 9:30 p.m. on average, making it all but impossible for them to contribute to housework or childcare during the workweek. Low opportunities for interfirm mobility render it risky for men to resist these long work-hour norms, as the options for moving to an equivalent or better job in another company are limited due to many firms' resistance to midcareer hiring. If wives are also in jobs with long or irregular work hours, they are highly likely to quit—especially if the couple wants to have two children. Both men's and women's narratives reveal tacit acceptance of the reality of working conditions in regular full-time jobs. Interviewees take it for granted that men's conformity to long work-hour norms necessarily implies a very skewed division of household labor.

In the minority of couples where the wife intends to continue working full-time, other conditions are generally present: grandparents provide an unusual amount of childcare support, the wife has a more moderate work schedule, and/or the husband gets home a little earlier and is able to do some housework. But among such couples, the certainty of the intention to have two children is generally weaker than in couples where the wife leaves the

labor force or cuts back on her work hours, resting as it does on a delicate combination of factors.

Our study makes several important contributions. First, we uncover the microlevel mechanisms underlying the persistent M-shaped curve of female labor force participation in Japan and Korea. The narrated experiences from young married couples' daily lives reveal fundamental incompatibilities between employment and childrearing for highly educated women, despite state policies intended to prioritize both their labor power and their reproductive labor.

Second, we make a theoretical contribution by bringing the role of labor market structure and workplace norms into the literature on postindustrial low fertility. Social demographers have demonstrated that many highly educated women in countries such as the United States and Sweden who are married or in stable cohabitations engage in simultaneous employment and childrearing. Cross-national studies suggest variation in how much men's contribution to housework and childcare in full-time dual-earner couples affects the probability of having a second child. Our study of two East Asian societies unveils how deeply the gendered division of labor at home is connected to labor market institutions and workplace norms. Our analysis highlights the mechanisms through which those institutions and norms—especially for men—affect married couples' allocation of time. In both Japan and Korea, the macrolevel context of work perpetuates a highly gendered division of household labor and creates severe time constraints for full-time dual-earner couples, rendering it unlikely that they will have two or more children.

Third, our use of in-depth structured interviews for married men as well as married women departs from quantitative studies and also from the majority of qualitative studies, which generally focus on married women's decisions about work and family. By asking individuals about their daily schedules as well as their expectations and reasoning regarding their own work patterns, those of the opposite sex, and childbearing intentions, our study reveals the microlevel dynamics of how perceptions of rigid labor market structures and inflexible work norms permeate both men's and women's outlook and behaviors. Our interviews with men reveal their strong assumption that wives will indeed adapt to the seemingly unforgiving demands that the workplace places on men. A possible limitation of our methodology, of course, is that we did not interview men and women who are married to each other. This would be a fruitful direction for future research.

Fourth, our supplementary analysis of unmarried individuals in the same demographic group allows us to see whether their common understandings and expectations differ from those of married individuals. This in fact was what we expected to find, especially given the high rates of late marriage and nonmarriage in the two countries. Instead, we were surprised at the

strong consistency between married and single people in their interpretation of working conditions and gender roles, and also the surprising consistency between how the sexes envision what married life is likely to entail. Especially striking is Japanese women's common acceptance of the constraints of full-time work and their embrace of the naturalness of these constraints for men. In exchange, women essentially adapt their work plans and the daily rhythm of their own lives to men's work schedules. This suggests that more research needs to be done on whether career-orientedness is as unusual among Japanese highly educated women as our qualitative analysis suggests.

Finally, we find some subtle differences between the attitudes and behaviors of women in the two East Asian countries we examined. The most important difference is that a career orientation is more evident among our female Korean than Japanese interviewees. Whether this is due mainly to labor market structure (the paucity of part-time jobs in Korea) or can also be traced to underlying differences in how women in the two countries develop their orientation to employment is a subject for future study.

Long work hours are not limited to Japan and Korea, but rather are a common feature of East Asian societies. Future research should continue to investigate not only how long work-hour norms affect gender inequality at work and at home, but how they affect the very reproduction of the family.

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