

REVEALING THE CLASS-GENDER CONNECTION: SOCIAL POLICY, LABOUR MARKETS AND HOUSEHOLDS¹

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Conversations are currently underway at several levels concerning comparative analysis of gender relations: gendered welfare states, gender regimes and the class-gender nexus. These discussions are occurring around important theoretical, methodological and empirical matters about changes in workplaces, social security and households. This paper advocates for the insights revealed through the class-gender nexus approach.

All are asking: is the priority for comparative gender regime analysis a refined classification scheme for welfare states or should we challenge the purpose of such classification itself? Also at stake are what may be described methodologically as 'thin' versus 'thick' comparative accounts. The 'thin' accounts are troubled mainly by which countries fit which welfare state regime typologies² whereas 'thick' ones are concerned about deeper issues of complex relational practices within countries.³ What can be revealed through the use of these methodologies about changing practices in post-industrial societies?

Gøsta Esping-Andersen's classic work on the three worlds of welfare capitalism was about the issue of the de-commodification of labour by which he meant freedom from the labour market and reliance upon state-based rights. These three regimes were liberal where services are provided by markets which means they vary by individual success in labour markets; conservative where subsidies, not services are provided to the needy thus making it difficult for women's labour force participation and promoting principal male breadwinners; social democratic promoting social rights and women's labour force participation by way of providing services for care work. His recent work offers an institutional framework of welfare regimes that are an interaction of composite parts: labour markets, the family and the welfare state. According to him, all nations have combinations of each part but different 'accents': the Liberal Anglo-Saxon nations are "market-biased", the Southern European or Japanese are "powerfully familialist" and then there are the Scandinavians' welfare states. In terms of the six nations I have selected to explore in my studies, Australia, Canada and the United States are characterized as identical in Esping-Andersen's scheme with little labour market regulation, residual welfare states and non-familialist. Sweden is the outlier with medium labour market regulation, a universal welfare state and non-familialist. Germany and Japan share social

insurance welfare states and familialism but differ on the extent of labour market regulation with Germany strong and Japan medium.⁴

A key example of a thick analysis is O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver's book on four liberal societies entitled States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States. They extend their analysis beyond welfare states per se to "social policy regimes" which include reproductive rights. For them, regime "indicates something broader than the 'welfare state', connoting the full range of domestic policy interventions as well as broader patterns of provisioning and regulation" including "sexual and reproductive relations."⁵ They choose to examine these issues deeply in terms of practices and policies in four nations rather than narrowly across 20-odd nations so common for those using statistical comparisons with data from the Luxemburg Income or Employment Studies, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or the International Labor Organization.

Sylvia Walby is a major advocate for gender regime analysis. She sees "a gender regime as composed of a set of inter-related domains of employment, unpaid work, the state, male violence, sexuality and culture. This broadens the concept of the state and adds male violence, sexuality and culture."⁶ Her formulation is much wider than the notion of a gendered welfare-state regime but less nuanced in terms of class relations. Walby is also advocating the 'thicker' kind of evidence such as used by O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver. All of these research strategies should be regarded as valuable but different ways to address class and gender matters in relation to transformations in welfare states and the world of work in advanced capitalist societies.⁷

In a preliminary way, the remainder of this paper will illustrate some key features of a class-gender nexus approach that differentiate it from either the comparative welfare state or gender regime approaches. This approach will attempt to cut across the thin/thick divide which has limited much of the comparative welfare state literature by locating the research focus in relational terms rather than as attributes of institutions or individuals. The major interveners in these discussions now all recognize the importance of 'family' in their understandings but they vary in their prioritization of gender and class. Much of the discussion here will focus on households since they are the least problematized feature of the triad within the comparative welfare state literature. I use the designation 'households' rather than 'families' because this broader category offers a complex site for investigation more open than a set of institutions suggested by the designation 'family'. As will be evident, I am suggesting a wider consideration of family commitments, obligations and residential arrangements than typical of a 'nuclear family'. First, I provide a brief note about the context for these connections.

