The Gendered Subjectivity of
Unmarried Single Mothers in Japan

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Abstract: This paper identifies three types of unmarried single mothers in Japan based on the results of an interview survey, and examines the process of development of their gendered subjectivities. Their subjective careers are examined with reference to three stages: life before pregnancy, then pregnancy and childbirth, and finally mothering as an unmarried single mother. Depending on the agency they express in their life courses, the three types can be called *single mothers by choice*, *single mothers by default*, and *single mothers by accident*. Since they are not legally married, these unmarried single mothers occupy a subject position which is oppositional to dominant discourses relating to the family, but at the same time, because they have children, they are positioned inside dominant gendered discourses of femininity and motherhood. They are affected by normative discourses, but at the same time they can overcome or reject them. This paradoxical subjectivity allows an appraisal of conflicts in dominant discourses related to family and gender.

  Key Words: Discourse, family, subjectivity, gender, unmarried single mothers, choice, conflict.

PART I: Towards a Theory of Gendered Subjective Career

1. Unmarried Single Mothers and Discourse

    In any society, certain accounts of the world come to be accepted as truth about social reality. A framework of such accounts forms a structure for perceptions and knowledge of the world, and other interpretations tend to be excluded. These socially accepted views can be called discourses. Not limited to spoken or written ideas, discourses are practices and the concepts behind them, and ways of shaping the world according to those ideas. People assume identities that correspond to these prevailing views of the world. By occupying certain places, or subject positions, within a discourse, the individual, who thus becomes the subject of that discourse, is empowered to act according to the identity prescribed by that discourse.

    Subjects must exercise agency in creating and maintaining the social structures, institutions and practices if they are to count as subjects. They assess their own needs, desires and social context, determine what action is necessary to satisfy their needs, and then

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they act. Thus, the self can be a site for social and discursive production and reproduction. Unconscious as well as conscious processes are involved in the construction of subjectivity. An individual's subjectivity can be defined as a set of capacities, such as reason and consciousness, which enable self-determination, self-awareness and independent action.

Rather than a single discourse, a network of discourses contributes to the subject's sense of self. Subject positions within different discourses can overlap. Moreover, subjectivity exists within a framework of reciprocal social relations. As a result, individuals experience a fragmented and contradictory subjectivity. There may be interplay and friction between different discourses with different accounts of subjectivity, leading to conflict, but inconsistencies and conflicts in discourse mean that social changes can occur, and potentially new discourses may develop.

Through discourses, gender differences between men and women are produced and reproduced. That is, discourses contribute to the formulation of a subjectivity which is explicitly gendered, and people engage in practices that serve to reproduce their gender identity. Motherhood is seen as women's central gender role. The biological circumstances of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding lead to a social expectation that women are the carers for children. Girls and women learn that the ideals of femininity include being appealing to men, finding a husband, having babies and then taking care of those babies. Mothering is seen as natural and instinctive, and takes place in the private sphere.

The discourse of essential motherhood is embedded in discourses related to the 'ideal' family in contemporary Japan. Roles are separated by gender: men function in the public realm of society and work for money to support their families, while women are dependent on them and support their labour by taking care of the home and children. Since the work of the family is divided between the two parents, the single parent family is positioned outside this discourse. The development of these norms and their effect on single mothers has been discussed in previous papers (Wright 1998a, 1998b).

Wallbank (2001) examines the discourses that construct the subjectivities of lone mothers (unmarried single mothers) in contemporary Britain. When lone mothers appear in court over custody or maintenance disputes, judges may verbally attack the character or morality of the women who appear before them. Even when the father is known to be violent, the mother's mental health is suspect, and she is automatically assumed to be hostile to contact.

Wallbank also considers the various problems related to the Child Support Agency (CSA), which was set up to retrieve unpaid maintenance from the parent without custody (most usually the father). The CSA employs coercion and activation of guilt and shame to obtain information and payments. The importance of biological links between parents and children is stressed. Children are seen as having a right to both parents, and paternal contact is seen as desirable for the psychological well being of the children. Thus, the CSA valorises the traditional two-parent family as the only real family.

