A half step ahead
Marriage discourses in Japanese women’s magazines

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J’ai décidé d’être heureux, c’est excellent pour la santé.

Da es sehr förderlich für die Gesundheit ist, habe ich beschlossen, glücklich zu sein.
Because it is excellent for one's health, I decided to be happy.

François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778)
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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 1970s, Japanese marry less and later in life. Even though many studies suggest that these changes are in the majority initiated by women, female-oriented media has remained understudied. Yet women’s magazines as part of mass media are an important element of society, they function both as mirror and motor of society, and are an agent of socialization. Therefore I present here a longitudinal analysis of women’s magazines, targeting different age groups. Using a qualitative and quantitative content analysis, particular focus lies on the shifting discourses on motivations for marriage, and what constitutes marital happiness and discord. The data suggests that the discourses are – for some generation of readers – “ahead of their times” and point to a greater heterogeneity of marital experiences than so far had been assumed. These can be seen as a contributing factor to the large-scale transformations of family and family lives Japan underwent in the last few decades.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction and research outline

A term like “demographic time bomb”, namely the declining birthrate and the concurrent aging of Japan’s society, is a prevalent topic in 21st century mass media as well as in academic research. It is also a significant focus among politicians in their efforts for shōshika taisaku, namely political means to reverse the trend of the declining birthrate.

The majority of research working to uncover the causes of the declining birthrate attributes them to Japanese couples marrying less and later in life (Ueno 1998; Chitose 2004, Suzuki 2006, Schad-Seifert 2006, Coulmas 2007), as extramarital births have remained extremely low over time if compared to European countries or the US (1.93% of all births in 2003 (Suzuki 2006)). Raymo (2007) summarizes the main explanations associated with low marriage rates as first and foremost due to significant normative changes in Japanese society with regard to divorce and female employment. Raymo sees these to result in an increase in the perception of marriage as being constritive, in an increased desire for and freedom to pursue ones’ own interests, and in an increased realization of the continuing division of labor in marriage, which adds to a significant double burden particularly for women. Furthermore, the high costs of living for young couples and the “comforts of home” argument are identified as additional factors, such as by Yamada (1999), who blames young women’s unwillingness to leave the comforts of home for marriage and rather indulge in elaborate consumerism in his widely popularized book on “parasite singles”.

In Rosenbluth’s edited volume (2007a, 2007b), it is assumed that both young women’s desire to stay in the labor market, and the continuing structural difficulties for women to combine work, marriage, and having a family are largely contributing to young women delaying or foregoing marriage and motherhood. In all, there are a number of standard, recurring constructions of academic discourse on what marriage and thoughts on marriage are like in Japan. However, the reasons underlying changed marriage patterns and attitudes towards marriage and childbearing defy mono-causal explanations and are yet to be fully explored.

The studies above and many others (see also the literature review in Chapter 2.2.) suggest that several of the relevant social and demographic changes in Japan are initiated by women. A common method to understand women’s thoughts on marriage and motherhood are interviews, ethnographic research, or surveys. Yet what has been missing so far is an analysis of female-oriented media. Women’s magazines have a high circulation in Japan (Holthus 2009), and thus their analysis is highly important, as women’s magazines serve as agents of socialization for the readership (Rosenberger 1995). A study of women’s magazines and their messages on marriage aids to understand “the relationship between culture and social structure” (Alexander 1989: 17). Alexander contends for her study of U.S. magazines and their messages on love and marriage, that “[f]or as a society changes, the messages of that society also change. (17) […] Media messages about love and marriage may say more about how men and women are socialized into their accepted roles than can be discovered by simply examining role relationship and related values” (Alexander 1989: 17).
Regarding the theoretical perspectives on mass media in general, and women’s magazines in particular, Stanger summarizes the debate, stating that there are three basic positions about the nature of the relationship between media content and society, namely that it “reflects society and culture, that it serves as a means of social control, and that it influences attitudes and behavior of people” (Stanger 1986). I am of the opinion that this is not an either – or question, but rather that the relationship is oscillating between all three functions. The fact that the relationship between media and society is a “rather messy” one is probably one of the main factors, why the relationship and media in itself has not been studied in larger number by sociologists. But it is my assumption that the media messages and their consumption contributed to the changes we see in marriage patterns. It is of course not measurable how and what exact impact they have. But one can make a circumstantial case, knowing their circulation numbers are high and mass media are considered a very important agent of socialization in Japan (and elsewhere for that matter), which allows one to assume that there is an influence on female consumers through the media messages on marriage.

In this dissertation I relate the academic constructions on marriage in Japan to Japanese women’s magazine discourses, asking how the discourses compare and where gaps appear. As a way to reduce the data to a manageable size, I focus on select English-language academic constructions on marriage.¹ I then relate these constructions to Japanese women’s magazine discourses on marriage. These discourses are analyzed by a qualitative

¹ This reduction to English language academic sources is out of convenience only and is not to deny or underestimate the amount of research conducted in Japanese or other European languages.
and quantitative content-analysis, and the time-period of investigation spans the years from 1970 to 1999.

Whereas similar sociological studies have been conducted for the US and with US women’s magazines, this work is the first to examine contemporary Japanese women’s magazines in that way. For the US, as will be shown in more detail in chapter 2, particularly two US sociology dissertations serve as means of comparison and blue print for the methodology of this study. Whereas Alexander (1989) analyzed women’s and men’s magazines and compared their discourses on marriage and love over a twenty year time-period between 1966 and 1988, Stanger (1986) compared women’s magazine discourses with the content in social science journals on family related issues over a forty year period. Both works use systematic content analysis for their research.

Theoretical underpinnings for my research are first and foremost from the fields of sociology of marriage and the family, demography, and media sociology. In very broad terms, my research question asks what the perceptions about marriage in the media are. For the analysis, I therefore selected four Japanese women’s magazines over the course of thirty years, in order to be able to see longitudinal changes. Then I compare diagonally the marriage-related messages of the magazines for each demographic (age) cohort to the academic literature on marriage in Japan, as we are not only talking about change in historical time, but also change among demographic cohorts. I chose the analyzed age cohorts so that they correspond with target groups of the select women’s magazines at different times. I thus select several “real” demographic cohorts and trace them across the magazines. How do the discourses for specific target groups relate to the life courses of
these actual age cohorts? Are there significant gaps between the cohorts when comparing the discourses of the different women’s magazines diagonally? And in a final step, how do these results compare to the findings of academic discourse on women and marriage in Japan for these specific cohorts?

I hypothesize that the analysis of mass media discourse will aid in the understanding of what is going on in Japanese society in regards to marriage, ideas of partnerships, divorce, motherhood, and subsequently the reasons why Japanese women forego marriage and motherhood in increasing numbers. I further hypothesize that the women’s magazine discourse can be – at least at times – considered to be ahead of its time if compared to the discourse in other, “mainstream” media or in academic research, as also the title of the dissertation suggests. This, I believe, is not true throughout the whole period of analysis, but nonetheless exists to some degree, as is to be explained in chapters 4 through 6.

Due to the continuing growing saturation of media in all levels of social life, women’s magazines should be understood as a legitimate object of sociological research, on maybe not equal, but nonetheless similar footing to interview data.2

1.2. Japanese women’s magazines

1.2.1. Short history of Japanese women’s magazines3

Overall, “the developments of women’s magazines and their markets [...] illustrate[s] the evolution of the women’s magazine market parallel to the broader context of the social

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2 See also Holthus (2000) for another explanation for the significance of Japanese women’s magazines in the study of Japanese society.
3 If not mentioned differently, see Holthus (2009).
history of Japanese women [...]” (Holthus 2000: 142). Magazines, in Japanese termed zasshi, have been published in Japan since 1867, when Seiyō zasshi (“Western magazine”) was founded. The first women’s magazine, Kosodate no sōshi (“Notes on childrearing”) appeared on the market ten years later, in 1877. Until the end of the Meiji-period in 1912, already 106 women’s magazines were founded. To a majority, early readership consists of female students or graduates of higher girl’s schools and women from the urban middle class. In the 1910s, women’s magazines begin to be commercially successful.

Since the Meiji-period (1868-1912), Japanese women’s magazines have encouraged their readers to write to the magazines about their personal problems and opinions on certain topics. With the founding of the women’s magazine Shufu no tomo in 1917 the first shufu zasshi (“housewife magazine”), a completely new type of women’s magazine, was born, making practical, applied articles and topics its main focus. Shufu no tomo, as well as several other women’s magazines of that time, begins publishing so-called kakeibo, household-books, which the magazines propagate and recommend. In tow, these magazines also all propagated the ideal of ryōsai kenbo (good wife and mother) (Uno 1993, 1999). Household-books have remained popular for magazines targeting full-time housewives, and still can be found in many of the January editions of women’s magazines.

Japan’s growing militarism since 1904, and then particularly since the 1930s, had significant influence on the women’s magazines’ content. Articles began to become more patriotic, virtues of hygiene and frugality were highlighted. Wöhr (1997) sees many of the women’s magazines in the 1930s as quasi-instruments of state propaganda. Laws in 1938 and 1941 on the general mobilization for the war effort influenced the women’s magazine
market, and subsequent censorship affected many magazines, which did not promote national politics satisfactorily. Those either had to shut down and cease publication, or change the title of the magazine into an all-Japanese name and “reject foreign influence” (Shiozawa 1994). Overall, the number of Japanese magazines reduced by half in the period between September 1942 and February 1945. Furthermore, air-raids of Tokyo in March 1945 destroyed the majority of the publishing houses (Fukushima 1987). During the post-war period, the Japanese publishing industry quickly recovered (Nihon tosho sentā 1990, Kimoto 1985, Hirano 1992, Okatome 1990, Shiozawa 1994; Holthus 2009), even though in the first post-war years it was faced with what Hirano (1992: 34) calls a “dual structure of occupation media policy”, during which the American Occupation censored the print media and at the same time also conducted propaganda.

While only four regularly published women’s magazines survived at the end of World War II, the number had increased again to forty as early as 1946 (Fukushima 1987; Holthus 2009). Those women’s magazines that had continued publication during the wartime period quickly did a 180 degree turn from war propaganda to transmitting democratic values - in order to avoid censorship or being shut down by the Occupation.

In the late 1950s then, Japan saw a boom of so-called shūkanshi, meaning weekly magazines, some of them particularly targeting women (e.g. Shūkan josei, Josei jishin). These reached high popularity due to the so-called mitchī būmu, the media hype

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4 In the case of the women’s magazine Sutairu (from the English term “style”), its title was changed into the all-Japanese term Fujin seikatsu (“Women’s life”) (Shiozawa 1994: 2-3).
5 This could also be clearly seen in postwar women’s magazines (see the analysis of Shufu no tomo for the years 1945 to 1955 by Pörtner 1996).
surrounding the engagement and marriage of crown prince Akihito, the current emperor of Japan, with Shōda Michiko, a commoner, in April 1959.6

The difference between the weekly women’s magazines and the often, but not exclusively monthly published women’s magazines are significant, as weeklies focus on gossip stories and on the lives of celebrities, often are printed on cheap paper and mostly in black and white. On the other hand, monthly women’s magazines are called “glossies”, as they printed on high quality paper and focus to a large extent on beauty, cosmetics, and fashion. Magazines up to the 1950s often carried words like fujin, shufu, or josei in their titles, but since the 1960s, many new magazines appeared with titles written in katakana for foreign loan words and thus became a clear expression of a decade focused on “catching up” with the West.7

In due course, magazines continuing to preach the “old” ideal of ryōsai kenbo lost their readers in large numbers, whereas magazines with a “new”, “foreign” image became more and more popular.8 But it is only with the appearance of women’s magazines such as An an in 1970, Non no in 1971, and Croissant and More in 1977 that the market drastically changed, over time pushing most of the established women’s magazines out of the market or forcing them to restructure. This new women’s magazine market since the 1970s, which saw its biggest “boom” in the 1980s, is signified by a very diversified market, with very narrowly defined target groups, based on age, interests, lifestyles, or occupations, whereas

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6 The media frenzy lasted three years (Matsuura 1984: 32-40). Many similarities can be seen in the media frenzy when the current crown-prince Naruhito married Owada Masako in 1993.
7 Examples are titles such as Madomoazeru (from the French mademoiselle), Misesu (from the English misses), Madamu (from the French madame) and Yanguredē (from the English young lady) (Shiozawa 1994, Inoue 1989, Holthus 2009).
8 Holthus (2000: 142-145) summarizes the trends, shifts and most significant developments of the Japanese women’s magazine market since the 1970s.
the established magazines had rather tried to be as general as possible to cater to a broad audience. Even though this growing segmentation of the women’s magazine market is economically motivated and driven, at the same time it recognizes the growing heterogeneity of women’s life courses, lifestyles, career paths, and interests, which carries with it an empowering element for the female readers.

1.2.2. Japanese women’s magazines as research object

A short overview of academic research focusing on Japanese women’s magazines makes clear that research has been conducted in diverse disciplines and with differing methodological approaches and foci. Overall, research on contemporary women’s magazines since the 1970s remains scarce, with the majority still focusing on magazines up to the 1960s only. This therefore marks the first gap in the academic literature.9

The second significant gap in the research is methodological, as the majority of research is historical. Furthermore, sociological analyses, using a formal content analysis, qualitative and quantitative, have been done in several studies concerning Western women’s magazines, but are hardly conducted for Japanese women’s magazines.10

One area of emphasis in regards to Japanese women’s magazine research is, as in the case of American and European women’s magazines, that of historical research. Wöhr and Sato (2000: 3) state in their literature review that in general, Japanese historical studies on Japanese women’s magazines evaluate the magazines negatively. They criticize the

9 Sakamoto (1999: 173) summarizes this trend by writing: “In spite of much academic work on Japanese women’s magazines in other periods, very little research has been carried out on women’s magazines in the 1970s.”
10 My previous research on the women’s magazine Croissant is a small exception (Holthus 2000).
magazines as only confirming women’s domestic roles, not promoting their public roles, and through their “cultural imperialism […] reducing women to “dupes” of the magazines” (Wöhr and Sato 2000: 3). My own analysis aims to overcome this stereotypical view of women’s magazines, trying to draw a much more differentiated picture.

Historical analyses of Japanese women’s magazines can be found, for example, in Wilson (1994), Frederick (2000, 2006), Sato (2003), and the edited volume by Wöhr, Sato, and Suzuki (2000). Wilson (1995) analyzes women’s magazines of the 1930s, and how state ideology and the growing influence of the government influenced women’s magazine discourses on the topic of the Mandschuria crisis, finding that all four analyzed women’s magazines complied with national propaganda and thus contributed to the dissemination of the indoctrination of state ideology.

Frederick (2000) presents organizational magazine histories of three Japanese women’s magazines (Fujin kōron, Shufu no tomo, and Nyonin geijutsu) from the late 1910s to mostly the 1950s, trying to present a “window onto gender in twentieth century Japan” (Frederick 2000: 3).11 In the edited volume by Wöhr, Sato, and Suzuki (2000), three of the six articles, by Wöhr, Hamill Sato, and Fuess, analyze women’s magazines of the 1920s, and a fourth one by Ishiwata focuses on a religious women’s magazine before and after World War II, thus pointing to the prevalence of historical analyses in the context of Japanese women’s magazine research.

Research on contemporary Japanese women’s magazines is comparatively limited, but has increased since the 1990s. A majority of these studies concern the images of women in

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11 For more information, see the book review by Holthus (2007).
these magazines (Rosenberger 1996; Clammer 1997; Mori 1990; Ochiai 1997a; Moeran and Skov 1995). Ochiai (1997a) for example conducted a longitudinal, qualitative study of the visual images of women in Japanese women’s magazines with a particular focus on changes of faces, make-up, and ethnicity of the models since 1945. One of Ochiai’s findings is that the photographic images of women shifted from the centrality of the face to the portrayal of full body shots, with poses becoming “freer” and their facial expressions more confident over time. She attributes this change in its beginning to the influence of the American Occupation (1945-1952). As a significant trend-shift starting in the 1980s, Ochiai states that sex in the women’s magazines is treated in a more open and natural manner than before, with the visual images of women changing accordingly, with young women “[..] taking the initiative over boys even in sex.” (Ochiai 1997a: 163).

Also Clammer (1997) analyzes the visual representation of women (Japanese and Western) and their bodies in contemporary women’s magazines and compares them to men’s and general magazines. Clammer comes to the conclusion that the magazine representations are not homogeneous, but rather that “the ranges of body types deemed attractive continues to expand” (Clammer 1997: 134).

These studies have in common that they point 1) to the connection between social changes and changes in representations in the magazines, and 2) to the process of “self-orientalization” in the discourses of the Japanese women’s magazines, be it through images of Western versus Japanese women in Ochiai (1997a) or Western versus Japanese products in Moeran and Skov (1995).12 As I hope to show in my own analysis, the discourses on

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12 See also Wöhr and Sato (2000): 4-5.
marriage in contemporary Japanese women’s magazines also seem to further contribute to this dichotomous construction or distinction between native (Japanese) and foreign (mostly Western) ways of marriage or divorce patterns, dating behavior, and values and norms regarding how to conduct partner relationships.


Whereas Lunsing (1997) and McLelland (1999) both focus on masculinity constructions in Japanese women’s magazines, they are limiting their focus to the so-called “gay boom” in the Japanese media, to which women’s magazines supposedly greatly contributed, as the magazines are said to describe gay men at the beginning of the 1990s as ideal partners and best friends for women. Holthus (2001) analyzes representations of men in a broader perspective, pointing to the sexualization of men in the women’s magazine *An an* in the 1990s.

Tanaka’s articles both focus on the linguistic side of the women’s magazine texts. In her article from 1990, she analyzes the language of advertisements in the magazines, and in her 1998 publication focuses on fashion articles of the 1980s. Here she concludes that the magazines use a very authoritarian tone towards their readers in the fashion articles, instructing their readers what to do and wear, what not to do and wear, and thus bringing a strong educative element into the discourse in Japanese women’s magazines. This is an
expression of the prevalence of the “how to –culture” existing in Japan, as also White (1995) and Moeran (1995) identify in their analyses of Japanese women’s magazines.  

Rosenberger (1995) finally combines in her study a textual analysis of women’s magazines with audience research, through interviews with single women between 25 and 39 years of age. Rosenberger tries to understand the inter-linkage between women’s magazine discourses and the actual lives of Japanese women by contrasting the media messages with her interviewees’ personal opinions on the topic of relationship matters. She concludes that the discourses are loosely connected, however 1) women’s magazine discourses do not criticize structural-functional settings or societal problems on a macro level, but rather stay on a micro level, and 2) women’s magazine discourses have simplified explanations to women’s problems in life, focusing on the partners of the women, rather than seeing multi-dimensional stakeholders influencing the women such as family, government, and authority figures from school and/ or work.

Even though Rosenberger’s analysis is very valuable, it nonetheless also poses problems by making generalizing statements about media messages, without controlling for the multitude and diversity of women’s magazines (and their discourses) and changes in these discourses over time. It is these flaws that my analysis will try to correct by filling these gaps: with a longitudinal analysis and by studying four different women’s magazines in-depth and comparing their contents.

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13 Tanaka explains this by comparing the authoritarian tone and the techniques of repetition, imitation, prescription, and instruction of the magazines with that of Japanese teachers, to which the young women are already accustomed. Tanaka describes young Japanese women as not being used to fashion, because they are socialized to school uniforms, supposedly feel insecure about fashion concerns, and therefore appreciate the magazines’ authoritative voice.
With the exception of Inoue Teruko’s study (Inoue 1989) comparing Japanese, American, and Mexican women’s magazines, these studies on Japanese women’s magazines are all qualitative analyses. Yet even Inoue’s work does not go beyond very basic descriptive analyses. I myself have conducted a formal content analysis on the visual images of women in articles and advertisements in the women’s magazine Croissant between 1977 and 1987 (Holthus 2000). This study revealed two opposite linear regressions: the more feminist the editorial slant of the magazine in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the more open and diverse were the topics of sexuality and body images presented within. In contrast, more socially conservative years went hand-in-hand with a decrease in the depiction of sexual images, a greater focus on the external body, with articles and advertisements increasingly focused upon cosmetics, dieting, and weight reduction methods. Thus, a quantitative analysis can lay bare diachronic changes of magazine content that otherwise might be overlooked. My research also hopes to fill this large gap of quantitative analyses in this area, therefore contributing methodologically to the existing research.

1.3. Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 establishes in its first part the background for this study. It presents statistical data on the fundamental social and demographic changes related to the situation of marriages in Japan. These include marriage and divorce rate trends, changes in male and female marriage age, changes in mother’s age, total fertility rates, male and female labor force participation, and others.
The second part of chapter 2 analyzes English language academic discourse on marriage in Japan. In particular, I focus upon the following areas: if the authors observe change or continuity in marriage pattern; if they look at mainstream or fringes of society; and most importantly, how changes or continuities in regards to marriages in Japan are explained.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used for this study, namely a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of four popular Japanese women’s magazines on the topic of marriage over a thirty year period since 1970. The magazine discourses and their changes over time are analyzed by looking at the marriage discourses for certain demographic birth-cohorts. Different age cohorts correspond with target groups of different women’s magazines. Thus I selected four women’s magazines, which target distinctly different age groups. These range from An an, targeting women ages 18 to 24, to More, targeting 25 to 30 year old women, to Croissant, which used to target women around 30, but since approximately the 1990s targets women in their 40s, and last but not least to Fujin kōron, targeting women over 40, including women in their 50s and 60s. Thus besides looking at changes in historical time, I take several demographic cohorts, trace them across the magazines’ target groups, and then see how discourses work diagonally and how they relate to the life courses of the actual age cohorts.

As the topic of marriage is huge, I break it down into three aspects, which I analyze and have coded separately. These are the discourses in the women’s magazine articles on 1) the motivations for marriage, 2) sources of marital happiness, and 3) sources of marital discord. After briefly explaining these three aspects, I present a general overview of the
quantitative development of these topics within the women’s magazines and what basic trends can be observed through quantity alone.

Chapters 4 through 7 examine the women’s magazine discourse on marriage, analyzed by demographic cohorts of their target readership. Each chapter is dedicated to a different cohort of women as potential target group of the different women’s magazines: women born in the 1930s and 1940s (Chapter 4), women born in the 1950s (Chapter 5), in the 1960s (Chapter 6), and women born in the 1970s and 1980s (Chapter 7). The design of the study permits analysis of how the magazine discourse on marriage motivations, marital happiness and discord for each cohort of women may have changed as they moved through their own life course and in the process, presumably shifted to reading different women’s magazines.

Chapter 8 then summarizes the main findings and contrasts the findings from the Japanese women’s magazine data to that of the U.S.-focused studies by Alexander (1989) and Stanger (1986), which are explained at the beginning of Chapter 3.

The dissertation ends with a brief discussion of the broader implications of these findings for future research on demographic change and the use of mass media data for sociological analysis, in the context of Japan and in general.
2. MARRIAGE IN JAPAN

2.1. Statistical data on social and demographic changes

In recent years, marriage or better the delay and decline of marriage has been blamed for Japan’s declining birthrate (shōshika mondai) (Retherford et.al 2001). But what exactly has been happening in marriages in Japan, what is it we know about them, what has been changing in the last decades, and most importantly, why?

In the first part of this chapter, I present demographic changes relevant to the issue of marriage, to serve as information backdrop for the subsequent chapters. In the second part, I analyze what US and other, mostly English-language academic research has been explaining about marriage in contemporary Japan, meaning what picture academic literature constructs about the topic.

What can be observed is that the areas that touch upon and are deeply interwoven with marriages in Japan and the understanding thereof are not only marriage and single rates and values about marriage. Also the birth rate, employment rate, education statistics, life expectancy rates, divorce rate, the rate of non-marital cohabitation, and others are important elements in solving the puzzle of the changes concerning marriages in Japan and subsequently the declining birthrate.14

2.1.1. Population changes

Since the Meiji-Restoration in 1868, Japan’s total population increased from around 30 million citizens to 127.77 million in 2006. This continuous population growth however has

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14 For a recent book-length analysis of marriages in contemporary Japan, please see also Tokuhiro (2010).
slowed since the 1980s, and the year 2005 was the first year the population fell (even though it recovered again slightly in 2006), and projections see the numbers seriously decreasing in the future (Coulmas 2007: 8-9).

As figure 1 and table 1 below make clear, it is the population of 0-14 year olds, which has significantly dropped and is projected to continue dropping. On the other hand, however, the number of people over the age of 65 has significantly increased, at a speed faster than Western European countries or the U.S. (Coulmas 2007: 10). In 2006, Japan accounts for having the highest life expectancy (at birth) in the world, for women age 85.81 and for men age 79.00. These drastic changes in the make-up of the Japanese population can be clearly seen in the often-cited population pyramid of Japan (see figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Population pyramid

Japan suffers from a declining birthrate, or more precisely a decline in the total fertility rate (TFR), while at the same time people live longer. In the period of three years, from 1947 to 1949, in the immediate post-war period, Japan experienced a so-called “baby boom”, with an average TFR of 4.32 children. Since then, however, the birthrate has more or less steadily fallen, reaching 1.25 in 2005, but up (temporarily) to 1.32 in 2006.

Table 1: Population trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population (1,000)</th>
<th>Age composition (%)</th>
<th>Population density (per km2)</th>
<th>TFR*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>15-64</td>
<td>65 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>94,302</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>104,665</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>117,060</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>123,611</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>126,926</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>127,770</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* TFR = Total fertility rate: The average number of children that would be born alive to a hypothetical cohort of women if, throughout their reproductive years, the age-specific fertility rates for the specified year remained unchanged.
An international comparison among thirty countries shows that Japan’s total fertility rate is well below the OECD-defined average (see figure 3). As Japan’s TFR has been falling below 1.3, it can be considered a country with “lowest-low fertility”, an expression termed by Francesco Billari (Billari 2007).\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} Lowest-low fertility, respectively a TFR lower than 1.3 children per woman, emerged first in Italy (1993) and Spain (1992), then Greece (1998), followed by several central and eastern European countries in the late 1990s, and Japan (2003) and other Asian countries in the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.
**Figure 3:** Total fertility rates

Number of children born to women aged 15 to 49, 2004 or latest available year


As a cohort analysis is at the center of the women’s magazine analysis in the subsequent chapters (Chapters 4 through 7), it is important to look also at the fertility rate broken down by cohorts (see figure 4). This shows that with each cohort, the fertility rate has been declining and fertility is being delayed to a later and later age. It has to be noted, however, that the cohorts of 1965 and 1970 have not ended their childbearing years yet. The trends nonetheless are clearly visible.
Even though the *actual* birthrate is significantly dropping, the *ideal* as well as the *expected* number of children are quite different, as they lie on much higher levels and have remained relatively stable since the 1980s (see figure 5). Thus the gap seems to continue to widen between ideal, expected, and actual number of children (see also Tanaka-Naji 2008). For the early 21st century, the number of ideal children was around 2.6 children, the expected number of children was slightly under 2.2, but the actual number of children was around 1.3.

**Figure 5:** Ideal versus expected number of children

2.1.2. Changes in marriage patterns

There is much speculation about the reasons underlying the decline in Japan’s fertility rate (and other low fertility countries’ for that matter). No matter how much academics or politicians try to find mono-causal explanations, it has become clear that only a multi-causal explanation (and in response only multi-faceted social policies) can grasp the situation fully.

However, the website of the Kokuritsu shakai hoshō jinkō mondai kenkyūjo (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research) prominently features a so-called “Low Birthrate Information Homepage” (Shōshika Jōhō Homupēji). There, on the introductory page, outlining the low birthrate problem, one can find the section “What are the main reasons for the low birthrate?” The institute states that the most important reason is that of the change in marriage patterns, namely that people marry late or do not marry at all. In addition, also the pace of giving birth after marriage has declined since the 1990s, and thus further contributes to the low birth problem. Reasons for these marital changes are broadly stated on the website as “societal and economic changes”, among which are listed “consumerism”, “gender relations”, “changes in the value system”, such as “family values”, and “individualization”. In the second part of this chapter, I will present a detailed analysis of the relevant English-language academic works trying to explain the changes in marriage patterns.

But first of all, a detailed look at the marriage rate data shows that a significant drop in the overall marriage rate occurred between 1970 and 1990, and less so in the subsequent decade (see figure 6).

**Figure 6: Changes in Marriage Rate and Divorce Rate**

[Graph showing changes in marriage and divorce rates from 1970 to 2005.]


It should be noted, however, that contrary to the overall marriage rate the rate of international marriages (*kokusai kekkon*) has seen a constant increase over the years (see figure 7).
In 1970, international marriages, meaning marriages in which one of the partners is Japanese and the other non-Japanese, made up only 0.53 percent of all marriages. Over the course of 35 years, the raw number of international marriages increased by more than seven times, from 5546 to 41,481 cases in the year 2005. Even though the share of international marriages in 2005 is still only 5.8 percent of all marriages during that year, it is a significant increase.

As figure 8 below shows, another important shift occurred among international marriages over time. In 1970, 62 percent of international marriages involved couples where the wife was Japanese and the husband non-Japanese, and only 38 percent of couples where
the wife was non-Japanese and the husband Japanese. In 2000 however, this relationship reversed, so that only 20 percent of the international marriages of that year involved a non-Japanese husband, whereas an overwhelming 80 percent (respectively 28,326 marriages) are unions between a Japanese husband and a non-Japanese wife.

**Figure 8:** Comparing international marriages

![Pie charts comparing international marriages](http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/jinkou/suii06/marr2.html, accessed Febr. 4, 2008. Chart design by Holthus.]

Looking in more detail what countries the non-Japanese partners derive from, among non-Japanese wives, the majority in 1970 are Korean, whereas in 2005, the majority are Chinese (11,655 women), followed by Filipina (10,242) and Korean (6,066). Among the marriages to non-Japanese husbands, in 1970, the majority were US citizen (1,571, respectively 46 percent), followed by Korean (1,386, 40 percent) and Chinese (195, 6 percent). In 2005, the countries from which the non-Japanese husbands originate have
diversified, with the majority of newly-wed non-Japanese husbands being Korean (2,087), 25 percent, followed by US citizen (1,551, 19 percent) and Chinese (1,015, 12 percent). Other countries include England, Brazil, Peru, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Going back to Figure 6 above, it also provides the divorce rate, which (however not in a completely linear fashion, but more or less) has seen an increase over the years. The divorce rate is still low in Japan if compared to the US, for example, but has slowly reached a level comparable to Western European nations like Germany.

Table 2: Divorce rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Crude Divorce rate(^{18})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2.04 (in 2005; down from 2.30 in ’02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>3.6 (2007; down from 4.0 in ’02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2.49 (2005; up from 1.9 in ’00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.3 (2006; down from 2.6 in ’04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.78 (2004; up from 0.69 in ’01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2.21 (2005; down from 2.39 in ’02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>2.8 (2004; up from 2.58 in ’00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>2.66 (2005; down from 2.85 in ’01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1.95 (2005; down from 2.31 in ’01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As mentioned above, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research has put the majority of the blame for the low fertility rate on the increase in late marriages and

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\(^{17}\) April 2007 saw the revision of the retirement fund law, granting women a higher percentage of their husbands’ retirement money, even if the couple is divorced. This was thought to significantly increase the divorce rate (Ueno 2007: 3). However, it has yet to been seen, if the divorce statistics for subsequent years will reflect just that.

\(^{18}\) Crude divorce rates are the annual number of divorces per 1000 mid-year population.
on the increase in the single rate. It is these two following graphs that are cited by the Institute in this context.

**Figure 9: Late marriage rate**

![Graph showing late marriage rate for husbands and wives over years with average age at first marriage and average age difference husband/wife]  


Whereas the average marriage age for women in 1970 was 24.2 years of age and for men 26.9, they increased in a linear fashion, until in 2005, women’s average age at marriage lay at 27.8 years of age, and for men at 29.6 years of age. This means an increase in the
average age at marriage of 3.6 years for women and 2.7 years for men, a development likely to continue for some time.

This development influenced social norms and values on ideal marriage timing and the ideal age of men and women at the time of marriage (*kekkon tekireiki*). Whereas in the 1970s, a women was to marry until the age of 25, so not to be considered an old maid, the *kekkon tekireiki* has supposedly shifted in recent years to age 40 for women, as the feature article in a recent edition of the magazine *AERA* proclaims (Kimura and Shirakawa 2007: 14).

Figure 10 below visualizes how also the rate of unmarried women and men increased in Japan over time. As women and men increasingly delay marriage to a later age, more than half of all women (54 percent) between 25 and 29 years of age in the year 2000 were single, up from 18.1 percent in 1970. Yet the rate of women remaining unmarried throughout their whole lives is still rather small with 5.8 percent in the year 2000, up from 3.3 percent in 1970, thus showing no drastic increase. Thus it is fair to say that the large majority of Japanese women will, in their lifetimes, still get married, yet increasingly delay that step. For men in comparison, the rate of never-married increased in a much more drastic fashion, up from 1.5 percent in 1970 to 12.4 percent in the year 2000.

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19 A Christmas cake analogy was used, comparing women to a Christmas cake, traditional in Japan, which is fresh before the 25th, but goes stale thereafter.
The whole concern over delayed or foregone marriages in the debate on the declining fertility rate can only be fully grasped by recognizing that out-of-wedlock births were and continue to be extremely rare in Japan, which makes childbearing and marriage deeply intertwined. Whereas in 1970, the rate of illegitimate births lay at 0.93 percent of all births (17,982 births) in Japan, in the year 2004 it lay at 1.99 percent (22,156 births) of all births of that year (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. *Populations Statistics of Japan 2006*: 38). In an international comparison of developed nations, Japan is by far the country with the lowest rate of out-of-wedlock births (Lesthaeghe 2000: 27). The publication *Child Related Policies in Japan* (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2003) uses this same data, visualizing the results as seen in figure 11 below.
Figure 11: Percentage of Non-Marital Births in Selected Developed Countries

![Bar chart showing percentage of non-marital births in various countries](chart.png)


Children born to unwed mothers as well as unwed mothers themselves still face stigmatization in Japan and thus often try to hide the fact, whereas divorced single mothers are much more accepted in society.\(^{20}\) These aspects play into the fact that, at a time when pre-marital sexual relationships are on the rise and becoming more socially accepted, the rate of so-called *dekichatta-kon* (marriage after the woman has gotten pregnant, but before the child is born), is recently increasing (Raymo 2007, Tokuhiro 2010).\(^{21}\)

Hand in hand with a delay in marriage-timing goes also the delay of childbirth in a women’s lifecycle. Therefore the increase in age of mothers at first birth is another factor that contributes to the changes in Japan’s fertility rate, particularly since the 1990s. As Figure 12 below shows, the rate of women age 20 to 29 having their first child has

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\(^{20}\) For more on unwed mothers see Korobtseva (2007), Hertog (2009) and Ezawa and Fujiwara (2005).

