

Chapter 2

The Japanese Context and Existing Empirical Evidence

2.1 Introduction

To evaluate claims that empirical patterns based largely on data from a single country are broadly generalizable, two types of comparative research are useful. One involves gathering data from a large number of countries and comparing patterns across those countries. This can involve descriptive analysis (McLanahan 2004; McLanahan and Jacobsen 2015; Perelli-Harris et al. 2010; Raymo et al. 2015; Rendall 2010) or multilevel regression analysis (Härkönen and Dronkers 2006; Kalmijn 2013). This approach is powerful for its ability to describe or estimate relationships between the outcome of interest and contextual variables of theoretical relevance. The second type involves focusing on a single country (or small number of countries) characterized by distinctive features of theoretical interest, such as specific policies and distinctive social or cultural factors (e.g., Rendall et al. 2009). This approach is powerful for its ability to provide detailed insights into the specific conditions under which the general pattern of interest does or does not hold. In both cases, the key source of information is theoretically relevant contextual similarities or differences across countries.

Japan is rarely included in large cross-national studies of educational differences in family behavior (see Carlson et al. 2014; Raymo et al. 2015 for exceptions), but several studies have examined socioeconomic differentials in family behavior within the country (e.g., Fukuda 2013; Ono 2003; Raymo 2003). In contrast to the U.S. (and to a lesser degree, European countries), research on Japan that explicitly addresses the notion of diverging destinies is very limited. Indeed, a recent search of Google Scholar found only two Japanese language research papers that reference McLanahan's (2004) paper. This limited attention to diverging destinies may reflect a view among Japanese social scientists that family change in Japan does not really fit into the larger second demographic transition framework. A few studies have addressed the question of whether Japan is experiencing a second demographic transition (e.g., Atoh et al. 2004; Matsuo 2001), but very low levels of nonmarital

childbearing, the relatively low prevalence of cohabiting unions (Atoh 2001a), and limited evidence of “individuation” in attitudinal data (Atoh 2001b) may limit the perceived relevance of the second demographic transition framework and related questions regarding diverging destinies. As noted in the previous chapter, we view McLanahan’s (2004) explicit linkage of diverging destinies with the second demographic transition as suggestive, but not necessarily implying that family bifurcation will occur in tandem with the progression of family changes typically associated with the second demographic transition. Our goal in this chapter is to provide an overview of both empirical and theoretical reasons to expect that family change in Japan may, or may not, be consistent with the patterns in research on diverging destinies or the “pattern of disadvantage” described in the previous chapter.

To accomplish this goal, we draw heavily upon our own work. Over the past decade, we have published several studies that articulate key reasons to believe that Japan is an unlikely setting for changes that conform to a pattern of diverging destinies. These include the long history of homogeneity in the family life course, limited use of modern contraception, and perhaps most importantly, a relatively strong maintenance of highly asymmetric work and family roles for husbands and wives. At the same time, our past research has recognized several features of the Japanese context that are potentially consistent with the kind of family bifurcation observed in the U.S. and many other low-fertility settings. Chief among these are relatively limited public spending on families and a rapidly changing employment environment that has had a very different impact on those at the upper and lower ends of the educational distribution, with implications for social and economic inequality.

2.2 Reasons not to Expect a Pattern of Diverging Destinies in Japan

2.2.1 Homogenous Family Life Course

One compelling reason to expect limited socioeconomic divergence in family behavior is history. The family life course in Japan has long been distinguished by its homogeneity (Brinton 1992), with the timing and ordering of family transitions following a well-established script with relatively little variation. Earlier changes in the timing of marriage and childbearing and in the level of fertility occurred similarly across the socioeconomic distribution (Hodge and Ogawa 1991; Raymo 2003), reflecting both structural forces and normative constraints on women’s opportunities outside of the family (Brinton 1992, 1993). Women’s own expectations about their work and family trajectories are also consistent with a socioeconomically homogenous life course (Raymo et al. 2015b). This lack of educational variation suggests that differentials in new family behaviors that do emerge in Japan may be less pronounced than in the U.S. and Europe. At the same time, evidence that being a full-time housewife is less of a “status symbol” than it was (Kohara 2007) and that

there are large educational differences in women's ideal work–family trajectory (Raymo et al. 2015b) suggest that the foundations of this family homogeneity may be shifting, at least with respect to mothers' employment.