Media and political discourses have portrayed fathers without custody as deadbeat or absent, but some middle class fathers have used this image in their campaign against what

they see as unfair treatment by the CSA. They present and alternative portrayal of themselves as victims of false and negative discourses, constructing themselves as 'new' fathers. They claim the all-powerful state has gone too far in protecting women's rights.

In a case known widely as the 'Home Alone' case, an unmarried single mother was jailed for leaving her small child at home while she went to work. The media coverage and the court's verdict played an important discursive role, and showed society's ambivalence about lone mothers who work: they are seen as striving to improve things for the children, while at the same time they are seen as neglecting their children and their mothering duties.

Using interview data, Wallbank shows how lone mothers make sense of their lives through the network of discourses that contribute to their sense of self. For example, the teen mother's sexuality is seen as exploitative and selfish, and other types of lone mothers attempt to dissociate themselves from this image. Solidarity is impossible between these different groups of lone mothers when social discourses exercise power through negative stereotypes. Lone mothers must also negotiate the stigma of reliance on state benefit: many claimants express a wish to not be a "burden on the state". They cope with the various types of stigma by stressing their abilities as mothers. The lone mothers interviewed place the children's needs above their own. They operate under a framework of "gendered moral rationalities" (Wallbank 2001: 33), constructing and negotiating their selfhood according to behaviour seen as appropriate for meeting the needs of their children even if this means leaving the woman's own needs unsatisfied.

2. Levels of Social Activity and Discourse Formation

The discourses, experiences and practices which form gender identity and subjectivity operate at diverse social levels. Layder (1993) refers to these levels as *context*, *settings and situated activity*, and *self*. Each level has different properties and no level can be considered more important than any other level. Each level has its own distinctive characteristics and time-scales.

Norms and social institutions form the macro context level, and macro elements include gender, class, ethnic relations and distribution of society's resources. Contexts and settings generally endure beyond the life span of the individual. Norms relating to the institution of marriage, and the resulting gender inequality upheld by the gendered division of labour are important considerations when analysing the situation of unmarried single mothers in Japan, as are norms and myths concerning motherhood and abortion. In addition, the legal and welfare systems are significant means of social control and formation of norms, for example through the social stigmatization of illegitimacy.

Individual activity takes place in socially defined situations, which are made up of reproduced social relations, so participants who enter these settings must fit in and replicate the rules or reject them. The self is not easily separated from situations where face-to-face interactions with other people occur, and the settings where these social interactions take place, such as the workplace, welfare institutions and family. The settings and context of social activities are sustained by the activities of the participants.

Some settings are enclosed and crystallised, whereas others are less tangible, having locations that are not fixed or concrete and norms are more implicit. Layder explains that immediate settings are connected to more remote norms, so for example, the experience of women at work is enmeshed in a system of gender segregation. Settings relevant to the case of unmarried single mothers will include physical locations (the individual's workplace, a child's nursery or school, welfare facility or welfare office), the normative practices that occur in those places, and the face-to-face interactions with people such as welfare representatives or co-workers who are encountered in those settings. Sanctions experienced in those places can be considered as settings. For example, the reactions of other people, such as family members and workplace colleagues, to the pregnancy of an unmarried woman serve to reproduce the stigma against exnuptial birth in Japan. Settings also include family background and relationships with important actors such as the unmarried single mother's child, or the child's father.

The subjective level of the self includes identity, personality and an individual's perception of herself within the social world. Personality characteristics might predict unmarried motherhood, as might consciousness of the self as a feminist, or as a member of a particular family. Mothering practices and personal attitudes to contraception and abortion will constitute part of the self. Production of the self will be realised through actions and strategies leading to the birth of a child outside marriage, and through overcoming any related problems. The time frame for the self would refer to the life course of the individual. Of course, this aspect would be incomplete without reference to the other levels described above, in particular the face-to-face interactions of everyday life.

3. The Career Model

Under the auspices of social anthropologists such as Goffman (1961) and Becker (1963), the idea of career has broadened to include "any social strand of any person's course through life" (Goffman 1961: 127), rather than indicating merely an individual's progress within a particular occupational profession, such as law or medicine. A career is two-sided: it is affected by personal matters and ideas of the self and identity, but it also has a contextual or institutional side which is publicly accessible. Goffman famously described the "moral careers" of mental patients as they became institutionalised in asylums. His main focus was management of a "spoiled" identity. The patients refused to accept their status as mental patients despite all evidence to the contrary, and took various measures, including lying to those around them and staying aloof from others, in order to protect their individual conception of their own identities.