\(^{21}\) Smith and Wiswell (1982) already reported on cases of *dekichatta-kon* in 1930s Japan, namely pregnancies that force the issue of marriage, without however using this particular terminology. The terminology is rather recent, the fact itself is not (Edwards 1989: 54-55).
significantly decreased from 78.6 percent of all women giving birth in 1975 to 50 percent as of 2005. On the other hand, the rate of women between the ages of 30 to 34 having their first child more than doubled, from 16.8 percent in 1975 to 38.1 percent in 2005. Also the rate of first time mothers age 35 to 39 increased from 3.3 percent in 1975 to 14.4 percent in 2005.

It should also be mentioned that on either side of the “childbearing age spectrum,” rate increases can be found. Granted these are minorities, but the rate of women having their first child after the age of 40 increased from 0.5 percent in 1975 to 1.9 percent in 2005. On the other end of the spectrum, namely women up to the age of 19 having their first child has doubled – from 0.8 percent to 1.6 percent in 2005. As Steinhoff (1983:xvi) wrote, it is not only important to look at mainstream society, but also to look on the fringes, in order to detect social change.22 So it might prove to be important to look at these women in particular.

22 “Large-scale social changes often creep up unnoticed because a certain dominant pattern of behavior is still followed by the mainstream of the society, while alternative ways of behaving appear around the fringes and gradually become more common. If researchers keep looking only at a mainstream that is defined by that dominant pattern of behavior, they will not notice the change until it has revolutionized the society” (Steinhoff 1983: xvi).
2.2. Academic discourse on changes in marriage patterns in Japan

The literature on marriage and the family of Japan comes from many scholarly fields, such as anthropology, sociology, labor economics, and demography. Methodologies therefore are equally diverse, ranging from ethnographies, interview studies, survey analyses, to - in a wider sense - literature reviews. Quantitative analyses, often found in journal articles on the issue of marriage in Japan, often tend to use the Japanese National Fertility Survey, or the Japanese General Social Survey.

It is of course always a question to what one compares something with, but Kumagai (2008) for example believes the existing literature on this topic to be rather limited. She writes:

It is regrettable that the number of volumes published in English on the subject of Japanese families is quite limited, and very little has been written by Japanese family sociologists who are in a good position to analyze the subject matter. (Kumagai 2008: xii)
For the analysis of the academic marriage discourse, I paid special attention to the areas of (1) motivations for marriage, (2) aspects of discord in marriages and (3) what determines or creates or is envisioned to bring happiness to marriage, as it is these areas that I analyze within the women’s magazine discourses. These are discussed in more detail within later chapters. Here I present only a short and broad overview of the academic discourse as I see it.

Overall, the trend of academic literature to focus increasingly upon diversity in marriage patterns is clearly visible in recent years. For example, in 1993, Sumiko Iwao still entitled her book The Japanese Woman, portraying a very homogenizing view of Japanese women, focusing only on the middle-class and their marriage patterns and experiences. In the most recent publication by Fumie Kumagai (2008) however, diversity, and particularly regional diversity, of Japanese families and marriages are at the forefront of her analysis.23 This runs parallel to the general trend of Japan studies literature, getting away from a homogenizing view of Japanese society to focusing on its heterogeneity.24 25

Similar tendencies can be found also concerning the analysis of changes and continuities in regards to marriages in Japan. Whereas literature up to the 1980s mostly focused on a stable image of middle-class salarymen families, since the 1990s we have

23 Even though the focus on diversity, and here particularly regional diversity, is honorable, the book unfortunately does not go much beyond description of statistical data and developments. Thus its explanatory power for these findings and developments is very limited.

24 Edwards (1989) argued that for weddings in Japan, the trend has not been from homogeneous to heterogeneity, but rather the other way around. As Edwards (1989) points out, for the case of weddings, the diversity that could be observed until the post-war period has since given way to a very homogenous way of thinking and doing of how weddings should be carried out. Now weddings are highly ritualized and standardized, helped by the commercialization of the wedding business.

25 This also goes, for example, hand in hand with an overall growing awareness since the late 1990s that Japan is an increasingly stratified society (kakusa shakai).
seen more work, particularly in the fields of demography, trying to explain marriage pattern changes (Kumagai 2008). And it is these, and here in particular the shift over time to a delay (“late”) and decline (“less”) of marriages (Retherford et al. 2001), which has sparked a significant array of analyses from scholars. Whereas some scholars focus on the importance of one specific cause of this development (Kelsky 2001, Raymo and Iwasawa 2005, Nemoto 2008, Applbaum 1995), scholars like Rebick and Takenaka (2006), Retherford et al. (2001), and Tanaka-Naji 2008, for example, have aimed to take a broad multi-causal approach in their explanations.

It should be pointed out that academic literature naturally always faces a significant time lag. Research takes a long time until it is actually available in print, be it ethnographic research or survey data analysis, and often times many years have passed between the research and its subsequent publication. However, what needs to be said is that due to this particular nature of academic writing and publishing, which distinguishes it from journalistic writing, it can often only provide a delayed picture of what is going on in Japanese society. A lag of seven or more years between the actual fieldwork and/or data set and the availability of the article or book in print is by no means an exception. But if the

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26 Tanaka-Naji (2008) for example nicely charted the multi-level causes of the changing development of the paths towards motherhood or singlehood. She shows a veering off the “conventional life-course” path since the mid-1970s, and then again the introduction of an alternative new path since 1990, thus showing that there really are two shifts: in the mid-1970s in regards to the premarital period, namely the choice not to marry, and since 1990 in addition the increasingly chosen path of being married but not to have children, for whichever reason.

27 Take for example Kelsky (2001), having conducted her fieldwork among “internationalist” women in 1991, 1993 and 1994. And statistical analyses often have to work with older data, due to the difficulty of attaining such data. Example here is Tsuya et al. (2004), who for a large part had to work with survey data from ten years earlier, 1994.
interest lies in understanding the changing nature of marriages in Japan, then this can lead to a delayed understanding of society and social change.

In summary, the academic literature focuses on various life-stages in regards to marriage, namely the pre-marital stage, the actual marital period\(^{28}\), or the post-marital period (such as through divorce or death of a partner), yet the pre-marital stage has been of particular interest in recent years.

The pre-marital stage: Changes and continuities

The pre-marital life-stage is considered and often described as the stage with the most drastic statistical changes regarding marriages, namely less and late marriages, pointing to the growing undesirability of marriage. This fact is explained by numerous changes, which supposedly contribute to them. These can be broadly categorized as legal changes, changes in socio-economic circumstances, as well as attitudinal changes. These changes then are said to clash with numerous other aspects of gender relations, attitudes, and policies, which have not seen any or barely any changes. Particularly this clash of changes with continuities is said to enhance the growing number of people not marrying at all and the increase in age at first marriage. However, the literature often fails to break down the situation specifically by cohorts or generations.

To summarize in more detail the relevant changes which are observed by scholars, in regards to legal changes, most often referred to are the legal advances for women, in particular the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) from 1985 (with several

\(^{28}\) The marital period can again be distinguished into the phases pre-parental, parental, and post-parental.
revisions since then) and the Parental Leave Act. In regards to changes in socio-economic circumstances, the increase in educational attainment, particularly for women, is highly important. This in turn increases the labor force participation of women and thus leads to more economic and financial independence of women. All this increases the opportunity costs of leaving work in order to get married (Retherford et.al. 2001: 82-83). Furthermore, the growing financial independence and educational attainment of women clashes with their continuing desire to marry up, which then leads to less choices of marriage partners, resulting in a so-called “marriage squeeze” or a “marriage market mismatch” (Raymo and Iwasawa 2005). Partially as a result of that, researchers have greatly discussed the increase in the number of single women living with their parents, some derogatively calling them “parasite singles” (Yamada 1999, Retherford et.al. 2001: 93). Yamada complains that these single women lead relatively posh lives and enjoy their single lives, which supposedly results in marriage becoming less attractive to them and increases their reluctance to compromise their carefree single lifestyles.

The economic slump of the 1990s, and lately the global economic crisis of fall 2008, have also significantly affected men through growing unemployment and an increase in unstable labor, more temporary workers and a decrease in people enjoying life-long employment protection. This is said to have resulted in a prolonged period of bachelorhood due to marriage seeming less affordable to many men and thus has led to postponement of marriage from their side (Retherford et.al 2001: 85), particularly if the male breadwinner ideal remains intact and the “provider” for the family cannot adequately fulfill his role anymore.
Now in regards to attitudinal changes over time, researchers have observed the following:

- A decline of arranged marriages is said to have led to an increased difficulty or inability to find a marriage partner (Applbaum 1995).
- Decline in social pressures to marry.
- The increase in the divorce rate, which increasingly signals to women that marriage offers less security and thus makes them more hesitant to engage in it in the first place.
- An increase in acceptability and prevalence of premarital sex, which in turn makes marriage less important as source of sexual satisfaction (Retherford et. al. 2001: 88-89). The value change occurred since the 1980s. At the same time, however, Rosenberger states that there is nonetheless an increasing search for sexual intimacy within marriage (Rosenberger 2001: 146).
- The “tekireiki”, the “cut-off age” for marriage, has gone up, from 25 to 30 and up (the magazine AERA in 2008 reports even a tekireiki of age 40).
- Increase in individualism overall, an increasing taste for independence, and an increase in women feeling that “they would lose their “selves’”’ if they were to marry (Rosenberger 2001: 217). In the same category fits the observance that rising aspirations lead to rising opportunity costs of marriage for women, because of the “loss of freedom”.
- Attitude shift concerning the gender division of work, with a growing desire to combine work and family life and a growing dissatisfaction with the traditional husband – wife roles (Retherford et. al. 2001: 95-96; Imamura 1987: 14).

Yet these, as many other changes above, clash with the many continuities within Japanese society. In regards to work-life balance, the high input in working hours has barely changed, even though lately, conscious efforts have been made by the government to improve the situation.

The “continuities” are mostly to be found in the realm of social norms and “cultural ideologies”. These are, among others, that – statistically - cohabitation remains low at about seven percent, the out-of-wedlock birthrate remains low at about two percent, and that most women still quit work upon childbirth (Retherford et.al 2001: 82-83). Furthermore:
• The tax policy continues to provide a strong incentive for a housewife to work only part time and be financially dependent on husband.
• It remains difficult to enter career track employment after age 35. That means if one does not want to give up on a career, then a woman has to maintain her job through most of the period of raising her children.
• Gender inequality persists (Nemoto 2008) and has even worsened in international comparison recently, based on numbers from *The Global Gender Gap Report 2007* down from 80th place to 91st place.
• Fathers’ utilization of the Childcare Leave Law has remained extremely low (1996 = 0.16%, 2009 = 1.23%), which contributes to the highly asymmetric division of domestic labor, the often necessary career interruptions for the wife and mother and thus their continued economic dependence on the husband.
• Persistent societal belief in the importance of intensive mothering for infants, yet more so in men than in women.

**Motivations to marry**

Whereas the body of literature analyzing the causes of the decline and delay of marriages is impressive, and particularly women’s growing inhibitions to getting married, there is much less literature concerned with trying to explain why then people still **want** and **do** get married nonetheless in large numbers. Thus the topic of motivations to marry is understudied in comparison. Yet Rosenberger (2001) is one who researched motivations and who points to the generational shift in motivations. She presents, for example, the case of a woman who married during WWII and who reported that she had an arranged, *omiai* marriage via a marriage proposal that came to her parents. Her motivation to marry was not developed, yet nonetheless she agreed as he was a “good match” and rich. Another, slightly younger woman reported not having any motivation for marriage, because she did not want an *omiai*, having heard too many complaints about her father from her mother and therefore had developed a distrust of marriage in general. Women in their 30s in the 1990s are shown
as not having a motivation to marry, because of the desire for more freedom to expand their selves and to find more independence. On the other hand, women in their 20s in the 1990s reported a very general, unspecified desire for marriage. Rosenberger describes a young woman stating that she wanted marriage and children for the purpose of not being lonely in old age. This clashes however with a graduate student Rosenberger interviewed, who voiced no motivation for marriage as she prefers work over children. Thus a shift from unspecified motivations for marriage and marriage out of convention to marriages by choice, a greater diversity in motivations as well as refusal of marriage can be identified in the interviewees. Rosenberger (2001: 238) sees this in concurrence with an increasing search for self-identity among Japanese women over time.

The marital stage: The private side of marital happiness and unhappiness

In regards to the marital stage, with a particular focus on aspects of happiness and unhappiness in marriage, what does the literature tell about what is going on inside marriages - other than stating the obvious fact that statistically an increase in divorce can be measured? Allison (1994) and Nemoto (2008) argue that there is reportedly no change in the fact that a man’s sexual fidelity has not been a big part of marriages in Japan. Yet changes in marital fertility are observed, namely that the rate of married women remaining childless has increased since the 1980s and 1990s, but is still very low if compared internationally (Nagase 2006), and that there is an increase in the interval between marriage and first births in recent years.

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29 For a detailed historical account of divorce in Japan, see Fuess (2004).
Yet overall for the analysis of what constitutes happiness and unhappiness or discord in Japanese marriages, it should be noted that the literature specifically focusing on these aspects is limited. Most valuable in that respect are ethnographic studies, since aspects of marital happiness and unhappiness strike the core of the private lives of people and are otherwise more difficult to explore.

In general it can be said that early work such as that by Dore (1958), who studied people in a ward in Tokyo in 1951, focused on the diversity and heterogeneity among the population, and in particular how social class factors into motivations for marriage, happiness, as well as unhappiness. He also points to social changes, yet, in contrast to later scholars who see the immediate postwar period as having brought about the most significant changes for Japanese families and marriages, Dore sees the changes between the 1920s and 1930s as of utmost importance in regards to changes in partner relationships in Japan.

But whereas Dore (1958) has explicitly pointed to the heterogeneity of the population of Tokyo he had researched in 1951, Vogel (1963) just a few years later entitles his book *Japan’s New Middle Class. The Salary man and His Family in a Tokyo Suburb*, and focuses on a specific, rather homogeneous group of people. In addition, he sees their lives in a rather positivistic light and does not see serious conflict between the demands of family versus company. Even though Vogel does acknowledge frustrations of new middle class wives, mostly loneliness and jealousy, they are supposedly nonetheless soothed by the husband’s sufficient financial and materialistic provision for the family. Vogel describes
them as comparatively happy compared to “old middle class wives” whom he reports to be unhappy due to their hard work schedules.

Whereas Dore (1958) and Vogel (1963) focus on urban Japan, Hendry (1981) and Bernstein (1983) conducted their research in rural Japan. Hendry did her ethnographic fieldwork in 1975 to 1976 on the island of Kyūshū, whereas Bernstein conducted hers in the years 1974-1975 in Ehime prefecture on Shikoku, and focuses on the life of one agricultural woman, Haruko, born in 1932. This book is unique in providing deep insights into Haruko’s life. Haruko experienced significantly more marital discord than happiness, such as instances of domestic violence, household chore disputes, and her husband’s alcohol consumption. But it is important to note that the marriage, and feelings of marital happiness and unhappiness along with it, underwent many changes over time. So ideally it is important to understand a marriage not just at one point in time, but to understand changes over the life course.

Umberson et. al. (2005), who analyze and promote a life course perspective on marital quality, argue exactly for that. They write:

Marital relationships, like individuals, follow a developmental trajectory over time with ups and downs and gains and losses. We work from a life course perspective and use growth curve analysis to look at trajectories of change in marital quality over time. Although the tendency is for marital quality to decline over time, some groups begin with much higher levels of marital quality than others. Moreover, a number of life course and contextual factors can accelerate or slow this path of change.

So just like everything else in life, also marital relationships and the level of satisfaction in marriage change over time. Happy marriages can turn sour, and unhappy marriages can improve. Nagai (2005: 7) is one of the researchers who have analyzed the longitudinal
changes in marital satisfaction of wives, not using ethnographic research but rather survey data. She writes: “[…] satisfaction with the marital relationship starts decreasing during the first six years of marriage.” She continues:

The amount of time the husband spends at work on a weekday is one of the factors that lower a wife’s degree of satisfaction with a marital relationship up until the sixth year of marriage, with a long time spent at work by the husband lowering the wife’s satisfaction with the marriage. However, from the seventh to the eleventh year of marriage the amount of time a husband spends doing housework and with the kids on days off appears as a factor in marital satisfaction, with a short time spent by the husband on such activities lowering the wife’s degree of satisfaction in the marital relationship. After the twelfth year there are no major factors other than socioeconomic variables. (Nagai 2005: 7)

These “stages” in levels of marital satisfaction should be kept in mind in the discussion on sources of marital discord below. In particular, Nagai (2005) focuses on “husband’s long hours at work”, “husband’s lack of involvement in housework and childcare”, and “socioeconomic variables”.

So we know recently married couples, and couples where the husband is spending time with housework and the kids, aid in the marital satisfaction for wives (Nagai 2005: 7). What we further know is that women’s desire to remain in the workforce, even after marriage and childbirth, has increased over the years. This should then potentially translate into an increase in the number of articles that discuss female employment as adding to a wife’s marital happiness. Yet Lee and Ono (2008), in their U.S.-Japan comparison on marital happiness rather find support for what they call the “specialization model”. They have found in their research that married women in Japan are happier if they are specialized in the household and when they have a higher household income.
In addition, Williams (2006) discusses the constitutional right of all Japanese for their pursuit of happiness from a legal standpoint, and focuses mainly on two restrictions for the pursuit of happiness for women. One is the issue of surnames in marriage. He sees women not being able to keep their maiden name in marriage as symbolizing the oppression of women and thus a “restriction on her pursuit of happiness in the family arena […]” (Williams 2006: 79). The other impediment is the financial aspect of a divorce settlement. Williams writes: “[T]he distribution of matrimonial property on divorce (and death) [is] an issue which goes to the very heart of the woman’s economic survival in the aftermath of divorce (and the death of the husband)” (Williams 2006: 79-80) and thus can greatly influence her pursuit of happiness.

The categories influencing women’s marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction named above can also be found in the women’s magazine discourse. Here are furthermore named many additional elements that also weigh into a woman’s judgment if she considers herself to be happy or unhappy in a marriage, showing once more the diversity of sources of marital discord and their presence within the media discourse.

A few other works for the context of Japan have not looked at marriage from a life course perspective but rather from a generational change perspective, such as Lebra (1984), Rosenberger (2001), and White (2002). The most recent studies in regards to Japanese marriages are those of Alexy (2008) and the monograph by Tokuhiro (2010) on Marriage in Contemporary Japan. Since the study on marriage in Japan by Hendry from the year 1981, an update was definitely needed. And even though Tokuhiro’s study is insightful and summarizes all the important statistical facts surrounding marriages in Japan, in addition to
having conducted interviews with single thirtysomethings in the larger Tokyo area, once again this is a book mostly focusing on the pre-marital stage, namely motivations for or against marriage, lacking once again an analysis of what is going on within Japanese marriages, how married people describe what brings them happiness and what produces discord. Alexy’s ethnographic study however, is exactly filling that gap. By conducting participant observation and extensive interviews with people in divorce self-help groups and elsewhere, she aims to answer the question how marriage is experienced and what it means in the Japanese cultural context. Besides offering a “typification of divorce”, based on when a divorce happens within a marriage (before couples have children, while children are young, after children are grown and out of the house), Alexy focuses in particular on how people tell their divorce stories. In what she calls “retrospective reimagining”, she identifies the two most common imaginings as a) the relationship was messed up from the start, and b) the relationship was good, but at some point turned bad. Alexy points out that talking about divorce (and for that matter, talking about anything related to the inner workings of a marriage) should be seen as a kind of performance, in which some parts get idealized, and that in their narratives, people emphasize or diminish reasons for divorce. As this is done even within “normal conversation”, the same of course is to be expected and kept in mind when looking at the women’s magazine discourses below.

The added value of women’s magazine discourse analysis

To recap, the academic literature on marriage and social change in Japan tells us overall that particularly the younger generation of Japanese women has changed, partially due to
declining social pressures from parents or surrounding society to get married at a certain age. Also the ideal of romantic love and love marriages has been firmly established, and women now in growing numbers supposedly want it “all” (marriage, children, and employment), for the realization of which they desire, among other things, more cooperative husbands. Academic analyses clearly find Japanese women to have advanced from “a half step behind” (Condon 1991), yet at the same time also recognize that full equality between men and women has not been achieved even at the beginning of the 21st century in Japan.

The reasons for many of these progressive changes in regards to Japanese women can be partially seen in the establishment of formal women’s rights. And the explanations provided by the literature about what changes have occurred in regards to Japanese marriages are partially social structural and partially point to shifts in cultural norms, values, and attitudes. Yet when articles point to shifts in values, attitudes, and norms over time, they often fail to explain how these changes came about. Tsuya et. al. (2004) note that attitudes and behavior are closely linked, yet the exact relationship is not established yet. So the question lingers what really has changed women’s consciousness to make these changes happen and how did it get triggered in the first place?

Authors have raised the point that women have been actively and passively influenced by their mother’s generation. On the one hand because they grew up very often seeing them unhappy in their marriages and lives, and on the other hand getting actively motivated by

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30 Even though on paper, equality has been established, in practice, particularly in the workplace, Japanese women are still far from treated equal, such as equal pay or equal promotional ladders and opportunities if not willing to forego marriage and children altogether.
their mothers to choose a different life and marriage as a result of mothers’ desire for their
daughters to have a better and happier life than their own lot. If that is correct, what is it
then that made the mothers change?

I suggest and will argue in the following chapters that the changes in marriage and
the family have their roots much earlier than statistical data could have shown. As
mentioned in the introduction, in terms of methodology and data, the academic literature
shows an apparent absence of media analysis on that topic. Yet I believe that looking at
women’s magazines is a very valuable undertaking in that regard. As my analysis has
shown and I will present in the following, many of the ‘new trends’, cohabitation, divorce,
women desiring to combine career and children, can be detected in women’s magazines
much earlier than in the statistical data.

Furthermore, we know that media in Japan are consumed in internationally
comparatively high levels in Japan. I have argued elsewhere that women’s magazines in
Japan are much more respected and thought of – and read – as sources of ‘real’ information
and community building (Holthus 2009) than US magazines. Resulting from early feminist
thinking, women’s magazines were blamed for stupefying their readership, never changing
messages, and conveying highly conservative messages. Academic knowledge by now has
developed and mass media, of which women’s magazines are an important part – is coming
to be understood as an important agent of socialization – by now even overtaking the role
of parents and institutions such as schools in importance. As mass media discourses can be
analyzed for several generations of women, possible changes in opinions on marriage can
be traced through a longitudinal analysis of the material - a gap in the literature which the following chapters aim to fill.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Comparative research on U.S. women’s magazines

Two unpublished sociological dissertations, which analyze U.S. women’s magazines, help to structure my methodology in this dissertation and at the same time allow for a limited degree of cross-cultural comparison. Alexander, for example “compares the messages concerning love and marriage directed to men in male-oriented magazines and those directed to women in female-oriented magazines” (1989:ii), by conducting a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of a total of 212 articles from two men’s and two women’s magazines for a twenty-year time period from 1966 to 1988. By Alexander having chosen the year 1966 and myself the year 1970 as starting point for analysis, we chose a time at which in the respective countries (U.S. and Japan) the women’s movement gained in popularity and started to have social impact.

With her coding instrument, Alexander lays emphasis on measuring the following aspects:

1) Motivations for entering into the marital relationship
2) Marital role prescriptions for husbands and wives and marital power relationships
3) Sources of happiness and discord in marriage
4) Recommended and criticized values and attitudes in regard to: premarital cohabitation, premarital and extramarital sex, divorce, and women’s employment outside the house
5) Criticized and recommended behavior of men and women

In her research, Alexander (1989) does not find longitudinal changes in the magazine discourses. She concludes that magazine discourses are much more conservative and portray more traditional views than the actual situation of family patterns in the U.S. (Alexander 1989: 233). She writes: “The present research has shown that there is also a definite cultural lag in magazine nonfiction in regard to values and behaviors when
compared to the actuality of the real world” (Alexander 1989: 231). So, if one wants to use the analogy, women’s magazine discourses in the U.S. are a “half step behind” ‘the real world’.

For my research on Japan, I replicate Alexander’s study to an extent, by using part of the coding scheme she developed. This will allow a certain degree of cross-cultural comparison of marriage discourses in female-oriented magazines in the U.S. and in Japan. However, I hypothesize that the outcome of my research contradicts Alexander’s results, that there are many longitudinal changes in the Japanese women’s magazine discourses, that the discourses are “ahead of their time”, and that “social reality” in Japan is more conservative than the discourses in the women’s magazines.

Even though Alexander understands the age of the target group as an important determining factor in the selection process of the analyzed women’s magazines, she finds that her two selected women’s magazines, Ladies Home Journal and Mademoiselle “disseminate similar messages despite the fact that these magazines are targeted to different female readerships. ... Only in the area of recommending or criticizing certain standards of conduct is there a discernible difference in the prescriptions and proscriptions transmitted to the different readerships” (Alexander 1989: 131).

Similar messages in these two U.S. women’s magazines can also be found in regards to the sources of marital and non-marital happiness and discord. Both magazines, throughout the twenty year time period of analysis, see “love, understanding, companionship, fidelity, commitment, an active satisfying sexual union, and above all good communication” (Alexander 1989: 133; see also 233) as sources of happiness, whereas
“lack of communication and love, infidelity, boredom, sexual problems, competition between spouses, and role strain resulting from the blurring of gender definitions and the two-career household” (Alexander 1989: 134) are identified as sources of discord in a relationship and marriage.

Furthermore, both magazines “recommend love, romance, and marriage” (Alexander 1989: 135; see also 221), believe romantic aspects to be the main reason for marriage, and see “women’s true accomplishment and fulfillment” in having a “loving husband and family” (Alexander 1989: 210). On the other hand, the magazines differ in their opinion on premarital sex, which is criticized by the magazine Ladies Home Journal but seen as a common occurrence, “the norm” (Alexander 1989: 135), in Mademoiselle. The stance of Ladies Home Journal in terms of divorce is also critical, whereas Mademoiselle “endorses it as a way to relieve misery” (Alexander 1989: 135). Yet the magazines concur on their negative judgment of extramarital sexuality.

In her dissertation entitled The Representation of Family Change in Social Science Journals and Women’s Magazines, Stanger (1986) also conducted a content analysis of U.S. women’s magazines (Ladies Home Journal, Redbook, Good Housekeeping), but here in comparison to social science journals (American Sociological Review, Journal of Marriage and the Family). The time-frame of Stanger’s analysis covers a forty year period from 1935 to 1975. She “investigates when, how, and to what extent changes in the American family structure are presented in two print media” (Stanger 1986: 1), particularly in regards to divorce rate, age at marriage, female employment rate, and public awareness
of negative behaviors in the family (domestic violence, etc.), all of which significantly changed over the chosen time-frame of her study (Stanger 1986: 6). The author therefore states her leading research question as

[t]he relationship between changes in the family structure as measured by demographic data and the content of nonfiction articles of women’s magazines and social science journals is the specific focus. If change occurs in one structural aspect (as measured by demographic data) does the content of women’s magazines and journals reflect the current trends or will there be a lag with older, often idealized, patterns portrayed for some time? (Stanger 1986: 21).

This comparison of the content of women’s magazines with social science magazines is a method which Stanger identifies as a significant gap in academic discourse. She identified a number of demographic indicators, seeing their changes as documenting the timing and extensiveness of family changes (Stanger 1986: 28-29). These demographic indicators are: age at first marriage, the marriage rate, duration of marriage, fertility rates, child spacing, incidence of divorce, and female employment rates. Stanger chose one year each in ten year intervals of the women’s magazines, resulting in the analysis of five years (1935, 1945, 1955, 1965, and 1975) with a total of 224 women’s magazine articles. Her selection of articles among the social science journals differs slightly, where she ends up with a total of 227 articles.

By comparing her select demographic indicators of family structure change with the contents of the articles in women’s magazines as well as social science journals, Stanger found that “generally the print media did not reflect changes as they were occurring in the society” (Stanger 1986: 104). Thus Stanger’s main conclusion is that “neither medium [women’s magazines and social science journals] played an innovative or creative
role in shaping public perception of trends. Both the selected magazines and journals appeared to be serving roles as maintainers of widely shared views of the nature of the family [..]” (Stanger 1986: 101).

Stanger tries to explain her findings in the following way:

The presentation of the family is not representative of changes within the society, but of norms or values, what writers and editors believe should exist. […] Shifts in the content of articles are an indicator of the audiences’ or the writers’ interests at a particular time. While possible explanations may be offered for the presence of numerous articles upon a topic, e.g. changing conditions in society, they also should be offered for what is omitted from the publications. The omission of some themes may be a result of reluctance to provide recognition or legitimation to a situation in the society and in the case of “negative” trends a desire to provide readers with more positive information (Stanger 1986: 103).

Methodologically also Stanger’s work proves important to me, because

1) of her coding scheme, as she chose the topic of demographic changes in regards to the family.

2) she compares academic discourse with women’s magazine discourse. However, Stanger uses the same codes for academic journals and women’s magazines, a procedure I do not follow. I code the women’s magazines’ discourse, but then only compare these results qualitatively with the academic discourse on marriage in Japan (in books or academic journals).

In summary, both dissertations by Alexander and Stanger provide methodological frameworks, which, added together, help to serve as templates for my own research on Japanese women’s magazines. Yet both dissertations lack in certain ways, such as the fact that they deal with rather small numbers of articles (around 200 articles each), or that Stanger only coded the “main theme” of each article, but didn’t go into a more detailed
quantitative or qualitative analysis of the articles. Thus their results are quite limited. I counter these flaws by analyzing a larger quantity of articles, as well as by coding them in more detail and by providing a more detailed qualitative analysis.

3.2. Content Analysis

As stated above, I have conducted a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. It is longitudinal research as well as a cohort-analysis. The material dates from 1970 to 1999, thus covers a thirty year period. As mentioned above, the year 1970 is the starting point of the analysis, because it coincides with the beginning of the second wave of the women’s movement in Japan and it also was an important year for the women’s magazine market (Holthus 2009). It is during these years that we can also observe the biggest shifts in marriage pattern.31

I chose four women’s magazines, in five-year intervals, thus a total of seven years of data, from a total of 550 magazine issues. The magazines are chosen for their widespread popularity (nationwide and high circulation), the fact that they cover different age-target groups, and that they have a long publication history. The four magazines have however one important element in common, which is their focus on middle class women, which limits their diversity in content to a certain degree. But there are no women’s magazines with high circulation numbers and a nationwide distribution, which are solely focused on lower class women. Three of the four selected women’s magazines also have in

31 Of course it would be good for future analyses to also look at the subsequent years during the beginning of the 21st century. However, the changes related to marriage are not significant since 1999; they just have continued to increase. I believe the reasons have stayed the same, and only just progressed in the same direction.
common that they were, in the beginning of their publication histories, published in 
cooperation with foreign publishers that already had established women’s magazines 
exthere. Yet each of the three magazines became “independent” after a few years out on 
the Japanese market, by cutting ties with their European or U.S. cooperation partner. And, 
as will be shown later, it is that early Western influence, which also greatly impacted the 
magazines’ stance on marriage – with a very liberal stance during the cooperation, followed 
by a subsequent decline once the cooperation had ended.

The four magazines selected for this study are *An an*, *More*, *Croissant*, and *Fujin 
kōron*. *An an* was founded in March 1970, by the publisher Heibonsha (today Magazine 
House). Originally, from 1970 to 1981, the magazine was published biweekly, but since 
then changed to a weekly rhythm. *An an* was considered “revolutionary” and influential on 
the entire women’s magazine market when it was founded, as it had a much larger format 
than pre-existing magazines, a higher percentage of photos, and focused mostly on fashion 
(Ishizawa, April 17, 1991). The majority of readers (56 percent) of *An An* are women ages 
21 to 25 years old, followed by 34 percent of the readers being between the age of 16 to 20 
(Zasshi nichiroku kankōkai 1996: 150), and thus it is no surprise that overall the majority of 
articles deals with non- or pre-marital relationships, and less so with marital relationships.

In the beginning of its magazine-history, *An an* was published in cooperation with 
the French women’s magazine *Elle*, and featured the subtitle *Elle Japon* for several years 
(Inoue 1989: 20). During that time, the European focus of *An an* was clearly visible. Many 
articles were mere translations from *Elle* (Holthus 2009). The publisher characterizes *An an* 
as follows:
*An an* is Japan’s most exciting, influential and respected fashion magazine for young women. Each week more than half a million women in their early twenties turn to *An an* for advice on fashion, hair, dieting, love, sex, money, travel and more. *An an*’s reputation for high quality editorial, photography and concepts has made it one of the most popular magazines in Japan (http://www.magazine.co.jp/english/anah.html).

The women’s magazine *More* was founded in 1977, and is published monthly by Shūeisha. In its first three years, *More* was published in cooperation with the American women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan* (Shiozawa 2000: 160). The reason for Shūeisha to cooperate with an established U.S. women’s magazine was to promote a “new lifestyle for women”, and at the time saw the U.S. as the most progressive country for women (Yamada 1982: 75). The magazine *More* became well known through the publication of its so-called “More Sex Report”, which was first published in 1980. Modeled after the Hite-report, *More* conducted a survey among close to 6000 of its readers, and has since been repeating large scale surveys on sexuality-related topics. 32 Even though the survey cannot be considered representative, it was perceived by the public as such. The target group of *More* are women in their twenties, with 41.7 percent between 21 and 25 years of age, and 32.2 percent between 26 and 30 years of age (Zasshi nichiroku kankōkai 1996: 159).

*Croissant* was also founded in the year 1977, by today’s Magazine House publishing, and also cooperated with an international women’s magazine. In this case it was the French *Elle parents* (Okatome 1990: 251, Inoue 1989: 20). *Croissant* tried to evoke worldliness, an international focus and a new Western lifestyle, expressed through its title and the fact that several articles were mere translations from *Elle parents*. The magazine

32 See the detailed report on the twenty-year history of the “More Sex Report” (Ogata 2001).
began with a monthly publication rhythm, which changed to a biweekly schedule in 1978. The official target group is women age 32 to 45 years. Women in their 30s and 40s make up 39.1 percent of its actual readers, women in their 50s still make up 21.5 percent of its readership, and women in their 60s 14.5 percent (Dentsū 1994: 302).

