Postwar Japan
as History

EDITED BY

ANDREW GORDON

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William W. Kelly

IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE IN POSTWAR SOCIETY

One can draw statistical profiles and ethnographic portraits to evoke very different models of postwar Japanese society as increasingly homogenous or persistently diverse. The dramatic figures for industrial growth and agricultural stagnation, rural exodus and urban sprawl, rising longevity and declining infant mortality, smaller family size and new housing options, and the escalation of educational credentialing demonstrate how transformed and leveled is the social landscape of the postwar decades. Many argue from such figures that these changes have erased earlier distinctions: of countryside and city, of farmer and factory worker, of extended families and nuclear families, of the poor and the rich, of basic schooling for the masses and higher education for a small elite. More equitable opportunities and more egalitarian outcomes, they feel, have standardized lifeways across the population, which largely identifies itself as a national "middle class" of shared, metropolitan aspirations.

To be sure, wider access to avenues of advancement and broader distribution of power and positions have both improved the general standard of life and narrowed the extremes. However, other statistics would caution us against drawing too quickly a model of rising middle-class homogenization. Employment has shifted dramatically away from the primary sector and toward manufacturing and service sectors. Yet the majority of corporate employment is in medium and small companies, wage differentials remain stubbornly wide, and part-time and temporary employment plays a significant role in work-force profiles. Marriage age, family size, household nuclearization, and other characteristics of family formation have become standard across the population, but rising difficulties in housing and caring for elderly parents and relatives have, if anything, complicated family histories. A national ministry, a standard curriculum, and near-universal high school graduation have homogenized the educational experience at the elemen-

tary and secondary levels, but there is still much variation at the preelementary and postsecondary levels. Postwar decades have seen a dramatic equalization of family incomes, but it is now clear that disparities in family assets are widening. A national health insurance and biomedical care system is in place, but practitioners in alternative medical and psychotherapies thrive, and sectarian New Religions continue to attract large memberships, which may be taken as symptoms of disenchantment with mainstream therapies and values.

Over the same postwar decades anthropologists and sociologists have built a rich ethnographic record that fleshes out and reinforces such paradoxical statistical profiles. Ronald Dore's portrait of the Tokyo ward of Shitayama in 1951, for example, evokes many sharp contrasts of life during the immediate postwar years of personal loss, family dislocation, material deprivation, and institutional chaos.[1] He found the "T" family—wealthy from wartime profiteering and then from American blood plasma contracts—living in a well-appointed mansion complete with a dozen servants, two late-model American automobiles, a ballroom, and air-conditioned bedrooms. Just down the street was the "A" family, squeezed into an eight-mat room above the greengrocer's shop, without water and with only brazier for cooking and heat. Mr. A's life had spiraled downward from tailoring to occasional day laboring; his wife was retarded and his children sick and ill fed. Between these poles stretched the other three hundred residents of the ward, much more frequently impoverished than enriched by the physical destruction and social dislocations. Already, however, the institutions that Dore went on to describe—including the local elementary school and a growing municipal bureaucracy—were proving effective vehicles for policies to broaden participation and widen opportunity.

Ten years later Ezra Vogel and David Plath witnessed some of the convergences fostered by economic recovery and political reconstitution. In their study of family dynamics in Mamachi Town, just east of Tokyo, Vogel and his wife realized that a double displacement—of population and life-style—was occurring in Mamachi in the late 1950s.[2] As he titled his book, a "new middle class" of white-collar employees was emerging amid the shopkeepers, small businesspeople, and professionals of the old middle class, and these new residents were changing Mamachi from urban fringe town to metropolitan bedburb. At the same time, Plath was out in Nagano Prefecture, in the hinterlands of Matsumoto City; predominant among the region's diverse lifeways were those of the farmer, the shopkeeper, and the wage-earner.[3] His book is both an ethnography of those lifeways and also a demonstration of the growing attractiveness of the life and

1. Ronald P. Dore, *City Life in Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958).

2. Ezra Vogel, *Japan's New Middle Class* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

3. David W. Plath, *The After Hours: Modern Japan and the Search for Enjoyment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964).