2.2.2 Contraceptive Environment

Japan's distinctive contraceptive environment is another reason to expect limited socioeconomic differentials in family change—especially in patterns of family formation. The range of contraceptives used in Japan continues to be limited primarily to condoms, rhythm, and withdrawal (Sato and Iwasawa 2006). All of these are cheap (or free), but all have high failure rates relative to the irreversible and hormonal methods more commonly practiced in the U.S. and most other low-fertility countries (Kost et al. 2008). There are some educational differences in self-reports of contraceptive use and abortion, with women at the lower end of the educational spectrum less likely than women with tertiary education to use contraception at last intercourse and more likely to report having had an abortion (Raymo et al. 2015b). However, Japan's distinctive contraceptive environment has not changed much over time (Sato and Iwasawa 2006) and there is little reason to expect that socioeconomic differences in contraceptive access or efficacy should contribute to differences in patterns of pregnancy and union formation.

Abortion is also widely available and not so expensive as to limit access among women with lower levels of education and more limited economic resources. Survey data show that 20–25 % of women in all education groups (except those who did not complete high school) said that they would abort a pregnancy resulting from contraceptive failure (Raymo et al. 2015b). Abortion is readily available and its relatively low cost is unlikely to be a barrier to women wishing to terminate unplanned pregnancies. In conjunction with the reliance on cheap, accessible contraception, this easy access to abortion suggests that educational differences in early childbearing and nonmarital childbearing should be limited in Japan.

2.2.3 Gender Division of Labor

Gender equality figures prominently in efforts to understand cross-national differences in marriage and fertility (McDonald 2000a, b, 2009) but has received less attention in research on socioeconomic differences in family behavior. However, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to expect that gender context plays a role in shaping the pace and nature of family bifurcation, with differentials less pronounced (or perhaps reversed) in more egalitarian societies (e.g., Kalmijn 2013). This pattern is clear in studies of divorce, with divorce among highly educated women more common in relatively egalitarian southern European countries (Härkönen and Dronkers 2006; Kalmijn 2013).

This focus may be particularly important for understanding patterns of family change in Japan, one of the most gender-inegalitarian wealthy countries. The 2014 Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum 2014) ranks Japan 104th out of 142 countries, primarily reflecting the large gender wage gap and limited representation of women in management and in politics. Perhaps more important for understanding patterns of family behavior is the division of labor within the family. OECD data on time use show that Japan has one of the largest gender gaps in time spent in unpaid labor (housework, childcare, and other family care). Japanese women spend 4.8 times as much time on these tasks as men, with only Korea having a higher ratio (5.1 times) (<http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/balancingpaidworkunpaidworkandleisure.htm>, accessed on January 4, 2016). To the extent that this highly asymmetric division of household labor is not strongly related to socioeconomic status, we would expect that divorce, cohabitation, non-marital fertility, and other family behaviors associated with lower resources for children would, if anything, be more prevalent among highly educated women for whom the opportunity costs of entering a conventional breadwinner-homemaker marriage would be highest (Kalmijn 2013). However, it may be that a positive correlation between socioeconomic status and more egalitarian division of household labor contributes to differentials more consistent with a pattern of diverging destinies. Tsuya et al. (2005) show that the husbands of more highly educated women do more housework and that this relationship has become stronger over time, suggesting the possibility of growing educational differences in divorce, women's labor force participation, and other related family outcomes.

2.3 Reasons to Expect a Pattern of Diverging Destinies in Japan

2.3.1 Public Policy

Public policies related to families in Japan are generally consistent with those thought to contribute to growing bifurcation in family outcomes. Levels of public support for families are generally low and benefits are typically means-tested. Japan has one of the lowest levels of spending on social policies among wealthy countries. Japan spends less than 2 % of GDP on family benefits, which is well below the OECD average and about half the level of countries with the highest family expenditures (OECD 2015). Welfare benefits (*seikatsu hogo*) are relatively limited and conditions for qualification are stringent. Despite recent growth in the number of welfare recipients, the number of recipients in households with children has remained stable (Ohtake et al. 2013). This is one reason why, as discussed below, a relatively high proportion of single mothers are in poverty despite working full time and often living with parents. Because many poor families do not qualify for welfare benefits, public income support is limited to a small universal child

allowance (*kodomo teate*) and somewhat larger means-tested childrearing allowance (*jidō fuyō teate*) (about \$500 per child) for single parents (Abe and Ōishi 2005; Akaishi 2011; Raymo and Zhou 2012). These benefits have become more restrictive in recent years (Abe and Ōishi 2005) and Japan's welfare policy environment can be seen as similar in some ways to that associated with bifurcation in family behavior in the U.S. (McLanahan 2004).