*Croissant* in its first years of existence had a very progressive outlook and soon began to question marriage in itself, and thus was categorized by Inoue (1989: 39) as a “feminist women’s magazine”. Yet by the mid-1980s the magazine changed its focus to target married housewives. This went hand in hand with an aging of the overall target group.33

*Fujin kōron* is the longest-running of the four selected magazines, founded already in January 1916 by Chūō kōronsha. Whereas *Fujin kōron* can be categorized as a so-called *yomu zasshi*, a magazine to be read, featuring a high percentage of essays by readers and famous people, *An an, More*, and *Croissant* can all be categorized as *miru zasshi*, magazines to be looked at, with a much stronger focus on visual aspects of the magazines.

From its start, *Fujin kōron* declared itself a supporter of the women’s movement (Yamazaki 1959: 175-176). Since 1955, the magazine tried to attract more and new readership, mostly women from the middle class, and between 1955 and 1976 featured what was to become known as the “housewife debate” (*shufu ronsō*) (see Bardsley 1999, Ueno 1982, Katzoff 1998). Since the 1960s the magazine’s thematic focus lies in sexuality and partner relationships. As late as 1998, as the magazine renewed many of its outward features in order to standardize with other women’s magazines (larger scale format, more

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33 See also Matsubara 1988 and 1998 for a discussion of these drastic changes in *Croissant*. 
illustrations, more glossy color pages, a modern layout), increased its publication interval to biweekly rather than monthly, and tried to attract a younger audience, women in their 30s. Yet by 2010, the focus again seems to have shifted toward the older segment of readers, women in their 40s and up.

Overall the four magazines show a decrease in visuality with the increase in the age of the target group, meaning An an is the most visually oriented magazine, whereas Fujin kōron is the most text-oriented magazine, even after its “renewal” of 1999. An important difference between the four women’s magazines, which does have an influence on the analysis and most likely also on the effect it has on the readers, is the type of text and the length of article each of the magazines features. In the case of An an, articles on average are either two or four pages long and thus are the shortest among the four magazines. An an integrates short personal reports and experiences by readers within an article. In More, on the other hand, articles are on average longer than in An an, averaging 10 pages. More usually uses a mix of different text types within one article, such as personal accounts by readers, in addition to a commentary by a “specialist” on the topic, and the results of a survey More conducted. In Croissant, then, there is no clear trend or tendency towards one particular type of text type. Mostly the articles are third person accounts, yet, with personal accounts from readers included within. In Fujin kōron, finally, the majority of articles are quite long and are essays, written either by private persons or well-known people, such as authors or actresses.
3.2.1. Voices

The articles in this analysis range from giving voice to women and men of all marital stages, single, married, divorced, and engaged. Female voices and opinions are in the majority, but some articles do feature men and their desires, opinions or experiences about marriage.

Furthermore there is a significant age range of the voices within the magazines, much more diverse than their rather tightly identified target group ages. So for example in An an, targeting women ages approximately 18 to 24, the women in the articles are on average older and show significant diversity. In the selected articles on the topic of marriage, women range between ages 21 and 35, with the average around age 26. The men are on average a bit older, most of them are around age 30 and slightly above. The range of ages in More is overall older and equally as broad ranging as in An an. For example in 1995, in articles where the ages or year of birth are mentioned, women are born between 1955 and 1974, so ages 21 to 40, with the majority of them however in their late 20s and early 30s.

So the female audience of the women’s magazines might be reading the marriage experiences or opinions of women or men of a different generation. If and how this is noticed or taken into consideration by the readers cannot be determined. It is in part the diversity in ages of the women in the magazine discourses that contributes to the diversity of opinions and experiences on marriage. And it further complicates the picture for this whole study, as we not only deal with magazines targeting different ages of women over a
thirty year stretch, but at the same time with marriage experiences and opinions voiced by
different generations of women, even within one publication with a stable target group age.

3.3. The dataset

The dataset of articles for analysis was chosen to obtain a representative sample of articles
on the topic of marriage over the course of three decades. In my earlier German
dissertation, I chose to analyze women’s magazine discourses on partner relationships from
a humanities and cultural studies perspective (Holthus 2009). For that study, I analyzed
discourses on love, sexuality, marriage, and men very broadly, focusing on discourses of
ethnic and sexual alterity as well as the role of celebrities in these discourses. The dataset
for that analysis consisted of a total of 1694 articles.

Due to the magnitude of data, I first made the choice to analyze only articles in five
year intervals over the course of the thirty years. Thus I chose material only from the years
intervals, as described above, result in an uneven number of issues across magazines, which
entered the analysis for this project. The total number of issues published in the select
seven years is listed in table 1.

Table 3: Total number of women’s magazine issues published per year

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<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croissant</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujin kōron</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The first years of An an are only partially available in libraries. Issues two to 43 were not accessible for
coding. Thus for this year of analysis, I only could get access to the very first issue.
Not only are the issues unevenly distributed, so are also the relevant articles very unevenly distributed among the issues, mostly due to the existence of so-called *tokushū*, special topics for an issue (of particular interest in the magazines *An an* and *Fujin kōron*). Whenever an issue features a *tokushū* focusing on partnerships or marriage, numerous articles from one single issue entered the dataset.

To reduce the data further to a manageable size, the dataset was selected only from articles of the years 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, and 1999, which were also listed on the cover-pages of the four magazines. As Japan has very low subscription rates compared to the U.S. magazine market, every issue has to attract readers to purchase the magazine. One way to do so is to list catchy article titles on the cover pages. Thus each article is given a certain prominence by the sheer fact of having been chosen to appear on the cover of that particular magazine issue.

A further criterion for an article to be selected into the dataset was for the article to feature one of a list of designated partnership-related “code words” (that I created in pre-tests) in the title of the article, for example on the topics of marriage, divorce, but also on love (e.g. *ren’ai, koi, rabu, love*), men (*otoko, dansei, otto, shujin, kareshi, boifurendo, kare*), and sexuality (*sex, H o suru, sekkusu o suru, beddo no naka ni*). This resulted in a total of 1694 articles for my earlier dissertation (Holthus 2009).

For this sociology dissertation, I selected from the larger dataset only articles with their main focus on the topic of marriage, in order to conduct a more systematic content analysis of how marriage was presented in the magazines. This reduced the dataset down to
1073 articles. These showed, however, a significant unevenness in the distribution of articles over time and between magazines. Particularly the magazine *Fujin kōron* was highly overrepresented in respect to the other three women’s magazines. This led me to reduce the quantity of articles of *Fujin kōron* further, by first choosing only every other month in the respective years (February, April, June, August, October, December), and second choosing only every other article from that reduced set. It is through these procedures that I eventually ended up with a total of 324 articles which could be coded. Please see table 4 for the final data distribution. Thus these analyzed articles are the ones given significance by the publishers by being listed on the cover page in addition to this being a systematic enough selection of material, so that the final dataset can be considered a representative sample.

Table 4: Distribution of analyzed articles on marriage by magazine and year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>An an</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>More</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Croissant</em></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fujin kōron</em></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see above, for the 1970s, I have only material from *Fujin kōron*, the women’s magazine data for the oldest cohort of women. I then pick up the younger cohorts from the 1980s onwards, as that is when the other three magazines kick in. Interestingly, even though *An An* was searched for one issue in 1970 and all of its issues in 1975 and

---

34 Reducing the data for *Fujin kōron* in that way still maintains the actual distribution of the data to be systematic, so that this rational decision still preserves the overall integrity of the data.
1980, only as late as 1985 relevant articles appeared. This is on the one hand due to the different focus of the magazine in its early years which was almost exclusively on fashion, and on the other hand due to its particular age demographic, for whom the focus lies much more on non-marital relationships rather than marital relationships.35

As can be seen in table 4, the number of articles on marital relationships in the dataset more than tripled for *Fujin kōron* between 1970 and 1985. Thereafter a significant drop occurs, with only slightly more articles in 1999 than in 1970. A similar development can be identified in regards to the discourse in *An an*. The articles on marital relationships increase from a low of five articles in 1985 to 35 in the year 1990, also followed by a significant drop for the last two years of the dataset, 1995 and 1999. Also *More* displays a parallel development, yet with its peak in quantity of articles later than *Fujin kōron* and *An an*, namely in 1995. However, the quantitative development in *Croissant* is significantly different. Here, the already small number of relevant articles (16) in its first year in the dataset, 1980, decreases further over the years, ending up with none in 1995 and just one article in 1999.

3.4. **Research questions**

In the following chapters, the analysis of the marriage discourse will be conducted by correlating them to demographic, “generational” cohorts by looking at the discourses in the

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35 For more limitations of this particular dataset and the coding procedures, see chapter 3.6.
women’s magazines, geared to their particular age group, longitudinally. Thus the following questions can be answered:

- What are the reasons for entering a marriage for separate birth-cohorts?
- What constitutes a happy or unhappy marriage for separate birth-cohorts? How have the constructions of happiness changed over time?
- Do the findings show consistent messages over time for the birth cohorts, or are the messages and values that are transmitted by the women’s magazines rather shaped by what magazine it is?
- What attitudes and behavioral values are displayed in the marriage discourses in women’s magazines that could provide an explanation to the normative and attitudinal changes measured by the academic literature?

3.5. Coding: Motivations, discords, happiness

I had originally wanted my methodology to follow very closely the dissertations that analyze U.S. women’s magazines on similar topics, but their coding turned out to be too simplified and needed to be adjusted to the discourses I found in the Japanese women’s magazines. Alexander (1989) for example coded most articles only as pro or con in regards to certain issues. And neither of the authors coded qualitatively, which further oversimplifies the data.

Therefore I eventually decided to focus on and code for the three issues ‘motivations for marriage’, ‘sources of discord’, and ‘happiness through marriage’. I initially used the coding categories by Alexander (1989) (see table 5, left side, below). After working with the Japanese women’s magazine data and conducting pre-tests, I adjusted the coding categories where needed. I left some categories out or put some together, and I expanded the categories wherever my Japanese women’s magazine data
deemed this necessary, as the categories by Alexander quickly became too limiting for the diversity of the ongoing discourse. Furthermore, in case a male or female voice in an article specifically notes that s/he has no motivation to marry, I created the category “No motivation”. For the final coding categories see table 5 (right side).
### Table 5: Coding categories in comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding categories (Alexander 1989)</th>
<th>My coding categories</th>
<th>Motivations for marriage</th>
<th>Indicators for happiness</th>
<th>Sources of marital happiness</th>
<th>Sources of marital discord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Motivations for marriage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Happiness due to enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dekichatta-kon (marriage due to pre-marital pregnancy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Happiness due to romantic love</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Family and children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wealth</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Happiness and love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Miai (arranged marriage)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• No motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outside factors</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Outside factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Security (financial, psychological, status, unspecified)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tekireiki (the appropriate age to marry)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unspecified (marriage seen as goal in itself or as ‘ideal’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators for happiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sources of marital happiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sexuality</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Extramarital affair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Love</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Good partner relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intimacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Security</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Security (financial, psychological)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial security</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Status</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sources of marital discord</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bad relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not having to work</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Divorce (or separation or death of partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial security</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Independence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Infidelity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not having to work</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Negative change of the relationship or partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Problems with parents or in-laws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources of discord</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sources of marital discord</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In-laws</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Infidelity (extramarital affairs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non or bad communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Husband’s lack of time for family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wife’s employment outside the home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Household chore set-up among partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sexuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to coding the three main issues, I also coded each article for the information on the “voices” in each article, namely number of voices, age(s), gender(s), and marital status(es). I did not, however, link each issue for example to the specific person voicing it. The unit of analysis is the article, not each person getting a voice in the magazine.36 Reasons are that the data is so diverse and the information given per “voice” differs significantly. Whereas particularly Fujin kōron is a magazine that usually only features one person and his or her opinions in an article, it is not uncommon for An an and More to feature numerous women and their opinions in one single article. They also regularly feature their own survey results with often more than 100 participants. Thus the decision was made that the information on “voice” is not coded individually for each statement on each of the issues of motivation, discord, and happiness, but is rather extensively drawn upon for the qualitative analysis.

I coded for each mentioning of a different motivation, discord or element of happiness in regards to marriage, but only once per article. For example, if domestic violence was mentioned as reason for discord in a marriage more than once, it was only coded once, even if more than one voice per article reported on differing experiences of domestic violence in the article. In Chapters 4 to 7 I will present the main trends of these discourses in the women’s magazine articles.

36 Of course it would be ideal to list all persons, who are given a “voice”, and code for their occupation, location of residence, etc., wherever that information is available. In terms of social stratification, this would be very interesting, as it could tell something about the social standing of the readership that writes letters to the editor of the respective women’s magazines or participate in the surveys of the magazines. Furthermore, one could attempt to find out how a certain social standing contributes or influences a certain view or value system on relationships, marriage, motherhood and female employment. But this is really not a feasible undertaking in the frame of this dissertation project, but could or should be focused upon more in future research on the subject and ideally by a researcher team rather than a single-person project.
3.6. Cohort analysis

In looking at the women’s magazine discourses geared at a particular age group over three decades, the need arises to compare these discourses with the “actual” people, living at a certain time, which could also be termed the “social reality”. However, the birth cohorts of the readers of the selected four women’s magazines can only be an approximation, as they are identified through the official target age of each of the women’s magazine, which is complicated by shifts in the ages of target groups over time among some of the magazines and by readers often reading up or down from their own age-group (Holthus 2009). To define generational cohorts, for convenience, I chose decades, such as “persons born between 1960 and 1969” for example. Thus, defining the readership of each of the four women’s magazines over time as birth cohorts results in the following:

---

37 For more on the academic discourse on the relationship between media and “reality”, see Holthus 2009.
Table 6: Hypothetical women’s magazine readership by birth cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s magazine</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Year and birth cohorts of target readership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An an</td>
<td><em>An an</em> targets in the majority women ages 20 to 25 years.</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>The target age of the women’s magazine <em>More</em> is 25 to 30 years of age.</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croissant</td>
<td>The target age of the women’s magazine <em>Croissant</em> was women in their 30s, until the target age of the readers shifted to women in their late 30s and 40s since the mid- to late 1980s. Thus, for convenience, the target readership age here is approximated to be women of age 35.</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujin kōron</td>
<td>The target age of the women’s magazine <em>Fujin kōron</em> was women in their 40s and up. Yet since its renewal in 1998, the magazine is trying to attract younger readers, namely women in their 30s.</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1985</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, to summarize, based on the time-period of 1970 to 1999, for which the women’s magazine articles were selected, I identified seven birth cohorts through broad approximation, such as that for 1970, *Fujin kōron* readers are the oldest cohort with an age around 40 in 1970, which means they are born around 1930. The youngest cohort in this sample is born around 1980. These are women around 19 years of age in 1999 and therefore the target group of *An an* in 1999. Thus this study analyzes the changes in
marriage discourses for women who are born in a fifty year range between 1930 and 1980.

The birth cohorts are as follows:

- **Women born in the 1930s**: Read hypothetically Fujin kōron in the 1970s
- **Women born in the 1940s**: Read hypothetically Fujin kōron in the 1980s
- **Women born in the 1950s**: Read hypothetically Croissant in the 1980s, and Fujin kōron in the 1990s
- **Women born in the 1960s**: Read hypothetically An an in the 1980s, More approximately between 1985 and 1995, Croissant in the early 1990s, and since 1999 Fujin kōron
- **Women born in the 1980s**: Read hypothetically An an in 1999

**Figure 13**: Women’s magazine readership by generational cohort
This then really covers three generations: Women born in the 1930s are the approximate mothers of women born in the 1960s, women born in the 1940s are the mothers of women born in the 1970s and women born in the 1950s are the mothers of women born in the 1980s. So how do the messages on marriage differ between mother–daughter generations?

3.7. Limitations to dataset and quantitative analysis

There are some limitations of the data set and the quantitative analysis, which should be kept in mind, some of which have already been mentioned. These are:

- The uneven distribution of issues among the different women’s magazines, and their usage of special topic issues resulted in an uneven distribution of articles that eventually entered the dataset for analysis.

- For the first decade, I managed only to have data from Fujin kōron, yet from none of the other analyzed women’s magazines.

- It is impossible to determine how the quantitative (as well as qualitative) shifts in content and marriage discourse could be a result of changes in magazine make-up and editorial policy, rather than actual changes of the messages that are to be transferred through the magazine content.

- The diversity of text-types and lengths of articles, from first-person accounts to surveys among thousands of people make the quantitative analysis, which as unit of analysis has an article, quite challenging. To illustrate, let me provide an example. As it stands now,
in a six page autobiographical account by one female reader in *Fujin kōron*, she talks at length about her divorce. She discusses her husband’s extramarital affair and instances of domestic violence. This article would be coded with three entries in the discord category: divorce, infidelity, and domestic violence. On the other hand, a survey article in *More* for example surveys over 3000 women, and asks them if they would divorce their husband or separate from their boyfriends if they would find out they have an extramarital affair. 73 percent answer ‘yes’. This would then be coded as two entries in regards to discords, namely ‘divorce’ and ‘infidelity’. Thus both article codings would be almost identical. Yet qualitatively, the information would be very different. Yet in the chosen database set-up it is impossible to quantitatively reflect this. But this is something that needs to be considered for the qualitative analysis. Thus this mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis is of utmost importance.

- The age of the official target group of each magazine does not necessarily reflect neither the ages of the voices within the magazines, because the ages of the voices within are much broader, nor the actual ages of the readers (which can be also much broader than the targeted group).³⁹

³⁹ See for example the description of a woman in her 50s, reading *An an*, who believed that she would better understand her daughter’s generation by reading a woman’s magazine geared to her daughter’s age group (see Holthus 2009).
3.8. Motivations for marriage\textsuperscript{40}

3.8.1. General overview

In the 324 articles, I coded a total of 422 motivation entries. Overall, the largest percentage of motivations for marriage was coded for the year 1990 with 34.8 percent (147 entries) – and during the decade of the 1990s with 53.3 percent of all motivations (225 entries).

Broken down by magazine, the majority of motivations can be found among the magazines targeting younger readers: I coded 182 motivations, so a total of 43.1%, in \textit{An an}, and 143 in \textit{More} (33.9%). \textit{An an} and \textit{More} together thus make up 76.9\% of all motivation entries. The “prime time” for discussing motivations for marriage is to be found both in \textit{An an} and \textit{More} in the 1990s (1990, 1995), with 27.7\% (117) of all 422 entries occurring in \textit{An an} in 1990-1995 and 19.2\% (81 entries) in the case of \textit{More} in 1990-1995.

\textbf{Figure 14: Motivations}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{motivations.png}
\end{center}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40}See Appendix 1 for the respective tables.
\end{flushleft}
Looking at the distribution for each magazine individually, this means that 64.3% of all motivations mentioned in An an are found in the 1990s (1990, 1995), and in More 56.6% of its total. In Croissant, however, it is the 1980s, which see the highest frequency with 20 of 21 motivations total (95.2%). In Fujin kōron, the distribution of motivations within the marriage discourse is rather equally distributed over the years, the percentage slightly rising throughout the 1970s to 1990s. Of all 76 mentioned motivations in Fujin kōron, 27.6% (21) appear in the 1970s, 30.3% (23) in the 1980s, and 34.2% (26) in the 1990s. For the year 1999 only six motivations (7.9%) were found.

Calculating the average number of entries per article in a year, in An an and More, the average number of entries per article ranges from 1.6 (for the case of More in the 1980s) to 5 (in An an in the 1980s). In Croissant and Fujin kōron, however, the average number of entries per article is much lower, never going above 1.

To summarize, motivations for marriage are predominantly a topic for younger readers. More than three quarters of all entries are to be found in An an and More combined, and there most frequently within the 1990s (1990, 1995). In the case of Croissant and Fujin kōron, magazines targeting comparatively older women, in their 30s and up, motivations for marriage are discussed much less.

### 3.8.2. Trends in motivation categories

Overall, the kinds of motivations mentioned in the four women’s magazines are very diverse. I identified 11 motivation categories, which however can be summarized into four
larger categories, below seen in the different shadings. Here the distribution of the categories (ordered by frequency):

**Table 7: Distribution of motivation categories overall**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation category</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness and love</td>
<td>101 (23.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and children</td>
<td>68 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No motivation</td>
<td>49 (11.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security (financial, psychological, status, unspecified)</td>
<td>49 (11.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified (marriage as ideal/goal)</td>
<td>49 (11.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside factors</td>
<td>21 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekireiki</td>
<td>17 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>13 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miiai</td>
<td>12 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dekichatta-kon</td>
<td>11 (2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>422 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As would be expected, emotional reasons (“romantic ideal”) for getting married are the most frequent overall and make up 40% of all mentioned motivations, with 101 (23.9%) of them mentioning happiness or love as motivation for marriage, and 68 (16.1%) mentioning having or desiring a family or children as motivation. Included here are also several statements, where people mention that they desire not to be alone, or who see marriage as a way out of or protection against loneliness. Interestingly, the next largest category is that of people having explicitly no motivation to marry (49; 11.6%). The same number of entries each are for the cases where people mention a desire for some form of ‘security’ through marriage, be it financial, psychological, status, or further unspecified; and for cases in which people have a rather vague desire to marry, understanding marriage in itself as goal or ideal, but not offering any further insights in the articles (see table 5 above). These two
motivations, together also with outside pressures, *tekireiki*, work, arranged marriage, or *dekichatta* can be categorized as so-called “rational choice motivations”. Outside pressures could be from parents wanting their child to getting married, or peers marrying and the woman feeling kind of left out or left over. In other cases where an arranged marriage is cited as step or motivation to marriage, sometimes it is explained why the women agree to have an arranged *miai* in the first place, such as in the case of a woman who is heart-broken over her lover marrying her girlfriend instead of herself (*Fujin kōron*, February 1990, #1).41 Others however report that it is a *miai* marriage that helps them to find someone, as they never had a boyfriend before and are inherently inexperienced in partner relationships. The agreement to marry through an arranged marriage is often connected with outside pressures, but in these particular articles are not in the forefront of the argument. The same can be said about *tekireiki* as motivation for marriage. The concern over the right age to marry might be self-inflicted or be a result from outside pressures, which is not always discernible from the women’s magazine articles analyzed. The category of “work” is similarly ambiguous, in that women sometimes mention that they would only want to marry if they can combine work and marriage (e.g. *An an*, October 19, 1990, #2) or some say they desire to quit work in order to have marriage function more as a sort of “escape” from the nuisance and exhaustion of outside work (e.g. *Croissant*, March 25, 1980, #3) – thus quite contrary voices indeed within one category alone. This shows that each coding category in itself shows significant diversity and will have to be analyzed in the qualitative part in the following chapters 4 through 7.

41 In order to identify articles in the women’s magazines I numbered them in order of appearance in this text. For the list of these articles, together with their title, please see References, Section 1 (“Primary sources”).
In regards to the longitudinal changes regarding marriage motivations over time, it is the 1990s that see the highest frequency in all categories except “no motivation”. To mention not to have a desire or motivation to marry is the most frequent in the 1980s, yet is not at all discussed in the 1970s. Dekichatta-kon and tekireiki are the other two motivations that are also not mentioned in the analyzed articles of Fujin kōron in the 1970s.

Looking at the changes over time broken down by magazine, the following can be observed: In An an, we have a total of 182 references; 64.3% of them during the 1990s. “Happiness and love” is the most frequent (40; 22%), followed by “family and children” (39; 21.4%). These are followed in equal numbers by a desire for security (be it financial, psychological, status, or otherwise unspecified) and by an unspecified desire for marriage, by seeing marriage as a goal in itself and marriage as ideal (both 25 times; 13.7%). To have no motivation to marry is mentioned 13 times (7.1%) and is the only category that has enjoyed a linear increase over time, from 2 references in the 1980s, to 4 in the 1990s and 7 in 1999. This is significant and an interesting contrast to the otherwise romanticized view of marriage, which seems to persist in the magazine. The trend however is clear. The primetime of romanticism regarding marriage seems to be over in An an.

In More we have 143 references to motivations for marriage, also with more than half of them during for the 1990s (56.6%). The highest frequency here also, just like in An an, are references to “happiness and love” (33; 23.1%), followed by “family and children” (21; 14.7%). Interestingly, the next highest frequency is that of people reporting to have no motivation to marry (20; 14%): 12 in the 1980s, only 2 in the 1990s and 6 in 1999. So while the romantic love and marriage ideal is similar in More compared to An an, a
comparatively high number of voices against marriage in *More* makes the magazine in the 1980s seem particularly progressive minded. This is something that only develops in later years in *An an*.

Interestingly, consideration of “outside factors” as motivators for marriage has seen a linear increase in *More*. This is surprising, as common-sense tells one that outside pressures should have declined or at least stayed the same. *Croissant* then mentions the least amount of motivations (21). Only one of them can be identified during the 1990s, none in 1999, all else are discussed during the 1980s. In the 1980s, the readership of *Croissant* was also still a bit younger than since the 1990s. In the 1980s (see explanation above) the readers were in their 30s. So naturally the discussion on motivations is a little bit more relevant to those women than women in their 40s.

A parallel is to be found to *More* in respect to the timing (1980s) and frequency (8 references) of people mentioning having no motivation for marriage. *No* motivation for marriage is actually the category with the highest overall frequency in *Croissant*. The romantic factors or reasons for marriage combined are only mentioned seven times. This a clear and very important difference between the discourses of the magazines. Absent categories from the discourse in *Croissant* are *dekichatta-kon, miae, tekireiki, outside factors, and marriage as unspecified goal*.

In comparison to *An an* and *More*, also *Fujin koron* mentions relatively few motivations and thus falls in terms of quantity between the high frequencies in *An an* and *More* and the very low frequency in *Croissant*. Over time you can find a slight increase, but overall it is a rather even distribution. The highest frequency is to be found regarding
“happiness and love”. Interestingly, it was highest in the 1970s, and has seen a steady decline over the years. Other categories with relatively high frequency in Fujin kōron are miai, no motivations, “security” desires, which were strongest in the 1980s, and an unspecified marriage wish, seeing marriage itself as goal, which was most frequently mentioned in the 1990s.

To conclude, there is no linear trend over time towards a greater denial of marriage within the magazines overall. This does not however go hand in hand with official statistics, which measure the rate of women never getting married. That number has risen slightly, even though is overall still quite low, particularly if compared to most European countries. The rate of women explicitly not wanting to get married has also risen only slightly, it is much more a desire to delay marriage to a later age, that has seen a steep and significant increase over time in society.

The fact, however, that already in the 1980s the discourse in the women’s magazines on not wanting to marry is the most frequent, could potentially point to or be interpreted as a motor function of magazine discourses. The higher frequency of discussing no desire for marriage within the 1980s occurs at a time when overall Croissant and More were most influenced by the second wave of the Japanese feminist movement, a trend that got lost in the magazines in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{42} Looking at the magazines by categories of motivations, the split between An an and More on the one hand and Croissant and Fujin kōron on the other is underlined by several of the findings mentioned above.

\textsuperscript{42} For more on that, see Holthus 2009.
3.9. Sources of marital happiness

3.9.1 General overview

Within the 324 articles analyzed for this project, 327 indicators for marital happiness were identified. Whereas in regards to motivations, there are clear differences between the distributions among the four women’s magazines, in regards to indicators for marital happiness, the distribution is fairly even, with the highest occurrence in *Fujin kōron* with 96 references (29.4%), followed by *More* with 85 (26%), *Croissant* with 81 (24.8%), and *An an* with 65 (19.9%).

![Figure 15: Happiness](image)

Looking at the distribution over time for all magazines together, the majority of happiness indicators can be found in the year 1990 (26.9%), and by decade in the 1990s

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43 See Appendix 2 for more details and the respective tables.
(1990, 1995) with 45.9%. Thus the 1990s overall prove to be the most significant period to
discuss matters of happiness in marriage and thus is concurrent with the findings for
motivations (see chapter 3.7. above). The same holds true when looking at the distribution
over time for each individual magazine. For each magazine, the 1990s are the period in
which the most frequent mentioning of categories occurs.

Calculating the average number of references per article in a year, however,
contrary to expectation, it is *Croissant* which features the highest average number of
references to marital happiness per article, namely 2.3 entries total. This is followed by 1.5
for the case of *More*, 1.2 for the case of *An an*, and 0.6 in *Fujin kōron*.

To summarize, overall, the 327 coded indicators for marital happiness occur most
frequently in the 1990s and in *Fujin kōron*. However, calculated by the total number of
articles, *Fujin kōron* has the lowest average number of entries per article, namely 0.6. The
highest is 2.3 in the case of *Croissant*. The average number of entries per article in a year
declines over time in *An an*, rises for the case of *Croissant* and *More*, and remains very
evenly distributed in *Fujin kōron*.

3.9.2. Trends in happiness categories

Similar to the discourse on motivations, also the discourse on marital happiness has proven
to be quite diverse. Table 6 lists the categorization of the discourse into five categories.
Table 8: Distribution of recoded happiness categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happiness category</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good partner relationship (incl. equality, love)</td>
<td>209 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence (incl. wife’s employment)</td>
<td>53 (16.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30 (9.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security (psychological, financial)</td>
<td>19 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extramarital affairs</td>
<td>16 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>327 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the five categories, romantic ideals of marital bliss outweigh other factors, with a “good partner relationship”, in its wide interpretation, being the most frequently mentioned in this context (209 references; 64%) for all four magazines together, but also the case for each individual women’s magazine. What really comprises a good partner relationship and those qualitative changes within the magazine discourse will be discussed in the subsequent chapters (4 through 7).

This is followed by mentioning issues of female independence in 53 instances (16.2%), which is quite significant. Also here, this is not only the case for the magazines together, but also for each individually as well. Thus we find a very similar overall discourse in that respect.

Extramarital affairs, which usually one would expect as an indicator of marital discord, are in 16 instances (4.9%) discussed as sources of happiness, and often as the only sources of happiness in the marriage. Granted, this is in most cases explained as due to the fact that the actual marriage is not satisfactory or lacking in one way or another, yet nonetheless an interesting discourse.

Feelings of security, which were rather significant as motivation for marriage, see above, are however much less considered as sources of happiness (5.9%). One woman
expressed this in one of the analyzed articles by saying, sort of surprised, that her husband had fulfilled all of her “marriage requirements” (tall, good education, high income), yet it turned out that within a marriage this is by far not so important then after all.

Looking at the distribution over time, we can see a quantitative increase from the 1970s to the 1990s (150 references; 45.9%). In 1999, however, a significant decline is noticeable down to only 33 references. With the exception of extramarital affairs, all other categories see their highest frequencies in the 1990s. Distinguished by individual women’s magazines, the distribution looks a little bit different. In An an, all categories are the most frequent in the 1990s, yet extramarital affairs remain completely unmentioned in An an. Also in More the highest frequency can be found in the 1990s. For the case of Croissant, however, the majority of references are to be found in the 1980s (46; 56.8%), decreasing in all categories over the years. In Fujin kōron, the distribution of references to marital happiness is fairly evenly distributed in the 1970s and the 1980s, and since then has seen a steady decline in quantity. Whereas here good relationship and independence saw their highest occurrences in the discourse in the 1970s, “security” and “extramarital affairs” were most frequent in the 1980s.

To summarize, both magazines for older women have a higher frequency of reporting extramarital affairs as source of marital happiness than the magazines for younger women. Also both Croissant and Fujin kōron have their highest frequencies in the 1980s, whereas the magazines for younger women have theirs in the 1990s. All four magazines have good partner relationships as most frequent categories for happiness, and independence as second most frequent category.
3.10. **Sources of marital discord**

3.10.1. General overview

In the dataset of 324 women’s magazine articles, appear a total of 629 references to marital discord. Whereas there are only a total of 422 references to motivations and 327 indicators for marital happiness within the same material, it is clear that discussions on marital problems are overall most frequent. Whereas in regards to motivations for marriage, it was overwhelmingly articles in *An an* and *More* that discussed them and there were comparatively few in *Croissant* and *Fujin kōron*, in regards to discords in marriage, the relationship is exactly opposite. With 333 mentionings of discords in *Fujin kōron*, the magazine features by far the majority of discords in its marriage discourse. The peak overall in the discourse in *Fujin kōron* on discords is in the 1980s.

**Figure 16: Marital discord**

![Marital discord chart](image)

44 See Appendix 3 for more details and the respective tables.
Croissant has the second most discords. An an, which features the most motivations, however mentions the least number of descriptions of discords. Just as in the case of motivations and happiness, overall it is the decade of the 1990s, and here more specifically the year 1990, which sees the highest frequency of marital discords.

Calculating the average number of entries per article in a year, it becomes clear that there is a general trend that references to discords increase over time, in the case of More and Fujin kōron in a linear fashion. In More, the average ranges from 0.6 references per article in the 1980s to 3.9 in 1999. In Fujin kōron, the average number increased from 1.8 in the 1970s to 2.8 in 1999. Both An an and Croissant see a peak in the average mentioning of discords per article in the 1990s.

Overall it becomes clear that discords are a more important topic for comparatively older women, who are the target group of Fujin kōron and Croissant, women who might actually have years of marital experience. Readers of An an and More most likely have little or no experience with marriage, and thus marital discord is just a far more distant topic and concern for them. Rather the step to marriage is much more a focus of their attention, which can be mostly explained by the age of the readership and the average age of marriage in Japan, which lies higher.

To summarize, marital discords are most frequent in the discourse of the four women’s magazines when compared to marital happiness or motivations to marriage, and are most frequent in the magazines for older women, Fujin kōron in particular, but also Croissant. Marital discord is furthermore most frequently discussed within the 1990s.
3.10.2. Trends in discord categories

Similar to the categorization of the happiness discourse, also in regards to the discourse on marital problems, the diversity is a challenge in regards to categorizing the discourse without oversimplifying the data. Below see the categorization of the data into a 10 item list (see Table 7).

Table 9: Distribution of discord categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discord category</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad relationship (from the beginning: incompatibility, no love, inequality in chores, unavailability of husband, complaints about partner’s character, non or bad communication)</td>
<td>161 (25.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce, separation, death</td>
<td>105 (16.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infidelity</td>
<td>98 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>63 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>48 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-laws problems</td>
<td>44 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial problems</td>
<td>33 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative change of the relationship or partner</td>
<td>33 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>24 (3.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence of wife (incl. wife’s employment)</td>
<td>20 (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>629 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the distribution of discord categories, among all 629 references, a wide interpretation of what I call a “bad relationship” has the most codings with 161 (25.6%). This is followed by “divorce” (which I coded together also with the separation or death of a partner), (105; 16.7%), and “infidelity” (98 references; 15.6%). Looking at this distribution more closely by decades, with three exceptions, the coding categories have their highest frequencies in the 1990s; only “independence” and “other” are the categories most often appearing in the 1980s, and the category “in-laws” sees its highest occurrence in 1999, which is surprising, as this was thought to be a more “antiquated” problem.
Looking at this distribution by magazine over time, it can be observed that in the case of An an, almost all references to discords can be found in the 1990s (1990 and 1995). Discords are hardly mentioned at all in the 1980s and in 1999 in An an. The topics almost non-existent in An an are divorce, sexuality, and domestic violence, all of which are only mentioned once. The three most frequent topics however are “bad relationship”, “infidelity”, and “negative change of the relationship or partner”.