leisure of the *sarariman*. His comments echoed conclusions of Vogel about this career path as "a model of life which is modest enough to be within the range of realistic hopes and modern enough to be worthy of their highest aspirations."[4]

Thomas Rohlen's study of a regional bank and the longitudinal portraits of rural villages by Dore and Robert Smith were further testament to the degree to which lifestyles were becoming regularized, affluent, and ever closer to a "mainstream" (*chūryū*) norm.[5] However, recent ethnography can be read for very different lessons—about the limits of such aspirations and the persistence of variations. For example, studying a Mamachi-like city in metropolitan Tokyo in the mid-1970s, Anne Imamura found its residents in at least five very different housing situations, with increasing immobility. In 1979-81 research in a Shitayama-like Tokyo neighborhood, Theodore Bestor found that the shopkeeping and small business "old middle class" was still vibrant, controlling local power and setting the tone for neighborhood life. Dorinne Kondo's study of work in a family confectionery business in another Tokyo ward underscored the strength of artisanal identity in opposition to white-collar work ways. Jennifer Robertson found that much public life in the metropolitan city of Kodaira was framed by the ideological distinctions of "natives" and "newcomers." Kenneth Skinner and Paul Noguchi have contributed ethnographies about employees of large organizations shunted to personnel sidetracks. And Rohlen's comparison of five Kobe high schools—from elite Nada to the dead-end night school—demonstrates how wide the postwar educational pyramid remains.[6] In short, ethnographies of postwar life present us with the same paradox as statistics of postwar life: homogenization and enduring difference.

What are we to make of such discrepant versions of postwar change? Perhaps they might be explained in terms of the long-standing debate in the social science of Japanese society between the relative merits of consensual and conflict models. This debate has pitted, for example, those who characterize Japanese commitment to the group and the natural harmony of a homogenous society against those

4. Vogel, *Japan's New Middle Class*, 268; compare Plath, *After Hours*, 35–37.

5. Thomas P. Rohlen, *For Harmony and Strength: Japanese White-Collar Organization in Anthropological Perspective* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974); Ronald P. Dore, *Shinohata: Portrait of a Japanese Village* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); and Robert J. Smith, Jr., *Kurusu: The Price of Progress in a Japanese Village, 1951–1975* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).

6. Anne E. Imamura, *Urban Japanese Housewives: At Home and in the Community* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987); Theodore C. Bestor, *Neighborhood Tokyo* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Dorinne Kay Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Jennifer Ellen Robertson, "A Dialectic of Native and Newcomer: The Kodaira Citizens' Festival in Suburban Tokyo," *Anthropological Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1987): 124–36, and "*Furusato* Japan: The Culture and Politics of Nostalgia," *Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 4 (1988): 494–518; Kenneth A. Skinner, "Conflict and Command in a Public Corporation in Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 6, no. 2 (1980): 301–29; Paul H. Noguchi, *Delayed Departures, Overdue Arrivals: Industrial Familism and the Japanese National Railways* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); and Thomas P. Rohlen, *Japan's High Schools* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

who insist on individual difference, opposition to the group, and structural inequalities.[7] If so, we must see these two views of postwar society as contradictory; we must choose, and allow our choice to reinforce one or the other view of the underpinnings of Japanese society.

In fact, I do not find the consensus-conflict polarization particularly helpful. It precludes appreciating how necessarily connected are the incorporating and differentiating effects of institutions and ideologies in postwar Japan. It is less homogenization than standardization that characterizes this period, enforced by certain policies and practices and reinforced by certain choices that people have made. Earlier differences—for example, between country and city, farm and factory, small firm and large company, young and old, male and female—have not been entirely erased; rather, they have been transposed to a new postwar key of differences and tensions. Our task is therefore to formulate analytically the transformations that have both standardized and differentiated postwar society. That is the aim of this chapter.