Becker (1963) utilised the idea of career when investigating the steps traversed by people during the process of becoming fully-fledged marijuana addicts: from a state of non-use of drugs, the individual must learn to perceive the effects of the drug, then learn to enjoy the effects, and finally must discover that they can continue a "normal" existence, holding down a job and so forth, while under the influence of drugs. Layder (1993) presents the example of the subjective career of acting, a profession which is said to attract neurotic

people who are insecure in their own identity. Layder found that the instability, pressure and uncertainty of the career actually made actors neurotic. Both Goffman and Becker identified a sequence of changes in self-conception that the individual traversed before becoming a member of the "category" that eventually constituted their identity ("mental patient", "marijuana addict").

Stebbins (1970) used the idea of the subjective aspects of occupational career to consider the predisposition of an individual towards a certain career path or life course. The individual must analyse past and future events connected with a particular identity in order to make choices. Contingencies, usually events not entirely within the individual's control, may bring about important turning points in an individual's subjective career. Stebbins cites the example of receiving unexpectedly good grades in an examination which cause the individual to re-assess his or her self-evaluation.

4. Gendered Subjective Career

We can apply the concept of career to understanding why women become unmarried single mothers, and how they negotiate their gendered subjectivity through normative discourses. Gendered discourses prescribe a progression from marriage to childbirth as part of female adulthood, yet some women make the progression to motherhood without the preliminary step of legal marriage, a non-normative subjective career.

Hartley (1975) proposes and tests various hypotheses on the rates of exnuptial birth in various societies, some with high exnuptial birth rates and some with low. Based on the results, she suggests a concatenated scheme of variables that can be applied to any society to account for rates of exnuptial birth. Hartley considers variables such as marital practices (the average age of women at marriage, rates of marriage during pregnancy), religion, the use of contraception and abortion, and sexual practices (attitudes towards pre-marital or extramarital sex).

In any society there will be a population of women of childbearing age, but usually only a small number will give birth outside wedlock. Some of this population will marry; not all of those who remain unmarried will be sexually active. Of those who are sexually active, not all will conceive. A proportion of those who conceive will marry before giving birth. Some of those who do not marry will have abortions. Only those who are left will have exnuptial children. Strong social sanctions applied to any one of these variables will result in low ratios of exnuptial birth. For example, in some societies, the taboo on premarital sex will be too strong to avoid. In other societies, the woman and her partner will experience pressure to marry before the birth.

Hartley identifies the legal system and the comparatively widespread use of abortion in Japan as the most significant factor in suppressing the exnuptial birth rate. Other factors are the use of contraception, a drop in the fertility rate and an overwhelming social desire to limit exnuptial birth because of its association with the concubine system.

Hartley applied her scheme to whole societies, but the scheme may be modified to apply to the life of an individual woman. Marriage is normative in Japanese society, so we can ask

why the individual woman did not marry. The lifestyle of the unmarried single mother appears aberrant, thereby suggesting a loss of subjectivity with regard to the dominant discourses, perhaps even leading to social punishment or stigmatisation. Why does a woman take up the subject position 'unmarried single mother', rather than, for example, 'married mother' or 'single, childless woman'? What are the constraints on her decisions? Consideration of these questions should allow us to identify the agency of unmarried single mothers in constituting their own subject identity, in opposition or otherwise to dominant discourses.

Unmarried motherhood may or may not be due entirely to the individual's own volition: she may have wished to marry, but was prevented from doing so. Alternatively, she may have rejected the possibility of marriage for her own subjective reasons. Sex before marriage is not taboo in Japanese society, nor has it been taboo historically, so it is not necessary to ask why an individual was sexually active, although we can enquire about the circumstances of her sexual relationship. The individual has a child outside marriage, so we know that she conceived, but we can ask why she didn't take steps to prevent conception through the use of contraception. We can then ask why she did not marry once the pregnancy was confirmed, although this may overlap with our original question about why she had remained single. We can then ask why she did not choose to have an abortion in order to prevent an exnuptial birth. This may reflect her religious views, but we should bear in mind that Japan is a Buddhist society where abortion is generally considered acceptable. We can identify three stages in the subjective careers of unmarried single mothers.