GENDER AND GENERATIONS

Generation has taken on greater significance because people are living longer, having fewer children and labour market entry is changing. Moreover, 'youth' (those falling between sexual maturity and economic independence) have grown and are experiencing unique labour market 'choices': greatly extended education, 'freeters' and reduced opportunities for career jobs. 'Freeters' are a new generation of Japanese young people who have not continued in school and have not had access to core career jobs but support themselves with only part-time, temporary work, now accounting for over a fifth of the population 15 to 34 years of age (not including students and housewives).⁸ We now learn that even young Japanese adults who do gain career jobs are experiencing a tremendous intensification of work because there are so few of them, especially those with computer skills, carrying a greater burden of work so they are being burned-out by job pressures. Instead of being 'mentored' and 'brought along' the 'burnt-out' generation is thrust into overload situations.

Gender and generation have not transformed in the same manner everywhere. Helga Krüger reports, "For the United States, Gerson (1993) classified the intergenerational differences between parents in the sixties and their adult children as a 'gender revolution.' The results of our similar research revealed that in Germany one should speak not of a gender revolution but of 'suffocated social change.'"⁹ Krüger seeks to expand, "our understanding of the low female labour-market-participation rates in Germany. The faltering nature of social change reveals that, in the postwar generation, we witnessed a high female interest in employment among married women set against the traditional and publicly shared view of their husbands on wives' conduct. In the generation of their sons and daughters, these norms had completely changed, but the bargaining process between couples nevertheless resulted in similar traditional, gendered, life-course patterns because of women's systematically lower resources for financial independence. Norms did change, but not the gendered segmentation of the pathways from school to work and the segmentation of the labour market inherited from the early-twentieth-century period of industrialization. These segmentations connect to a welfare-state regime based on a conventional family structure, with a wage-earning husband and home-bound, care giving wife (whose unpaid labour significantly reduces public schooling, kindergarten, and health-care costs). Clearly, social change in gender norms has come not with a bang but a whimper."

THE CLASS-GENDER NEXUS

The class-gender nexus has three principle cornerstones: within households, workplaces and civil society. The sites themselves are complex

formations: households include the division of labour between the sexes and generations. Generations remain critical—parents and children multiplied to include the experience that shaped a person’s formative years, the demands on their working lives and the requirements of dependent children and parents. How households connect to and limit or empower people’s encounters with work places and civil society is the often invisible but critical factor for the class-gender nexus. Nations experiences a variety of immigrants, regions, times, etc. which all affect the national and international class-gender nexus and its transformation.

One of the most salient issues of our times in advanced post-industrial societies is how to respond to the changing world of work. How work is rewarded, organized, distributed and even recognized is rapidly changing. These changes have their roots in work itself, that is, the types of work required by post-industrial societies. They also have roots in changes in the supply of workers through new household forms. Not to be forgotten are changes in the state both as employers and sustainers of households through services such as health care, eldercare, childcare, etc. All these developments are themselves embedded in major changes in nations where they ‘fit’ in the world. This is the backdrop for my study of six nations, each with a distinct ‘place’ in the world and representing key stages for broad processes to unfold.

HOUSEHOLDS AND GENDER ARRANGEMENTS

Household labour includes cross-gender and cross-generation issues; that is, the sex division of care for children and the elderly. Indeed it includes the care of three generations: children, the parents and the parent’s parents looked at from the point of view of the parent’s generation. Care also includes the maintenance and sustenance of households besides those requirements specific to the children and parent’s parents. The focus is on the allocation of responsibilities for care.

I identify five general models of gender arrangements with sub-variations:

1. **Family Economy** based on self-employment encompassing family members;
2. **Male-breadwinner/female-carer** whereby women may work for pay so long as they continue to deliver the lion’s share of care work. Typically this means part-time paid work for women and the continuation of ‘housewife’ responsibilities;
3. **Dual-carer/career** whereby both partners have full-time careers and jointly provide care work through a combination of leaves, outside the relationship provisioning and employment flexibility, whether sponsored by state regulations, employment entitlements or extended family;

4. **Single-parent** households with tremendous variation in labour force participation, ranging from an astonishing 87 per cent of single mothers working in Japan¹⁰ to 68 per cent of lone parents with children below six years of age in paid employed in Canada and the United States to 30 per cent in Australia;
5. **Single-person** households with variations between men and women, roots and roofs.