In what follows I argue that these postwar transformations must be traced on three closely related levels: that of ideological process, that of institutional patterning, and that of the everyday routines of individuals. I consider first the spread of certain public discourses that have proved, rhetorically, both incorporating and differentiating. Among these discourses have been those of Japanese *culture*, which stereotypes traits as national "character" but then by associating character and heritage, exacerbates the ideological dichotomies of modernity and tradition; discourses of *class*, which in fact have declassed and "massified" the debate about societal stratification; a discourse on *generations*, which takes the first Shōwa cohort (1926–34) as a moral standard of postwar adult role commitment; and a discourse on the *life cycle*, which aims to reconceptualize popular notions of the life course in an age of "mass longevity."[8]

Next I address the second dimension of this transformation: the reorganization and effective reach of institutional sectors of postwar society that have patterned lifeways in those decades—especially the sectors of work, family, and schooling. These institutions have both standardized opportunities and constraints but at the same time required differential rewards and variable outcomes (in work conditions, family form, and school success). And finally, a third dimension is the level of individual lives, the choices particular people have made within these ideological and institutional fields, which have produced both convergences and divergences in the routines of daily life. This is the subject of the section titled "Individual Lifeways," which introduces the lives of two sets of postwar siblings.

Each of these topics, of course, has been well treated in the recent social science

7. Examples of this debate about polarities include Harumi Befu, "The Group Model of Japanese Society and an Alternative," *Rice University Studies* 66, no. 1 (1980): 169–87; and Ross Mouer and Yoshio Sugimoto, *Images of Japanese Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

8. The phrase is from David W. Plath, *Long Engagements: Maturity in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

of Japanese society. In a brief essay I can be only selective and illustrative rather than comprehensive and definitive. However, my premise is that only in juxtaposing and relating these several levels of the postwar experience can we begin to understand and represent the nature of a society that has been so extraordinarily transformed in the last half-century.

CULTURE, CLASS, COHORT, AND CYCLE: RHETORICS OF PUBLIC CULTURE IN POSTWAR JAPAN

Among other developments, mass public education, a national readership, and a national marketplace have created both an ideological space—a public culture—and a cultural apparatus of public ministries and private media that are at once concentrated in the metropolitan center and pervasive throughout the peripheral regions. In this space and through this apparatus have been conducted several prominent debates that together constitute a loose field of public commentary and discourse about the shape of postwar Japanese society.

Culture, Character, and Tradition

One of the primary themes of public discourse in postwar Japan has been the fervent fascination with national character, a "Who are we Japanese?" boom, which has spawned a vast literature on the alleged uniqueness of all aspects of Japan. The focus of this "introspection boom" has been a putative Japanese exceptionalism expressed in allegedly unique features of Japanese culture or national character and ranging from the serious to the outrageous.[9] The former include Nakane Chie's well-known notion of Japan as a "vertical society" and Doi Takeo's characterization of a unique Japanese psychology of "indulgence and dependence."[10] Other analysts have claimed for Japan a language of nuance and silent empathic communication, a climate of resignation, and a democracy of hierarchical factions. More fancifully, the Japanese palate, the Japanese brain, and even Japanese bees and primates have been found to exhibit distinctive traits that cannot be fully grasped by the non-Japanese observer.[11] Newspapers and opinion journals are filled with articles such as those of prominent former government minister Amaya Naohiro, who has argued that strict antimonopoly laws are unnecessary and undesirable in a society like Japan, whose elemental unit is the harmonious group, not the competitive individual.[12]

Postwar ideologies of exceptionalism are hardly exceptional either in historical

9. Hiroshi Minami, "The Introspection Boom," *Japan Interpreter* 8, no. 2 (1973): 159–73; see also Koschmann's essay in this volume.

10. Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970); Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1973).

11. For critical reviews, see Peter Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), and William W. Kelly, "Japanology Bashing," *American Ethnologist* 15, no. 2 (1988): 172–76.

12. Naohiro Amaya, "Harmony and the Antimonopoly Law," *Japan Echo* 8, no. 1 (1981): 85–95.

or comparative terms; the prewar cultural nativism of the folklorist Yanagita Kunio and our own post-Depression fixation on the American Way remind us of that.[13] All such ideologies share the strategy of what Dale has felicitously labeled "cultural exorcism," by which internal tensions are projected onto an external and inauthentic Other.[14] Postwar versions tend to hypostatize Japanese culture by counterexample to the contentious, meat-eating, patrifocal, loquacious, alienated West. For a state that was aggressively militaristic and is now aggressively mercantilist, the political utility of such a mode of reasoning is obvious; valorizing interdependence, racial purity, silence, and obligation is an effective apologetic for national pride and self-repression. To frame these qualities in psychocultural terms is an inclusive appeal to national character.