The magazine discourse in More is similar to An an in respect to the 1990s showing the highest frequency in discords. Yet it differs in the fact that in More, the most frequent category is that of “infidelity”, followed by “divorce” and “bad relationship” in equal numbers.

Croissant concurs with An an and More in regards to having the most references within in the discourse of the 1990s. Equal to An an is also the fact that the most frequent discord category is that of “bad relationship” (35; 30.7%). Yet this is followed in frequency by the discussion on divorce, separation, death (19 times; 16.7%). Rather contrary to expectation is the fact that “in-laws problems” are least named (2 times; 1.8%) and even less than in the magazine More. Compared to the discourse on motivations as well as marital happiness, discords are by far the most popular within Croissant.

Other than that, the discourse in Fujin kōron presents itself as the most diversified, “bad relationships” being the most often mentioned, followed by “divorce, separation, death” and “infidelity”. The least occurring categories are the negative change of the relationship or partner and independence of the wife.
The fact that financial problems have seen their largest share (59.4%) in the overall discourse throughout the four magazines in the 1990s, underlines the economic downturn Japan has experienced since the burst of the bubble in the early 1990s and the continuously struggling economy since then. These consequences thus trickle down and are reflected in the increase in quantity of this category as source for marital discord over time.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45}The increasing discussion of growing social inequalities in Japanese society (see Holthus and Iwata 2010) since the 1990s certainly has played its part as well.
4. AHEAD OF THEIR TIMES: Marriage discourses for women born in the 1930s and 1940s

4.1. Growing up in post-war Japan

Japanese women born in the 1930s and 1940s have seen significant changes within society during their formative years. They were born in wartime Japan, raised by pre-war generation parents, yet experienced their youth in the immediate postwar era and lived through the Occupation period, the creation of a new constitution for a democratic Japan and unprecedented new legal rights for women.

When the women themselves began entering their childbearing years, the babyboom of 1947 to 1949 was over, not only out of free choice by the women, but also because it had become government policy to reduce the population.46 Then in the 1960s these women were in their 20s and 30s during the beginning of Japan’s economic boom period, the time of the dissemination of the salaryman ideal and what Ochiai (1997b) has termed “the postwar turn toward the home” and the increase in full-time homemaking (discussed in the well-known “housewife debate” during 1955-59, 1960-61, and 1972) (Ochiai 1997b: 24). “In the postwar period, the state of being a housewife became so strongly normative that it was practically synonymous with womanhood” (Ochiai 1997b: 35). Ochiai writes further that it is the cohort of women born from 1946 to 1950 who are said to have created the so-called “new family”, meaning “equal partners”, yet with a

46 As Ochiai (1997b: 45) writes: even though the government had initially desired to lower the birthrate, when it fell too drastically, the government began to change their mind once again. So eventually “both the lives of fetuses and women’s bodies [are] at the service of the current demands of population policy”.
clearly defined division of labor, with the husband working “outside” and the wife as housewife (Ochiai 1997b: 111).

During the 1970s, when the second women’s movement was taking hold, these women were in their 30s and 40s. By the 1980s, the bubble years and the years of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL), these women were in their 40s and 50s, thus having completed their childbearing and most of their childrearing years by that time. Throughout the 1990s then, when Japan had to struggle through the economic bubble burst and the subsequent economic difficulties, these women were in their 50s and 60s.

4.2. General observations of trends: Motivations, happiness, and discord

Women born in the 1930s were in their 40s in the 1970s and thus potential targets of the women’s magazine *Fujin kōron* from the 1970s onward. Similarly, women born in the 1940s were the target group of *Fujin kōron* from the 1980s onward. Thus it is these two decades of women’s magazine data which are analyzed in this chapter. More specifically, as described above, it is data from *Fujin kōron* from the years 1970, 1975, 1980, and 1985.

As mentioned above, motivations are rarely mentioned in *Fujin kōron*, in comparison to the magazines for younger women, *An an* and *More*. Compared to the frequency of discussing indicators of marital happiness and the sources of marital problems, it can be said that *Fujin kōron*, as a magazine for women age 40 and up, focuses mainly on marital problems, rather than the reasons for or against marriage and the sources of marital happiness. As the overwhelming majority of Japanese women in their 40s in the 1970s and 1980s were married, this might actually not be that surprising. And as the average marriage
age of women between the 1960s and 1980s lay between 24.4 and 25.5 years, these women can look back on an average of 15 plus years of marriage by the time they hit their 40s. So motivations for marriage lie far back in the past for most of them and thus are not as frequently part of a discussion on marriage.

**Figure 17:** Marital motivations discourse for women born in the 1930s and 1940s

Not only is it of interest *what* is being said but also what discourses, what topics and which kind of marriage motivations are *omitted* from the discourse. In this case, both in the 1970s and 1980s in *Fujin kōron*, there is no mentioning at all in the data about tekireiki, the “right age to marry”, as motivation for marriage. In addition, in the 1970s, equally missing
is an explicit voice against marriage, such as a woman or man stating that they do not have any motivation to marry. Also having gotten pregnant before the marriage and then getting married due to pregnancy (dekichatta-kon) is not mentioned within the discourse of Fujin kōron in the 1970s and only once in the 1980s, and here not as the main topic of the article, but only mentioned ‘on the side’.

The highest frequency both in the 1970s and 1980s in Fujin kōron is the category ‘happiness and love’ as a motivation for marriage. Yet an interesting shift between the 1970s and 1980s can be seen in a tendency from the discussion of more ‘positive’ reasons or motivations to marry in the 1970s towards more ‘negative’ motivations in the 1980s. In the 1970s, fun and companionship are mentioned in addition to happiness and love, family and children, and an unspecified marriage wish, seeing marriage as goal or ideal in itself. These are all ‘positive’ elements and point to a romantic understanding and view of marriage. Yet in the 1980s, the discourse on marriage motivations has shifted towards a larger share of reporting marriage as being more often born out of necessity, be it having gotten pregnant or due to outside pressures for marriage. References to arranged marriages also increased from the 1970s to 1980s. These trends however are contrary to what scholars on Japan have been telling us, namely that there is a decline of arranged marriages and an increase in love marriages and that outside pressures for marriage are supposedly decreasing over time. The discourse in Fujin kōron cannot support that. The increase in people reporting no motivation for marriage however corresponds with common perceptions of the increase in the decline and delay of marriages over time.
To summarize, *Fujin kōron* in the 1970s and 1980s offers very limited discussions on motivations for marriage overall. Yet even among this limited discourse in quantity, the qualitative analysis shows significant heterogeneity in opinions and experiences, such as in regards to ‘security’ as motivation, which can range from a desire for a “3 high” partner and a secure and stable middle class life to the desire of purely being rescued from a life of poverty through marriage.

The decline in the romantic appeal of marriage is puzzling, yet the apparent lack of discussion of family and children as motivation could possibly be explained by the sobering experience of being married and having children for an extended period of time among this target group. A desire to *not* marry is yet barely existent in the discourse for this generation of women born in the 1930s and 1940s.

In regards to the discourse on marital happiness, within the dataset of *Fujin kōron* in the 1970s, there are a total of 30 references to sources of happiness, and 35 in the 1980s. These are very similar frequencies over the two decades, yet those numbers are small if compared to the high frequency of references to marital problems. Within the discourse of *Fujin kōron* in the 1970s, we find among the references on marital happiness the highest percentage on “good partner relationships”, followed by those regarding “independence”. In the 1980s, however, we find on the one hand a decline in the references to "good relationship" and "independence". On the other hand, we see new categories in the 1980s which were non- or almost non-existent in the 1970s, namely "security" and “extramarital affairs”.
In regards to specifically how “good relationships” are described in *Fujin kōron* in the 1970s and 1980s, the following aspects were most often described as making a marriage happy: The absence of extramarital affairs of the husband, having cute and healthy children, good communication and spending time together, a good sex life, having fun, love, equality between the partners in regards to the share of household and children, and finally, voiced in one article, living apart as being beneficial to the relationship as it means less fighting among the couple.
The majority of articles describe marriages either as having been good and happy from the start and remaining happy throughout, or they have seen a decline in marital satisfaction over time. Yet there are exceptions. Interestingly, the two exceptions here, which describe a previously unhappy marriage that turned happy over time, are those reporting about problems with the parents-in-law, a quite common source of marital discord.

As mentioned above, the discourse on marital problems is highly significant within the dataset and also sees from the 1970s to the 1980s a clear increase over time in the quantity of references to marital problems within *Fujin kōron*.

**Figure 19:** Discourse on marital discord for women born in the 1930s and 1940s
Among the different categories of marital discord, those specifying a “bad relationship” have the highest frequency, both in the 1970s and in the 1980s. The next highest frequencies, which have seen an increase from the 1970s to 1980s are those of “divorce, separation, and death”, “extramarital affairs”, and “sexuality”. The category “other” also has seen a steep increase from 9 to 19 references, which points to the growing heterogeneity of marital problems as discussed within the context of Fujin kōron. Only two categories have seen a declining trend over time, namely “independence” and “in-laws problems”.

The category of “bad relationship” is very broad and subsumes quite diverse articles within it. Among them:

- Complaints about the partner’s character
- Issues of incompatibility of the partners
- There never was love in the relationship from the start
- There is no or only insufficient or outright bad communication between the partners
- The husband is “unavailable” to his wife or the whole family, often due to his long working hours
- Complaints about the inequality of the share of chores among the partners in respect to the household and childcare

These are all complaints about relationships and the marriages having something wrong with them from the start. However there are other articles which report on the negative changes throughout the duration of a marriage, none of them in the 1970s, but three references in the 1980s. So overwhelmingly it is less the problem of a marriage changing for the worse over time, but not having been happy from the outset. This however then puts into question the romantic love ideal, where love and happiness are supposed to be the essential foundations of a beginning marriage.
4.3. The stable desire for independence, employment, and equality

Overall, articles that discuss explicitly a woman’s independence, her employment, as well as issues of equality between the partners, show these, if existing, as closely related indicators for happiness. Expected was that throughout the two decades there would be an increase in frequency of these categories, but they have remained fairly stable over time. In addition, the two articles on women having no motivation to marry, are also related.

Articles suggest the ideal marriage to be the one which can combine marriage with the continuous employment of the wife. In addition, in the discourse in the 1980s, women (or men) having no motivation for marriage were almost non-existent, as mentioned above.47 Yet the two exceptions, which occurred within the same issue (Fujin kōron, June 1980, #4 and #5), deserve a closer look. In these articles, having no motivation for marriage is also inextricably linked to the discussion or call for the wife’s independence and employment, packaging all these topics together.

Article #4 features a discussion between Ōba Minako (1930-2007) and writer and psychiatry professor Kaga Otohiko (born 1929). Entitled “Onna no ai to jiritsu no kōzō”, they discuss women, love, and independence. In numerous instances they draw comparisons to the U.S., heed several warnings and discuss trends in Japanese society. Among these general issues, Ōba and Kaga agree that love does not have much to do with marriage. One of the “dangers” they warn the readers about, is for wives to fully commit their lives to their husbands and children. Because once they are less needed, such as when

47 In the same year, 1980, also the women’s magazine Croissant reports on women explicitly stating that they have no desire to getting married, using strong terminology such as considering childcare as slave labor or marriage as a “danger” to women. For more on that see the following Chapter 5.
children advance into middle school, the wives risk developing neuroses and becoming unhappy.

Furthermore, Kaga is expressing his opinion that it is not good to completely separate work and life and thus have husbands and wives lead completely separate lives. Whereas in Japan, husbands are said to never speak about their work with their wives, in the U.S. supposedly, wives know everything about their spouses’ employment. Both Ōba and Kaga point out that they, being born just a year apart, are from the same generation and grew up in a time - the postwar period - when emancipation was still young in regards to concepts of independence, be it financial or psychological. They state that by now, meaning 1980, the number of women who do not want to marry anymore is increasing, because they do not want to lose their independence, which they are able to achieve while single, but are endangered to lose during marriage. Ōba explicitly states that she thinks financial power from being employed is beneficial for wives and empowering them, as it can, among other things, also increase their level of happiness.

Interesting in this context is also article #6 (Fujin kōron, October 1980), which presents 16 women and their short statements about their opinions on marriage and which combines the issues of female employment, equality among the partners, and independence. Among them is a 22 year old woman who works in a department store. She had just gotten married three months ago, and reports being very happy. She mentions that not much in her life really has changed, because she continues working just like before the wedding. A 33 year old housewife, on the other hand, complains about her husband not helping at all in the house, and her having to do all of the housework. For him marriage is
like “paradise”, she writes, as he can just lounge around at home, read a book or watch TV. This negative image of a housewife’s life is further aided by the comments of a 38 year old housewife. For her the ideal marriage would be where the partners do not live together, just like Simone De Beauvoir, she states. She boldly writes that men just want marriage because it provides them with not having to come home in the evening to a dark apartment, with having a bath prepared for them, and with their laundry made. This also adds to the contrast of the older, frustrated housewife versus the younger, happy wife, who keeps her employment (at least for the time being). Keeping in mind that this magazine was read by older women, the tone of this article and the compilation of voices is interesting. It might more be read as an outlook what fortunate times lie ahead for the younger generation of women, whereas the readers themselves are stuck in the majority as frustrated housewives? At any rate, the article presents significant generational differences and a trend towards greater equality between the marriage partners the younger the women are.

In the other article (Fujin kōron, June 1980, #5), which also features a woman not being motivated to marry, Yamauchi Sumiko, a 31 year old housewife from Tokyo, describes her complicated relationships with men. At the age of 26, she started an affair with a 40 year old married colleague. She spent a lot of time with him and he frequently stayed overnight at her apartment. As she was not particularly interested in marriage, this arrangement was working just fine for her, being a single working woman. However, eventually her parents pressured her to get married; at the same time as rumors at work started about her and her colleague. Even though Sumiko really did not want to marry, her
lover suggested that she marry a man he introduced to her, which quickly resulted in *miae kekkon*, an arranged marriage. After the marriage, her lover continues visiting her and they have sex again. When she finds out three months later that she is pregnant, she opts for an abortion, since she is uncertain whose child it is. At the time of writing her article for *Fujin kōron*, she has ended the relationship with her former lover and is trying to build a happy family with her husband. This example further shows that a woman can desire not to marry, but eventually nonetheless succumbs to external pressures.

As mentioned above, the equality of the partners is another important element. To sum up the discourse into a simple formula: The equality in sharing duties regarding household and childcare issues brings happiness, whereas no equality adds to frustrations and complaints. Equality in household duties is most likely to be achieved among couples where both partners are employed, which intertwines these aspects closely.

In article #7 (*Fujin kōron*, April 1980), once again writer Ōba Minako is getting a voice. This time she describes her personal life and marriage. She describes her family as not “family-like”, not your average family, in other words. As example for her unconventional marriage she tells that she is not getting up in the morning for her husband to make him breakfast, like usually wives do. Furthermore, she does not cook him his favorite food, which happens to be fried eggs. Because Ōba herself does not like eating them, her husband had to learn to make them for himself, if he wanted to eat them. She keeps saying "I don't know if you can call that a real marriage". So even Ōba Minako has a view of how a Japanese marriage should be, just that she happens to veer from it. But what
is important is that both partners are happy in the marriage, she emphasizes in the article. If the husband or the wife have a partner who is unhappy, then they themselves cannot be happy either. “When you can't make your partner happy, then all that is left is to separate”, Ōba tells the readers. “It is important to think that being together is better than being alone. If that is not the case, separate.” She makes this sound very easy, without consideration of any social norms. Yet social stigma was still attached to getting a divorce in 1980, yet granted on a declining trend. This however is not mentioned at all in the article.

In regards to the equality between the partners, the ultimate ideal however is painted to be a relationship to a “house-husband”, an infrequent but extraordinary occurrence in the discourse of the time - extraordinary in the sense that the percentage of “house-husbands” is close to non-existent even in 21st century Japan.

In some cases in the discourse in *Fujin kōron*, the portrayed house-husband is a Western man, such as in article #8 (*Fujin kōron* June 1980). This article introduces a Swedish husband, who is happily taking childcare leave, so that his wife can go back to work. This can be seen as an example of the “idealization of the West”, which is in more detailed described in Holthus (2009).

Yet also Japanese house-husbands are featured in *Fujin kōron*. One such example is article #9 (*Fujin kōron*, December 1975), written by male writer Saotome Katsumoto. He is a “writer / house-husband”, his wife has been working as elementary school teacher for 13 years, and they have three children. Their children all were at a private, non-licensed
daycare center (*muninka hoikujo*),\(^{48}\) so that she could keep working throughout the time the children were very little. Now two of their children are in elementary school and one is still in daycare. Saotome is author of a total of 26 books, yet both partners share the responsibility of housework, and he states that he always tried to relieve his wife’s stress. As he works from home, he is more flexible in the way he distributes his time, so can help more in terms of childcare and household issues. He further states that both partners have achieved a level of independence that is important to them, and they both have their own "place" (*ba*), which further aids the relationship to be such a happy one. As described, the combination of the wife’s employment, together with a husband who contributes a large share of the household and childcare duties, and both partners therefore having achieved a sense of independence for themselves within the marriage, are important factors contributing to a couple considering themselves happy.

Yet this simple formula is not ubiquitously valid. There do exist infrequent voices that equality in the relationship is *not* everything, as can be gauged from the article by U.S. based designer Mori Michiko (*Fujin kōron*, August 1985, #10). She tells about her married life in the U.S., which in the beginning was a very liberal, equal relationship. Her husband helped in the household and with the cooking. Yet this rather admirably, presumably perfect relationship did not last, because problems began to arise. One issue of big concern and pressure was the fact that they did not get pregnant, and the other that Michiko’s

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\(^{48}\) More on the different forms of daycare centers and work-life balance issues for Japanese parents, see Holthus (2010).
husband turned out to be an alcoholic. So even the relationship seemed rather ideal in the beginning, eventually Michiko left her husband after ten years of marriage.

CONS OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

As mentioned earlier, not only is the existence but also the lack or almost lack of a topic an important finding. That of course can have many different reasons. One could assume, for example, that there is just not a problem with a wives’ employment within marriage, as in the 1970s only very few articles mention negative aspects of female employment. In two cases it is poor women reporting about the stress they had from having to work so hard, but needing to do so in order to earn for the family. One of them is the case of Miura Michiko (Fujin kōron, October 1975, #11), who reports about her hardships working in a small family-run store. Thus it is an issue of poverty that plays into this, as this is not a posh middle-class family with the husband having a white-collar salaryman position.

In an article from 1975 (Fujin kōron, June 1975, #12), the author, a woman, Takimoto Yoshiko, born in 1922, is an elementary school teacher, who had married in 1953, so at the age of 31, which she writes was when she was already considered an “old miss”. When she had finally married through an arranged marriage (omiai), her husband was 38. For him it was a remarriage, and he already had a daughter, age 11 at the time.

Yoshiko continued working also throughout her married life, even though she quickly had a child after marriage. In addition to her regular work as school teacher, she worked as a katei kyōshi, a home schooling teacher. Because they wanted to build a house, they wanted to keep both incomes. Contrary to the couple described above, where the
husband took the role of house-husband and the children were in daycare, this couple instead decided to get a full-time babysitter.\(^{49}\) They decided on a 17 year old girl from the countryside to live with the couple and help them with household and children. The husband was also very busy working until late at night most days. The couple did not have much time for each other, but as she was also busy with work and everything ran smoothly, she considered herself happy. But then, several years later, she found out that her husband had an affair with the house-helper girl. This was her unhappiest time, as she was burning up with jealousy, she writes. Eventually she confronted her husband and told him to choose between her or the house-help. She writes: “I have my work as teacher, so either way is fine with me.” She had financial independence, so divorce would not have been that scary, she continued. But her husband eventually decided to split from the girl. They sent the girl home and gave her a large sum of cash.

As a result of these events, Yoshiko began to reform her life; she worked as hard as she could in the school during the day, but never took work home, as she used to do before. Now home was there only for her kids and her husband. She writes that now, at the time of writing, they are a "normal family" again. But she still thinks with a heavy heart about that time back then. So this story shows also the potential danger of becoming too busy with work and as a result having the husband engage in an extramarital affair. On the other hand, the author is very explicit that divorce is a great deal less of a scary option if one as wife has financial independence by maintaining full-time employment throughout marriage and even the child-raising period. It is interesting that both Yoshiko as well as the wife of

\(^{49}\) At the beginning of the 21st century, this has become very rare in Japan. On the reluctance to hire a babysitter in contemporary Japan, see Holthus (2010).
Saotome Katsumoto as described above are elementary school teachers, a job that seems a bit more flexible and to provide a little bit better options for working wives and mothers than corporate employment.\textsuperscript{50}

In the 1980s, we find only exactly one article on the wife’s employment as source of marital discord. Here, Yamamoto Yoriko, sociology professor at Rikkyō University, broadly discusses the topic of career women and their love relationships and the different possible ways of these relationships (\textit{Fujin kōron}, June 1980, #13). One of the examples she gives is that of a woman who early on in her life had her heart broken and who then went to the U.S. to get her secondary education. She is now an English teacher back in Japan. She married particularly late, when she was already past age 40. She and her husband do not have children, and she continues working even after the marriage. Yet, and here this is the cause of the marital problems, her husband is described as not supporting her working, but she does it nonetheless.

So in this respect, there is obvious change within the discourse, as the topic of impoverished working women has disappeared, substituted by the story of a middle-class and obviously better educated working woman, with her employment being out of free choice rather than necessity.

\textsuperscript{50} Recent interviews with Japanese mothers have shown, that it is their opinion that being a school teacher allows actually for the best and easiest work-life balance. Teachers also have more or less same vacation days and holidays as their children, whereas in work in a company as very independent from that. Also a lot of the preparatory work can be done from home, so particularly in the 1970s a much easier profession in order to combine with marriage and childcare. And public employees also have the best plans when it comes to taking childcare leave, etc.
4.4. **Low fertility causes: Marriage timing and the wish for children**

In academic discourse, it is mostly women, who are blamed for the delay and decline of marriages. But, as Kato (2010) rightfully proved through his analysis of NFRJ (National Family Research of Japan) data, it is actually men who have triggered this trend. This is underlined also in the discourse of *Fujin kōron*. Here we find the story of actor Hira Mikijirō, who, at the time of the article, is engaged and about to get married (*Fujin kōron*, April 1970, #14). He has not yet experienced marriage and its realities, thus his *outlook* towards marriage is a romanticized one and love on the forefront. This is very similar therefore to articles one can find in *An an* and *More* as well, which often feature romanticized ideas on the future endeavor of marriage. The fact that a male celebrity, an actor, is interviewed further adds to that impression, as also *An an* and *More* often feature celebrities as role models and “specialists”.

Interesting in this article is the fact that Hira is marrying quite late (for the time), at the age of 36, and that is also what the interview focuses upon. He explains that he had always been driven to be really good at his job, he used to only focus on that, and for many years his work was most important to him in his life, and he feared a marriage – and having to provide for a wife, so a fear of the standard male breadwinner role – would stand in the way of his dream to becoming a great actor. But now his love for his bride is so overwhelming, and because by now he has become an established actor and his wife-to-be is herself a very successful movie-actress, he has changed his mind and now is finally embarking upon marriage.
The fact that the article uses the term *bankon*, ‘late marriage’, is in so far of interest as this term entered the public debate really only twenty years later. As described earlier, late marriage is recently blamed for being one major reason for Japan’s declining birthrate. Just that now it is women who are thought to be the main causes for this trend, and not men, like here the actor Hira.

Looking at gender differences in regards to the marriage discourse, Hira seems furthermore an “oddball”, as men who get a voice in *Fujin kōron* usually seem rather far removed from the romantic love ideal and who see marriage motivations usually under a much more unromantic and highly practical light. Among them are the following two men: Article #11 (*Fujin kōron*, October 1975) contrasts the motivations of several husbands and their wives with each other. Among them is Sakurai Masaya, a 28 year old copywriter, and his wife Hiroko, age 26. They are in their first year of marriage. His motivation for marriage was that “It is convenient, I get my food made, the cleaning, the laundry, and I don’t have to masturbate”. She on the other hand enjoys (and was perhaps motivated by) a feeling of safety and security which marriage provides her.

Another couple in this article is Miura Haruhiko, age 33, and his wife Michiko, age 30, who are married for nine years. He cannot name a particular reason why he got married to her. He thinks the kids are cute and that she is a good wife. He had several relationships before her, but then just decided to get married to her. More than a wife he had desired a family. Michiko explains that they got married in an arranged marriage, and whereas in the beginning she had felt love, this had changed over the years of marriage and had turned into hatred instead.
Another important argument in the debate on Japan’s low and declining fertility is that even though Japanese give birth to less and less children, they do still desire many more—at a rate still slightly higher than the replacement level of 2.1. (see Tanaka-Naji 2008). Furthermore, academic literature tells us that having children is the ultimate reason for getting married in Japan. Yet when looking at the discourses in the women’s magazines, in this case Fujin kōron, the motivation to marry in order to form a family and have children can be found to be minimal throughout, (two references in the 1970s, only one in the 1980s). Of course it could possibly be argued that having a family and children as motivation for marriage is considered so “natural” that the women in the magazines do not even mention it. This question cannot of course be answered through this content analysis, but my hunch is that that is not the case. If one contrasts the discourse in Fujin kōron in these two decades with the discourse in the other magazines for later cohorts of women, then clearly in the two magazines for younger women, An an and More, having a family and children are quite significantly stated as motivations. Yet these women are most likely not yet mothers themselves, so the romanticization and idealization of motherhood and that of being a wife is still going strong. On the other hand, the fact that both in Croissant and Fujin kōron, the magazines for mostly married women, hardly state family and children as motivation at all could be because these women mostly have experience in marriage and motherhood, which has robbed them of their romanticization of that state of being. At any rate, this lack in the discourse is very obvious and seems important.
4.5. **Pro-divorce**

As mentioned above, what I have summarized under the category of “happiness and love” are the most frequent motivations both in the 1970s and 1980s, yet with a decline in quantity and overall significance over time. Thus we can see a decline in the romantic love ideal in regards to the motivation for marriage. Motivations within this category alone are quite diverse, such as for example a desire for marriage to provide a possibility for growing peacefully old together, seeing marriage as more fun than a life as single person, and also to have a companion for playing games with. When love is described as having been the motivator for marriage, articles show very different possible outcomes in marital life, be it a kind of “happy end” or a nasty divorce. So on the one hand, in article #15 (*Fujin kōron*, December 1970) a woman reports about her long-lasting happy marriage, which had been based on and motivated by love and mutual interests. Yet thirty years later, her husband had passed away, after which she mourned his loss for several years. As she writes, big love comes with big pain and should be seen as an unavoidable “package”. A later relationship with a widower proves less successful, ending in separation.

On the other hand, *Fujin kōron* also features the story of 21 year old Hattori Akiko (*Fujin kōron*, October 1975, #16), whose love marriage ended up in a divorce battle, which, at the time of the article is still continuing. Akiko had met singer and songwriter Hirao when she was 18 years old and he 16 years her senior, age 34. They got engaged after only three months of dating. She tries to explain her motivation to marry Hirao by her father complex, which she had developed through her father’s death, when she was a 14 year old only child. So when Hirao began courting her and showed his affection, she quickly fell in
love with him. She further explains that soon into the marriage she became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. Yet it was then that the marital problems began, as Akiko’s husband began to stay out late and usually returned home only in the morning hours, did not help with childcare at all, and hardly even held his son. Eventually her husband confronted her with the news that he fell out of love with her and wanted a divorce, as he has begun an affair with an even younger woman, a 16 year old singer. The evolving divorce process was nasty and developed into a real drama, a rare occurrence in Japan, a land where only very few divorces land in front of the family court. The divorce battle is mostly revolving around alimony payments. Akiko demands a large sum from her husband, which he is not willing to pay, and therefore even threatens to seek sole custody of their child. At the time of the article, the divorce is not yet settled. Akiko however maintains a strong posture throughout, stating that she learned a lot through this awful experience and that she is determined to continue to fight. This is a very progressive voice, as it is still usual in Japan for women to face financial hardships due to the fact that alimony payments are not as well regulated as is the case of the U.S. or Europe. As Akiko at age 21 is much younger than the readership of *Fujin kōron* and in addition is the wife of a celebrity, this makes her kind of an “odd ball”, an exceptional case – with an interesting, progressive development from a young woman with a father complex to fighting for her legal rights.

As mentioned above, the divorce discourse in *Fujin kōron* has seen as quantitative increase over the course of the 1970s into the 1980s. In the articles, some women are contemplating a possible divorce, some want divorce but their husbands do not agree, and
some have actually gone through a divorce. All of these women are said to feel better off post-divorce. In article #17 (Fujin kōron, February 1980), for example, housewife Noguchi Takako, age 26, contemplates divorce. Takako, who lives in Fukui prefecture with her husband and two young children, has had two extramarital affairs: one with her middle-school sweetheart and the other with a former colleague. She eventually split from both men, for different reasons, but is now ready to call it quits also with her husband, as she writes that she does not love him anymore.

In article #18 (Fujin kōron, February 1985) Kawamura Eiko, a 31 year old woman from Gunma prefecture, who works in the mizushōbai, the “water trade”, describes her divorce attempt. It is not in more detail described what her work entailed, but it could range from working in a bar as a hostess to prostitution, once again an immediate marker for her lower class status. At the time of marriage, she is 20 years old, her husband ten years her senior. She describes that her marital problems are caused by sexual dissatisfaction, financial worries, as well as his verbal abuses. Very quickly after getting married, her husband became sexually not interested in her anymore, not making any effort for her sexual satisfaction. Their intercourse usually lasted only about five minutes. He brags about that women are like monthly trainpasses (“nyōbō wa teikiken da”), meaning that “whenever you like, you can hop on and off (sexually)”. But that is not his only verbal abuse. She also describes instances when he looks at her vagina and says “you are dirty and rotten”, maybe hinting on her employment before the marriage. In addition to the sexual and verbal frustrations, their financial problems are caused by the husband having a low income and wasting his money nonetheless, aggravated by this gambling addiction. She is
forced to pitch in and start working part-time in order to make ends meet. Eventually she
does not want to put up with this and moves out. At that point, she has an affair with her
husband’s brother. She wants to divorce her husband, but he is not agreeing to it, so that
though they live apart, she is still legally bound to him. She however craves freedom and to
be able to live together with someone else again. The piece of paper, which marriage really
all is, is not important to her, she just wants a ‘good’ partnership, as she states.

All these women are proactive in their non-acceptance of their unhappy marriages.
For some women, a divorce does not seem a possible option, yet also other means are
employed to escape or get out of a marriage, such as having an extramarital relationship or
living apart without a formal divorce. This pro-divorce stance of *Fujin kōron* then is
uniquely focused upon in article #19 (*Fujin kōron*, April 1980). Here several women who
have actually gone through divorce are discussed, in addition to an analysis of divorce and
the social and generational changes associated with divorce, linked together by an
outspoken call for the courage to divorce. “Divorce specialist” Madoka Yoriko is “pro-
choice” on the issue of divorce.51 Through her divorce counseling activities she has heard
the stories of about 500 women, she states, and thus is featured as the “divorce specialist”
in the article. She introduces three of these women and their divorce stories in greater detail
in the article. These stories reveal the diversity of how women end up with divorce or
living separate from their spouse. One of these is Eiko, a 50 year old woman, married for
27 years, and another one is Aiko, age 46 and married for 23 years. Both women end up
being separated from their husbands, but have not achieved divorce. Eiko, who has one

51 For more on Madoka Yoriko see Holthus 2009.
child and who teaches calligraphy, had to endure about ten years of living separate (tanshin funin) and craves a divorce. Aiko has two university-age daughters and works for a hairdresser. Her husband moved out 12 years ago and started living with his girlfriend. Even though the marriage exists only on paper, they still have not divorced, and Aiko continues to suffer from his lack in financial support for her and the children. What this tells us is that there are apparently marriages that only persist or exist on paper, but are actually non-existent anymore. So looking at divorce statistics data does not accurately reflect this group or this diversity correctly.

Madoka discusses these cases of the two women from the generation of women born in the 1930s (1930 and 1934), who want to “protect the family”, no matter how much they themselves suffer. But Madoka passionately disagrees with the excuse that a woman cannot divorce because she supposedly cannot feed herself (and the children). Madoka says that this excuse cannot be accepted, as she thinks that there is work, that society is changing, so that there is no real reason anymore to delay divorce.

Madoka further states that she finds a significant change in opinions on divorce between women in their 40s and 50s and women in their 20s and 30s. The younger women would look at the situation of the older women and say “Gosh, I cannot believe you are treated like that by your husband. Why didn’t you separate earlier?” As proof for her theory on social change, Madoka presents also stories of younger women who have gone through divorce, such as the story of Yuko, age 32. She married already while she was a student and has three children. The children are in daycare and her and her husband work. She eventually started disliking her husband, because she believed her husband to be not manly
enough. The turning point for her change of heart came when they were in the process of buying a house. It was then that she did not think he behaved “manly” enough, in addition to not participate enough in childcare. Madoka writes that there are supposedly many women like Yuko in her generation. The husbands are not alcoholics or gamblers, they work hard and do not have extramarital affairs, but still the women get sick of them. The women have become more demanding in the level of involvement they desire from their husbands. These women also have many more chances and choices after their divorce than the older generation; they can go back to work and can remarry. Madoka’s observations point to the fact that a lot has to do with the level of financial independence women have or have not. A greater level of independence and the possibility of feeding oneself and one’s children by herself will make it more likely that a women chooses divorce in the case of an unhappy marriage.

4.6. Marriage and social stratification: Rescue from poverty

It should be noted that poverty or social stratification are never the main topic within articles on marriage, but are nonetheless quite often referred to in passing. This is the case much more so in Fujin kōron, or also Croissant, but much less so in More or An an. When and if they do, marriage as rescue from poverty is a popular theme.