For women with higher levels of education—who have higher earnings capacity themselves and are more likely to be married to higher earning husbands—the opportunity costs of divorce and single motherhood are thus high. Similarly, the opportunity costs of early family formation (which may prevent both investment in her own human capital and the search for spouse with high earnings) may be particularly high for highly educated women given limited support for childrearing and strong tax incentives for married women to limit their own earnings in order to maintain dependent exemption on their husband's taxes (Akabayashi 2006). Limited support for childrearing includes insufficient access to high-quality, affordable day care (especially in large metropolitan areas), and expectations of long work hours and long commutes (Boling 2007; Yamaguchi 2005). Recognizing that this policy environment may be contributing to Japan's very low fertility rate, recent policy efforts have sought to improve women's ability to balance full-time employment and family responsibilities. These efforts include the expansion of parental leave following birth, increase in the level of salary replacement during leave, the option to work shorter hours, and other support for private sector efforts to facilitate work–family balance (Nagase 2014). These policy initiatives should work to limit socioeconomic differences in family behavior by reducing the opportunity costs of early childbearing, divorce, and single parenthood and by facilitating continuous attachment to the labor force across the socioeconomic spectrum. However, existing empirical evidence casts doubt on the effectiveness of these efforts. While it is true that there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of women who take maternity leave, there is little evidence of change in the proportion of women who exit the labor force following childbirth. In other words, more women are taking childcare leave before exiting the labor force than in the past, but the total proportion leaving has remained stable (Nagase and Moriizumi 2013; National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2012). Educational differences in post-birth labor force attachment have, to our knowledge, not yet been studied. We provide some of the first evidence on this question in Chap. 4.

2.3.2 *Changing Employment Environment*

Perhaps the most compelling reason to expect patterns of family bifurcation similar to those observed in the U.S. and elsewhere is major change in the Japanese labor market. Three particularly important and interrelated trends are the rapid spread of nonstandard employment, wage stagnation, and increasing returns to higher education for women. During Japan's "lost 20 years" following the end of the

“bubble economy” in 1989, the unemployment rate increased and the prevalence of nonstandard employment has grown markedly among both men and women (Brinton 2011; Osawa et al. 2013; Shire 2002). Importantly, both of these trends have been most pronounced at lower levels of education and in young adulthood (Kosugi 2004), when men and women are finishing their education, entering the labor market, entering the marriage market, and starting to think about parenthood. Nonstandard work typically does not pay well, provides little or no security, and rarely provides benefits (Osawa et al. 2013) and early exposure to these jobs has lasting implications for economic well-being across the life course (Genda et al. 2010; Sakai and Higuchi 2005; Yu 2012). Some studies have examined how unemployment and exposure to “bad jobs” are related to marriage and fertility (Kondo 2014; Nagase 2002; Ogura and Kadoda 2008; Piotrowski et al. 2015; Raymo and Shibata 2014), but we are not aware of any research that has explicitly considered the ways in which these labor market changes are associated with educational differences in family outcomes.

As in other countries, stagnating or declining real wages, especially for men with lower levels of education, mean that it is increasingly important for both spouses to work and contribute to the family economy (Oppenheimer 1997). As discussed in the previous chapter, the increasing symmetry in men’s and women’s economic contributions to the family has implications for family outcomes central to the diverging destinies literature. Perhaps most important are the implications for marriage timing, non-marriage, and assortative mating. Increasing valuation of women’s earnings potential in the marriage market means that highly educated women will marry later, but be more likely to ever marry (Goldstein and Kenney 2001; Oppenheimer 1988) and more likely to marry highly educated men (Schwartz and Mare 2005). Because preferences for female educational hypergamy and the breadwinner-homemaker model of marriage are deeply entrenched in Japanese society (Kohara 2007; Raymo and Iwasawa 2005), these changes would represent a major shift in family behavior. Evidence that these changes have occurred differently across the educational distribution (as in the U.S.) would have important implications for inequality and processes of stratification within and across generations.