In Japan, the male-breadwinner model is often evident with young women starting employment after schooling in jobs that do not have careers, exiting upon marriage and often re-entering the labour market inside the **family economy** (as in model one, often including the extended family) or as 'part-time' workers. Care for parents remains a major household task in Japan. About a fifth of non-agricultural employment in Japan is accounted for by self-employed and family members. About 11 per cent of Japanese women and 13 per cent Japanese men are self-employed but family workers account for 12 per cent of employed women outside agriculture (compared to only 2 per cent of men).¹¹ The examples of **single-person** households for Japanese day labourers and transfer workers can be used to demonstrate that households are more about 'roots' than 'roofs'. Roots are about obligations and entitlements to others, independent of whether they live 'under the same roof'. Within the triumvirate of household, employment and state policies, households are typically absent for day labourers. In Japan a distinction is made between 'homelessness' in the sense of 'rooflessness' and 'rootlessness' which means detached from traditional home life.¹² In Japan, a household is a 'registered domicile' so to be without household is to be free from obligation (and status, standing and support).¹³ Most day labourers either have rejected or been expelled from their households; that is, they are not only roofless but rootless. Ironically, many core workers in Japan (who are overwhelmingly men) who appear to be in stable jobs are transferred in mid-career for extended periods (three to five years) away from their families (*tanshin funin*). These transfer men appear to 'live on their own' as single households but in fact are financially and socially attached to the 'main house', usually in male-breadwinner/female carer relationships. Wives remain 'at home' to care for children's education, the household and dependent adults (often the husband's parents). Those transferred may be sent to branch operations, suppliers or other firms obliged to the parent company. Roots are particularly relevant for obligations to the elderly—what responsibility does one have caring for their parents? And for children one no longer 'lives with'. They may return to the household or be entitled to covering their advanced education costs. Such practices differ greatly between regimes where the state covers advanced education costs (as in Australia, Germany or Sweden) contrasted to those with higher expectations of family contributions (as in Japan, Canada and the United States). In Canada there is a trend toward returning to 'the nest' for young

people. Among those 20-24 years, a greater share of young men in 1996 lived with their parents (74 per cent compared to 69 per cent in 1981) than young women (67 per cent of compared to 60 per cent in 1981).¹⁴

Seldom do unmarried young Japanese women live 'on their own'. Young women's initial labour force entry is not into a career channel job and they have an extended 'youth' by remaining inside their parent's households. 'Office Ladies' is a common status for unmarried Japanese women (about a third of all women in the labour force), a status which includes living with her parents, thus lacking responsibility for domestic costs. As recently as 1991, three-quarters of unmarried women in their 20s in Tokyo lived with their parents and few of these contributed to the household economy.¹⁵ This gives 'Office Ladies' financial and work-place freedom (albeit not much personal freedom or independence). The phenomenon is wider, however, with about three-fifths of all single men and four-fifths of single women between 20 and 34 living with their parents, giving rise to the expression "parasite singles." This is extending to an entire "parasite generation" as "parasite couples" who are married often move in to live off their parents. All this reflects the inability to form independent households.¹⁶

Germany is the paradigmatic case of the **male-breadwinner** model. It is important to note, however, that especially in working-class households women have been required to contribute through wage work with limited relief for domestic work. Middle-class households in Germany often employ immigrant women in order to sustain dual careers. Sue Yeandle reports for Germany that "the use of the paid labour of women outside the family to provide childcare, cleaning and other domestic services by families that have dual earners, usually both in professional or managerial jobs, is an especially important source of polarization between women in societies where the state has not accepted responsibility for enabling parents to participate in the labour force."¹⁷

In contrast, Sweden is the strongest example of a state-supported **dual-career** model with entitlements based upon state regulations and 'earned' labour market provisions. Eligibility requires working for eight months prior to a child's birth and support based on a proportion of salary.¹⁸ Ironically, since it is mainly women who still deliver the care, Swedish women often work 'part-time' and are on leave from work but with income supplements and benefits. The careers of Swedish women are marked by the effects of these practices in terms of limited promotion through middle-class careers. Even Swedish men who choose to participate in paternity leave are negatively affected in their careers.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Sweden is the closest to a **dual-carer** model with provisions designed to 'freely compel' fathers to share in childcare. Household help is seldom hired in Sweden. Most support is delivered by parents through state-sponsored programs. In the United States, middle-class households are able to afford care arrangements supporting market-sustained **dual-careers**. This creates

a substantial underclass of hired domestic workers and the development of low-wage service activities.