1. Life before pregnancy
2. Pregnancy and childbirth
3. Mothering

A study of the motivations, attitudes and experiences of unmarried single mothers in Japan, within the prevailing discursive climate, will give a picture of their gendered subjectivity.

PART II: Interview Survey

1. Background Information

An interview survey of unmarried single mothers was carried out in the Kansai area during 1998-9. The interviewees were women who had a least one exnuptial child under the age of eighteen years old, and was living entirely or mainly without the support of the father(s) of the child(ren), or the support of any other partner. The interviewees were divided into three typologies based on the main type of support they received. Practical support, for example child-care, housing, or job-seeking assistance, financial support, and emotional support received by the unmarried single mothers was examined during the interviews. Details of the methodology and results of the survey have already been published in Wright (2001).

The first type, named the *feminist* group, had an interest in gender or social issues, often

having participated in a feminist movement. They gained support from like-minded people (mostly women), who were not related by blood or marriage, but had similar political and social beliefs. The second type, the *family* group, gained support mainly from their relatives by blood or marriage. The women of the final type, known as the *welfare* group, were unable to rely on their birth families for various reasons, and gained from public welfare services. All were living in welfare facilities at the time of interview and relied on other public services, such as the employment agency Hello Work. Interviewees in the feminist and family groups also made use of welfare services, but this only accounted for a small part of the support they received.

The interviewees in the feminist group tended to have a junior college or university level of education before pregnancy. They either had well-paid professions, or lower paid but personally satisfying jobs. In some cases, their child's birth was a stimulus to improve their employment status and stability. They were younger than the average single mother when they gave birth and generally had one child.

The interviewees in the family group had a university graduate level of educational achievement, and in some cases postgraduate study. They generally had well-paid, demanding jobs before the birth of their children, which they continued after giving birth. They were older than the average single mother when they gave birth, being mostly in their late thirties at the time of pregnancy.

The interviewees in the welfare group were generally middle school or high school graduates. They had a work history of low-paid, low-skilled, part-time work, and thus did not have job security when they become pregnant. They are more likely to have been married or cohabited when they were young, and to have children from those relationships. They were living in welfare facilities at the time of interview, having lived in rented accommodation before giving birth.

2. Becoming an Unmarried Single Mother

Almost every interviewee clearly stated that she had no regrets about becoming an unmarried single mother. However, the journeys through that particular subjective career are extremely diverse. There are various reasons why individual interviewees did not marry. For the feminists, who had insight into the socio-political nature of the marriage system, and rejected the ideology wholesale, their choice is easy to understand. They are taking up a subject position of opposition to marriage. In the family group, however, apart from the interviewees who were deceived outright by their lovers, there seems to be a pattern of ambivalence towards entering into relationships which might lead to marriage, although they did not ultimately reject the discourse of marriage itself: they were waiting for an appropriate opportunity. They then found themselves facing the end of their fertility without being married, and so having a child became a pressing concern. Some of the interviewees in the welfare group had had experience of divorce, or relationships that they believed would lead to marriage, but did not do so for reasons beyond the control of the individual women, for example imprisonment of a lover. They ascribe to the discourse of marriage, but are unable

to put it into practice.

Interviewees across all typology groups had negative insights into the relationships of those around them, especially, of course, their own parents' relationships. They were determined not to repeat these experiences. There was strongly negative perception of their mothers' positions. However, this was not universal. Interviewees in the family group were unable to consider giving up the independence they had worked so hard to achieve. An unwillingness to participate in, or radical opposition to, other discourses might be expected, but this does not appear to be the case.

The use or non-use of contraception is an extremely sensitive issue, linked discourses of sexuality and attractiveness. While some interviewees in the family and feminist groups actively sought their pregnancies, there were interviewees in all typology groups who were not using contraception at the time they became pregnant, or experienced what they described as contraceptive failure. Attracting a man is the defining feature of women's sexuality and gender identity. Women occupy the object position in the discourse of male sexuality, which defines male sexuality as a biological fact. Sex is seen as a necessity for men, and women are the objects of their desire. Women's sexuality is also linked to the satisfaction of a maternal 'instinct', so successful gender positioning in relation to dominant discourses requires to possession of a child. However, once a woman has a child in Japan, she ceases to be a woman for her partner, and becomes only a mother.