2.3.3 *Growing Inequality*

Despite widespread interest in growing economic inequality and rising levels of poverty in Japan, very little attention has been paid to the role of differential family change (see Sudo et al. 2012 for an exception). Japan has long been viewed as a relatively egalitarian country (Moriguchi and Saez 2008), but has become somewhat more unequal since the 1980s, with the Gini coefficient for household disposable income rising from 0.30 in 1985 to 0.34 in 2009 (OECD 2016a). Growth in poverty is also pronounced, with the proportion of the population living in relative poverty (equivalized household income less than half of the national median), rising from 0.12 to 0.16 over the same period (OECD 2016a). As discussed in the

previous chapter, economic inequality is intricately linked with family behavior in the U.S. (McLanahan and Percheski 2008) and cross-national studies have found that higher levels of inequality are associated with a stronger negative educational gradient in divorce (Härkönen and Dronkers 2006). Our analyses cannot shed light on the complex relationships between inequality and family behavior, but existing research on the U.S. and elsewhere suggests that the rising levels of inequality and poverty make Japan ripe for growing socioeconomic bifurcation in family behavior. We now turn our attention to existing research on educational differences in the family outcomes linked to diverging destinies.

2.3.4 Trends in Educational Attainment

Trends in educational attainment are closely related to trends in inequality. In the not so distant past, relatively few women attended university as this was considered unnecessary and even detrimental to marriage prospects (Brinton 1993). Because the proportion of men and women completing high school has long been over 90 %, the scarcity of female university graduates meant that most women stopped their formal education following high school or junior college, neither of which provided women with career orientation or the kind of human capital rewarded in the labor market. In this context, there was arguably little variation either employment aspirations or the opportunity costs associated with early family formation. Similarly, there may have been little socioeconomic variation in the social stigma associated with unconventional family behaviors.

Figure 2.1 shows that the proportion of women entering four-year universities increased rapidly from the mid-1980s. Nearly half of female high school graduates now enter a four-year university, a figure that is only slightly lower than that for

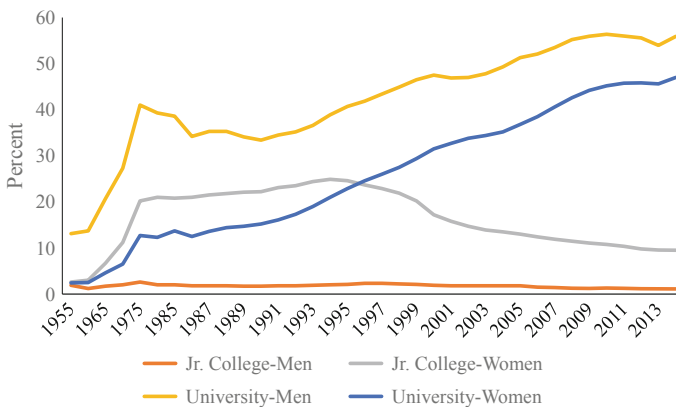


Fig. 2.1 Rates of continuation to tertiary education, by college type and sex. *Source* NIPSSR (2016), citing data from Gakkō Kihon Chōsa (Basic Education Survey)

men. As the proportion attending junior college rapidly shrinks, women are increasingly concentrated at the high and low ends of the educational spectrum (university graduates and high school or vocational school graduates). To the extent that these groups differ with respect to life orientation, employment opportunities, perceived work–family tradeoffs, support from partners/husbands, or the perceived costs of violating social norms, we might expect them to follow increasingly different family pathways, as in the U.S. and other countries discussed in the context of diverging destinies.

2.4 Empirical Evidence

In the remainder of this chapter, we briefly describe what is known about educational differences in family behavior and how those differences have changed over time. We focus first on aspects of union formation and dissolution, then on aspects of childbearing, and finally on patterns of maternal labor force participation.

2.4.1 *Union Formation and Dissolution*

2.4.1.1 Marriage Timing

At first glance, research on marriage timing and the probability of ever marrying suggests that the pattern of diverging destinies observed in the U.S. and elsewhere is of little relevance in Japan. Research on marriages taking place in the 1970s and 1980s consistently found that women with higher educational attainment and higher earnings married later and were less likely to ever marry than their lower SES counterparts (Ono 2003; Raymo 2003; Tsuya and Mason 1995). This pattern is less consistent with diverging destinies than it is of a more “traditional” scenario in which women’s economic contributions to marriage were limited and in which men, even those at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum, were capable of supporting a family as the primary breadwinner. In this context, higher education enabled women to achieve a degree of economic independence that allowed some to postpone or opt out of the “the onerous status of the Japanese wife and mother” (Tsuya and Mason 1995: 156).