However, culture in the postwar period has been an argument, not a consensus. There is a divisive tension in this discourse as well. Culture as national character attempted to be all-embracing, but culture also came to be closely linked to "tradition" (dentō). In early postwar debates among intellectuals, this tension was often phrased as an argument about alternative modernities. J. Victor Koschmann has demonstrated in an incisive recovery of these controversies that by the late 1950s there was a conceptual opposition of "critical modernism" and "nationalist particularism," or what one might term Westernization and an autochthonous modernity, based on Japan's unique cultural attributes.[15] However, by the 1960s Japaneseness was increasingly rooted in a putative traditional past, and the politics of heritage came to be set against the very modern condition in which most Japanese found themselves.

Through the 1960s and 1970s Japanese culture was associated with and frequently expressed as an exaltation of Japanese folklore and rural nostalgia. A feverish furusato būmu (home village boom) idealized country life and country folk as the true examplars of Japanese values and communal forms. This exaltation not only exposed a contradiction in the discourse about culture but also caught Japan's regions in an ideological bind. In contrast to the modern center, policy planners and popular media imagined them simultaneously as inaka (the "sticks") and furusato. That is, as the backward "boonies," they had to be assimilated into "modern" society, but as the nation's "folk," they had to be preserved as testimony to a moral society.[16]

13. See, for example, the work of Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

14. Dale, *Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, 40.

15. J. Victor Koschmann, "*Nihonjinron* in Postwar Japanese History" (paper delivered at the 1988 annual meeting, Association for Asian Studies).

16. William W. Kelly, "Rationalization and Nostalgia: Cultural Dynamics of New Middle Class Japan," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 4 (1986): 603–18; and "Japanese No-Noh: The Crosstalk of Public Culture in a Rural Festivity," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 30–45. From a somewhat different perspective, Marilyn Ivy offers a provocative interpretation of the containment as "tradition" of marginal expressions of plebeian culture such as oral tales, spirit mediums, and urban popular the-

Class, from Mass to Micromass

The long-standing belief in the efficacy of the three sacred imperial regalia (mirror, sword, and jewel) has been playfully commercialized by postwar mass media into a variety of slogans of consumer desires, such as the three *S*'s of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the three *C*'s of the mid-1960s, and the three *J*'s of the early 1970s.[17] Similarly, it is clear that the three statistical jewels of the postwar state have been the GNP, population mortality, and class identification. The last of these has meant the declaration of Japan as a "90 percent middle-class" society, which is itself an interpretation of the Survey on the People's Life-Style (*Kokumin seikatsu chōsa*), a well-known public opinion survey conducted annually for more than twenty years by the prime minister's office.[18]

Many commentators (myself included) have characterized postwar conceptions of class in such "new middle class" terms. However, it better problematizes the homogenizing thrust of the claim to see class, like culture, as a shifting field of discourse rather than as an ideological constant of the postwar decades. That is, there have been three broad rubrics in the recent historical trajectory of class. In the two decades of recovery and catch-up, 1945–65, much of the debate focused on the character of an emerging "mass society" (*taishū shakai*), together with speculations about a new middlebrow culture (*taishū bunka*), which Katō Hidetoshi and others argued was replacing earlier highbrow and then lowbrow phases as the dominant tone of public culture.[19]

By the mid-1960s the class debate was increasingly rendered by a new phrase, "the mass mainstream of 100 million people" (*ichiokunin sōchūryū*), who collectively now constituted a "new middle class." That is, middlebrow had become mainstream. Academically, the Social Stratification and Mobility (SSM) national surveys of Tominaga Ken'ichi and his colleagues gave credence to a widespread "white collarization" of the working population and such "status inconsistencies" among respondents as to undermine coherent class stratification. The theoretical economist Murakami Yasusuke proposed an alternative model of a homogenous

ater. Marilyn Ivy, "Discourses of the Vanishing in Contemporary Japan" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1988). For both Ivy and me, the discourse on "tradition" and the ambivalence toward the countryside have important prewar and early modern antecedents.