This is often the case with women who grew up having no father, but rather who grew up in single mother homes. This is the case in article #20 (Fujin kōron, February 1980) and #21 (Fujin kōron October 1980). Here the women mention financial fears and hardships as motivation for marriage, with marriage intended to rescue them from their fate.
and poverty. Thus the desire for a sense of security can be understood here as a lower-class ideal. In both of those cases these women have grown up in single mother families, where the father had prematurely passed away. Article #20 is written by 26 year old Yoshida Sachiko, a housewife from Akita prefecture. At the time of writing she is separated from her husband, has filed for divorce with the family court, and is now living with her mother and disabled older brother. Her husband, whom she had married to get away from her impoverished life, ran off after less than a year of marriage. Sachiko also describes the life of her mother in great detail. Her mother, who had a very strong influence on Sachiko, had married Sachiko’s father in an arranged marriage. The father then turned out to be an alcoholic, and after several years of illness passed away at the age of 35. Her mother was only 32 years old at the time, Sachiko 6 and her brother 10 years old. Currently Sachiko cares for her disabled brother while her mother continues earning the money for the three of them by working extremely hard as a factory worker. Sachiko describes their impoverished lives and describes it as beyond hard. This article also allows a view of the lives of two generations of women, that of the 26 year old narrator as well as her mother and how they both handled their unfortunate marriages. In both instances it shows that the end of marriage, be it through divorce or widowhood, throws women in poverty, and highlights the deficiencies of the social welfare system to protect these women.

The other article (#21) is written by Utsumi Midori, a celebrity in her mid-30s. She describes that having grown up only with her mother, as her father had died early, influenced her into wanting to get married for financial reasons, as she had developed many

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52 For more on the hardships of single mothers see Hertog 2009.
existential fears. But over time her strategy out of those fears changed and she decided instead to totally focus on work only, and to have no free time at all for herself. Eventually however she did get married after all and finally felt like she can actually enjoy her free time. She originally had a negative image of marriage, which had meant for her just PTA, kids, and education problems. But now, as she can combine work and family life and does not have to worry about daily life for financial reasons, she describes herself as quite happy.

Not only do articles describe cases where marriage was hoped to be a rescue from poverty or describe women being thrown into poverty due to a failed marriage, but also marriage themselves can mean a life of poverty. This we find particularly in the earlier years in the analysis of Fujin kōron. Yet probably with generally improved life conditions for the majority of Japanese during the 1970s and 1980s, descriptions of women (or men) living in poverty more or less vanished from the women’s magazine discourse in the later years of the analysis.

One such example is article #22 (Fujin kōron, December 1975), in which 42 year old housewife Dōya Miyoko reports about problems which she had with her husband’s family early on in the marriage. In Miyoko’s case, when she marries into the family, she has to live with her husband, her mother-in-law, and both the sister- and brother-in-law in extremely cramped quarters. Their poverty is described to be the result of the head of the family, her husband’s father, having died shortly after the end of the war already. Miyoko’s mother in law, whose exact age is never mentioned, but who can be understood to be about born in the early years of the 20th century, felt therefore forced to quickly remarry, as her
child at the time of the father’s death was still an infant. Yet her second marriage was a very unhappy marriage, in addition to having to suffer through severe poverty, a poverty she never managed to get out of, and which Miyoko eventually marries into.

At any rate, the impoverished life forced Miyoko to continue working even throughout her pregnancy, which eventually resulted in her having a miscarriage. For a while thereafter, she contemplated separating from her husband in order to escape this miserable life, but then eventually her husband’s siblings became adults, soon married thereafter and moved out. When finally the mother-in-law passed away, the situation at home became much more relaxed for Miyoko. Thus this article is not only interesting in terms of the description of the impoverished marital life, but also in regards to the relationship of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law and the extended family being “too close”.

4.7. The role of the parents-in-law

Whereas the fear of poverty as motivation for marriage has declined over the years, the motivation “security” - be it financial or psychological – for middle-class women has seen a development of rising importance although the number of references are small altogether within the discourse of Fujin kōron. Both in the 1970s and the 1980s, there are voices that focus on the so-called “3 highs” (sankō) which were for a long time, but particularly in the 1980s, the qualities which women supposedly always demanded of a potential marriage partner, in order to guarantee them a “secure, middle class life”. These three “highs” are for the potential spouse to have high income, high “elite” education, being tall (Holthus 2009:
That to marry a spouse based on these criteria is however not necessarily guaranteeing a happy marriage is shown in article #23 (*Fujin kōron*, February 1975). Here 24 year old librarian Minagawa Yasuko states that she married her husband because he fulfilled her “requirements” of high income, being a sportsman, having graduated from a good university and being now employed at a good company. These status symbols were important elements in her decision for *omiai kekkon*, her arranged marriage, helping her fulfill her desire for financial stability, which a good degree and the employment in a good company certainly could guarantee at the time. But, as the woman explains, these criteria did not help make her marriage a happy one. As a matter of fact, she describes hers as a very unhappy marriage, due to her mother-in-law and her husband having a way too close relationship in her opinion. Having to live with the mother-in-law under one roof adds further to this.

This story underlines the influence that a good or bad relationship with the parents-in-law has on the overall evaluation of the marital relationship. However, the importance of the role of parents-in-law in a couple’s life has been declining if judging from the quantity of articles on parents-in-law within the two decades of analyzed articles in *Fujin kōron*. The quantitative decline could be explained in part by the growing “nuclearization” of Japanese families, thus the decreasing situation of multi-generation families having to live under one roof, which greatly contributes to the problems with the in-laws, as described in more detail below.
We know already from several academic studies about the hardships of daughters-in-law with their parents-in-law, and here usually the mother-in-law (Bernstein 1983). The problems as described in Fujin kōron fall into three main categories of difficulties, namely

1. The parental opposition to marriage to a particular partner in the first place.
2. The difficulties faced by the couple, and mostly the wife, in living together with the parents-in-law on a daily basis.
3. the amae relationship between mother and son, which the young wives suffer from.

1) In regards to the parental opposition to the marriage, opposition can have many different reasons, such as racial issues, age-related matters, financial or educational gaps between the partners. Of course there are also cases where the parental opposition seems to have no particular reason whatsoever. In article #6 (Fujin kōron, October 1980), within 16 short reports from women about their diverse opinions on and experiences with marriage, one woman, a 23 year old office lady (OL), describes how her parents oppose her wedding to her boyfriend out of no obvious reason at all. Article #24 (Fujin kōron February 1975) describes the woman’s parents’ opposition to her relationship with a Japanese man, whose father happens to be Korean. She is 23 years old and her boyfriend is a colleague from work. For her, the fact that her boyfriend’s deceased father was Korean has not been an issue and she had never given the fact that her boyfriend therefore is part non-Japanese a second thought. But for her parents this is the reason why they do not agree with the marriage. In the article the woman tries to contemplate the meaning of race (“black”, “white”, “yellow”, as she labels it), and stratification (rich versus poor). If you further add the distinction of someone’s father being Korean, she sees this as an example of discrimination. The opposition of her parents was so strong that she had to listen to their complaints on a daily basis. She was close to giving her partner up because the pressure had built up so much. But she felt she just could not break their relationship off. But what she did was to quit her workplace and
at the time of writing the article remains unemployed, but nonetheless continues seeing her boyfriend. She contemplates on the meaning of parents, bloodline, marriage, and having children. She has been together with her boyfriend for three years at the time of writing and mentions that her friends are mostly married by now, are housewives and busy with child rearing. She looks at that with envy and wants that for herself as well. She would be so happy if she would marry her boyfriend - but also probably the saddest, as she would most certainly lose her family over this dispute, she writes. So the difficult task of weighing her own happiness versus the guilt that would come with running away from home and getting married and by that also ruining her sister’s marriage chances because her own marriage with a part-Korean man would stain the whole family reputation. At the time of writing the article she is still undecided of how she should handle the situation, if being selfish for her own happiness or being selfless for the sake of her family’s standing in society.

Also age-related discrimination of the prospective marriage partner is experienced. In the case of a 32 year old woman from Fukushima-ken (Fujin kōron, April 1975, #25), his parents opposed the prospective marriage, because they thought that she was, at age 29 and of the same age as their son, too old.54 Whereas usually the opposition to a marriage comes from the parents of either partner, it can also come from other family members, as article #26 (Fujin kōron, June 1985) reports. Here Fujin kōron has picked up a very tragic story that had been previously reported in the mainstream media. It is the story of an elderly couple having fallen in love and expressing their desire to marry. This prospective

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54 In the same article which presents short stories about several relationships that ended up not leading into marriage one other reason is also that his parents thought “her” to be too poor and not from a good enough background to marry their son.
marriage at a late age in life, labeled kōreisha kekkon, made their children fear of losing their inheritance if their mother or father would remarry, and therefore they violently opposed the wedding. The couple, deeply in love with each other, apparently did not feel capable to stand up to their families. Therefore, as they supposedly wanted to be together for the rest of their lives, they decided to end their lives and committed double-suicide. Double-suicides of lovers, who are not allowed to marry, are widely known in Japanese literature and depict the “purity of love” and are an acceptable way of dealing with such seemingly ‘unsolvable’ situations. They are much more rare in contemporary Japan and even more so rare in the case of elderly people.

2) The difficulties faced by a married couple by having to live together or within close proximity to the parents-in-law are the next set of marital problems. It is most often the relationship between the wife and mother-in-law who struggle with each other on a daily basis, which trigger severe feelings of marital discord. Yet the existence of the mother-in-law is not the sole cause for marital distress usually, but rather adds to other problems already existing in the relationship. Articles with that theme can be found a total of eight times, five of which in the 1970s, three in the 1980s. Whereas most of the time it is wives who complain about their mothers-in-law and the difficulties they have with them, in article #27 (Fujin kōron, April 1985) presents short reports by husbands who describe their wives and their own mothers fighting for various reasons, some as insignificant as an old iron.

The negative relationship to the mother-in-law however can change over time as well. Thus in Fujin kōron there can be found few voices, which remark on improvements
over time in the relationship to the mother-in-law. Such is the case in article #28 (Fujin kōron, December 1975). 33 year old housewife Sasaki Yoshie describes that she used to have had major problems with her mother-in-law, whom she had to live together with since the wedding. Many times she had wished to be able to live separate from her mother-in-law, and if that were not possible, thought that then she’d be getting a divorce. But eventually she ended up not getting a divorce, and now her relationship with her mother-in-law has actually improved.

Contemplating divorce to escape her mother-in-law, Yoshie writes that whereas in TV dramas divorce, widowhood, living separate, and remarriage all seem fairly easy, she was nonetheless scared of the (mostly financial) hardships a divorce would bring. She mentions having heard the story of a woman in her extended family who did have a divorce, ended up in mizushōbai, and thus had a very hard time. Yoshie feared the same fate, so eventually just somehow adjusted to the situation and now lives fairly problem-free together with her husband and mother-in-law.

Yoshie then goes on to describe the life of the mother-in-law in detail, who, as one of seven children, has actually had a life full of hardships. Understanding this, Yoshie developed some form of understanding for the harsh behavior and rigid ways of her mother-in-law. And by now she sees her improved relationship to her mother-in-law actually as a source of happiness within her marriage.

3) The third strain in terms of the relationship with the mother-in-law is that of her remaining too close to her son even after he gets married. Article #23 (Fujin kōron, February 1975) describes the case of the Minagawa Yasuko, the 24 year old librarian
suffering under the close *amae*-relationship and love between her husband and mother-in-law. This is further magnified by the fact that all three, as is so often the case, have to live together under one roof. The woman complains that her mother-in-law only cares for her son, but does not lift a finger to help her. And the fact that the mother-in-law is from the war generation and therefore extremely careful not to waste food or money, adds to the marital discord and to making the young wife's life difficult.

Overall the women reporting problems with their in-laws are more or less describing themselves as passive victims. Very often coupled with concerns, fears, or the actual experience and hardships of poverty, the wives who are given a voice in the articles here are not the ones describing themselves as taking charge in changing their often intolerable situations. Even though the marriages contain a high degree of conflict, consequences such as escape from the situation, the marriage, through divorce are few mentioned, even though often wished for. Very often it is the financial constraints that a woman at that time – and partially still today – is faced with, which make her continue to endure her unhappy marriage. So the low divorce rate of the time does not reflect the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within marriages in Japan. The level of unhappiness within marriages at least seems to be much higher than the actually measurable level of marital unhappiness, namely divorce statistics, could show.

4.8. *Sexuality, contraception, and abortion*

In regards to the discussion of sexual dissatisfaction as source of marital discord, several important observations can be made about the discourse in *Fujin kōron*:
a) There is an overall increase in the discussion of sexuality and sexual dissatisfaction over time in the dataset. This category was only mentioned three times in the 1970s in *Fujin kōron*, but 14 times in the 1980s. This comes at a time in Japan when as late as 1980 the first large-scale (even though unrepresentative) sexuality survey was published, a kind of equivalent to the U.S. “Hite report”. Already in 1977 the Japanese version of the “Hite report” had been published, but was a pure translation and therefore only gave insights into American sexuality. Information on the situation in Japan had so far not yet been available. It was the magazine *More* which conducted this survey entitled “More Report” among its readership in 1980. A total of 5422 women between the ages of 14 and 60 participated in the survey. The survey asked about a multitude of issues regarding sexuality. Overall it was a rather sobering account of, for example, the limited frequency of Japanese women experiencing orgasms and of the limited number of women masturbating. The survey was highly publicized and became known well beyond the circle of readers of the magazine.\(^{55}\) At any rate, a possible awareness to sexuality-related issues and their problematic aspects within marriages could be linked to these larger trends that were going on at the same time in Japanese society and thus could have contributed to the rise in discussing marital problems surrounding sexuality within *Fujin kōron*.

b) There is an increase in the mentioning of abortion over time. This is most of the time coupled with complaints about the contraceptive behavior of husbands and reflects what we know from Coleman (1983). Abortion was not discussed at all within the articles

\(^{55}\) *More* continued to infrequently conduct these kinds of large scale surveys. Comparing the data then also with their results from 1987 and 1999 show that the rate of women experiencing orgasms has actually been falling over time. More on the *More Reports* see Holthus 2009: 384ff.
of the dataset in the 1970s, but then gained visibility in the 1980s. Rather than interpreting this rise in discourse as a reflection of the rise of the rate of abortions, it probably is more so the case that this is rather an expression of liberation of women in greater numbers in the 1980s, feeling freer and emancipated enough to discuss abortion in this mass medium. Yet the stories themselves are just the opposite from liberation. They rather tell the stories of extreme submissiveness to the husband’s sexual desires, resulting in severe emotional and physical strain on the side of the wives.

Thus two articles feature extended complaints about the husband not using contraception. One results in the wife constantly fearing of getting pregnant, even if not resulting in an actual pregnancy or abortion. But the fear alone is hard enough on the woman and reason for serious marital dissatisfaction. Article #29 (Fujin kōron, February 1985) describes the life of Yamasawa Rie, 31 year old housewife from Tokyo. Her husband always wants to sleep with her without contraception, telling her that “it'll be fine”. She does not like that at all, because her period is so irregular that they really always should use contraception. They already have two children, and doctors have told her not to have any more children, as pregnancy and birthing were very difficult for her. So she has a clearly vested interest in not becoming pregnant, yet does not manage to get her husband to use contraception. There is no talk about her possibly contracepting herself (the high-dose pill was available at the time for medical reasons), so she has to rely on her husband’s use of condoms, which he does not do. So each time her period is late, which happens almost every month, she becomes terribly worried and fears to be pregnant. Her husband’s comments to her worries are: “We cannot afford another, so we’ll get an abortion then”.

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Whereas the husband is apparently only concerned about the financial aspects of another pregnancy and child, Rie is afraid of the physical strain a pregnancy or abortion would put on her body. So really her story is about these worries, and when she finally gets her period in a month, any talks about contraception with her husband go up in smoke. Her husband wants to continue to have unprotected intercourse, so all she is left with, as she writes, is being thankful for so far not having gotten pregnant unwantingly and praying not to get pregnant in the future either.

38 year old Taniguchi Keiko, from Hyogo prefecture, also reports on her husband’s unwillingness for contraception, even though he also has a vested interest in her not becoming pregnant (Fujin kōron, April 1980, #30). In their case, Keiko, a widow herself, had married another widower. She has a 3 year old daughter from her first marriage, and he brought two children into the marriage, a boy age 10 and a daughter age 3. She has problems with his children, as they constantly compare her to their real mother and do not behave well for her, which makes her life very difficult. On top of that, because her husband lost his first wife at childbirth, he tells Keiko that she should not have any more children. As he is however not doing anything to prevent that, such as by not using contraception, she ends up with many abortions. When she finally does desire to get pregnant after all, she has major uterine problems, probably from the many abortions, she assumes. Hospitalization and surgery follow, making her through and through unhappy, as she writes, both physically and spiritually.

Even though the low-dose pill only got approved in Japan in 1999 (see Norgren 1998 and 2001), there were in the 1980s other means of contraception available in Japan,
which even women could use, such as the spiral or the high-dose pill.\textsuperscript{56} Yet there is a complete absence of discussing this as option within the articles of \textit{Fujin kōron}, which is partially explained by the research by Norgren (2001) and Coleman (1983).

c) Mentioning of sexlessness within marriage can be found, even though that topic only in recent years in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century has become a popular topic within mainstream media as well as also within academic research (Moriki 2008). Recent suggestions by the government aiming to increase the birthrate focused on Japanese having more marital sex. In order to achieve that, husband’s were to have a better work-life balance and to be returning home earlier in the evening from work, in order to have freed up some time in which to have sex and procreate.

d) Sexual dissatisfaction is in some articles described as leading the wives to having an extramarital affair. This is described in the following chapter.

4.9. \textbf{Extramarital affairs as sources of marital happiness and discord}

Infidelity has the possibility of being a source of happiness, yet much more often it is a source of discord within a marriage. The evaluation between happiness and discord depends on the position of a person. If the person is him- or herself engaging in extramarital affairs, then this could provide a source of happiness, possibly an escape from an otherwise unhappy marriage. On the other hand, if the person, and here most often the wife, finds herself being the one cheated on by her husband, then this is the most likely scenario of this being presented as problem rather than a source of happiness.

\textsuperscript{56} For more on the topic of contraception in women’s magazine discourse, see Holthus 2009.
Discussion on infidelity has increased in quantity over time in *Fujin kōron*, however only slightly in its significance throughout each decade: in the 1970s we find 9 references (12.3% of all marital problems), in the 1980s 19 references (14.7%). A significant difference over time can also be seen in who is described as having an affair in the articles. In the 1970s, husbands are the only ones reported as having extramarital affairs. Yet in the 1980s, a significant part of the articles describe the wives as being the ones straying from the marriage and having extramarital affairs. Eight out of 19 references to extramarital affairs are those involving wives. One can understand this shift in discourse as putting women into a more active role. They are over time less so passive victims, suffering from their husband’s extramarital affairs, but rather actively searching out extramarital relationships themselves, if they consider their marriages lacking or are somehow dissatisfied with the sex-life with their husbands. Of course there are still 11 references to wives suffering from the pain of their husbands having an affair, but it has come to an almost even draw, a major shift from no articles describing wives having affairs in the 1970s.

Within the discourse in the 1970s, two of the articles describe how the betrayed wives eventually initiate divorce, after an extensive period of suffering from their husbands’ infidelity (*Fujin kōron*, October 1975, #31 and #16). The rest of the cases only describes the jealousy or disappointment of the wives, but they passively accept the situation. In the 1980s then, articles begin to refer to the happiness women (or men) achieve through having an extramarital affair. Overall, extramarital affairs are a very
important topic in regards to the discourse on marital problems and the frequency with which they are discussed is astounding. I am not aware of representative statistical data that has measured how frequently Japanese have extramarital affairs or intercourse, yet based on the articles in the women’s magazines it seems a major issue among many Japanese married couples. But whereas extramarital affairs are usually discussed as a problem within marriages, here there are voices that judge their affairs as positive and as sources of happiness. It is not the relationship to the spouse, but rather the affair that is the source of happiness - which does not speak much for those marriages as such, but is a rather sobering view on Japanese marriages.

These affairs, and the happiness that the married women get out of them, is often born out of being stuck in an otherwise very unhappy marriage. So the affair serves as escape from their unhappiness. Example for that is article #32 (Fujin kōron, June 1985). Here 28 year old Kawachi Miwa, housewife from Yamagata prefecture tells her story. She explains that she would like to get a divorce, but states three reasons for not being able to. Those are: 1) My husband would never agree to a divorce, 2) As wife I have sufficient to eat without having to work, and 3) My husband is my child’s father.

She had married in an arranged marriage and is of the opinion that marriage resembles a lottery. You can be lucky, or you are not. In her case, she was not lucky, as she states. She can only bear to stay married to her husband because she has a very nice male friend and lover. With her husband she only knew sex without love, but with her lover, she writes, she understands for the first time in her life how wonderful sex can be if you love.
On the other hand, we also find cases of women considering themselves happy and fortunate with husband and children, but nonetheless maintain affairs with other men. One woman is explicitly stating that she considers this a further elevation to her already existent happiness. In article #33 (Fujin kōron, February 1985), Sawa Hideko, 43 year old housewife from Fukuoka prefecture, writes that she actually loves her husband, but cannot physically separate from the two lovers she has. She had gone through the typical M-curve of employment, thus was a full-time housewife during the children’s early years, but then started working again, in an office, when her kids got into school and she did not have to care for them so much anymore. In addition, she had help from her still very fit mother-in-law. At work Sawa then met the men with whom she began her extramarital affairs, which have been ongoing for over ten years. She meets each man about once a month. At the time of writing, she mentions that she is married for 21 years and has an ideal husband, good-looking children, and considers that as happiness (kōfuku). By having her two lovers in addition to this already happy state of being, she writes that every day is filled with a lot of happiness (mainichi ga kōfuku ippai).

In article #34 (Fujin kōron, August 1980) 35 year old designer Yano Nashiko from Tokyo reports about her extramarital affair. She married her husband seven years ago, a love match, and has continued working as lecturer in a design college. Eventually she begins an affair with a ten year younger student of hers. She says she loves both, her husband and her lover. However this state of happiness came to an end when she got pregnant. Since she had never gotten pregnant with her husband in seven years, she was certain it to be her lover’s child. But then she suffered a miscarriage. As at that time her
lover had to move back to Kansai to find a job after graduation, this concluded their extramarital relationship.

Moral concerns about immorality or feelings of guilt against their husbands are never mentioned in the analyzed articles – not even in the case of designer Yano Nashiko, where her affair involves a dependent, a student of hers.57 What the articles however show is a very active way of “curing” their marital unhappiness. This chosen way is not a solution of structural change. The women use the power they have on a very personal scale: not accepting their unhappy marriages, which some of them feel they do not have enough power to even flee through divorce. Yet they do have the power for engaging in an extramarital affair. This reminds of the tactics of “weapons of the weak”, as described by Ogasawara (1998) in regards to the relationship of salarymen and office ladies.

Marital discord as a result from learning that the partner is straying from the marriage is often expressed by severe feelings of jealousy. This experience is described in two articles, in which women describe their personal experiences, such as in article #12 (Fujin kōron, June 1975) with the case of school-teacher Takimoto Yoshiko (see above) and in article #35 (Fujin kōron, April 1975) with Sawai Keiko, age 33, housewife and mother, who becomes very jealous when she learns of her husband’s long-lasting affair. There is no mentioning that she had thoughts about divorce, but she is rather described as somehow managing to get through this period, and eventually is lucky as the husband

57 One possible explanation could be that issues of morality and guilt are fundamentally Christian values, yet Christianity is only a small minority religion in Japan.
leaves the girlfriend. In this article also the girlfriend is described as jealous, namely because her lover’s wife gave birth to a child while at the same time he is having an affair. Complementing these personal accounts, *Fujin kōron* offers also more scientific approaches. Article #36 (*Fujin kōron*, August 1970) entitled “Yakimochi shakaigaku”, a ‘sociological analysis of jealousy’, written by Murashima Ken'ichi, discusses diverse forms of jealousy, among them also jealousy felt by women due to their straying husbands.

Whereas the stories of Harue, Akiko, Yoshiko and others portray comparatively strong and to a certain degree independent women, and therefore can be considered progressive in their portrayal to a degree, there are also examples of rather conservative ideas on marriage and gender roles. In article #37 (*Fujin kōron*, April 1975), writer Tomishima Takeo explains men’s motivations about extramarital affairs, discussing them as something “natural”, like eating. His overall message in the article is that married women should not worry about their marriages even if their husbands have affairs. Men will stray as they are attracted to youth, but they will come back. Tomishima’s suggestion for wives is to best not say anything. There are men for who sex is like eating. They like to eat a lot and diverse foods. Tomishima continues to say that there are significant differences between men and women having extramarital affairs. Whereas men's extramarital sex is supposedly purely penis-oriented, women who have an extramarital affair are, in his view, in it with their whole bodies and minds. That is why, Tomishima concludes, it is okay for men to stray, but not for wives.
4.10. *Fūfu bessei* and outspoken progressiveness

Japanese law requires partners to choose a family name at the time of marriage. In almost all instances, it is thus the wife taking on the name of the husband and “moving” into her husband’s family registry. Ever since the feminist movement, this legal obligation has been a source of dispute. Several times a change of the law has been debated in the diet, but never so far has passed legislation and thus remains still a significant obstacle on the way to gender equality in Japan. The analyzed women’s magazine articles are usually very quiet about this topic. However, it is in article #38 (*Fujin kōron*, October 1980), where we find a strong position on this law of *fūfu bessei*. Here, writer Anzai Atsuko discusses and criticizes the law that women have to change their last names to those of their husbands. She describes how complicated that law has made her own life. She begins with explaining that she had gotten pregnant in 1946, in response to which they registered her in the baby’s father’s *koseki*, his family registry for marriage, an act through which she also had to take up his family name. She is of the opinion that it is odd and really problematic to sort of move out of one’s own family and move into that of the husband’s through this act. She further mentions that she read a book about slavery and she now considers the name change requirement, a law not yet changed but rather still a topic of public debate in politics and the media even in 2010, a form of slavery. She eventually divorced her husband, and remarried, which meant a name change process that turned weird and which she greatly opposes. As a consequence of the divorce she returned back to her maiden name, only to lose it again to her new husband’s family name at the time of remarriage. This makes this article a rather outspoken commentary on the persistent gender inequality surrounding
marriage in Japan. And since this law on *fufu bessei* still has not changed and still is a topic of public debate in politics and the media even in 2010, such as in the current news about the pregnancy of politician Noda Seiko and her outspokenness against this still unchanged law, 30 years later, it certainly points to *Fujin koron*’s progressiveness at the time.

In addition, the article appears also as progressive as it mentions pre-marital pregnancy as marriage motivation. Raymo (2007) and others have argued that instances of *dekichatta-kon* have only been increasing since the late 1990s. So we find here an early case of *dekichatta-kon*.

### 4.11. Conclusion

Overall my evaluation of this discourse for women born in the 1930s and 1940s is that it is quite progressive and which I eventually would term “ahead”, thus the title of this dissertation. I base this evaluation on the fact that the analyzed articles frequently discuss the equality between the partners, idealize “househusbands”, are pro-choice in regards to divorce, treat sexuality as a topic of growing interest, and often call for the wife’s independence, which often goes hand in hand with her employment.

All this seems much more progressive than what could be gauged from the reflection of official statistics on household and childcare chore division among married people, divorce statistics, or female employment patterns. It also seems more progressive than the image academic literature had presented of the 1970s and 1980s, which for a long time was very much influenced by such male-centered, mainstream and middle-class analyses such as that by Vogel (1963) on salarymen families. A female perspective of
marriages only was analyzed in more detail in the early 1980s by studies such as those by Bernstein (1983), Smith and Wiswell (1982), and Lebra (1984), which finally portrayed Japanese women as having a certain level of agency, no matter how unequal they were and are in society. The frequent focus of issues of independence, female employment, and equality in connection with marriage as well as the diversity in marriage patterns in the 1970s and 1980s, as shown in the discourse in the women’s magazines, is also something that could not have been guessed or be known from works such as Vogel (1963).

The same also goes for issues of social stratification and the influence of class and poverty on aspirations towards and experiences of marriage. The women’s magazine articles are interesting venues to understand these issues, their changes over time and their role for, against, or within marriages, and reflecting the increase in material well-being throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with severe poverty less described over the course of time. In contrast, the English-language academic discourse however at the time still very much focused on middle class Japan and offered overall still a rather homogenizing view of Japanese marriages. Japan’s stratified society, now well-known under the term *kakusa shakai*, only really became a focus of academic analyses in greater numbers throughout the 1990s, thus to a much later date.

Another topic described in the women’s magazine articles is that of single motherhood, portraying at the same time issues of poverty and lower class lives and the hardships particularly of the children of poor single mothers, as that greatly influences their own marriage behavior and attitudes. Single motherhood again is something thought of to be extremely limited – and which it is in sheer quantity – and thus only in 2007 became the
main focus of an ethnographic study of these households (Korobtseva 2007, Hertog 2009). However, among the single women described in the women’s magazine discourse, none of them has never married, but rather these are divorced or widowed mothers. Korobtseva and Hertog however also specifically focus on never-married women, who however hide that fact often by lying to their surroundings and labeling themselves rather as divorcees – which carries less social stigma than the status of ‘never married single mother’ – even in 21st century Japan.

However, some findings within the women’s magazines very much are equally described within the academic literature for that time period and thus are no surprise. These include 1) the fact that marriage motivations are rarely mentioned, which fits into our understanding of marriage for the generation of women born in the 1930s and 1940s to be more so out of convention and understood as social norm rather than as free choice. Adding to this is the fact that the majority of marriage problems described in the discourse results from marriages not having been happy from the outset, further pointing to these marriages as not being based on the romantic love ideal but rather having been decided upon for different reasons, such as marriage as a “must do”.

Another issue equally described in the academic literature for the time is that of abortion and sexuality, a topic which was studied quite early by Coleman (1983), a work which exactly looked not at mainstream but at the fringes of society to gauge social changes in their early development, as Steinhoff (1983) in her preface highlighted. And it is exactly the same which the discourses in the women’s magazine, particularly for the cohort of women born in the 1930s and 1940s, can be said to provide – a look beyond mainstream
society. However, as mentioned earlier, a major gap in the content of women’s magazine articles is their failure to discuss or recognize macro structural factors, which equally might have a significant influence on the women. Surrounding the issue of sexuality, abortion as most prevalent form of contraception in Japan versus the much delayed legalization of the pill have a lot to do with the powerful stakeholders, such as the medical and pharmaceutical associations and the whole policy making process. This is described at length in Norgren (1998, 2001).

Overall the women’s magazine articles described above provide a multitude and diversity among the voices found in Fujin kōron, which aids in the impression that society, and women as their driving force, is undergoing significant change.
5. **LIVING CHANGE AND LIBERATION: Marriage discourses for women born in the 1950s**

5.1. **Growing up in prosperity: Women born in the 1950s and 1960s**

Women born in the 1950s and 1960s grew up at the height of the student’s movement at the end of the 1960s and the women’s movement, which began in 1970. When the delay in marriages and the drop in the fertility rate became visible in statistics since the mid 1970s, these women are in their teens and twens. Their adolescence is however also very much still a time in which white collar corporate culture (the salaryman doxa; Roberson and Suzuki 2002) continued going strong. The women also grew up during a time of spectacular growth of the economy, but when the bubble economy eventually burst in 1989, these women are in their 20s and 30s. After that Japan is said to have entered the “lost decade” (*ushinawareta jūnen*), a time signified in particular through the high growth in temporary workers and *frēta* (*freeter*), forms of unstable employment and a far cry from the life-long employment so verociously imagined to be the form of employment of middle-class Japan.

The shift in role models further exemplifies the drastic changes the women born in the 1950s and 1960s went through. Role model of the 1970s was Yamaguchi Momoe (*1959), singer and actress, who already in 1980, at the age of 21 and the height of her career, got married, quit her career and became a full-time housewife. The role model of the 1980s then became Matsuda Seiko (*1962), who, even though also married young,
continued her career throughout marriage and motherhood, and in later years had a widely publicized divorce and an affair with an American man.\footnote{See also More, August 1995, #39 for a discussion on Yamaguchi Momoe and Matsuda Seiko.}

But also the well-known “words of the year” give an impression of the social changes influencing this generation of women. In 1981, the word “maternity wedding dress” made it onto the list of “contemporary words”, mirroring the supposed increase in weddings being held while the bride is already pregnant, so an increase in dekicchatta-kon, something that academics however see to have only had statistical significance since the 1990s (Raymo 2007). Another word, this time from the list of popular words of the year 1992, is batsuichi, meaning divorce, but literally refers to the “crossing out” of the women’s name from the husband’s family registry at the event of a divorce. This “fashionable” word then describes the growing social acceptance of divorce in society and also the higher frequency of divorce.

5.2. General trends

The generation of women born in the 1950s is hypothetically the target group for Croissant in the 1980s and Fujin kōron since the 1990s (see Figure 13). In Croissant, the discourse on marriage motivations in the 1980s sees actually the highest frequency for the category “no motivation” and thus shows great similarities in that respect with Fujin kōron of the 1990s (see Figure 20). Also the other categories are similarly distributed within the two women’s magazines throughout the two decades: The second most frequent motivation for marriage is “happiness and love” in Croissant and also a frequent topic in Fujin kōron. And also the
lack or near absence of several topics is similar. In *Croissant*, several motivations are not or barely mentioned at all, such as “*dekichatta-kon*”, “*miai*”, “outside factors”, “*tekireiki*”, and “marriage as goal”, and in the 1990s in *Fujin kōron*, this is the case for “work” “*dekichatta-kon*”, “outside factors”, “security”, and “*tekireiki*”. The difference however lies in *Fujin kōron* to discuss “*miai*” and “marriage as goal” quite frequently, which is not the case in *Croissant*. So the discourse overall becomes more diverse in terms of quantity when readers graduate from reading *Croissant* to *Fujin kōron*.

**Figure 20:** Discourse on marital motivations for women born in the 1950s
In regards to marital happiness, there is an overall decline in articles discussing marital happiness, once readers graduate from *Croissant* to *Fujin kōron*, but the diversity and distribution is fairly similar in quantity. For the readers of *Croissant* during the 1980s as well as those of *Fujin kōron* of the 1990s, most frequently “good relationships” in a wider sense are discussed as sources of marital happiness. In addition, in *Croissant* and *Fujin kōron* are also some references to a woman’s independence as source of marital happiness, and some articles referring to extramarital affairs making married women happy. This in particular is similar as to what I described in Chapter 4 for readers of *Fujin kōron* born in the 1930s and 1940s. And last but not least, both in *Croissant* in the 1980s and *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s, having children as source of marital happiness is only very
rarely made the topic of discussion. Overall, a difference between the discourses in the two magazines lies in the fact that in *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s, the frequency of references to marital happiness is much reduced compared to the quantity in *Croissant*. And whereas in 1980’s *Croissant* one article referred to “security” as source of happiness, there is no more mentioning of that in *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s.