However, more recent research on marriages in the 1990s and 2000s suggests that this pattern is changing in ways that may be consistent with the general picture painted in the diverging destinies literature. For example, Fukuda (2013) finds that, in contrast to Ono’s (2003) results, earnings are positively associated with the transition to marriage among women born in the 1970s. Similarly, Fukuda and Raymo (2015) find that the negative educational gradient in women’s marriage has disappeared among recent cohorts. This reflects both the relatively high marriage rates of college-educated women beyond age 30 in recent years and the declining

rates of marriage among women with less than a four-year degree in the late 1990s and beyond. In closely related research on employment status and marriage, several studies have found that men and women in nonstandard employment (a group that includes large proportions of the less educated) are less likely to marry than those in regular employment (Nagase 2002; Piotrowski et al. 2015). These patterns are suggestive of the growing economic difficulties of maintaining a breadwinner-homemaker marriage. Attitudinal data support this interpretation, with both husbands and wives indicating that they would like wives to work more hours than they currently do (Bumpass et al. 2010) and unmarried men indicating an increased preference for marriages in which their wives are employed (NIPSSR 2012: 62). In Sect. 3.3, we provided updated evidence on change over time in the educational gradient in marriage—focusing on the likelihood of early marriage. To what degree do we see an increasing concentration of early marriage among women at the lower end of the educational spectrum, as predicted by research on diverging destinies?

2.4.1.2 Educational Assortative Mating

Japan has long been characterized by a high degree of educational assortative mating (Suzuki 1991; Watanabe and Kondo 1990; Yasuda 1971). The strong tendency for educational homogamy or female hypergamy is clearly important for understanding educational differences in marriage behavior in response to rapid relative improvements in women's educational attainment. For example, Raymo and Iwasawa (2005) showed that the increased competition for a relatively smaller pool of highly educated men contributed to the decline in marriage rates among highly educated women during the period 1980–1995.

Patterns of diverging destinies suggest that the tendency for homogamous pairings should be increasing at both the top and the bottom of the educational distributions. Consistent with this, Ishida and Motegi (2014) show that the likelihood of educational homogamy is much higher among four-year college graduates and those with a high school degree or less than it is among those in the middle category (vocational school and junior college). Recent research on trends in assortative mating is limited, but there is some evidence that educational homogamy is, if anything, declining (Raymo and Xie 2000; Smits and Park 2009). For example, Fukuda and Raymo (2015) find that the propensity for highly educated women to marry men with less education than themselves has increased in recent years (see also Iwasawa 2013). They speculate that this reflects women's response to the marriage market mismatch described by Raymo and Iwasawa (2005) as well as shifting attitudes among men regarding wives' relative educational attainment and economic contributions to the family. They do not find any evidence of an increase in the propensity for educational homogamy among those with a high school education or less, suggesting that trends in educational assortative mating in

Japan are not consistent with a growing bifurcation of resources at the two ends of the socioeconomic spectrum as observed in the U.S. (Schwartz 2010). In Sect. 3.4, we will provide updated figures on patterns of educational assortative mating.

2.4.1.3 Cohabitation

Research on nonmarital cohabitation in Japan is limited and we know little about educational differences in the prevalence and nature of cohabiting unions. It is clear that cohabitation has increased markedly in recent years and that experience of cohabitation is somewhat more common at the lower end of the educational distribution (Iwasawa 2006; Raymo et al. 2009; Tsuya 2006). It is also clear that cohabiting unions are less likely than marriages to be educationally homogamous (Ishida and Motegi 2014). It is less clear, however, whether trends in cohabitation (and its relationship to marriage) conform to patterns emphasized in research on diverging destinies. Of particular interest in that research is the bifurcation of cohabitation into a precursor to marriage among more highly educated men and women and an alternative to marriage among those with lower levels of education. Relative to their more highly educated counterparts, women with lower levels of education in the U.S. are increasingly having children in relatively unstable non-marital unions (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008). So, even if cohabitation is now widespread in the U.S., the meaning of these unions varies across the educational spectrum in ways that have differences for the resources available to women and their children.

There is little evidence with which to evaluate the relevance of this scenario in the Japanese context. Raymo et al. (2009) showed that cohabitation is rarely an alternative to marriage, but that cohabitation among the less educated more often involves transition to marriage following pregnancy. To the extent that these pregnancies are unplanned (Raymo et al. 2015b), and to the extent that marriages precipitated by unplanned pregnancies (within cohabiting unions) are more likely to subsequently dissolve, this pattern is potentially consistent with growing bifurcation in family resources. We explore this possibility more directly in Sect. 3.5.