Not all household structures are the same. **Single parenthood** matters, especially in the United States where a quarter of all parents are lone parents, with half of the lone-parent women with children under six working full-time, 17 per cent part-time and only a third 'not working'; this differs from the pattern in Germany where a tenth of all parents are lone-parents and for lone-parent women, a quarter work each of full-time and part-time but over half are 'not working'.²⁰ In Japan, nearly 90 per cent of single mothers are employed. A tremendous insight into Japanese society is provided by Ezawa and Fujiwara through this lens: "the idea that the Japanese welfare regime emphasizes family responsibility and maternal care to children only applies to wives who have husbands. Mothers without husbands (i.e. lone mothers) have traditionally not been able to dedicate themselves to child rearing. In other words, the Japanese policy emphasis on family responsibility is concerned with the role of the wife, not of the mother."²¹

In Sweden and Japan, nearly all mothers of children for their first eighteen months are full time in the home. Elsewhere, new mothers tend to quickly return to work, especially in the United States where only half the infants are exclusively cared for by their parents and a fifth spend over an average of 40 hours a week in outside-the-home care. But Sweden and Japan are far from the same. Japanese mothers quit their jobs to give birth. Swedish mothers work in order to give birth: they are on work-based leaves, still technically part of the paid labour force, returning to their careers. Japanese women leave marginal jobs (often as "Office Ladies") and return to marginal jobs (often in family firms or as so-called 'part-time' workers). Diane Sainsbury identifies what she calls the "greatest paradox" whereby 95 per cent of Swedish infants are exclusively cared for by their parents compared to 55 per cent in the United States.²²

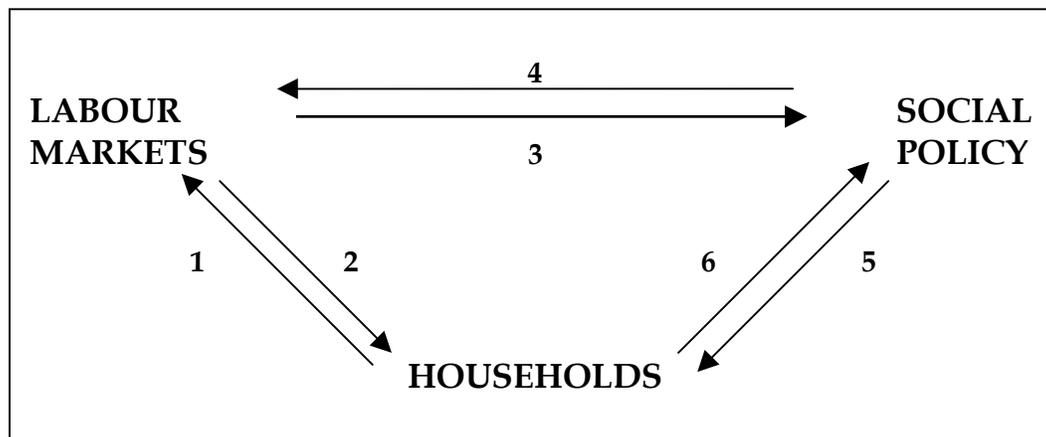
Some notes of caution: class matters in terms of the character of the relationships, especially for market-driven care; these are models and individuals can move between them over time, as the Japanese example reveals; family economy arrangements are often based upon patriarchy but may be organized symmetrically; as the Swedish case illustrates, there may be a stronger commitment to dual careers than to dual caring, thus retaining some features of the 'female-carer' model.

THE INTERSECTIONS TRIAD²³

As suggested, my approach focuses on the practices of social welfare, paid work and unpaid work as located in citizenship entitlements, markets and households. Within each and through its relationships to the others I seek to discover the class-gender nexus. Households include the 'long family' from

childhood to pensioners while labour markets include the active period but also work-based pensions and all forms of 'leaves' which follow. Child-care is not only for pre-school children but for after-and-before care for school-age children as well---who takes responsibility (i.e. who can both respond and have the ability) for caring for all childrearing needs from education to taxiing to nurturing. All this occurs in a post-industrial economy which demands that women work to support their families and households.