Some of the interviewees did not have clearly articulated reasons why they had children. Reasons given by interviewees in the feminist group were couched in terms of personal growth and self-expression, although some recognised an avoidance of issues through the choice of mothering. Some were clearly adhering to the discourse of essential motherhood, which requires a woman to give birth to children. Interviewees in the welfare group, and to a certain extent in the family group, said that they had a strong desire for children, or they believed women ought to have children. Several in the family group gave reasons that were associated with their position in the wider kin network, such as the maintenance of the family grave. Thus, their choice of unmarried single mothering can be considered far from radical.

Aside from the absence of a person playing the traditional role of the father, none of the interviewees was approaching parenting in a particularly non-normative way which overcomes the gendered roles of parents. In many cases, a paternal role model was available in the form of the child's grandfather or genetic father, or friends of the interviewee. In some cases, the interviewees were teaching an awareness of gender issues, but none were actively challenging gender roles through their methods of child rearing. Most said they wanted a friendly relationship with their children.

PART III: Application of Theory to Survey Data

1. Three Types of Unmarried Single Mothers

Examination of the life courses of women who become unmarried single mothers in Japan shows that the subjective career of unmarried single mothering is not a straightforward

or predictable path. A woman may become an unmarried single mother for a variety of different reasons, and no two individual trajectories were exactly alike. Unmarried mothers are often termed *single mothers by choice* in Western academic discussions. It may not be an accurate description, in the sense that the individual may not have actively intended to become an unmarried single mother, but it hints at the importance of individual choice in expressing subjectivity.

Pregnancy or childbirth can be considered as the social start to the career of unmarried single mother, when reactions to the pregnancy occur and actions must be taken to deal with it. However, it is necessary to take into consideration her life before the pregnancy in order to elicit the factors that led to the exnuptial pregnancy. A complex set of ideologies and social attitudes affect the individual woman, who in turn has her own complex psychological profile of hopes and desires. In other words, the experience of unmarried single mothering is neither wholly social and external nor wholly personal or subjective, and should be examined from various angles.

The interviewees in the feminist group, who had the support of a network of like-minded friends, come closest to being the archetypal *single mother by choice.* In other words, they actively rejected normative discourses of the family in Japanese society, in particular, the oppressive aspects of the Japanese family registration system. With it, they rejected the "traditional" families of their birth. They generally chose to forgo contraception in order to conceive. Mothering was a form of self-expression or self-determination, albeit one which echoed essentialist norms. They had some hopes for non-conventional relationships with men that would be based on equality, but were not able to realise these relationship.

The interviewees had no regrets about becoming unmarried single mothers, and unmarried single mothering became a clearly expressed and important aspect of their identities. Some were actively involved in related campaigning work, especially welfare issues for single mothers. To borrow Goffman's (1963) term, these women became "professionals" in their area of stigma. That is to say, they have made their own particular stigma their life's work, rather than trying to hide the stigma from those around. However, they were unable to articulate an idea of feminine subjectivity that was not based on normative ideas about motherhood.

Interviewees in the family group could be more accurately described as *single mothers by second choice*, or *single mothers by default,* a term used by Davies (1995). In other words, they would have preferred to have children within a legally-married nuclear family arrangement, but this being impossible, they were unwilling to give up their hopes for a child. The high level of education they had achieved and excellent progress they had made in their occupational careers made it difficult for them to participate effectively in the gendered discourses of marriage and the family that prescribe full-time housewifery. For the family group, the discourses of marriage are important elements in forming subjectivity, and some interviewees continued to hold hopes for marriage. The pressure to conform to discourses of motherhood is strong, and it can even be said that these women have a greater investment in discourses of femininity through motherhood because of their failure to participate in

discourses of marriage.

They tended to have an essentialist view of motherhood, and felt very positively about mothering. They hoped for high social achievements for their children. They gained support from the fathers of their children only through coercive measures such as legal action, and would have preferred the active support of a partner to unmarried single mothering.