2.4.1.4 Divorce

Divorce has risen markedly over the past 25 years in Japan, with as many as one in three marriages projected to end in divorce (Raymo et al. 2004). Evidence regarding educational differences in divorce is mixed and is subject to important data limitations, including substantial underreporting of divorce in sample surveys (Raymo 2008). Seeking to avoid the limitations of existing survey data, an earlier study by Raymo et al. (2004) used census data and indirect estimation methods to show that

educational differences in the prevalence of divorced individuals were minimal in the 1980 but increased markedly through 2000. By 2000, women with a high school degree, and especially those who did not complete high school, were substantially more likely to have divorced relative to women completed at least some tertiary education.

Other studies have found a negative educational gradient in divorce, especially for men (Katō 2005; Ono 2009), but these studies did not consider change over time in the educational gradient. Raymo (2008) used two different sources of data to conclude that divorce is negatively associated with women's educational attainment, but he found no evidence of change over time in the educational gradient. Similar results were found in the most recent and most comprehensive study to date on trends in educational differences in divorce. Raymo et al. (2013) used two different sources of data to show that women who completed some tertiary education were 30–50 % less likely to divorce in a given year than high school graduates, but they found no evidence that this differential has changed over time. Importantly, they also found that the strong negative educational gradient in divorce remained statistically significant after controlling for a range of posited economic and family correlates. Speculative interpretation of these findings suggested the potential importance of factors such as differential selection into marriage in a setting where a large proportion of men and women are projected to never marry and educational differences in the meaning of marriage, especially with respect to the role of marriage as a mechanism for intensive investment in children (see Lundberg and Pollack 2013 for related ideas regarding educational differences in marriage in the U.S.). Consistent with earlier studies, Raymo et al. (2015b) also demonstrated that women who did not complete high school have a much higher risk of divorce than women in any other educational group. Although this is a very small and increasingly select group, they appear to be disadvantaged in many ways and we will include them in our examination of recent trends in divorce in Sect. 3.6.

2.4.1.5 Single-Mother Families

The rise in divorce rates has resulted in a substantial increase in the prevalence of single-parent families and the strong negative educational gradient in divorce means that many of these families are headed by women with a high school education or less. One recent study showed that 54 % of single mothers have a high school education or less, compared to 41 % of married mothers (Raymo 2015b). We are unaware of any research on change over time in the educational composition of single mothers, but the evidence of little change in the educational gradient in divorce just summarized suggests that the degree of concentration of single parenthood among the less educated has likely remained stable. Evidence that educational differences in remarriage are small and have not changed over time

(Raymo and Iwasawa 2014) is also consistent with stability in the educational composition of single mothers.

A growing body of research on the well-being of single mothers provides a wealth of evidence directly relevant to the idea of diverging destinies. Much of this work is based on the National Survey of Households with Children conducted by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (Zhou 2014). While this work does not focus explicitly on the role of single motherhood in contributing to socioeconomic differences in children's resources, it does demonstrate the many disadvantages faced by these families. The fact that single mothers are heavily concentrated among the less educated provides indirect evidence of diverging destinies as a salient feature of the Japanese family landscape.

While nearly 90 % of single mothers are employed, over half of single-mother households live below the poverty line (OECD 2016b). Economic disadvantage is thus a defining feature of single-mother families and is only partially mitigated by the common strategy of "doubling up." As shown by Shirahase and Raymo (2014), about one-third of single mothers coreside with their parents but, in many cases, these older parents are also economically disadvantaged. Other research has shown that, relative to married mothers, single mothers report lower levels of self-rated health and emotional well-being (Raymo and Zhou 2012; Raymo 2015b), spend less time with their children (Raymo et al. 2014), and report that their children have more health problems and perform less well in school (Raymo 2016). To a large degree, these disadvantages are explained by the relatively high levels of economic deprivation among single-mother families. These results are consistent with compelling qualitative evidence of the difficulties faced by single mothers and their children (Abe 2008) and suggest that divorce and single parenthood is a particularly relevant mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage as suggested by research on diverging destinies. Because the National Fertility Survey does not provide sufficient information to consistently identify single mothers across time, we do not include analyses of this outcome in Chap. 3.