The six relationships between the three sites are not boundaries but blurred and inter-connected spheres. Households include domestic labour, families and unpaid community work (volunteers). They are associated with the relations of reproduction and maintenance/supply-side. Labour Markets include paid work (market work) and relations of production/demand-side. Social Policy involves citizenship entitlements, communities and welfare state regimes/regulation. They are all classed, gendered and generational but in different ways; that is, in ways that enhance or undercut the class-gender nexus.



1. Households to Labour Markets
2. Labour Markets to Households
3. Labour Markets to Social Policy
4. Social Policy to Labour Markets
5. Social Policy to Households
6. Households to Social Policy

We can use the example of care to illustrate some of the complex intersections represented by these relationships. As 'care' (childcare, eldercare, sickness care, disability care, and household maintenance) is recognized as a collective (5) or commodified (2) service rather than individual responsibility there is an expansion in the paid labour market of caring jobs (1), either in the

private or public sectors. As benefits from employment expand to cover care work in the home (2) for young children or needy family members, more household work becomes 'paid'. This can occur through citizenship entitlements (5), commodification (1) or work-based entitlements (2). Population/immigration (4) or family (5) policies can drive the social welfare policies to reinforce or strengthen birth rates, especially when shortages occur in the labour market (3) or households can no longer cope with excessive care demands (6). If childcare or eldercare benefits are provided as a social service, then public sector jobs are created; if childcare benefits are cash, then private sector jobs result (either in households, including by parents themselves released from the labour market by paid leaves, or labour markets). One major difference is the quality of jobs in private and public daycare arrangements, including benefits for workers, such as maternity leave (2). The significance of generation at all points of care is made transparent by this exercise. The illustration could be drawn-out further but it introduces why the entire 'web' or context of these sites should be taken into account in a holistic analysis of the class-gender nexus. The interaction and substitution possibilities are enormously rich, both theoretically and practically.

RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

Beyond extending traditional analysis further than the institutions of the labour market and the state into the household, my claim to novelty is the relational quality of its analysis. Following C.B. Macpherson's insight into property rights, the issue is not the objects of property themselves but the relations between people in relation to things.

In my case, the three sites of labour markets, welfare states and households are not studied as institutions, policies or practices. Rather it is the matrix of relations between these sites that yield our understanding of class, gender and generation. Class, gender and generation are themselves relational concepts that are given meaning in terms of how they unfold in the intricacies of these fundamental relationships. Space and time are crucial to yielding variations and transformations in these relations. Relations can never be static; they must continually be sustained and adjusted. They are not the same everywhere; spatial context matters.

Generation provides a strong reminder of this since it is embedded in time and life stage, defined relationally. Generation involves the intersection of individuals with their context. Children are those dependent upon others for their support; youth are those between sexual maturity and economic independence; adults are economically independent; the elderly are mature people retired from labour market dependence. It includes several levels of analysis: the relative weights of numbers of one set compared to the others: are there sufficient adults to sustain the others? The relationship between the

generations: who will care to the children and elderly? The problems of transition: the conditions for youths to attain economic independence and for the elderly to attain freedom from the labour market. These are the issues which engage the focus on my current research.