They did not reject the two-parent family discourses under which they had been raised, rather they utilised the historically normative three-generation Japanese family in order to successfully realize their subjective career of unmarried single mothering. For some, their investment in conservative ideas of the family even acted as stimuli leading them to become unmarried single mothers: for example they wanted to take care of the family tomb in the absence of male siblings, or to rebuild family relationships that had gone awry. Despite their hopes for marriage, interviewees were unwilling to prioritise romantic relationships over the well-being of their children, causing the breakdown of subsequent relationships. Some mentioned the difficulties of having to be "both a mother and a father" to their children, suggesting they are not radically rethinking parenting roles. They tend to be isolated from other single parent families.

The interviewees in the welfare group could perhaps be most accurately described as *single mothers by accident,* in that they ascribed to the discourses of marriage, but had been unable to realise the way of life prescribed in these discourses. Moreover, they did not express strong agency in engaging in unmarried single mothering as a life course: it seems that their subjectivity as unmarried single mothers was weakly formed. Their pregnancies had occurred by accident, through non-use of contraception. They remained committed to discourses of the two-parent family, despite having been rejected by their families of birth, or being unable to avail themselves of the protection of the two-parent family environment. However, they were able to make sense of their subjective career *post hoc:* they had no regrets about having their children and voiced a strong commitment to mothering, while expressing reservations about becoming unmarried single mothers. They were able to identify aspects of their personalities that had predisposed them to the subjective career of unmarried single mothering. They still held hopes of meeting someone to marry, and believed that two parents are better than one for a child. While valuing their freedom from men who had perpetrated domestic violence on them, they were concerned about the lack of a father figure for their children. They did not especially hold high hopes for their children's futures.

2. Conflicts and Paradoxes in Unmarried Single Mothering

There is an apparent discursive contradiction inherent in the subjective careers of unmarried single mother. They take up conflicting positions within the dominant discourses relating to gender in Japan. In one sense, single mothers represent a challenge to the socially normative discourses related to the family and marriage because of their unmarried status. Yet unmarried single mothers are adhering to gendered norms related to motherhood, as they were not willing to give up the idea of having children. Thus, they are taking up subject

positions both inside and outside the dominant discourses of femininity.

Despite social norms, these women are self-determining actors in deciding their own fate. Unmarried single mothers are stigmatized by norms relating to the family, but at the same time present a challenge to them. They both accept the social norms concerning motherhood and challenge them, at the same time being penalised socially or economically. There are both radical and conservative aspects to their actions.

Conflict or paradoxes became apparent in the development of the subjective career, although the individual interviewee herself did not necessarily perceive these. We find women who have a high consciousness about women's rights and yet have an essentialist view of motherhood. One woman said she could not marry because she was not cut out to be a housewife, yet she realised that her life is hardly any different from that of a woman who is a housewife and mother. There are others who seek independence (from men), but end up depending on friends or family, or even on their children, especially in a psychological sense. Independence was generally an important issue for the interviewees, yet there is very little practical independence for a person single-handedly raising a small child. One interviewee thought it important to take responsibility for her own actions, but was living in a welfare facility at the time of interview, and another wouldn't get married because of the importance of her career, and yet feels no hesitation in limiting her career to spend time with her child.

In order to have children, the interviewees may have been forced to make trade-offs that may disadvantage the child, such as being brought up in a low-income household. Some interviewees expressed personal pride in their decision to have a child, yet they feel unable to talk freely about their status as unmarried single mothers. Several interviewees said they found self-expression through their child, an interesting paradox, since the child is a separate individual. Moreover, they feel happy with their decision and comfortable with their challenge to the social norms, yet worry that the child will view them negatively or will suffer discrimination in some way, a sense they have failed to carry out the mothering task of producing socially acceptable children.

3. The Importance of Discursive Conflicts

Discursive conflict, both social and personal, develops between the desire to be single and the desire to have children, a juxtaposition of both normative and non-normative subject positions. These can be considered as conflicts within the self (between the desire to be single and the desire to be a mother), and conflicts of context and self (being unmarried and being a mother). Through examination of conflicts in the subjective careers of unmarried single mothers, we can begin to see inconsistencies and contradictions in the discourses.