2.4.2 *Childbearing*

2.4.2.1 Age at First Birth

While much of the research on the second demographic transition focuses on delayed childbearing and the extent to which women are "catching up" at older ages, a primary concern of research on diverging destinies is about the increasing concentration of early childbearing, typically outside of marriage and often outside of stable unions, among less-educated women. As noted in the previous chapter, this focus is motivated by the large body of research demonstrating that this pattern

of family formation is negatively associated with the subsequent well-being of both children and mothers. In contrast to the U.S., early childbearing is uncommon in Japan. In 2010, only 1 % of all births were registered to teenage mothers and only 10 % were registered to women age 20–24 (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2015).¹

Nevertheless, it is clear that these early births are concentrated among at the lower end of the educational spectrum. For example, Raymo et al. (2015b) show that nearly all teenage births are to women who failed to complete high school and that about one-fourth of first births to women with a high school education or less occur in the early 20s, compared to only 6 % among university graduates. They also show that the relatively high prevalence of unintended first births among less-educated mothers is partially explained by this relatively high prevalence of early births. Research on trends in educational differences in early childbearing in Japan is limited, but a recent study by Raymo et al. (2015b) finds little evidence of change across cohorts in the concentration of early childbearing among women with a high school education or less. We provide updated evidence on early childbearing in Sect. 4.2.

2.4.2.2 Nonmarital Childbearing

In contrast to low-fertility societies in the West, the prevalence of nonmarital childbearing has remained negligible in Japan. The proportion of all births registered to unmarried mothers reached 2 % in 2005 after hovering around 1 % since the 1960s (National Institute for Population and Social Security Research 2015). Because the prevalence of nonmarital childbearing is so low, research on this pathway to family formation is limited. It is clear, however, that nonmarital births are much more common among women with lower levels of education. Tabulations presented by Raymo et al. (2015b) show that among first births occurring between 1995 and 2005, the proportion to unmarried mothers was 5 % for those who did not complete high school and vocational school graduates, 3 % among high school graduates, and only 1 % among four-year college graduates.

Despite the low levels of nonmarital childbearing, it is clear that relationships between pregnancy and marriage have changed markedly. This is most evident in the sharp rise in bridal pregnancy (marriages preceded by pregnancy). The proportion of first marriages that was preceded by pregnancy doubled from 10 % in 1980 to 19 % in 2010 (Iwasawa and Kamata 2014). This pathway to family formation is heavily concentrated among women with lower levels of education and this negative educational gradient has increased sharply over time. Comparing the 1970s and 1990s marriage cohorts, Raymo and Iwasawa (2008) showed that the probability of first marriage preceded by pregnancy doubled for women with a high

¹In the U.S., 6 % of births in 2015 were to teenage mothers and 21 % of births were to women age 20–24 (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr65/nvsr65_03.pdf, accessed June 3, 2016).

school education or less while remaining stable at significantly lower levels for women who completed a two- or four-year college degree.

One way to think about this trend is to view the emergence of pregnancy as a primary reason for marriage in a setting where other incentives to marry (especially at younger ages) have waned. That is, couples postpone marriage until pregnancy necessitates formalization of the relationship. The link between marriage and fertility remains strong, but the temporal ordering of marriage and pregnancy has reversed for many couples. This scenario would be consistent with the notion of diverging destinies if bridal pregnancies are associated with lower quality, less stable marriages. However, it would be less consistent if bridal pregnancies simply hasten stable marriages that would have occurred sooner or later. Carefully distinguishing between these two scenarios is an important task for future research.

The limited empirical evidence that is available appears more consistent with the first scenario. Raymo and Iwasawa (2008) found that the patterns of educational pairing in marriages preceded by pregnancy differ significantly from those not preceded by pregnancy, with women who are pregnant at the time of marriage much more likely to marry a man with less education than themselves. It is also clear that bridal pregnancies tend to be reported as unintended. Raymo et al. (2015b) find that the higher prevalence of unintended childbearing (among first births) for women with a high school education or less is partially explained by the fact that these women are more likely to have a first birth that was the result of a premarital pregnancy. Because female educational hypogamy and unintended childbearing have been linked to subsequent marital instability and lower levels of well-being, growing educational differences in the relationship between pregnancy and marriage may play an important role in the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. We examine trends in educational differences in nonmarital childbearing and bridal pregnancy in Sects. 4.3 and 4.4.

2.4.2.3 Stepfamily Fertility

While the strong link between marriage and childbearing in Japan means that the growth in multi-partner fertility observed in the U.S. and Europe (Thomson et al. 2014) is limited, stepfamily fertility is potentially relevant. Evidence that about 40 % of divorced women remarry (Raymo and Iwasawa 2014) indicates the potential for rising levels of family complexity. However, the absence of research on remarriage means that we know very little about stepfamily fertility in Japan. There is some evidence that levels of childbearing within remarriages are quite low (Raymo and Iwasawa 2014), but nothing is known about educational differences in stepfamily fertility and their implications for family complexity and its role in shaping the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. We summarize data on stepfamily fertility in Sect. 4.3.