**Figure 22:** Discourse on marital discord for women born in the 1950s

In regards to marital problems, the opposite trend in terms of quantitative development can be gauged, namely here a significant overall *increase* in marital problems, once readers graduate from *Croissant* to *Fujin kōron*. 

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Yet again both *Croissant* in the 1980s and *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s portray several similarities. In *Croissant* in the 1980s, the highest frequency of references to marital problems can be found in the area of divorce, followed by issues of independence of the wife, “bad relationship” in general, and instances of infidelity. In addition, it should be noted that whereas the existence of equality between the partner in terms of housework and childcare duties as well as the wife’s employment are seen as factors for marital happiness, on the other side of the coin, the absence of these elements leads to marital discord. And in terms of quantity, the absence of these factors seems to weigh heavier and trigger more unhappiness than their existence can bring. This can not only be seen in the discourse in *Croissant*, but overall in all four women’s magazines, just to varying degrees. Negative are in that respect if the husband opposes the wife’s employment outside the home or if the husband does not understand his wife’s loneliness as full-time housewife.

When readers move on to reading *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s, they are then presented with a fairly even spread quantitatively between complaining about a “bad relationship” and reporting about divorce. This is followed by comparatively less frequent instances of mentioning infidelity, financial problems, and sexuality.

### 5.3. Rejecting marriage

Instances of people discussing having no motivation to marry saw their prime in the women’s magazine *Croissant* throughout the 1980s. In *Croissant* in the 1980s, article #165 (March 25, 1980) is the first and quite lengthy article to mention this. The article is significant in the way that it is very detailed, mixes public survey data on marriage with
qualitative interviews that were conducted with a large number of women, and features women’s voices from different generations and with different life-courses in regards to marriage – a diversity which is astounding in 1980 and which also points to generational changes in regards to thoughts and opinions about marriage.

The article begins with the detailed introduction of a recently conducted public survey on the declining number of women whose goal is marriage. The article, respectively the survey, points to changes in the views and opinions of Japanese women on marriage, such as that the sayings “Women cannot achieve happiness without marriage” or “Marriage is a woman’s happiness” are outdated by now, meaning 1979, the time the survey was conducted.\(^{59}\) Among other information, the article states that the percentage of single women who do not want to get married rose from 14% in 1972 to 25% in 1979, thus a large increase, whereas the percentage of women wanting to marry fell from 68% to 62%. Women who \textit{definitely} want to marry decreased from 32% to 23%. The article calls this trend “single women’s distancing from marriage”. These changes are underlined by the increasing percentage of women believing that if one can live on their own, then it is okay not to marry, which rose from 13% to 23% in the seven years between 1972 and 1979.

The article then goes on to present individual women, describing their lives and marital life-courses, views, and opinions. Interesting here are three elements: one is that all but one (and this woman is not working because she is nine months pregnant) of these women are employed, which is an overrepresentation of working women, since we know

\(^{59}\) The survey was conducted in two years, 1972 and 1979, in order to track longitudinal attitudinal changes. The percentage of women thinking that marriage is woman’s happiness has greatly declined over the seven years from 34% to 12%. And women thinking “because a woman's happiness lies in marriage I should better get married”, fell from 40% to 32%.
that in Japan in 1982 overall 55.9% percent of all women age 15 to 64 were employed (Saso 1990: 4). The other element of interest is that the article offers views of women from different cohorts, thus allowing a glimpse on social change, even though the article is not explicitly organized by cohorts, but rather colorfully mixes the views of women of different ages. But reordered, a pattern becomes visible. And last but not least, the sum of their comments shows the plurality of opinions and life-courses that existed in 1980 Japan. But only really in recent years in the 21st century has the pluralization of lifestyles become a major topic in academic writing. So academia lags behind to a certain degree.

The generational change in terms of attitudes towards marriage presented in the article is the following: The oldest woman given voice in the article is born in 1931, thus 49 years old at the time of the article. Her concern about and favor for marriage is purely of a practical nature, being concerned about the socially fragile standing of unmarried women. She suggests that it is better to marry, because unmarried women are not rich and are not physically and psychologically secure. She gives an interesting illustration of this by saying that “because a women's range in society is small, if the man doesn't provide the stage, the woman can't sing”. You don’t find that practical nature anymore in marriage motivations of women born in later decades.

Among the women born in the 1940s, thus ages between 30 and 39, are two 36 year old actresses, one who had just married and another who says that she has never yet thought about marriage, yet does want children at some point, and a 39 year old lawyer, a mother of two and who had gotten married already while she was a student (gakusei

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60 The percentage of women in the labor force among the entire female population is 29.5%; see http://www.jiwe.or.jp/english/situation/working.html, accessed Aug. 6, 2010.
Thus these three women present uncommon “extremes” in marital age, comparatively “late” in life and comparatively “early” in life. In the 1980s, the *kekkon tekireiki* was still considered to be around age 25, with the by now outdated “Christmas cake” metaphor still going strong at the time.\(^{61}\) Thus women marrying in their 30s or not yet being married were uncommon at the time. Equally uncommon – and still very much is, is the other extreme of getting married during one’s time as student. The mean age at first marriage in 1980 is 25.2 for women, in 2008 28.5.

The 39 year old lawyer describes her relationship with her spouse as very equal. “We never thought about divorce, and that we both work is normal for us. I didn't even take childcare leave when I had my two children, because being an independent lawyer is kind of like being self-employed. If you don't work, you don't have any income.” She further states that lately the number of people getting divorced during their first year of marriage is rising. She sees the main reasons in women now having jobs with which they can or could at least feed themselves (meaning they are financially independent enough not *having* to marry for economic reasons), and in the fact that the demerit of being divorced is declining in the world.

One of these divorcees is another interviewee, a 40 year old woman who was married at the age of 24. She had been raised with the belief that the highest happiness for a woman is becoming a bride. This mother of two divorced at the age of 31, and points to the hardships of women living alone. She herself hopes for her future for finding a lover, yet not a second marriage necessarily. Other women from this generational cohort include a 32

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\(^{61}\) Japanese women resembling a Christmas cake, popular until (age 25), and after that getting highly unpopular pretty fast. For a more detailed description, see for example White 2002.
year old designer, who had married in 1972, at the age of 26, and just last year had a child, as well as a 32 year old single woman who specifically states that she enjoys being single, yet with concerns for her future financial security: “But of course I am scared about the future, naturally, because I am working as a freelancer.”

Women born in the 1950s are the youngest cohort in this group of interviewees. The younger the women, the more they harbor a marriage wish and rather traditional views of becoming a fulltime homemaker within this article. For example, a 26 year old stylist wants to marry, as she thinks that being alone is bothersome. She has a three year younger boyfriend. He lives with his parents and is still a student. But even though she wants to marry, she states that for her, marriage is not everything, and she explicitly mentions that she does want to continue working after marriage. On the other hand, however, a 22 year old student also voices her desire for getting married. But even though she is still currently employed, she plans to quit working once she gets married. This is similar to the opinion of a 21 year old student. She is quoted as saying: “In ten years I think I will be married and have one child. And probably be a kyōiku mama [a full-time dedicated “education mother”; for more on education mothers see (White 2002, Allison 1996)].” Yet even though she idealizes a traditional division of gender roles in marriage, she nonetheless is critical of understanding marriage as happiness-guarantor. She continues with saying: “I don't think marriage equals happiness. Marriage is something natural, but happiness you only find if you put effort in it.” As Tanaka-Naji (2008) states, even though the fertility rate is falling, the wish for marriage and having children has remained more or less stable and high.
Two other articles in *Croissant* in 1980, which also mention women having no motivation for marriage (*Croissant*, June 25, 1980, #40 and #41) are interestingly both translations of interviews with Simone de Beauvoir62 from articles in the feminist magazine *MS* of the year 1972. This points to two interesting factors. One is that it underlines the rather feminist approach *Croissant* had in its early years of existence63, and the other is that this is a translation of material eight years prior. So one can clearly see the delay of almost a decade in the feminist wave hitting Japan. Within these interviews, de Beauvoir uses rather strong language by stating that she believes marriages to be a danger to women. Already the title of the article leaves no doubt about her argument: “Marriage is dangerous for women”. She sees marriage as a huge trap and childcare the hard labor of a slave. She calls for women to please rethink their opinion on marriage. She says: “Your social standing is different if you are married. I know there are reasons to marry. For example if one wants their own children. Not being married and having children is still very difficult. […] For one's independence it is most important to be working. Even if you are married, don't give that up. But work does not solve everything. If we liberate ourselves from housework, we have time to think.”

The discourse on women having no motivation to marry is equally diverse in *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s, and thus provides continuity in the quality and content of the discourse,

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62 De Beauvoir (1908-1986), was very active in the French feminist movement. Her work as well as her private life became very well known. She chose to remain unmarried, but lived together with Jean-Paul Satre (1905-1980).
63 More on the “blaming” of that magazine for having changed from its feminist stance and promotion of singlehood to a conservative agenda and marriage and motherhood, and the discourse that spun around that, resulting in a total of three published books and numerous articles in the press, see Holthus (2009).
as the women hypothetically “graduate” from reading *Croissant* in the 1980s to *Fujin kōron* in the 1990s. But article #42 (*Fujin kōron*, June 1990), written by freelance writer Hanyū Sakuru, reflects the fact that having no motivation for marriage is however still a rarely life-long lived choice for Japanese women. She tells about her class mates from graduate school at a women’s university, signifying that they are all well-educated women. These women are now in their 30s. Of these, only one woman has remained unmarried. The married friends encourage her to not give up hope on marriage, yet she says that she does not really see the need to marry anymore. So women remaining unmarried are in the minority and their marital status is subject to peer pressures, in society as well as in this article.\(^6^4\)

In the same issue of *Fujin kōron*, article #43 (*Fujin kōron*, June 1990), on the other hand, presents several short reports by unmarried women, who either harbored a marriage wish but eventually gave up on it, and three women who really do not want to get married. The eight women are between the ages of 25 and 33, are all employed, with very diverse professions. Even though the majority of the women are OL, one woman is a *freeter* (a temporary employee), one an advertising designer, one in sales, and one is a ‘companion’. The reasons for not wanting to marry are equally diverse. Whereas one woman does not want to marry because of the negative example of her father, an alcoholic, another woman rejects becoming a full-time housewife. She believes that marriage sounds like stress, and having to cook and clean for another person besides herself is not what she finds attractive. And last but not least, the 29 year old companion does not want to marry due to her

\(^{64}\) Lifetime celibacy rates in Japan are quite low, with 4 percent in 1980 and 5 percent in 1995 (Retherford et. al. 2001: 66).
experience, as she says. She does not believe that men can stop having extramarital relationships and expresses a rather fatalistic view on relationships and men in general.

*Fujin kōron* also offers voices from women who actually have gone through marriage for one reason or another, but have eventually gotten divorced. It is now, post-divorce, that they report having no motivation for remarriage. In article #44 (*Fujin kōron*, June 1990), writer Shimazaki Kyōko reports about the divorce stories of several women. It becomes clear from the stories of these women that divorce brings poverty, yet freedom. The level of freedom, achieved through divorce, is something several women report of not having experienced before, so this positive outcome of divorce contributes to these women’s now absent motivation for remarriage as they fear they would loose that again through another marriage.

It also should be noted that not having a motivation to marry or remarry could be a permanent decision or a temporary one. This for example is the case in article #45 (*Fujin kōron*, February 1995). The author is Yamamura Reiko, housewife and essayist. She reports about her first marriage, which was followed by divorce and remarriage. She describes going through divorce as a process from hell, but that once the divorce was finalized, her life turned into heaven. She reports that then she had not wanted to remarry, as she became to dislike the whole institution of marriage. But eventually she did remarry after all, and describes herself as very happy now after all.

Just as Alexy (2008) showed in her dissertation research, constructing one’s own “divorce story” is a social construction, is influenced by the time and date, the audience, and to whom this story is being told. The same, and not just for the topic of divorce, but
marriage and relationships in general, is also constructed within the women’s magazine articles. The “stories” are told at a particular point in time, and situations can change, opinions can change, marriages can divorce or turn happy, etc. Change is part of the overall “package” of and within a marriage. Another example can be found in article #46 (Fujin kōron, April 1995), in which writer Miyamoto Michiko describes a similar change of mind, from an earlier opposition to marriage, due to believing marriage to limit ones freedom, to eventually ending up marrying nonetheless. So it has to be kept in mind that the “end result” in a woman’s life, being married or not, does not necessarily provide the whole picture of opinions on marriage. It is certainly more complex than often assumed.

Further underlining the limited desire for marriage are two articles (Fujin kōron, June 1990, #47; August 1990, #48), in which both women mention that they do not like marriage in itself, but it cannot be helped since they want children, who are their ultimate motivation. And since marriage and motherhood go hand in hand and out-of-wedlock births are still, even in the beginning of the 21st century, only around 2 percent in Japan (see Chapter 2 for more details), the option of having children without getting married first is not even considered by the two women. So marriage becomes a means to an end. And even in articles that discuss love and also the romantic side of it, women voice their opposition to the institution of marriage. Yet they not necessarily live out that opposition by not getting married. So being married or not does not reflect if one is generally pro or con marriage, but rather shows the persisting strong structural and societal norms for getting married.
The same goes for the surprising arranged marriage of literary author Hayashi Mariko, born 1954, in the year 1990, so at the age of 36. Article #49 (Fujin kōron, June 1990) discusses her seemingly sudden change of heart in regards to marriage, and in more general about older women, how marriage is still seen “as goal”, yet also how marriage is more difficult to achieve and a partner to find when one gets older. Apparently though, Hayashi had experienced significant outside pressure for her to getting married, even though the marriage can eventually be interpreted as “happy-end”.

5.4. Parental role in marriage

Readers of Croissant during the 1980s were exposed to detailed reports on “passionate love” as motivation for marriage, a love strong enough to withstand severe obstacles, such as the opposition to the union by either parent. We find exactly this perseverance to “survive” parental opposition also as reasons for why a marriage is considered happy, namely because the couple already went through hardship together. To overcome obstacles is considered to make a couple even more appreciative of having managed to endure, overcome, and “win”, and thus glorifies endurance (gaman). But whereas parental opposition, as described in Chapter 4, often hinders the couple to go through with the marriage, here the couples manage to overcome the often severe opposition from the parents.

One example to be named here is article #50 (Croissant, January 1980), which presents numerous “relationship histories” in detail. Five of the 12 stories are significant in

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65 Not only is Hayashi “outside the norm” by marrying quite late for Japanese standards at the age of 36, but she also gave birth to her first child in the year 1999, when she was age 44.
that they report about the opposition the couple faced from the parents. Interesting in this context is the absence of the possibility or even considering getting married without parental approval. So marriage at that time can still very much be seen as a family affair beyond just the couple themselves. These relationships furthermore have in common that all of them married quite early, and several had already gotten together during their school years:

1) A 29 year old woman from Saitama prefecture had entered a company as OL after graduation from high school. It was then that she met her now husband, who at the time was however engaged to someone else and also ended up marrying that other woman, even though he loved this narrator. He had only gone through with the marriage out of obligation, and thus filed for divorce after only a few months into the marriage, so that he could be free to marry the woman he really loves. Yet his parents were against it and threatened to not even attend the wedding, an affront which however in the last minute was averted as his parents after all did attend the wedding. The woman describes this as dramatic, passionate love against obstacles and considers her and her husband as two happy human beings.

2) A 28 year old woman tells her story and that of her 27 year old husband. They had promised each other already in high school to getting married, but, as she writes, “of course” our parents were strongly opposed, particularly as his parents had “someone better” in mind for their aspiring dentist son. Out of protest her partner then moved out of his parents’ place to his aunt in Osaka. She describes the separation as a very hard time, which they dealt with by writing each other letters every single day and continued to intensify
their relationship. Eventually his parents gave in, as he had threatened to give up his university studies to becoming a dentist, apparently a very important factor for his parents. So after they gave their permission for their marriage, he continues with his studies to be a dentist, and eventually last year, so 1979, the couple finally got married.

4) She, a 26 year old French woman and described as being “strong”, fell in love with a one year younger Japanese man on first sight several years back. At that time, he was working as cameraman and she was an exchange student. Interestingly, she was the one eventually asking him to getting married. Yet his parents and also her mother in France opposed the relationship. This was followed by a longer period of separation. During their long distance relationship, they sent each other love letters and endured a lot of travelling back and forth, in order to keep their passion for each other alive. Eventually then, all parents consented to the marriage. Overall however, these stories are actually less interesting in terms of the way they describe long-lasting long distance relationships and their “passionate love”, which they supposedly managed to carry over into their married lives, and which then is the basis of their “good partner relationships”, but rather the fact that the role and involvement of the parents and parents-in-law and especially their opposition to relationships and marriages is quite apparent.

Whereas all these descriptions above of passionate love resulted in happy marriages, there are also unhappy outcomes mentioned in the articles, with one woman even attempting to commit suicide, but fails and eventually ends up marrying on the rebound in an arranged marriage - a month after her suicide attempt.
5.5. **Good bye tekireiki**

Alternatives to the “standard lifecourse” of getting married before or around age 25 are often the topic of discussion within the discourse of *Croissant* in the 1980s. Article #51 (February 10, 1980), for example, makes this its main topic. Here six women give detailed information about their lives and how it came that they married very late for Japanese standards at the time, between their late 30s and early 50s. Some of them also report about having become a mother at an equally comparatively late age (age 35 and 37). The article mentions tekireiki, but specifically argues against it by saying that tekireiki, so the right age to marry, is *anytime* in a woman’s life, not just this small window around age 25.

One woman, born 1932, married a widower with two children, when she was 44 years old, at a time when she had pretty much already given up on her dream of marriage. Another woman, born 1926, had been a Takarazuka revue star and had married also at age 44. And another woman, born 1923, married at the age of 53. She explains that when she was in her tekireiki, it was the stormy post-war period, so thoughts on how and where to get food was most important, so she just did not think about marriage. As her father had already died, she was forced to work her whole life. Then at age 53, she embarked on her first omiai with a 65 year old man who already had grandchildren. The problem of a deceased father and issues of poverty are also mentioned by another woman, born 1940. She is a pro-bowler, whose father had died when she was only three years of age, so that she was forced to help her mother raise her two siblings. As she was poor, she thought she could only get married to another poor man, which did not seem an attractive prospect, and thus did not embark on getting married. Furthermore, for years she had been busy as pro-
bowler, and did not even want to fall in love. But then she eventually got close to another pro-bowler, seven years her junior, whom she eventually married at age 35. She gave birth to their child at age 39. As the article again shows, women’s magazines report about women older and younger than their actual target group. The women with “untraditional marriage ages” are women born in the 1920s and 1930s, so significantly older than Croissants actual target group.

Whereas this article hints on the continuity across birth cohorts in respect to their “unconventional” marriage ages outside the pre-defined “social norm”, other articles however point more to generational change. Such is the case of article #52 (Fujin kōron, February 1990), where a woman born in the 1950s has followed a mainstream life course (marriage and children) who happens to observe women born in the 1960s during an omiai party. Written by 33 year old Endō Saya (born 1957), a freelance writer from Tokyo, the article describes her experience accompanying a girlfriend to an omiai party. Endō, herself married with children, describes her omiai experience in a sort of anthropological way. She describes in detail the men and women participating in the omiai party, some of whom have attended those parties many times already, one even as many as eight times. Yet participation in such a party is expensive. The party entrance fee costs 900 Yen, in addition to the monthly membership fee. And if the party results in marriage talks, an additional 20,000 Yen are charged.

Endō describes the male participants to seem to lie about their height by claiming to be taller than they really are. Most of them dressed in salaryman grey suits, whereas the women dressed mostly in pink or white. The age range of the party participants was wide,
ranging from age 21 to 34. Endō was shocked to see a 21 year old there, commenting "why would she already attend such a party? She should be busy with studying, friends, starting work". Endō furthermore noticed through speaking with many of the people at the event that they had very, or better, too specific ideas about their ideal partner, which Endō assumes to be the reason why they had not found anyone yet. Her overall critical or more so pitying evaluation is that she found the people rather lonely and understood the party itself as just a big illusion, hinting also on blaming the young people themselves for not finding a spouse. So the article suggests mostly attitudinal changes between generations in regards to marriage, by having a woman, born in the 1950s and married with children, observing and discussing single women born in the 1960s, eyeing them as very different to her own self.

5.6. Constructing “good” versus “bad” partnerships

As stated above, having a “good relationship” is the main source of marital happiness. But what is considered to be a good partnership? The diversity of the articles and the stories being told within that category, as well as their overall comparatively small numbers (if compared to the quantity in discourse on marital problems) make it challenging to find significant tendencies. Croissant very much focused in the 1980s on passionate love and the perseverance against the resistance of the parents as sources of marital happiness, as described above. As the relationships had gone through so much before they even were allowed to get to the marital stage, this served to make the couples even more so
appreciative of what they had in each other. Yet this is something only brought up within *Croissant* and also only within the 1980s.

Egality between the partners, their fair share both in housework and childcare, is also only discussed within *Croissant* in the 1980s and not in *Fujin kōron* of the 1990s. This could either be seen as significant decline in discussing this issue over time, or it could also point to the “motor” function of media, and in this case that of *Croissant*, as this falls together with the magazine’s rather extraordinary period of very liberal tendencies (which later however vanished from *Croissant*). By seeing that the relatively high number of people reporting to be happy with the equality of work-share inside the home in the 1980s in *Croissant* falls together with a time when the magazine was most “liberal” and most feminist leaning, these examples of couples enjoying equality with their partner in regards to housework and childcare could possibly be trying to point out the rare examples of what could be possible among married couples. Showing these “positive” examples could be understood as a call for other couples to strive for and thus underline media’s role as “motor” for social change.\(^{66}\) Now in the discourse in 1990’s *Fujin kōron* to have there pretty much no discussion on gender equality within the home could be a more “realistic” portrayal of Japanese married couples. Thus it cannot be argued that gender equality has seen a decline in Japanese society, but in *Croissant* in the 1980s, the more “rare” examples could have been highlighted, contrary to the small number of couples actually engaging in gender equal relationships.

\(^{66}\) More on the role of media as “mirror” and “motor” see Holthus 2009.
It certainly cannot be argued that equality between the sexes in marriages had been achieved by the 1990s in society, and it is therefore that this is just not discussed anymore within the 1990s in *Fujin kōron*. This is rather unlikely, particularly when statistics tell us that Japanese husbands still spend only between 20 and 27 minutes a day in the household (depending if both partners are employed or just the husband), compared to 7:30 hours, which full-time housewives on average spend on housework daily (and still 4:33 if they are employed).\(^6^7\) Thus gender equality within married couples is definitely not achieved yet fully throughout society. And, as a woman in article #53 (*Croissant*, 1980) states, it is men that have not yet fully undergone the changes in mentality and attitude in order to achieve full gender equality in regards to the work in the home. In this article, several couples with significant age differences are presented. In three of the couples, the man is older (22, 17, and 13 years older). In just one case, it is the woman who is older (9 years older). It is this relationship, which the 43 year old housewife, whose husband is age 34, describes as particularly happy. This is said to be because her husband is from a different generation than her. His generation has supposedly significantly changed from earlier generations of men, so that now changing diapers is not a difficult task anymore for younger men. In her generation these kinds of men are still very rare, she writes. So not only is she now happy with the equality in childcare duties such as diaper changes, but she also specifically picked her spouse for that reason.

\(^6^7\) Inubushi 2000: 35; see also Holthus 2009.
In regards to the construction of “bad” relationships, marital problems are often said to stem from the relationship “being bad”. This has to be distinguished from relationships or the partner him- or herself changing negatively throughout the marriage. As Alexy (2010) also points out in regards to how her interviewees describe their divorce histories, that there are two main patterns of stories: either the relationship is described as bad from the start, something inherently wrong, which became unacceptable, or the relationship or the partner as such changing negatively over time. Yet comparing the discourse in the women’s magazines, the frequency of people reporting the relationship to have changed over time into the negative is much less so mentioned than the fact that the relationship had been somehow wrong from the start, and thus is identified in almost all instances as the most frequent discord category.

Within the discourse in Croissant in the 1980s, a significant amount of references to negative characteristics of the partner are what triggers the relationship to be identified as a “bad relationship”. Negative characteristics of the partner are for example that the husband pays no attention to his wife, is too controlling, has no understanding of her desires and wishes, or is an alcoholic. In Fujin kōron in the 1990s, we find a similar amount of references to negative characteristics of the partner. They are, for example: The husband does not understand his wife and daughter; the husband has a cold character, the husband is highly critical of his wife (she is too involved in culture center activities, she is too much of an education mother (kyōiku mama) or she talks too long on the phone and has too much of a “life” outside marriage).
Furthermore, the identification of the relationship as bad also comes from the partners said to be incompatible, such as the partners having different values in life, the couple not having good communication, frequent arguments, or not having communication at all. And as mentioned above, the husband’s unavailability mostly due to his heavy work-schedule and thus also his uninvolvement in household and childcare work contributes as well to the marital problems.

Domestic violence is another contributing element of a relationship being considered bad. We find in Croissant in the 1980s two references to it, in Fujin kōron five. In some instances, domestic violence is only mentioned sort of “in passing”, and not necessarily as the only or main problem in the relationship, in other instances it is the one and only problem. In Croissant (March 10, 1980, #54) among several stories of women and their marital problems, one woman reports about experiencing domestic violence, but for the sake of her daughter endures this and holds off with getting a divorce until the daughter is grown up, so that the parental divorce would cause her the least hardship. In Fujin kōron in the 1990s, domestic violence is also described as one element among many in contributing to marital problems and one of the reasons for women filing for divorce. In addition, what can be found in Fujin kōron, which is “new”, is the combination of domestic violence with a “foreign element”, which could mean that these foreign-influenced women are feeling less inhibited to discuss domestic violence than women who always only lived in Japan. As the term for domestic violence as such is the English term simply put into Japanese in katakana, domesutikku baiorensu, the awareness about domestic violence is said to have been triggered in large part since the term is available in Japan. The term used
before, kateinai bōryoku, violence in the home, often rather meant the violence of children against their parents. One such example within the women’s magazine discourse is article #46 (Fujin kōron, April 1995), in which writer Miyamoto Michiko tells of her rather complicated life and about her understanding of love and marriage and what they mean to her. She had lived for twenty years in New York, but then eventually followed her lover back to Japan with mother and daughter. In New York she had experienced her first marriage, a period of jealousy and domestic violence, from which she got out through divorce. This negative experience influenced her to think of marriage as killing one’s freedom, yet she nonetheless eventually agrees to a second marriage and this second marriage turns out to be a happy one.

5.7. Striving for independence: The Western ideal of gender equality

Similar to discussing gender equality at home and in childcare as source of happiness, the same is true also for discussing the wife’s employment and her independence within the marriage, namely that the quantitative relevance is greatly declining over time for the generation of readers born in the 1950s. In Croissant in the 1980s, this is referred to as source of happiness within a marriage eight times, yet only three times in Fujin kōron in the 1990s. Interesting feature of these are, that many of these references have a Western influence of some sorts or other. For example in article #41 (Croissant, June 25, 1980), the above mentioned translation of an interview with Simone de Beauvoir, who advocated that it is important for a woman’s independence that she is working, even if or when married. And article #55 (Croissant, February 25, 1980), within the presentation of the film "Scenes
from a marriage”, directed by Ingmar Bergmann and featuring Liv Ullmann, describes the ups and downs of a marriage, where the wife is a 35 year old lawyer, her husband a 42 year old university professor, and they have two daughters.

And in article #56 (Croissant, June 10, 1980), a couple is presented that challenges the stereotypical role division of the man working "outside", the wife "inside" and doing the housework. The article presents the book of American author Mike McGrady entitled *Kitchen Sink Papers - My Life as a House-husband*. Mike McGrady is a 40 year old American newspaper journalist, married for 16 years and having three children, who used to have himself a stereotypical view of fixed gender roles. After the children did not need so much more attention, his wife started her own business and in due course became very busy. With him being full-time employed, something had to be done. So they decided that she would earn the money and he would become house-husband. It is about that that he wrote the book about. Now he knows how important it is for the one cooking to get compliments. He himself used to be many times to late for dinner, but now he knows that that is really disappointing to the one doing the cooking. The couple seems to be very happy with the arrangement, he and his children have no problem with his role as house-husband, and his relationship to his wife actually benefitted from this, as they have now more understanding for each other. The article ends with stating that in the U.S, more women now are working, so that the situation of McGrady could become a more common pattern in the future. *Croissant* then also asks its readers to write to the magazine if they or someone they know has also equally reversed the gender roles in a marriage. As mentioned above, even in *Fujin kōron* in the 1970s and 1980s, we find reports on house-husbands,
both Japanese but also Western (see Chapter 4.3). In that regard, this can be seen as a continuation respectively a discourse more so featured in the 1970s and 1980s.

In _Fujin kōron_, as also mentioned for the earlier birth cohort in Chapter 4, the element of achieving independence through divorce is highlighted also in the 1990s, such as in article #44 (_Fujin kōron_, June 1990), in which several divorce stories of divorced women with and without children are introduced. Gist of the article is that even though divorce is still said to carry some form of social stigma with it, divorce is nonetheless positively reported upon by the divorced women. The most negative part of divorce is still said to be it bringing poverty with it, but on the other hand the divorced women report a level of freedom and liberty which they had not experienced before and thus makes them evaluate their divorces positively overall.

There are also several other parallels to the divorce discourse for the previous generation of women born in the 1930s and 1940s. For the generation of female readers born in the 1950s, divorce is the most frequently discussed topic, both in _Croissant_ 1980s and _Fujin kōron_ in the 1990s. Differences we find in the fact that in _Croissant_ several women report about _kateinai rikon_, meaning divorce within the house. This is not a formal, official form of divorce, but rather means the separation of the couple, while at the same time keeping the same residence – a form of divorce mostly undertaken for maintaining the appearance of a functioning marriage to the “outside”. Throughout the 1980s, when divorce only slowly became more acceptable in society, a certain number of women still obviously feel compelled to choose this divorce alternative. Within the discourse in _Fujin kōron_ in the 1990s however, one would expect the instances of _kateinai rikon_ to be decreasing. Yet we
still find several references to it, as well as also the difficulties of obtaining divorce altogether. This is surprising, particularly since at the same time, article #57 (*Fujin kōron*, December 1990) reports about the increase in middle-aged persons getting a divorce.

### 5.8. Conclusion

This chapter describes the marriage discourses, which the generation of women born in the 1950s were exposed to. As these women grew up through significant social changes and became in young years influenced by the women’s movement, by high economic prosperity as well as its fast and deep decline, these changes can also be seen in the shift in role models for women during the 1980s and 1990s.

The main findings as elaborated above for the discourse for the age cohort of women born in the 1950s, can be summarized as follows:

- A high frequency in the 1980s on women reporting *no* motivation to marry. This is however not only due to a prosperous and independent way of living, as described in Iwao (1993), but rather the women’s magazine articles show numerous reasons, recognizing the diversity among Japanese women and seeing beyond the homogenizing image of middle class, working women.

- Occurrences of non-standard life course models in regards to marriage timing and the share of chores within a marital relationship. This significantly differs from the mainstream and middle class, independent and highly generalizing image of Japanese women, which again was described by Iwao (1993). Whereas Iwao did not recognize diversity, the women’s magazines’ main focus is not just diversity between classes, but
also the heterogeneity of partnership models and marriage patterns, similar to the main findings within the research by White (2002).

- A focus on generational change in terms of attitudes regarding marriage. Rosenberger very much does that as well in her analysis of the changes of the construction of self among Japanese women over the course of three decades (1970s, 1980s, and 1990s) and White (2002), thus covering the same time period as the analysis of the women’s magazines, and in that regard, academic literature points to similar overall findings.

- *Croissant* in the 1980s is quite feminist leaning. The Japanese feminist movement has been analyzed in numerous studies, however its influence onto mainstream mass media such as women’s magazines has been less well researched.

- Continuities to the discourse of *Fujin kōron* for the women born in the two earlier decades can be found in regards to the discussion of the parental opposition to marriage. Interesting in this context is the absence of the possibility or even considering getting married *without* parental approval. So marriage at that time can still very much be seen as a family affair beyond just the couple themselves.

What becomes clear is that the social changes are also reflected within the discourses, either by having articles state statistical data, such as an increase in the divorce rate, or also by presenting more diversity in life course choices and life courses lived. This is done by articles either contrasting women of different ages and their lifestyle choices and the ranges of life choices available to them, or by over-representing a certain lifestyle, as is definitely the case in *Croissant* in the 1980s, underlining its feminist agenda during that
time period. And it is this very liberal stance that is the most significant and probably highly influential to its readers, but which already declined to a certain degree once the readers “graduated” to *Fujin kōron*.

Last but not least, the combination of discussing two aspects of marriage, on the one hand domestic violence and on the other equality in household and childcare chores, with an increase in references to “the West”, is an important element. In the case of domestic violence, an increase in awareness seems to be triggered due to the exposure to “the West”, and in the case of equality among the partners, “the West” is shown as a progressive ideal to aspire to.

This ideal however is not advocated to be experienced by going abroad, as the ‘yellow cab’ discourse of Japanese women flocking to New York or the study by Kelsky (2001) have argued. This is a significant absence within the discourse in the women’s magazines within the select pool of analyzed articles. Looking at the West from Japan, or looking at Westerners within Japan is what the magazines provide, but only in very few exceptions are there reports of Japanese women having made “the leap” abroad within the discourse.
6. RIDDLED WITH INCONSISTENCIES: Marriage discourses for women born in the 1960s

6.1. General trends

The cohort of women born in the 1960s hypothetically reads An an in the 1980s, More in the 1980s and 1990s, Croissant in the 1990s and 1999, and since 1999 also Fujin kōron. What the analysis below shows is that for this cohort, that there are noticeable breaks within the discourses, when the readers “graduate” from one magazine to another, shifting from very conservative marital relationships and ideals to very progressive ones. These shifts are however not in a linear fashion, but are fluctuating back and forth, resulting in “mixed messages” for the readers over time.

MARRIAGE MOTIVATIONS

In terms of quantity, we see major shifts over time in regards to the discourse on motivations. In An an in the 1980s, the highest frequency in motivations to marriage is found in regards to “happiness and love”. Other motivations mentioned several times are “security” and an unspecified wish for “marriage as goal”, yet several marriage motivations are not mentioned at all in An an, such as miai, outside factors, and work. During the same decade, the 1980s, when readers hypothetically move on to reading More, the discussed marriage motivations change completely. Now it is women mentioning that they have no

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68 For a brief background information on this cohort of women and the circumstances under which they grew up and which might have influenced their marital behavior and attitudes, please see Chapter 5.1 above.
motivation to marry, which now has the highest frequency by far among all motivation categories.