It is important to recognize the contradictions described above, because they challenge the smooth reproduction of gender difference. It is perhaps more helpful to view the subjective careers of unmarried single mothers as the sum of two distinct and, sometimes, conflicting life courses: the subjective career of a single woman, and the subjective career of a mother. The career as a single woman is oppositional to the dominant discourses, which prescribe marriage for the successful realisation of the next step in the normative life course

for women, which is having children. Motherhood, on the other hand, fits the prescribed gendered life career for a woman, which requires the possession of a child. Unmarried single mothers embody the problem for feminist research described by DiQuinzio (1999) as the "impossibility of motherhood": feminism must claim equal subjectivity for women based on equality, but at the same time must recognise the specificities of mothering. Unmarried single mothering offers a reconstructed subject positioning within the discourses of the two-parent family: the interviewees express themselves and constitute their own identity through unmarried single mothering. Wider changes in social consciousness can be accomplished as a result of such contradictions in subject positionings and practices.

Not all women who have conscious or unconscious concerns about the current discourses of marriage and the family will become unmarried single mothers. There will be other contingences which are part of the individual's subjective career, such as a conscious desire for independence, a career, or the existence of a supportive network of friends. One of the interviewees, Hiromi, told me that the unmarried pregnant women who she speaks to during telephone counselling say that they have no friends they can rely on for support, and that they don't want to cause trouble for those they work with. Hiromi suspects that most of these women will decide to have abortions rather than become unmarried single mothers. These contingencies will prevent them from making the choice of becoming unmarried single mothers.

Women have seen their identities bound up with the roles of wife and mother, but for the unmarried mother, mothering has become detached from the idea of marriage. Despite the loss of power and subjectivity suggested by remaining outside the dominant discourses, subjects may resist oppression and develop alternative conceptions to the dominant discourses. Alternative discourses can be produced and used by unmarried single mothers, allowing a redefinition of women's positions in gendered practices and discourses, ultimately leading to social change.

Career women of the type described in the family group seem to be the ones most likely to increase significantly in Japanese society. Increasing dissatisfaction among women, along with educational and economic advances and self-determination for women will result in incremental changes to gendered discourses relating to the division of labour. Life-long singlehood is increasing for both men and women, suggesting that both sides are becoming unwilling to subscribe to current family-related discourses, especially those associated with the *ie* system.

There is no doubt about the continuing importance of the family group (both the wider kinship network and the parent-child grouping) and of mothering and the strength of the norm of motherhood. Giving birth and raising children is still the ultimate expression of femininity for women, despite a steep reduction in the birth rate. Rejection of marriage is not a sign of rejection of family, and there is a strong sense of both continuity and change in family structure. The family is a socially constructed institution, which is open to change and reform, so the actions of unmarried single mothers may lead to change in the institution. The family plays an important role in the formation of consciousness and social ideas, such as

those about gender, so unmarried single mother families can be seen as catalysts for future change.

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日本における非婚シングル・マザーの
ジェンダー化された主体性についての考察

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　インタビュー調査に基づき，非婚シングル・マザーを３種類に区分し，ジェンダー化された主体性の発達について検討する。主体的生き方（キャリア）は３つの段階，つまり妊娠する前の生活，妊娠の時期，そして出産後の非婚シングル・マザー生活に分けて分析される。積極的に非婚シングル・マザーになることを選択したかどうか（彼女たちの主体的行為）によって「選択して─ by choice」，「二番めの選択として，しかたなく─ by default」，「予想外に─ by accident」，それぞれが非婚シングル・マザーとしての現在に立ち至ったことを明らかにした。結婚していないため，この女性たちは家族についての規範的ディスコースに反する対抗的位置を占めている。しかし，同時に，子どもをもつために，女らしさや母性についての規範的ディスコースに適合させられる。つまり，規範的ディスコースに影響されると同時に，規範的ディスコースを越えるか拒否することが可能である。この逆説的な主体性を通し，家族やジェンダーについての規範的ディスコースを明確にすることができるのである。

　キーワード：ディスコース，家族，主体性，ジェンダー，非婚シングル・マザー，選択，葛藤

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