

## A Life as a Full-Time Housewife?: Never-Married Women's Ideal and Expected Life-Course

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In this paper, I first provided a brief description of the situation of full-time housewives in Japan today, including the ways in which housewives are supported by the social security system, how the general public views various life-courses of women and what type of life-course never-married women see as ideal and what type of life-course they expect for themselves. Next, using the never-married women's data from the 12th Japanese National Fertility Survey conducted in 2002 by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, I examined two dimensions of the subjective view held by never-married women about their own life-courses: whether or not the women consider living as housewives as an ideal for themselves ("housewife desire"), and whether or not they actually expect to live as housewives ("housewife expectation"). Living as a housewife in this study refers to a life-course in which a woman works outside the home until marriage or childbirth and does not go back to work afterwards.

I first undertook bi-variate analyses of "housewife desire" and "housewife expectation" with socio-economic characteristics (level of education, work status and income), gender attitudes and heterosexual experiences (whether or not she is currently involved in an intimate relationship with a man). I then undertook binomial logistic regression analyses with the same variables, controlling for age group and women's intention of getting married. The same analyses were repeated for the gap between the presence and absence of "housewife desire" and "housewife expectation."

The results of the analyses revealed that a higher level of education increased the odds of having "housewife desire" while graduating from women's universities increased the odds of having "housewife expectation." Gender attitude, operationalized as the response to the question "In marriage, a husband should work outside while a wife should stay home and maintain the home," has the greatest and statistically significant effects on both "housewife expectation" and "housewife desire." The most intriguing findings are that having a steady male partner increased the odds of having "housewife desire" while it decreased the odds of having "housewife expectation." It is highly possible that being in a heterosexual intimate relationship encourages a way of thinking consistent with a more conventional gender ideology that supports full-time housewifery as a way of life and which at the same time promotes a more realistic understanding of married life in which both men and women have to bring in income earn to maintain a family. Further research is suggested to look more into the ideology surrounding heterosexual intimate relationships and actual interactions within such relationships.