NOTES

- ¹ Originally presented at Households, Labour and Social Relations Conference, Institute of Political Economy, Carleton University, 7 November 2003. This is part of my on-going comparative study of the class-gender nexus.
- ² See Walter Korpi, "Faces of Inequality: Gender, Class, and Patterns of Inequalities in Different Types of Welfare States" *Social Politics*, Summer 2000, for the leading-edge of this typological exercise.
- ³ For an earlier attempt to span thick and thin accounts see Wallace Clement, "Who Works? Comparing Labour Market Practices" in *Reconfigurations of Class and Gender*, edited by Janeen Baxter and Mark Western. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001, Chapter 5, pp. 55-80.
- ⁴ Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford University Press, 1999, based on pp. 85-86.
- ⁵ Julia O'Connor, Ann Orloff and Sheila Shaver, *States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States*. Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 28.
- ⁶ Sylvia Walby, "From gendered welfare state to gender regimes: national differences, convergence or restructuring" Paper presented to Gender and Society Group, Stockholm University, January (2001:17).
- ⁷ An excellent example of gender regime analysis is provided by Sophie Mathieu in her Master's thesis for Université de Montréal, Département de sociologie, "Droits, marchandisation et défamilialisation: une typologies des régimes de genre" September 2003.
- ⁸ Reiko Kosugi, "Increase in the Number of Young Non-regular Workers: Situation and Problems" *Japan Labor Bulletin* 1 July 2002. It is reported that there are 4.17 million freeters in 2001, an increase from 1.83 in 1990, defined as part-time workers between 15 and 34. Glocom Platform, Social Trends #40, 4 June 2003, Sean Curtin, "Youth Trends in Japan."
- ⁹ Helga Krüger, "Social Change in Two Generations: Employment Pattern and Their Costs for Family Life" in *Restructuring Work and the Life Course*, edited by V.W. Marshall, et. al. University of Toronto Press, 2001. p. 401.
- ¹⁰ See Aya Ezawa and Chisa Fujiwara, "Lone Mothers and Welfare-to-Work Policies in Japan and the United States: Towards an Alternative Perspective" RC19 Conference of the International Sociology Association, Toronto, August 2003. They claim lone-mothers in Japan have had an over 80 per cent labour force participation rate throughout the post-war period.
- ¹¹ See Masanori Hashimoto, "Aspects of Labor Market Adjustment in Japan" *Journal of Labor Economics*, 11:1 (1993): 138.
- ¹² The distinction seems to originate with Peer Somerville, "Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness or Rootlessness?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16:4 (1992): 529-539, although he gives a rather shallow meaning to roots as "one's source of identity and meaningfulness, involving a sense of security" or elsewhere as "degree of respectability and sense of niche." I intend to suggest roots as obligations and entitlements from one's origins or extended family more broadly than those under the same roof.
- ¹³ See Tom Gill, *Men of Uncertainty: The Social Organization of Day Laborers in Contemporary Japan*. State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 10.
- ¹⁴ Caroline Beavais, Lindsey McKay and Adam Seddon, "A Literature Review on Youth and Citizenship" CPNR/02. June 2001: Ottawa, p. 11.
- ¹⁵ See *The Economist* 22 October 1994, p. 150.
- ¹⁶ Sean Curtin, "Youth Trends in Japan" Part I Glocom Platform, Social Trends #8, 26 May 2003.
- ¹⁷ Sue Yeandle, "Women, Men and Non-Standard Employment: Breadwinning and Caregiving in Germany, Italy and the UK" in *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment*, ed. R. Crompton. Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 95.
- ¹⁸ *European Industrial Relations Review* #331 (August 2001). Sweden's paternity benefits is 12 months (with an additional 3 at lower benefit levels) with 2 months reserved exclusively for each of the father or mother (as of January 2002) at 80 per cent of salary (having shifted from 90% to 80% to 75% back to 80%). In

contrast, Germany has 14 weeks maternity leave at 100 per cent of salary and 162 weeks total leave. The United States and Australia have no program of compensated leave, only employment-based ones. In the United States mothers are entitled to 12 weeks uncompensated leave and in Australia to 52 weeks. Canada and Japan are similar: 15 and 14 weeks respectively of paid leave at 55 and 60 per cent and overall leave for 50 and 58 weeks. See OECD, *Employment Outlook*, June 2001, Table 4.7, p. 144.

¹⁹ See James Albrecht, et. al. "Career Interruptions and Subsequent Earnings: A Re-examination Using Swedish Data" *The Journal of Human Resources*, 34:2 (1998): 310.

²⁰ OECD, *Employment Outlook*, June 2001, p. 135, Table 4.1. Sole mothers are most likely to experience poverty in Australia (61%), the United States (58%), Canada (51%) and Germany (39%) but least likely in Sweden (6%), O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver, *States, Markets, Families*, p. 111.

²¹ Ezawa and Fujiwara, "Lone Mothers", p. 23.

²² Diane Sainsbury, *Gender, Equality and Welfare States*. Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.100.

²³ For an elaboration of these points, see Wallace Clement "Comparing Households, Labour Markets and Welfare States in Canada, Japan and Beyond" *The Journal of Economics Quarterly*, Hokkai-Gakuen University, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 43-57 (June, 2003).