2.4.2.4 Mother's Employment

As noted in Chap. 1, mothers' attachment to the labor force is another dimension of family change central to the pattern of diverging destinies. More stable employment in higher paying jobs for highly educated women is thought to contribute to growing family income inequality and bifurcation in the economic resources available to children (Schwartz 2010). The highly asymmetric division of labor within Japanese couples makes this a particularly interesting research focus. For women, higher education has long been associated with lower levels of employment because these women typically married high-earning men capable of supporting the socially desirable role of mother and homemaker (Brinton 1993; Kohara 2007). Recent research on socioeconomic differentials in married women's employment paints a mixed picture, with evidence of growth in dual-earner couples among those with the highest earnings potential (Kohara 2008) balanced by evidence that highly educated women are also the least likely to reenter the labor force after exiting prior to childbirth (Raymo and Lim 2011). In general, it appears that relatively high rates of labor force participation among less-educated women reflect economic necessity while the heterogeneous behavior of highly educated women reflects a split between those with preferences for career employment and those with preferences for a primarily domestic focus (Raymo and Lim 2011).

One potentially important dimension of stratification among mothers in the labor market is employment type. As in the U.S. and many other western countries, Japan has witnessed a rapid increase in nonstandard employment (Osawa et al. 2013; Rebick 2005). It is clear that this type of employment is heavily concentrated among women (Futagami 2010; Houseman and Osawa 2003), but less research has been done on educational differences in the type of employment. One recent study finds that nonstandard employment is more common among women with lower levels of education and links this pattern to educational differences in women's employment stability (Lim and Raymo 2014). Because women who reenter the labor market after exiting almost always work in nonstandard employment (Lim and Raymo 2014; Yu 2002), the instability of less-educated women's employment trajectory results in a higher prevalence of nonstandard employment. Married women with a four-year college degree are distinctive for the relative stability of their employment status (regardless of whether they are in standard employment, nonstandard employment, or not employed). Because nonstandard jobs tend to be low paid and provide little stability or opportunity for advancement, concentration of this type of employment among less-educated women is a potentially important mechanism of stratification consistent with ideas central to the notion of diverging destinies. We present data on the employment status of mothers in Sect. 4.5.

2.5 Synthesis of Existing Research

What does the existing evidence summarized above tell us about how Japan is similar and different to the U.S. and other Western societies? Is it consistent with the emergence of a pattern of diverging destinies in Japan? Our assessment is that the evidence is mixed and that the answers to these questions depend on the aspect of family change considered. Several of the family outcomes emphasized by McLanahan (2004) are indeed strongly differentiated by education in Japan. In particular, divorce, single parenthood, and a range of outcomes associated with early family formation are concentrated among women with lower levels of education. These include early childbearing, unintended fertility, bridal pregnancy, and nonmarital childbearing (albeit at very low levels). Evidence of an increase over time in these educational gradients is less convincing, however. In the following chapters, we therefore devote particular attention to describing trends in these educational gradients.

Educational differences in other family outcomes are less consistent with a pattern of diverging destinies. For example, there is little evidence that cohabitation is replacing marriage for less-educated women and no indication that cohabitation has emerged as a setting for childbearing for any educational group. Similarly, the continued high prevalence of labor force exit at childbirth across educational categories is not consistent with a scenario in which diverging employment trajectories for mothers is contributing to bifurcation in children's resources. In fact, evidence that the most highly educated women remain the most likely to permanently exit the labor force (Raymo and Lim 2011) is consistent with a more traditional view of the family in which women with the resources to do so choose to focus on domestic production.

After systematic empirical examination of the wide range of family behaviors discussed above, we will return to this question of the extent to which the diverging destinies framework is applicable to Japan. We will also consider possible explanations for observed similarities and differences between Japan and the more widely studied western countries. Our analyses will be primarily descriptive in nature and we are thus not able to directly evaluate the relevance of underlying mechanisms. Nevertheless, we can offer speculative interpretations that may provide a useful basis for subsequent research. Finally, we will evaluate what we have learned from our analyses (and the previous work summarized above) and consider the potential implications for stratification and intergenerational transmission of dis/advantage in the Japanese context.

Diverging Destinies

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