As described above, during the same decade of the 1980s, the age cohort of readers born in the 1950s, reading *Croissant*, were exposed to similar messages, with *no* marriage motivation seeing its highest occurrence in *Croissant* during that decade (see Chapter 5), thus pointing to the liberal, feminist tendencies of both women’s magazines during that decade.

The next highest frequencies in *More* are “happiness and love” and “family and children”, but several motivation categories are also absent from the discourse, such as “dekichatta”, “miai”, “security”, and “tekireiki”.

**Figure 23:** Discourse on marital motivations for women born in the 1960s
Then moving on into the 1990s, which means readers hypothetically continuing to read *More* before switching to *Croissant*, would once again impose a major change in discourse on the readers. In the 1990s in *More*, the overall frequency of references to discuss marriage motivations highly increased, the variance of categories greatly diversified (with all pre-defined motivation categories mentioned in *More* during that decade), and, significantly, the most frequent category shifted to “happiness and love”, whereas at the same time, having “no motivation” to marry fell into insignificance within the discourse of the magazine. The next most frequently mentioned categories after “happiness and love” are “family and children” and “marriage as goal”. The sum of these shifts in frequencies within *More* point to a very liberal and progressive discourse on marriage motivations during the 1980s and a rather ‘conservative’ turn within the magazine in the 1990s.

When these readers born in the 1960s then move on to *Croissant* in the 1990s, that magazine has, except one article, dropped the whole discussion on marriage motivations altogether, which in itself is a drastic change as such. And if readers graduate finally to *Fujin kōron* in 1999, the decline in discussing motivations is equally felt, with only six references throughout the year, and none of them discussing having no motivation to marry.
MARITAL HAPPINESS

Now in regards to discourses on marital happiness, the distribution looks quite different. Here we find that for all four magazines for each analyzed time-frame, so-called “good relationships” are by far the most frequent.

**Figure 24:** Marital happiness discourse for women born in the 1960s

![Marital happiness discourse for women born in the 1960s](image)

A nonetheless significant shift can be seen once again in the change in the discourse in *More* from the 1980s to the 1990s. Whereas in the 1980s, even though “good relationships” were the most frequent in *More*, they were closely followed in quantity by articles discussing a woman’s independence as marker for marital happiness. Yet when
readers move into the 1990s, the number of articles discussing “good partner relationships” skyrocketed, whereas the discussion on independence slightly decreased in quantity from the earlier decade. Thus the gap between the two topoi so significantly widened that independence as happiness marker greatly declined in influence. Furthermore, at the same time, some form of security through marriage increasingly aided in marital happiness – not necessarily surprising, given the new and growing instability of the economy during the 1990s. Thus we can label this also as a conservative shift in the 1990s within the women’s magazine discourse.

It should however be pointed out that under the umbrella of “good relationship”, shifts also occurred in regards to the meaning, its connotations and foci, once readers “move up”, reading from one woman’s magazine to the next with their own increase in age. It is particularly the discourse in *An an* in the 1980s which is the outlier here as it greatly focuses on sexuality as important element in the relationship. The women’s magazine *More* however, both in the 1980s as well as the 1990s, focuses on the partners being friends, having fun, as well as several instances mentioning having children, and also having the same values. The discourse in *Croissant* in the 1990s defines a good relationship similar to *More*, by particularly focusing on the couple having an understanding and respect for each other, sharing the same values or hobbies, having good communication and making time for each other, also without the children, and creating experiences together, such as travel memories, and sharing fun events. Last but not least, the discourse in 1999 in *Fujin kōron* is not all that much different, with here having the mutual understanding for each other’s feelings and being in love with each other mentioned specifically.
MARITAL PROBLEMS

Whereas the discourse on marital happiness has shown such a seemingly homogenous picture of the discourses in all four women’s magazines over the two decades of analysis, in regards to the discourse on marital problems, the discourse is once again highly diversified, signified by several shifts and changes, and thus similar to the discourse on motivations for marriage.

Figure 25: Discourse on marital discord for women born in the 1960s
As can be seen in Figure 25 above, in the discourse in *An an* during the 1980s, marital problems are yet hardly mentioned. Only one reference to infidelity and one to unsatisfied desires of independence can be found, with the wife stating her need for her “own” time, which she does not feel she is getting in her marriage. Thus the clear focus of *An an* onto marriage motivations and marital happiness and therefore the joyful sides of marriage become obvious. When readers then move on to reading *More*, still in the 1980s, they continue to only get a very limited discussion on marital discord. What is described therein as problems is to a great majority “bad relationships”, in addition to two references to divorce and one to infidelity. There is absolutely no mentioning of any other possible discord categories.

The significant change comes with the move to *More* in the 1990s, which is signified by a stark increase in quantity, and a change in the most frequent discord topics. The majority of articles shifted to discussing divorce and infidelity, followed in quantity by “bad relationship” and sexuality. Also different here is that now the variation has significantly broadened, with all pre-defined discord categories at some point being mentioned within *More* during that decade of analysis. One unique aspect is the mentioning of the husband’s death, in two cases from cancer, and articles discuss how the wives deals with that. As the target group of *More* is rather young, women between 25 and 30, this occurrence of “tear jokers” is fairly unexpected, as statistically, Japanese have the longest overall life expectancy. But of course those stories do add to a certain sensationalism and this is of course something mass media, and women’s magazines in particular, are “blamed” for more than often. When we find the death of the partner to be also discussed in
several instances in *Fujin kōron* in 1999 however, due to the much higher average age of the target group of readers and the age of the women whose stories are told within the magazine, the edge of sensationalism is lost.

As the readers then hypothetically move to *Croissant* in the 1990s, the high level of frequency in references to marital problems remains. Within the 67 references in *Croissant* during that time frame, close to half of them identify the problem to be a “bad relationship”. References about divorce, separation, or death, and reporting about a negative change of the relationship or partner are the next highest frequencies. Last but not least, also in *Fujin kōron* in the year 1999 the majority of articles refers to bad relationships in general, which is followed in frequency by discussions on divorce and death, and also problems with in-laws, which is, in that frequency, unique to the discourse within *Fujin kōron*.\(^{69}\) In the other women’s magazines, parents-in-law are comparatively much less mentioned.

*More* in the 1990s, besides the “usual suspects” of complaints about the partner’s characters, and bad or no communication between the partners, we also find two references to there never having been love involved in the marriage, due to the fact that the two women only married for pragmatic reasons, which, they realize, did not make them happy after all, even though their desires for financial security were fulfilled. Greatly increased in *More* in the 1990s are the instances of women complaining about the infidelity of their partners as well as sexuality in making them unhappy. Problems with sexuality range from

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\(^{69}\) For more on the discourse in *Fujin kōron* on problems with in-laws see Chapter 4.7.
women seeing sexuality only as duty (ginu) to being dissatisfied with marital sexuality, such as not being able to experience orgasms or having a sexlessness marriage. Both in Croissant in the 1990s and in Fujin kōron, their target groups as well as the women getting a voice in the magazines are significantly older now. This means that the period of marital discord is also much longer and thus holds the potential for much longer endured marital suffering, which naturally has an influence on the way and intensity of the marital problems described.

6.2. Rejecting marriage

As mentioned above, instances of people discussing having no motivation to marry saw their prime in the women’s magazine More (and Croissant, see Chapter 5) throughout the 1980s. In An an in the 1980s, having no motivation to marry is only mentioned in a few instances, such as in article #58 (An an, March 15, 1985). Here ten single women, most of them in their 30s, are getting a voice, explaining their diverse reasons for why they are not married yet. Several report about having been too occupied with their work so that time “flew by”, others are consciously still enjoying their single lives too much for being willing to give it up when getting married, and a couple of women voicing their desire for non-marital cohabitation. One of these women believes the reason for her to feel the way she does about marriage is because she had earlier lived in Paris for a while. She furthermore sees a value change in Japan, with marriage not necessary anymore as she believes that women now can live on their own fairly well.
The reasons for not being motivated to marry are even more diverse in the 1980s discourse of *More* then, ranging from seeing marriage only as an institution, to preferring unmarried cohabitation to marriage, and opposing the requirement of women having to change their names at marriage. Furthermore, several times women expressed that they prefer love over marriage, understanding marriage as not necessarily being an expression of love and also no guarantee for love or a good relationship. So the women desire the emotional bond and love, but not the social recognition through the social institution of marriage. One could get the impression from reading these articles that the pressures for getting married have vanished more or less by the 1980s, but from all that we know about Japanese women and the ubiquity of marriages in Japan, that really was not the case in 1980s Japan yet. Pressures from outside to marry, such as the parents, is only mentioned once at all within *An an* in the 1980s, and in *More* also is only rarely mentioned, both in the 1980s and the 1990s. So the portrayal within the women’s magazines at the time was definitely “ahead of its time” in that respect.

In one of these articles in *More*, a woman expressed her desire to work rather than getting married (since it is still seen, and often is in fact) - an either-or decision which women had and sometimes even in the 21st century still have to make, with the combination of both frequently thought to be close to impossible.

A sobering understanding of one woman in the women’s magazine discourse also can be found, namely that men still do not see an equal relationship as the ideal marriage. It is this lack which caused her not having any motivation to getting married. Of course we do

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70 For more on that, see Williams (2006).
not know if these women continue to stay single throughout their lives or if they do eventually get married nonetheless, despite their inhibitions. But at this point of time in their lives, they are quite committed to not getting married.

When the women born in the 1960s then eventually move on to Croissant in the 1990s and 1999 as well as to Fujin kōron in 1999, having no marriage motivation is not once discussed anymore. Thus this complete non-existence of voices rejecting marriage for this age cohort of women is a definite break within the overall discourse for this group of women and adds to the impression of “mixed messages”.

6.3. Independence, employment, and “the West”

In regards to the discourse for women born in the 1960s, in An an in the 1980s, the one reference to a woman’s independence through marriage is found in a survey among 100 women, where marriage is seen as a means of becoming independent from parents (#59, An an, March 15, 1985). The frequency as well as the content is what once again makes An an stand apart among the four analyzed women’s magazines.

In More in the 1980s, we have, similar to Croissant in the 1980s (see Chapter 5), references to a woman’s independence in a relationship and marriage in a number cases in combination with references to the West. Article #60 (More, November 1980), for example, discusses the American movie Scenes from a marriage, and article #61 from the same issue (More, November 1980) reports about the publication of two books, which are translations from Hermann Schreiber’s originally German book Singles and an originally English language book entitled The two career couple. The article states that because
women’s independence and liberties are growing, more women naturally want to work. In Europe and the U.S., an increase in singles or dual career couples is said to be already visible, and the article also expects this to pick up in Japan as well from now on. Interestingly, the way singles are described here is not as “parasite singles”, but as independent women, living on their own and who have their boyfriend stay over night a few nights a week, or they stay at his place. The fact that the introduced books are mere translations "from the West" and not written by inherent Japanese authors is telling. This gives the impression that singlehood and dual working couples are Western concepts, which are spreading from the West to Japan. This particular article is furthermore advocating women to have more control over their lives, by being economically independent and also by having 100% control over their bodies in terms of reproduction choices.

Article #62 (More, June 1980) further underlines this by suggesting that women’s awareness and thoughts about work have changed, as an increasing number of women now want to combine having children and working and who do not think marriage alone can guarantee a woman’s happiness anymore but rather see the combination of marriage, work, and children as what brings happiness. Men are allowed by society to “have it all”, but women are faced with an either-or decision. This article is also interesting by presenting not only the women’s side but also discussing women’s workplaces in more detail, something usually greatly lacking within the discourses of all four women’s magazines. The article explains that companies see women as short-term workers, as they assume to loose them once the women either marry or have children. Yet the article also presents
some exceptions, by introducing in more detail four companies, among them Seibu
department store and Daimaru, which are shown to be progressive in their treatment of
female employees. The Seibu executive interviewed for example believes it to be okay for
women to work while married. Yet because the majority of women quit when they have
children, they decided at Seibu on a license system. For these women to return to work no
more than 10 years after they quit, they are guaranteed to be rehired into the company. And
another company is offering an in-house daycare facility for their employees, making these
companies early examples of work-life balance efforts. It is to take another 37 years until
these efforts are encouraged on a larger scale by the Japanese government (Holthus 2009).

In article #63 (More, February 1985), five years later, several unmarried and
married men are given a voice on marriage, marriage motivations and marital happiness
and discord. Among the married men, having both partners working or at least both
partners sharing household duties are the factors mostly elaborated on in terms of what
makes their relationship a happy one.

In the discourse in More in the 1990s, then, the discourse becomes rather split
between more conservative gender roles and idealizing the housewife role versus the need
for financial independence and continuous employment. This is exemplified in article #64
(More, October 1995), which discusses different wedding styles. Whereas two interviewed
women in their early twenties dream of quitting work when getting married and of
becoming full-time housewives, in addition to envisioning traditional, elaborate wedding
ceremonies, two other women, equally in their early 20s, desire to continue to be
financially independent, they want to continue working and, possibly an expression of that, favor simple wedding ceremonies.

Now the discourse in the women’s magazines for older women shows similarities among *Croissant* and *Fujin kōron*, but which distinguishes it significantly from both *An an* and *More*. This is that both magazines discuss the topic of divorce as said to bring independence, even though at a price (*Croissant*, January 25, 1990, #65). Even though this article also presents couples that have remained happy throughout their marriage and are presented here are all where both partners are employed and also where the partners leave each other room for their independence. One presented couple takes that to the extreme by not even living together in the same apartment, but rather living in adjacent apartments, so that both can keep even their physical space and independence. But we find here also the motif of achieving independence only post-divorce. And it is this motif which continues also in the discourse in *Fujin kōron* in 1999 and actually is then reduced to only this motif.\(^7\)

But female employment is however also found to be discussed in the one and only relevant article of *Croissant* in 1999. Article #66 (*Croissant*, 25. September 1999) presents insights into the marital life courses of several couples, presenting happy as well as unhappy relationships. The main argument of the article is however, that relationships among married people change over time – for the better or for the worse. One such example is the story of a wife who had married at age 25, and for many years from the outside they had seemed like a perfect couple. Yet at one point, her husband suddenly left

\(^7\) See articles #67 (*Fujin kōron*, June 7, 1999) and #68 (*Fujin kōron*, August 22, 1999).
her, resulting in her psychological and physical breakdown and extended illness. But the happy examples outweigh, such as the husband, who, when his wife had to be hospitalized, got up every day an hour earlier to visit her before having to go to work. Or another husband, who gets home from work before her in the evening, and thus does all the cooking, vacuuming, and ironing by the time she gets back from work. He does that as he likes her to be able to work, so presenting a great example of a dual-working couple sharing the housework chores.

In addition, an example of a long distance marriage is given. This couple, which married in 1972 and at the time of the article is married for 27 years, had a period of seven years during their marriage when they had to live apart. When their daughter was still small, she found a job in Kyoto, and he found one in Sapporo, and as both wanted to be able to work, they agreed to this extended period apart. To stay close, however, they telephoned at least once a day with each other. And finally the article presents a very early example of a so-called “I-turner” couple (Matanle 2010). When the husband, 15 years ago at age 43, decides to quit his job as salaryman, return to the country-side and become a farmer, his wife fully supported him, and through this bonding experience they became a very happy couple.

6.4. Divorce

Whereas within An an in the 1980s divorce is not yet a topic of discussion and even in More in the 1980s barely a topic, within More in the 1990s the discourse begins to show a great increase in frequency and also discusses features of divorce which can be said to be
“new”, such as the infamous *Narita rikon* (see White 2002 for more detail). *Narita rikon* means the divorce of a newly-wed couple right or shortly after they return from their honeymoon. Narita is the name of the international airport in Tokyo, and thus stands for the place of return from the honeymoon abroad. This quick divorce stands in stark contrast to the many years of suffering described by the women in the divorce stories for readers born in the earlier decades. In *More*, the decision for a fast divorce is described to have two main reasons. On the one hand, and that is concurrent with the stereotypical knowledge on Narita divorces, is it because the husband is unfamiliar with being abroad, whereas the wife usually already had experience with travelling and is familiar with customs abroad. At that point during the honeymoon she realizes that her partner is just not what he appeared to be, but rather is very depended on her. Other reasons for Narita divorce are also mentioned, such as outside pressures to marry. They are warned to be the wrong reason for marriage and thus trigger an increased risk for divorce.

Once the readers then hypothetically move on to reading *Croissant* in the 1990s, we find descriptions of *kateinai rikon*, of divorce within the house (see Chapter 4). This is certainly a continuation of the discourse in earlier years in *Croissant*, however for the generation of readers born in the 1960s, who had been exposed to the discourses in *An an* and *More*, this can be seen as a quite sudden change in discourse and a return to more conservative times as *kateinai rikon* is definitely a less powerful choice than an actual divorce. Choosing the option of *kateinai rikon* keeps up the façade of a working marriage, and thus the concern for society, and of how the marriage is evaluated from the outside is an important consideration, and less so how one self is feeling best with a relationship.
The fact that marital problems are often multi-causal is nicely exemplified by article #69 (*Croissant*, October 25, 1990). This very long article of twelve pages discusses women in their 40s and how many of them rethink their lives at this stage of life. The article focuses mostly on women with experiences of unhappy marriages, but ends with presenting some happy marriages as contrast, how it should or could be ideally in a marriage. Even though in these marriages, the couples report about ups and downs in their relationships, yet which they managed to work through and now they consider themselves happy. Part of this article is also a long statement by Madoka Yoriko (*1947)*, a “divorce experts” in many women’s magazine articles and who also ran at that time a divorce counseling agency. She explains why it is women in their 40s, who sort of "rethink" their lives, because parental roles change as the children grow older, coupled with growing thoughts about own possible illnesses, about growing old oneself, and about having to care for one’s own aging parents. And all this, she writes, starts when women are in their 40s. There are furthermore in the article several divorced women who report on why they eventually decided on getting divorced and also a woman from a “couple counseling telephone service” reports what men and women call in for to discuss their marital problems. Here readers are presented with a huge list, such as: no and bad communication between the partners, the husband’s extramarital affair, the relationship having grown cold, the husband having no understanding for the wife’s desires and wishes, the fact that the partner’s life goals differ, the husband seeing his wife not as partner but only as housekeeper, the

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*72 See also Chapter 5 for more on Madoka Yoriko. Today she is a member of parliament for the Democratic party of Japan. For more information see http://www.madoka-yoriko.jp (accessed August 10, 2010) and Holthus (2009).*
husband being an alcoholic, instances of domestic violence, both physical as well as psychological, the wife’s desire for independence, the partners leading completely separate lives, sexual frustrations, financial worries, *tanshin funin*, the husband’s non-contribution to housework or childcare, and the fact that love died and got replaced by feelings of hatred.

6.5. Mixed messages

The discourse on rejecting marriage and its quantitative decline, from a frequent topic to complete inexistence, is one of the causes for the evaluation of the discourse for the age cohort of women born in the 1960s as providing mixed messages to its readers. Further example of these mixed messages is the discourse on the ideal partner-relationship model. The voices between wanting a housewife/breadwinner model and voices wanting independence, employment, and equality for women in a marriage are shifting within the discourse over the years.

In *An an* in the 1980s, for example, part of the discourse focuses on the age of the partners, with opinions divided over the question if older or younger men are “better” partners. In article #70 (*An an*, March 1, 1985), a 24 year old OL debates on whom of her current two boyfriends she should settle on for marriage. She reasons that she would not be able to settle on the one-year younger man, even though she apparently loves him more, but believes she should decide for the older man, who in addition also graduated from a famous private company and is employed at an elite company. This desire for a “breadwinner” and the fulfillment of *sankō*, so rather conservative ideals and expression of “traditional”
gender roles, is also mentioned in article #71 (An an, June 28, 1985), where several women voice their desire for mature men who can satisfy their desire for security.

Yet also romantic visions of marriage as motivation are mentioned, such as in article #59 (An an, March 15, 1985), where a survey among 100 women, average age 24, who recently got married shows that the majority got married in order to become happy (shiawase ni naritai). In addition, in the 1990s, also a significant increase in voices/women mentioning love and happiness as motivations for marriage, can be identified: Women are featured who either want to be together with the person they love, or desire to make their partner happy.

In More in the 1980s, several women mention their wish for children, something much less mentioned in An an, and their voices increase in frequency throughout the 1990s. In the 1990s, a survey, part of the More Report (see Holthus 2009 and Chapter 3), is cited in two articles, saying that for 29.2% of surveyed women, it is children who were the motivation for getting married. Other articles also report that women’s motivation for marriage is their desire to fight or get rid of their loneliness, citing survey data in which 21 percent of all questioned women voice a desire to marry in order not to be lonely.

Then on the other hand, there are articles idealizing the combining of marriage and employment for women. These carry, even in their extremely limited range, quite a new and progressive tone with it. Article #72 (Croissant, March 10, 1990) reports about the U.S. and the supposed trend that an increasing number of young successful men marry older women. This is described as very positive trend and the hope is expressed that this
trend also will come to Japan soon as this is described as a particularly good combination for Japanese career women.\textsuperscript{73}

Last but not least, adding to the impression of mixed messages is also the fact that the presentation of voices of men add another angle on marriages. In \textit{Fujin kōron} in 1999 for example, we get a rare glimpse of marriage as seen and interpreted from the side of men (\textit{Fujin kōron}, February 7, 1999, #73). Here several men get a voice, discussing mostly their marital problems, blaming their wives for the problems, such as being an education mom (\textit{kyōiku mama}), or a complete lack of emotions towards their husbands. Among that, a couple of men also mention the reasons for having gotten married in the first place. One man mentions \textit{dekichatta-kon}, so marriage due to premarital pregnancy, and one that it had been an arranged marriage. Gender roles within the marriage or female employment are not discussed at all if men get a voice, thus giving the impression that men are taking the traditional gender role division for granted and as a ‘given’.

6.6. Conclusion

In the discourse for women born in the 1960s, when readers hypothetically graduate from one magazine to the other over time, we can identify two large breaks in the marriage discourse.

A first break can be seen between the discourse in \textit{An an} in the 1980s, where we find rather conservative desires for traditional gender roles, the male breadwinner, the fulfillment of the 3 highs, and romantic visions of becoming happy through marriage. Then

\textsuperscript{73} For more on the role of “the West” as role model and progressive forerunner as portrayed in Japanese women’s magazines, see Holthus (2009).
readers in the 1980s get suddenly very liberal messages in *More* magazine. Moving on into the 1990s however, the magazine itself is changing its discourse, now split between more conservative gender roles and idealizing the housewife role versus the need for financial independency and continuous employment, which become important topics in *More*. The next big break is then in the hypothetical move of readers to *Croissant* in the 1990s, which at that time has turned quite conservative and “housewify”, The break for example can be seen in the significant decline from a high frequency of women having no motivation to marry to this line of discourse becoming absolutely insignificant in the 1990s as well as in *Fujin kōron* in 1999 as well.

Yet one could go as far as suggesting another turn in the discourse, namely by the way marriages are discussed in the only article on the topic in *Croissant* in 1999. Granted the marriage discourse declined to almost complete inexistence, so it is hard to evaluate if this one article is “representative” or even matters at all, but it is interesting in the way it portrays unconventional marriages.

So whereas some themes in the discourses will show certain continuity, even across women’s magazines, the most significant break however can be found in the discourse on women *not* having a motivation to marry, as that discussion completely vanishes for women born in the 1960s since the middle of the 1990s. At the same time articles also portray less social pressures to having to marry and the absence of parents or parents-in-law in the decision making for or against marriage as well as for or against a certain spouse. This traditional pattern of the involvement of the whole family into marriage decisions seems to be overcome for good, as at least the decision for marriage is rather portrayed as a
very personal decision, even though peer pressures are not completely absent. But this does 
not mean that the family beyond the nuclear has become less important in other family-
related issues. As White (2002) as well as my research (Holthus 2010) have shown, 
particularly in families with younger children, the grandparent generation still plays an 
important role in regards to childrearing and care. Even though childrearing is an important 
aspect of life for Japanese women, as White rightfully describes, within the selected articles 
on marriage in the women’s magazines, children are more or less absent. The marriage 
stories told are primarily focused upon the husband-wife unit, in addition to parents and 
parents-in-law in the discourse for the cohorts born between the 1930s and 1950s.

Thus, overall, it can be concluded that for these women born in the 1960s, the 
women’s magazine discourses the women are exposed to, are highly diverse and are really 
presenting “mixed messages”, but overall presenting a less progressive gist than the 
discourses for women born in earlier decades.
7. OFF TO NEW SHORES? Marriage discourses for the generation of women born in the 1970s and 1980s

7.1. The beginnings of *arafō*

The generation of women born in the 1970s has been very much the focus of attention since 2007, and especially since 2008. In April of that year the TV drama “Around 40” (*arafō*) began to be aired and instantly became a big hit, leading eventually to the term being chosen as “Word of the Year 2008”. *Arafō* women are between the ages of 35 and 44, thus born between 1964 and 1973 (Iwata-Weickgenannt 2009). These women are seen as a very important consumer group and have joined the labor market after the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1986 was put into place. Thus they have enjoyed the possibility of careers in greater numbers than ever before. They are the generation to have the most liberty to choose between work or marriage (http://www.nikkeibp.co.jp/style/biz/abc/newword/080415_46th/index3.html, accessed Dec. 2, 2009). Yet at the same time they are also the group said to agonize the most over this decision and particularly the decision for children. The women are said to “want it all”, but because combining career and babies is still a very difficult option that is not yet often chosen in Japan, they eventually just end up significantly delaying childbirth. Thus it is of particular interest to understand the media influences on this group of women while they were growing up, in their early to late 20s.

Hypothetically women born in the 1970s would have been the target group and potentially have read the women’s magazine *An an* in the 1990s and the magazine *More* in
And women born in the 1980s hypothetically would have started reading *An an* in 1999. So in this chapter I analyze the discourses for both generations together, namely *An an* for the entire decade of the 1990s (1990, 1995, 1999) and *More* in the year 1999.

### 7.2. General trends: Quantitative changes

Over time, the discourse on motivations has seen a shift between the 1990s (1990 and 1995) and 1999. *An an* in 1990 and 1995 featured family and children as the most important marriage motivation. This is followed by a desire for “happiness and love” through marriage, as well as the need for security and an unspecified wish for marriage as such.

Yet in 1999, the discourse in *An an* changed, and closely resembles in quantity that of *More* in the same year. In 1999, the frequency of the desire for family and children mentioned declined and is now as often mentioned as happiness and love both in *An an* as well as *More*. The desire for security is also still an important factor. However the significant difference is the increase in references to having *no* motivation to marry, which was only peripherally mentioned in *An an* in 1990 and 1995. This could hint to the increase of two contradictory ways of thinking: an increased romantic love ideal as well as an increased rejection or at least delay of marriage.
In regards to the discourse on marital happiness, we see a similar quantitative pattern of a high frequency of references to marital happiness in *An an* in the 1990s (1990 and 1995), but a severe decline in 1999, both for *An an* as well as *More*. “Good relationships” are the most frequently named source of happiness in all time periods and both in *An an* and *More*. Extramarital affairs as source of happiness are never mentioned - that is limited to a discussion for earlier cohorts of readers.
Figure 27: Marital happiness discourse for women born in the 1970s and 1980s

Last but not least, as can be seen in Figure 28 below, the frequency distribution of references to marital problems is also similarly distributed. *An an* in the 1990s has the highest distribution, followed by a serious decline in overall frequency in 1999. The discourse in *More* is also, compared to *An an* in 1990, limited in numbers, yet a little higher than *An an* in the same year 1999.

The significant changes in the discourse lies in the fact that in *An an* in the 1990s, "bad relationships" are what are most often blamed for the problems within the marriage, closely followed by "negative changes" within the relationship – and in both cases it is usually the male partners who are blamed for it. The third most frequent category is that of infidelity (in all cases that of the male partner). In *An an* in 1999 this is not overly frequent, yet in *More* in 1999, this has advanced to the most frequently named source of marital discord.
Overall, *More* in 1999 is also in two other points significantly different from the discourse in *An an* – namely in the comparatively high frequency of the topic of divorce, separation, and death, as well as in the topic of sexual problems.

**Figure 28**: Discourse on marital discord for women born in the 1970s and 1980s

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### 7.3. Female employment and celebrity role models

The use of celebrities in the women’s magazine discourse has manifold increased overtime. In many instances they are used as “specialists” for a topic, as if they know relationship matters better than others. This lends to the impression of the elevated role of celebrities
and of using them as a sort of role model. This is a common practice in fashion, but is equally used in relationship-related discourse.

Article #74, (An an, October 19, 1990) is one such article which focuses specifically on Japanese celebrities and their engagements and marriages: The article claims that this year has seen a marriage rush among celebrities and explains that with social change: Namely that today female celebrities can continue working even after marriage, which did not used to be that way. Celebrities are more so inclined to getting married now, as it does not mean the end of their career anymore. The article contrasts the marriages of singer and actress Yamaguchi Momoe and singer Matsuda Seiko, both of whom mentioned before Chapter 5. Yamaguchi Momoe was the role model of 1970s Japan, who, after only a short but highly successful career, got married a fellow actor. Her marriage meant also the end of her career, and she never once took the stage again, but rather portrayed the image of a humble housewife and mother, fully devoted to the care of her husband and children. On the other hand, Matsuda Seiko, role model of the 1980s, had several marriages, high-profile affairs and never quit her work even though she married and had a daughter. The article does not, however, mention the fact that overall it has been easier for celebrities to lead “different” lives from mainstream than for “normal” women. At that time Matsuda was still considered exceptional in choosing that lifestyle, by now, the time of the article, apparently being able to combine marriage and continued employment has become “normal” in the celebrity world at least. Just as fashion trends are said to trickle down from the upper classes to the lower (Veblen 1899), so might it be with the lifestyles of celebrities. They, and here in particularly the possibility of combining work and marriage, has become more
common practice among celebrities (and thus more socially accepted), and this trickles equally down to the masses. So then it is no wonder that in article #75 (An an, October 19, 1990), nine, recently married women, ages mid 20s to beginning 30s, all expressed in their interviews that to continue working is a very strong factor for them, and eventually was their most important so-called kekkon jōken, marriage requirement.

And in article #76 (An an, Febr. 2, 1990), five married and working women report about the advantages of marriage, which they believe are not often mentioned. These advantages include, among others the freedom from ones parents as well as the possibility to continue working, which provides alternatives to the ryōsai kenbo model, the good wife and wise mother (see Uno 1993). Equally positive is female employment during marriage portrayed in article #77 (An an, Febr. 2, 1990). Here again it is on the one hand married women, some of them already mothers, so older women than the actual readership of An an, who get a voice in this article. They speak about the difference between the ideal and the reality of marriage and married life, and the pros and cons of marriage, of which however the pros outweigh the cons. When they discuss the combination of marriage and their employment, which they enjoy, they nonetheless report also on the difficulties in doing so. For example one woman explains that her company made her quit her job upon marriage. Yet as she wanted to continue working, she actually had to find a different company to work for. So the resistance to women’s desire to combine marriage and employment from the side of organizations such as companies, is described as an obstacle. So once again, the article makes clear that attitudes and behaviors are much faster to
change and adjust than the social structures, norms and institutions around them – which is what eventually is the biggest problem in all of this.

The article features on the other hand also single women and their opinions on the topic by presenting the results of a survey the magazine conducted among 1500 single female readers about their *kekkon jōken*, their marriage requirements. It showed that 642 women said that being able to work after marriage is one of their marriage requirements, 749 answered with ‘no’. Clearly, the desire to work while married is significant. Yet how many of those, who want to work actually does when married, cannot be gauged from this, but will eventually be much less than anticipated.

In *More*, article #78 (October 1999) is entitled “*Kekkon shitai! Sono yume to genjitsu wa!?*”, meaning “We/I want to marry! Dream and reality”. Here the article provides numerous data, from official ministry statistics to surveys among their own readership on marriage, not just among women but also among men. Focus is on the phenomenon of *bankon*, so delayed or late marriage. Among the many questions, one asks the women “After the wedding, do you want to continue working?” The answer is that 51% want to continue working throughout, 10.8% want to quit, and 22.8% plan to quit work once they get pregnant. These are quite significant findings.

The question of female employment in marriage would not necessarily therefore have to be such a big problem if it weren’t for the fact that women’s opinion and attitude towards their employment have obviously significantly changed, whereas men’s attitudes are lagging behind. Several questions reveal that men are still much more conservative in terms of their views on marriage. This can be seen for example in the fact that 45.8% of
men and only 31.3% of women think that the man should work outside and the wife is inside.

7.4. Facets of diversity

Selling change - that is what women’s magazines have to do, in order to attract readers month over month to be bought. This is particularly clear and obvious in articles about fashion, but is also essential in articles on relationship matters. So this is the case for all magazines, but here in the discourse for the age cohort of women born in the 1970s and 1980s particularly strong and specifically highlighted by the articles themselves. The discussion about social change pertains here to the change in values and ideas about marriage, often providing either their own survey data or other kinds of official statistics to support their statements.

One example, where all of this comes together and provides a conglomerate of the facets of diversity of discourse, is the February 2, 1990 issue of An an. The 16! articles portray a changing view on marriage. Side by side are an article of cohabitating couples, an article on working wives, an article – once again presenting celebrity women, one of the Yamada Eimi – on marriages to foreigners, an article on divorce experiences, one on late marriages, and one critiquing the Japanese marriage system and weddings and their artificialness and costliness. The diversity of life course options in the realm of relationships, with marriage only as one option, and cohabitation and divorce as other alternatives, is obvious. So the women’s magazine discourse is an expression of the growing diversity and lately pressure for individualization of life courses – if that aids to
the level of happiness cannot really be correlated. And this is actually exactly the main argument in article #79 from the February 2, 1990 issue. Here An an presents the results of a survey it conducted among 80 unmarried women between the ages of 15 to 35, with an average age of 25, on the topic of marriage. The magazine states at the outset of the article that it used to be said that marriage is a woman’s happiness, but that it recently has become socially accepted not to marry, so that marriage is now only one possible means to achieving happiness. Thus there are women who want to marry for numerous reasons, but there are others who have no motivation to marry, due to the fear of bothersome parents-in-law, or because they want to be able to continue working. The question however, why work and marriage still are thought to be mutually exclusive, is not answered – and not even put forth.

In the same issue of An an, another article features eight already married women, giving readers recommendations on marriage and “the right motivations”. In particular they warn about not succumbing to the outside pressures of tekireiki. They believe that too many women get married for the wrong reasons, tekireiki being one of them, and see this as a danger and threat to the women’s happiness. This article is followed by the voices of five divorced women, and by a further article about two couples that are not married but live together. It is the culmination of marriage discourses in these altogether 16(!) articles on marriage in this February 2, 1990 issue of An an into this article with the detailed presentation of these people living rather “untraditional” relationships, that not only shows the diversity of relationship patterns in Japan in 1990, but also social change and new trends. This article actually presents a lived “alternative” to marriage. The couples portray
their relationships as very equal, with equal rights and duties. The partners give each other space to do one’s “own” thing, their own hobbies, but also both pitch in in regards to household duties. They specifically mention that marriage would make the relationship “safe”, but that they explicitly don’t want that. The two couples point out that they have not promised each other anything, and that they consider this a positive aspect. Important is that in both relationships the women are full-time working and that both couples are depicted as very happy. The couples do not have children (yet).

So not only the articles themselves but also the sum of articles on marriage to be found in *An an* (throughout the entire 1990s) and *More* (in 1999) points to a diversity of marriage ideals – and their lack of fulfillment to disappointment and discord: romantic love versus confluent love, the desire for ‘security’ versus no desire to marry, and succumbing to peer pressure to marry versus the personal desire for children and family.

In *An an* and *More*, romantic and confluent love is idealized. And the lack or disappointment in romantic expectations which is described in many articles as being the main cause for the marriages to become unhappy. In *An an*, good partnership in the 1990s includes having the same hobbies, “sharing life”, having someone to talk to well, having the same values, being able to talk about anything, mutual compassion and consideration and understanding, the couple being like friends, mutual respect, spending time together and having children, described with the Japanese expression “two people, three legs”, to support each other, and having good communication. In 1999 then the desires are quite future-oriented, namely being able to walk through life together and to build a future together.
In *More* in 1999, the ideal however is said to be couples who still are and act like lovers, so both emotionally and physically like lovers. This carries with it the message that the stereotypical view is that within a marriage, a couple is not lovey-dovey anymore, that couples call each other not with their names but rather *papa* and *mama* (*More*, October 1999, #78) or *omae*.

It is the lack, vanishing, or non-existence of the romantic love ideal that leads to marital discord. These are particularly visible where it is reported that one of the partners has changed to the negative over time. The husbands are blamed for stopping with their pre-marital courting behavior, that the couple’s communication has died down, that the husband does not give his wife a chance to go out by herself anymore, and that he has gained a lot of weight since having gotten married.

Whereas sexuality is not necessarily something to bring marital happiness, its lack or extramarital sex is often cited as problem within a marriage. Complaints about sexlessness in the marriage very much fit into the observation that cases of sexlessness are to have increased over time (see Moriki et. al. 2008).

These changes weigh particularly hard on the women if, at the outset of their marriages, they had thought to have “caught” the ideal marriage partner, who had fulfilled their *kekkon jōken*, their terms for marriage, such as rich, good job, etc. In the October 19,

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74 Different to *An an*, which did not mention sexuality at all, in *More* we find four references in 1999. In one case (*More* March 1999, #80), she is diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease a day before the wedding, an STD she got from her boyfriend. But she didn’t have sex yet with her future husband, which makes for a particularly tricky situation.
1990 issue (An an, #81), we find several short reports by married women about their marriage experiences. In one case, the woman thought he is good looking, speaks perfect English, but once married she finds out he is gay, as a result of which she filed for divorce. And in another case, a woman married an American, who had seemed very liberal in the beginning of the relationship and marriage. However once she became pregnant, he totally changed, becoming an ‘education father’ (“kyōiku papa”) with a very narrow and conservative view on education.

Another frequently reported complaint by wives is that of the unavailability of the husbands for the family, due to him working too much, or having to be transferred. On the other hand, we find also voices of husbands within An an, who to the contrary complain about the lack of understanding of their wives for their work, and the wives just being too selfish (An an, October 19, 1990, #82, #83). But whereas the unavailability of the husbands is cause for marital concern and discord, the availability of husbands on the other side is then equivalently featured as important contributor to marital happiness, namely spending time together, having hobbies together, having time for each other and for communication.

7.5. Male voices

Even though this is an analysis of women’s magazines and the voices of women are by far in the majority, yet men’s voices are also present in the marriage discourse in the analyzed women’s magazines. Celebrity men get a voice, as well as “normal” men both in more lengthy interviews or statements, as well as in larger-scale surveys. Such is a the case for example in article #84 (An an, October 19, 1990), with a survey among 1028 men on their
kekkon jōken, and in #85 (An an, July 7, 1995), featuring a survey among 350 single men on their opinions of marriage.

Article #85 asks how the opinions of men about marriage have changed. Did they change just like women, or are there differences? Presented is a survey among 350 single men, average age 30, in addition to essays and a discussion round among celebrity men. In the survey, 52.5 percent of the men want to marry, 39.6 percent do not want to in the near future, but at some point in the future. Together, that makes over 90 percent of all men surveyed. 74 percent of these men want to marry someone younger than themselves, ideally someone three to four years younger, so the “classic” pattern of Japanese marriages. But it becomes clear that men most certainly contribute to the delay in marriages and is not just something that is pushed by women.

The men also mention more ‘conservative’ motivations for marriage than can be found overall among the female voices in An an, even though some arguments are the same as women’s. Men mention that ‘marriage is a necessity’, marriage is “natural” (atarimae), and they talk about the male tekireiki. Their marriage motivations include a desire to marry when living alone has gotten lonely, for becoming socially accepted, wanting to be always together with the person one loves, and a desire for children. The arguments that have not been found voiced by women and thus are exclusively male are the following:

- marriage as important in the work environment
- marriage in order to secure or guarantee cooked food and sex,
- “when I am confident at work I want to marry”, “when I want to become independent I want to marry”,
- when work is hard
- in order to have someone when sick
- to have someone to do the housework
Yet even though male voices within *An an* are limited compared to female voices, the differences between the voices is clear. Men mention marriage motivations which cannot be found among the women, which however point to wanting a partner to fulfill both the role of caretaker as well as homemaker. These motivations are expressions of still very “traditional” desires for marriage.

In the issue of September 24, 1999, a special on marriage, in one article (#86), again also men get to talk about marriage. The article proclaims that young men today have a new view on marriage, thus again one of the repeated hints on social change in regards to marriage. In the article, several single celebrity men talk about marriage and their ideals, and one married man talks about his marriage. The men are ages 22, 30, 18, 20, 24, 27, 26, and 33. With those ages, of course, statistically the majority of them have still a long time until the average male marital age. So naturally marriage is still a long shot for them so marriage is not on their thought horizons just yet. Thus the marriage motivations voiced in the article reflect that: Here a list of their motivations, which are really not new, and are partially similar and also different to those of women:

- “If and when I am financially secure enough to provide for a family”
- “No motivation, because I am still greatly enjoying single life”
- “If I would feel that I cannot live without her”
- “Someday when I want children”
- “Maybe in the distant future”

What becomes clear here is this the male breadwinner ideal being alive, as well as also here a delay in marriage and childbirth. Neither of these can be really seen as new, even in
1999, as the delay in marriage and childbirth had already significantly progressed by 1999. And the male breadwinner ideal is most certainly a remnant of the 1960s.

Within the discourse of *More* in 1999, there is just one article within the selected articles for analysis that features men and their opinions on marriage. Article #78 (*More*, October 1999), which is also mentioned above in Chapter 6.3., presents the views on marriage, comparing the views by men and women. The results show that men are overall more conservative in terms of their views on marriage: More men than women think that lifelong single is not good (57% to 49%), more men than women think that the man should work outside, the wife is inside (45.8% to 31.3%), and more men than women think one should not divorce (62% to 47%).

7.6. Conclusion

Within the marriage discourse for this group of women born in the 1970s and 1980s, the most important feature is that overall, the heterogeneity in marriage possibilities, which we already saw for the earlier generation of women, continues and is further elevated. By now marriage has become only one of many life-course options within the magazines.

What women desire is quite diverse and ranges from the wish to becoming a full-time housewife as the essential motivation for marriage, to no motivation to a general desire to marry yet not wanting to quit work (#87, *More*, Sept 1999), so rather contradicting or better diversified female life course models. The discourse over the course of the 1990s, from 1990 to 1999 has seen also other contradicting trends, such as the importance of
female employment, the fact that men’s attitudes towards marriage also add to the delay in marriage, and an increase in the discussion on women having no motivation to marry, an increase in marriages ideally based on love, either the romantic kind or the equal partnership one, an increase in the discourse on male infidelity, and an increase in the “use” of celebrities as specialists. Their progressive marriage and partner relationship choices can be seen as role-models, which eventually, but with a time delay, “trickle down” to the ordinary population.

The discourse found here for the cohort of women born in the 1970s and 1980s is very much in step with academic literature, which also has recognized the diversity and the flux in lived life courses. Thus the results of many ethnographic studies on Japanese women and marriages come to the same findings as the analysis of the women’s magazine discourse for this cohort. Particularly the rich descriptions of the Japanese White (2002) studied, show significant parallels in their social practices regarding marriage within the web and confines of social norms and social structure surrounding them, as can be read in the women’s magazines. This leads to understanding women’s magazines being not “out there”, but rather being quite close to the “pulse of time” and thus underlines the understanding of media as in some way or other “reflecting” society and an important and valuable additional tool in gaining understanding social practices and social change within Japan, be it past or present.
8. Conclusion

8.1. Significance of media research

In Japan, the last forty years have seen major transformations in society, among them significant changes in Japanese families. But even though we have seen a beginning pluralization of partner-relationships and life-course models, marriage is still very much the ubiquitous choice of partner relationships. Tachibanaki (2010: 98-99) even calls Japan still a “marrying society”.

Within the field of demography and social policy research in Japan, marriages and their changes have been identified as important element and cause for Japan’s low birthrate. However, this line of research suggests that these changes are of a more recent nature. Through my study, this assumption has been refuted. The idea that a quick fix, as desired by the Japanese government, can heal Japanese marriages is out the window. What my analysis shows is that liberal ideas of what marriage means, why people should marry and why not, as well as ideas on female employment versus or concurrent with marriage have been around since the begin of this research period, 1970. These marriage changes are part of a long term development and are not only a recent phenomenon.

A common method to understand women’s thoughts on marriage and motherhood are interviews, ethnographic research or surveys. Yet what has been missing so far is the systematic analysis of female-oriented media. Thus by conducting an indepth qualitative and quantitative analysis of several women’s magazines covering the discourses for three
generations of women, born between the 1930s and 1980s, I believe I have gained significant insights into their messages.

Ethnographic research can only interview and study people of the present. To get insights into the "past" and to understand when and what attitudinal changes occurred, analyzing the voices of women and men over time via the medium of a women’s magazine is a possibility not often undertaken. If we have a historical interest in understanding - in this case - social change, and as we do not have the possibility to zoom back in time to interview people of the past, the analysis of women's magazine discourses is the next best thing. It provides us with a window which otherwise would be hardly accessible.

Critics may say that this is just media analysis and not “real” people. That definitely may be true, the question if these voices are “true” or not could only be answered with insights into the magazine-making in past and present, and that was beyond the scope of this study here.

Yet what I find much more important in this context is that previous qualitative interviews with about a dozen Japanese women between the ages of 22 and 50 show that women’s magazines and their stories are read by the readers as “real” and are seen as window onto other women and men and their ways of thinking about and living marriages (Holthus 2009). In difference to a study on Dutch readers of women’s magazines, reading magazines is not mostly a way of killing or passing time or filling empty time slots, but rather that the magazine content is comparatively considered much more important for Japanese readers (Holthus 2009).
So, if using Ellis Krauss (1999), a circumstantial case can be made about people becoming somehow influenced by their consumption of media, no matter how fuzzy that relationship may be. That is also proven by the studies which over and over have identified media as highly important agent if socialization and which still continues to grow in importance over time. Thus media has to be studied, no matter how much some might object to its content.

The fact that the relationship between media and society is a “rather messy” one, is probably one of the main factors why the relationship and media in itself has not been studied in larger number by sociologists and that media sociology is still not one of the main pillars within sociology.

What I hope this analysis also shows is how important it is to do systematic media analysis. Countless studies are using media, an article here or there, or they love to quote them where it just fits their argument. Yet I would just like to voice a word of caution to that practice. As the amount of media messages is sheer endless, picking an article to support one’s argument is not difficult at all. But if looking at the media messages in large scale and systematically, one might just find that this article cannot be seen as “representative” but rather as ‘oddball’ within the discourse. I would just like to hint on Lunsing (1997) and McLelland (1999), who described discourses in womens magazines on gay men as womens’ best friend as "the new trend". But they never conducted a longitudinal systematic analysis of media messages. Even though their articles are interesting, what is really wrong in them is their suggestion that we have here a trend of sorts with the articles that they were analyzing. That is just not true. So my study should also be understood as a cautionary tale. Media messages are difficult to do, are, and also
that has this research shown, more a work suited for groups of researchers, in order to
tackle the immense data out there. But it takes systematic research to really understand
what is going on in the media.

I argue that it is very worthwhile to analyze women’s magazines when interested in
value and attitudinal changes among women (and in part even men, since they also get a
limited voice in women’s magazines). Of course women’s magazines lack greatly in seeing
social structural aspects, and this is clearly visible in the analysis. In the majority of articles,
women’s magazines stay in their analyses on a very personal level, they mostly do not see
beyond the micro level towards the macro level. But are they to blame for it? They often
have been, for not letting their female readers see the structural constraints they are
surrounded with. Women’s magazines most often offer solutions to whatever problems on
a micro-level only. They do not call for activism in the form of some social movement
group, trying to take on the larger issues at hand. No, they try to provide the female readers
with very personal solutions. Of course in the long run, for all the women of Japan, this has
barely any effect. Other than a cumulative effect. The magazines aim to provide
“immediate” help, everything else is too long term and the outcome anyway questionable.
And that is probably the case of the majority of people anywhere in the world, who, rather
than trying society and the way the structure is, just make ends meet by working for
themselves within the system, within the boundaries of the system, maybe stretching it here
and there on a personal, individual level, but otherwise leaving the system intact.75

75 Of course the feminist movement in Japan tried to just go beyond that and really change the system. Over
the course of 30 years from 1970 to 1999 they managed to stretch and partially reform the system quite
Women’s magazines serve two functions, as agents of socialization for their readership, as mentioned above, and as biography generators, a narrative form of culturally established self-disclosure, as in the majority in the women’s magazine articles women report about their own experiences and lives and thus the focus of the articles is on them and their feelings. Or, to speak in Goffman’s terms (1959), these voices about those very private matters of relationships and marriages can also be seen as the presentation of the “backstage” selves, but within the very public “frontstage” medium of women’s magazine.

8.2. The social construction of marriage biographies

As mentioned above (see Chapter 8.1.), it cannot be determined how “fictional” the non-fiction reports on marriages in the Japanese women’s magazines are. And it does not matter really, since they are read as “real”. Furthermore, no matter if in an interview, a conversation, or a letter to the editor for a women’s magazine for example, everything one reports is constructed.

In her ethnographic study on divorce, Alexy (2008, 2010) lays her focus in particular on how people tell their divorce stories in Japan. In what she calls “retrospective reimagining” (54), she identifies the most common imaginings and points out that talking about divorce (and for that matter, talking about anything related to the inner workings of a marriage) should be seen as a kind of performance, in which some parts get idealized, and that in their narratives, people emphasize or diminish reasons for divorce. Alexy argues that it is important to consider at what point in time and a person’s life situation their story is significantly, and some of the analyzed women’s magazines here for this dissertation show more or less influences by the feminist movement, even though that declined over time and varies between magazines.
being told – and to whom. As this is done even within “normal conversation”, the same of course is to be expected and kept in mind when looking at the women’s magazine discourses below. 76

This problematizes the whole idea of what "reality" really is. Once we tell something, be it in personal communication or through text, we sort of create ourselves and any stories related to marriage, over and over again. One omits where things might be too painful or embarrassing to tell, one might tie loose ends, one might emphasize certain aspects. Things which we omit however might become important at a later point. Just like we have to understand human interaction in that way, this is the same with texts of any sort.

Alexy (2008) further typifies divorce into when, or at what stage of a person’s life it occurs: before couples have children, while children are young, and after children are grown and out of the house. Yet it is very interesting to note a significant gap within the marriage descriptions in the women’s magazines, as children are more or less absent within the marriage discourses. Even though marriage and childbirth in Japan are inextricably linked in Japan, it is surprising that we find such a gap or void of that topic within the women’s magazine discourse. It is the partner relationship that is at the forefront within the articles. Children are comparatively infrequently described as motivation for marriage and only in some early articles in the 1970s and early 1980s named as reason for a delay in considering or going through a divorce. Much more frequent are articles which describe the process of making babies, sexuality, as well as the prevention of children through abortion,

76 Within the media discourse, there is of course a further added dimension, namely that each article and personal report on marriage is furthermore edited, or even invented (?), by one or more editors, journalists, or anyone else involved in the publishing process of the women’s magazines.
as highly problematic - much more so than reporting sexuality as source of marital happiness.

8.3. Findings from the content analysis

There are fundamental differences between the four analyzed women’s magazines in the way they treat and discuss marriage motivations, marital happiness and discord, which supersede the discourse differences between the generations. The discourses in the women's magazines are significantly split by the age groups which are targeted. This has to do with the experience horizon of the readers, thus we find the main split between *An an* and *More* on the one side, and *Croissant* and *Fujin kōron* on the other. Younger women, the readers of *An an* and *More*, have very limited personal experience with marriage, due to their young age. So naturally marriage is identified in more romantic terms and motivations for marriage are much more discussed than marital discord. Some married women however nonetheless get a voice in these magazines and can report about their actual experiences. Yet in contrast to *Croissant* and *Fujin kōron*, it is limited after all. On the other hand, in *Croissant* and *Fujin koron*, the magazines targeting comparatively older women, in their 30s and up, discuss motivations for marriage much less.
Figure 29: Quantitative distribution of marriage motivations, marital happiness and discords

Compared to discussions on motivations for marriage and marital happiness, discussions on marital problems are overall most frequent. In regards to motivations for marriage, it is overwhelmingly articles in *An an* and *More* that discuss them and there are comparatively few in *Croissant* and *Fujin kōron*. However in regards to discords in marriage, the relationship is exactly opposite. Discords are a more important topic for comparatively older women, who are the target group of *Fujin kōron* and *Croissant*, women who might actually themselves have years of marital experience. Readers of *An an* and *More* most likely have little or no experience with marriage, and thus rather the step to marriage is much more a focus of their attention.
Looking at the discourse on motivations, happiness and discord in more detail, it becomes clear that whereas the discourse about marriage motivations is most frequent in the 1990s, mentioning *not* wanting to marry is the most frequent within the 1980s. This could potentially point to or be interpreted as a motor function of magazine discourses. The higher frequency of discussing no desire for marriage within the 1980s occurs at a time when overall *Croissant* and *More* were most influenced by the second wave of the Japanese feminist movement, a trend that got lost in the magazines in the 1990s.

In regards to marital happiness, all four magazines discuss good partner relationships as most frequent categories for happiness, and independence as second most frequent category. Yet the two magazines for older women have a higher frequency of reporting extramarital affairs as source of marital happiness.

In the analysis of marriage discourse by different age cohorts, the complexity of the topic became very obvious. Yet the discourse on marriage provides an excellent window onto existing gender relationships in society. I specifically looked at the following themes, which emerged from the material, namely how, in connection with marriage, a wife’s independence was discussed, as well as female employment, equality between the partners, divorce, sexuality, and the relationship to the parents-in-law.

The shifts in discourse over time and for each birth cohort from the 1930s to the 1980s do not show a linear trend. Since the first material of the 1970s, targeting the oldest group of women born in the 1930s, a wife’s independence is idealized, strengthened by the fact that she is employed and thus financially secure to a certain degree. The idealization of
independence is very often named also in connection with an equal partnership, either through the husband pitching in with household duties and childcare or he even is a househusband. Whereas the existence of these aspects is said to bring marital happiness, their non-existence makes for unhappy relationships. Overall the important fact in the evaluation of marital happiness or unhappiness seems to be between a woman being or feeling powerless or feeling empowered.

A certain pro-activeness and thus expression of power can be seen in the growing non-acceptance of unhappy marriages over time in the discourses of each subsequent birth cohort, so a clear shift from passive suffering to active fight. It started in the discourses for women born in the 1930s and 1940s that women over time began not to accept unhappy marriages and instead either found themselves an extramarital affair themselves or they sought divorce.

What these stories and articles in an increasing number show is a very active way of women “curing” their marital unhappiness. Yet this chosen way is not a solution of structural change or change on a macro level. The women use the power they have on a very personal scale, they are not accepting their unhappy marriages, yet many of them do not feel like they have enough power to “flee” through divorce. Yet what they do have is the power of engaging in an extramarital affair. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this resembles the tactics of “weapons of the weak”, as described by Ogasawara (1998) in regards to the relationship of salarymen and office ladies.

Furthermore, already in the discourse for women born in the 1930s and 1949s, articles can be said to be “pro divorce”, yet the difficulties and hardships affiliated with
actually going through a divorce kept many from following through. These obstacles to choosing divorce over time became much less discussed within the discourse for later birth cohorts. Also disappearing over time are articles discussing the influence of parents-in-law prohibiting a marriage. This is not discussed anymore for the birth-cohort of the 1960s onwards. This adds to a growing power in the decision-making process of choosing one’s spouse.

The passive suffering in regards to issues of sexuality – the husband’s unwillingness for contraception and the felt need for abortions - is an expression of the extreme submissiveness of the wives towards their husbands. Whereas this was frequently reported upon in the magazine discourse for women born in the 1930s and 1940s, this vanished over time, which could be interpreted as an increase in power over time for wives in the realm of sexuality. On the other hand, an increase in the discussion about sexuality in general in the women’s magazine discourses can be identified, which however now identifies in the majority as a means or element of marital happiness.

The powerlessness associated with poverty is also a topic which declined quickly within the discourses, and really is only clearly visible for the birth cohort of the 1930s and 1940s. Marriage was frequently described as a rescue from poverty and divorce a sure way to fall (back) into poverty for most women, as we find a passive acceptance of the inadequate alimony system in Japan within the women’s magazine discourse.

The desire for “security”, in a more basic meaning of survival, over time eventually changed to a more middle-class ideal of securing a middle-class life, and one’s status and role as housewife within the discourse for younger birth cohorts. The increase in a delayed
or non-existing desire to getting married is closely connected in the women’s magazine articles with the possibility of being able to afford one’s life, be financially independent due to employment. Yet it is also an expression of a continued powerlessness against the structures or norms of what a marriage entails, namely the mainstream assumption that the wife will have to quit work and take on the role of the housewife. Yet that is something that is not verbalized, but rather the structural and normative constraints are understood as a “given”.

As mentioned above, these changes have not necessarily all seen a linear development. Particularly within the discourse for women born in the 1960s, this culminates into a conglomerate of mixed messages and thus symbolizes the shift towards the large scale individualization and heterogeneity of life-courses for Japanese women, with marriage being only one possible option, as the increase in women voicing no motivation to marriage shows. Yet on the other hand, an increase of the desire for romantic love contradicts this to a certain extent. So to conclude, there is overall significant complexity and heterogeneity within the marriage discourses in the select women’s magazines, and women are described as having agency within their lives in regards to their relationships.

8.4. Academic discourses versus women’s magazine discourse

Early postwar English-language academic literature on Japan studies has been highly influenced by the work of Vogel (1963). As mentioned above, it is a study on urban, middle class salarymen families, written very much from a male ethnographer’s point of
view. We know about the significant difference of perception between male and female researchers, as exemplified in the research on the 1930s village Suye Mura, both by Embree (1939) versus that of his wife (Smith and Wiswell 1982). The long tradition of male ethnographic research was still influential in the 1970s and has shaped our understanding of what is going on in Japanese society and marriages in particular. This was of course further aided by an equal interest by the Japanese government to have Japan seen as a more or less uniform country of middle-class citizens only. As that is the case, analyzing women’s magazine discourse adds, at least compared to early research on Japan, a good alternative to look beyond the mainstream and to add female voices to our understanding of Japanese marriages.

However there are some, yet not many, male voices within the women’s magazine articles as well. These show that men’s attitudinal changes and normative thinking about marriages, household duties etc. are still very conservative and are indicative of not challenging the status quo of Japanese marriages. So the argument that changes among Japanese families and marriages are greatly pushed by attitudinal changes among Japanese women is concurrent with the academic literature. The same goes for the quantitative increase in articles discussing divorce and female employment for each subsequent cohort of hypothetical readers. The quantity of articles rise in accordance with statistical trends. Yet it should not be underestimated that voices pro-divorce and pro-full time female

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77 Japanese men are shown to have changed their attitudes however over the last decade from 2000 to 2010. Benesse (2010) found in a large-scale survey that men desire now to have more equal partnerships and to be more involved in household and childrearing matters. These attitudinal changes however have yet to trigger behavioral changes. Men complain about wanting to have more input in family matters, but complain that their structural confines do not allow for such.
employment could be heard in the women’s magazine discourse way before academia paid major attention to it already for the cohort of women born in the 1930s and 1940s.

Overall, it should be said that the findings from the women’s magazine analysis do not show major differences to the findings in White (2002), in which she gives a very detailed picture of postwar families, their diversity and their social practices, which are lived within the confines of social norms and the larger social structure. To a certain degree creatively making “do”, the same can be seen also in the women’s magazine discourse.

Within academic research, and that is not only limited to the study of Japanese society, the sociology of happiness is a fairly new but emerging and growing field of study. Governments, not only that of Bhutan with its concept of “Gross National Happiness”, but also Britain, France, and as recently as 2010 also Japan, have discovered that their population’s level of happiness might be a very important level of success for a country.78 The Japanese government, particularly with their new policy of “Work life balance”, tries to fight many social ills, among them the country’s very low fertility rate. So not only from nation states, but also from the field of sociology there is a rising interest in understanding people’s happiness, their unhappiness, and the factors contributing to their happiness. By particularly focusing on discourses of happiness and unhappiness regarding marriages in Japan, this study provides a small additional glimpse on Japanese marriages, even though the larger-scale findings are in unison with contemporary studies such as those by White (2002) and Rosenberger (2001).

78 For more on the more general conceptual change of happiness within Japan, see Coulmas (2009a and 2009b).
8.5. Cross-cultural comparison: U.S. and Japan

As mentioned in Chapter 3, both U.S. studies on women’s magazines found the magazine discourses to be “lagging” behind in attitudinal and value change concerning marriage to what can actually be found in society. So the U.S. media seems to be more conservative than society itself, supposedly actually taking an active, moralizing stand against extramarital relationships and divorce. The Japanese women’s magazines are very different in that respect, as there is a complete absence of moralizing articles.

At any rate, Alexander (1989: 233) speaks of a “cultural lag” of the media and sees no longitudinal changes in the magazine discourse. Stanger (1986) also sees the discourses on marriage in the media to be only serving the role as maintainers of widely shared views in society, and to not have an innovative role in shaping social change. Thus it is her argument that media messages are a mirror of society, clearly not a motor.

A similar perception within the academic literature on Japan can also be found. Take for example the analysis by Retherford et.al (2001) about late and less marriages in Japan. On page 93 the authors discuss ‘parasite singles’ and what they call “the new single concept, which refers to the enjoyment of single life without pressure to marry. “ They write further:

This concept, which received considerable publicity in the Japanese press in the late 1980s, was somewhat novel at the time, given traditional pressures to marry early. The proportion of single persons favoring the new single concept was, however, already high by 1988, suggesting that considerable value change had already occurred before the concept surfaced in the mass media.

It is true, media often picks up the information from survey data and hangs their analyses and articles on that, and women’s magazines do that as well. But what scholars like
Retherford et. al. (2001) suggest is that media mirrors society – and even with delay. There are two points of criticism: 1) Media is not like media. The authors spoke of “press” and “mass media”. These are different, thinking that press is more a likely term to be used when talking about newspapers and such. The term “mass media” on the other hand is very broad, and would encapsule also women’s magazines in Japan, since they are definitely also mass media. I however believe to have managed to support my hypothesis that Japanese women’s magazine’s portrayal of attitudes on marriage are quite different to the U.S. ones and actually the opposite, as they are more progressive, at times, than society itself, which is more conservative. To use Condon’s (1991) expression of Japanese women being a “half step behind”, women’s magazine discourse oscillates between a “full step ahead” in regards to the discourse for the birth cohort born in the 1930s and 1940s, to a “half step ahead” in regards to the discourse for the birth cohort born in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1990s, the advance only barely remains visible, so kind of “in step” with societal changes. Thus it can be argued that overall, society and its changes, as well as the discourse in the academic literature on societal changes surrounding marriages in Japan, seem to have caught up over time with the women’s magazine discourses. This development could be termed as a kind of “convergence” of these three areas, from three separate ones, led by the women’s magazine discourse, into more or less one line of development. For future studies it will be interesting to see how this development has progressed since the year 2000.
## References

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<td>25</td>
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<td>&quot;Rōkoibitotachi wa naze shinchūshita ka&quot;</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Fujin kōron</td>
<td>1.4.1985</td>
<td>&quot;Kako (yome shūtome) sensō: Waga ie no shōsha to haisha&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Konai seiri o matsu shufū gokoro&quot;</td>
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37 Fujin kōron 1.4.1975 "Fūfu no sei to uwaki no sei"
38 Fujin kōron 1.10.1980 "Onnazakari no saikon o mae ni shite"
39 More 1.8.1995 "'Aisuru koto' o shitte iru onna wa kakko ii!!"
40 Croissant 25.6.1980 "Onna no kaihō to mirai"
41 Croissant 25.6.1980 "Beauvoir wa kataru: Kekkon wa onna ni totte kiken desu"
42 Fujin kōron 1.6.1990 "Waga kurasu mēto no kekkon jōkyō"
43 Fujin kōron 1.6.1990 "Watashitte dō shite endooi no"
44 Fujin kōron 1.6.1990 "Shiawase na rikon datte arundesu"
45 Fujin kōron 1.2.1995 "Seiai o meguru danjo no gokai: Zure o toitsuzukete koso akareru"
46 Fujin kōron 1.4.1995 "Kuruoshii koi to yasuraka na kekkon no aida de"
47 Fujin kōron 1.6.1990 "Kekkon kara nukedashite mata kekkon e"
48 Fujin kōron 1.8.1990 "Sei nuki seki nuki dōkyoseikatsu 4 nenhan"
49 Fujin kōron 1.6.1990 "Ima kekkon aite ni deau basho wa"
50 Croissant 10.1.1980 "Watashi no jōnetsu ren'ai"
51 Croissant 10.2.1980 "40sai no shokon"
52 Fujin kōron 1.2.1990 "Komochi shufu omiai pāti sennyūki"
53 Croissant 10.11.1980 "Ren'ai kara kekkon made - Otoko to onna no kankei"
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2. Secondary sources


Korobtseva, Ekaterina. 2007. “‘I did not know how to tell my parents, so I thought I would have to have an abortion’ – A Study on unwed mothers in Japan. Tokyo: Unpublished presentation held at German Institute for Japanese Studies, December 12.


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Appendix: List of tables

Appendix 1: Marriage motivations: Quantitative distribution

1. Distribution by magazine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
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<td><em>An an</em></td>
<td>182 (43.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>More</em></td>
<td>143 (33.9%)</td>
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<td><em>Croissant</em></td>
<td>21 (5.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Fujin kōron</em></td>
<td>76 (18.0%)</td>
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2. Distribution by individual years

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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>18 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>41 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>52 (12.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>147 (34.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>78 (18.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>83 (19.7%)</td>
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3. Distribution by decades

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 – 1985</td>
<td>93 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 - 1995</td>
<td>225 (53.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>83 (19.7%)</td>
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### 4. Distribution of motivations by decades

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<td>6 (54.5%)</td>
<td>3 (27.3%)</td>
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<td>13 (19.1%)</td>
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<td>15 (14.9%)</td>
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<td>93 (22%)</td>
<td>225 (53.3%)</td>
<td>83 (19.7%)</td>
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### 5. Distribution of motivations by decades per women’s magazine

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<tr>
<td>Happiness/love</td>
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<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
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244
Appendix 2: Indicators for marital happiness: Quantitative distribution

1. Distribution by magazine

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>85 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croissant</td>
<td>81 (24.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujin kōron</td>
<td>96 (29.4%)</td>
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2. Distribution by individual years

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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>44 (13.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>88 (26.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>62 (19.0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>33 (10.1%)</td>
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3. Distribution by decades

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<tr>
<td>1980-1985</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1995</td>
<td>150 (45.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>33 (10.1%)</td>
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4. Distribution of happiness by decades

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<td>24 (11.5%)</td>
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<td>20 (37.7%)</td>
<td>24 (45.3%)</td>
<td>5 (9.4%)</td>
<td>33 (100%)</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>7 (36.8%)</td>
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<td>114 (34.9%)</td>
<td>150 (45.9%)</td>
<td>33 (10.1%)</td>
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5. Distribution of happiness by decades per women’s magazine

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<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
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<td>19 (19.8%)</td>
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**Appendix 3: Sources of marital discord: Quantitative distribution**

1. Distribution by magazine

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<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
</tr>
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<td>An an</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>103 (16.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croissant</td>
<td>114 (18.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujin kōron</td>
<td>333 (52.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>62900%</td>
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</table>
2. Distribution by individual years

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<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>68 (10.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>111 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>74 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>195 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>81 (12.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>95 (15.1%)</td>
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3. Distribution by decades

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency (Percent)</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1980 – 1985</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 - 1995</td>
<td>276 (43.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>95 (15.1%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>629 (100%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Distribution of discord by decades

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<td>77 (47.8%)</td>
<td>21 (13%)</td>
<td>161 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorce/separation/death</td>
<td>15 (14.3%)</td>
<td>33 (31.4%)</td>
<td>41 (39%)</td>
<td>16 (15.2%)</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infidelity</td>
<td>9 (9.2%)</td>
<td>27 (27.6%)</td>
<td>44 (44.9%)</td>
<td>18 (18.4%)</td>
<td>98 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20 (31.7%)</td>
<td>10 (15.9%)</td>
<td>63 (100%)</td>
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<td>17 (35.4%)</td>
<td>20 (41.7%)</td>
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<td>6 (13.6%)</td>
<td>13 (29.5%)</td>
<td>15 (34.1%)</td>
<td>44 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10 (41.7%)</td>
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<td>24 (100%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>73 (11.6%)</td>
<td>185 (29.4%)</td>
<td>276 (43.9%)</td>
<td>95 (15.1%)</td>
<td>629 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Distribution of discord by decades per women’s magazine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1 (4%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15 (88.2%)</td>
<td>1 (5.9%)</td>
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<td>1 (100%)</td>
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<td>8 (40%)</td>
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<td>20 (100%)</td>
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<td>4 (20%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
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<td>4 (50%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>333 (100%)</td>
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