17. The 3 *S*'s were *senpūki, sentaku,* and *suihanki* (electric fan, washing machine, and electric rice cooker); the 3 *C*'s were *kaa, kūrā,* and *karā terebi* (car, air conditioner, and color television); and the 3 *J*'s were *jūeru, jetto,* and *jūtaku* (jewels, overseas vacation, and a house).

18. For English-language debate on this poll and its interpretations, see Shigeru Aoki, "Debunking the 90%-Middle-Class Myth," *Japan Echo* 6, no. 2 (1979): 29–33; Kōji Taira, "The Middle Class in Japan and the United States," *Japan Echo* 6, no. 2 (1979): 18–28; and Yasusuke Murakami, "The Age of New Middle Mass Politics: The Case of Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 1 (1982): 29–72.

19. Hidetoshi Katō, "Middle-brow Culture," *Journal of Social and Political Ideas in Japan* 11, no. 1 (1964): 70–74, a translation of his influential 1957 article. See also Koschmann's essay in this volume. On the mass society debates, see Hidaka Rokurō and Takahashi Akira, *Taishū shakai,* vol. 5 of *Kōza shakaigaku* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1957).

New Middle Mass, which nonetheless emphasized the blurring of class boundaries.[20] More popularly, the Prime Minister's Office surveys, begun in 1967, were read as evidence of a largely classless class consciousness. Wittingly or not, establishment interests were well served by this rhetoric of mandarin planners and commentators. Economically, such an image both promoted and responded to new patterns of savings and spending.[21] Politically, it restated societal consensus at a time of student unrest, environmental protest, "oil shocks," "Nixon shocks," and other perturbations of the social order.

The nature and significance of middle-class consciousness (as *chūryū ishiki* was often glossed) remained the major focus in class/mass debates through the 1970s. By the early 1980s, however, this discourse took a new turn toward what some have called a "consumer culture" debate (*shōhi bunka ron*).[22] The preferred class commentators of the 1980s were not the social scientists but advertising executives such as Fujioka Wakao and consumer market researchers such as Ozawa Masako and Sekizawa Hidehiko, who introduced the terms *fragmented masses* (*bunshū*) and *micromasses* (*shōshū*).[23] A uniform middle class with standard needs, they claim, has given way to a "diversified middle class" with multiple preferences; Fujioka's micromass theory, for example, makes much of intuition, "cute" and "mismatch" aesthetics, and grasshopper consumers. Advertising's vision of Japanese society discovers or creates new trendsetters and big spenders, including, most famously, the "neo-homo sapiens" or the "new breed" (*shinjinrui*), a chimera of youth counterculture created as a magazine slogan in the mid-1980s.[24]

In short, class as a topic of public concern in the postwar decades was curiously shorn of its antagonistic rhetorical potential—despite a serious and substantial

20. Tominaga Ken'ichi, ed., *Nihon no kaisō kōzō* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1979); Murakami, "Age of New Middle Mass Politics." Ishida Hiroshi's test, using the 1975 SSM data, of these and two other competing models, is quite valuable; see his "Class Structure and Status Hierarchies in Contemporary Japan," *European Sociological Review* 5, no. 1 (1989): 65–80.

21. See Horioka's essay in this volume.

22. For critiques of the "mainstream consciousness," see Ishikawa Akihiro, Umezawa Tadashi, Takahashi Yūetsu, and Miyajima Takashi, *Misekake no chūryū kaikyū* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1982); and Kishimoto Shigenobu, *"Chūryū" no gensō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1985). On the "consumer culture" debate, see Saitō Seiichirō, Hoshino Katsumi, Kurimoto Shinichirō, Ozawa Masako, Sekizawa Hidehiko, and Tanaka Yasuo, "Shōhi, kaikyū, soshite yutakasa," *Voice*, Mar. 1986, 88–113.

23. Fujioka Wakao, *Sayonara taishū* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, 1984), and *Sayonara sengo* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, 1987); for Ozawa and Sekizawa, see Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living, *"Bunshū" no tanjō* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1985).

24. See especially Nakano Osamu, *Wakamono bunka no kigōron* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, 1985), and Tetsuya Chikushi, "Young People as a New Human Race," *Japan Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1986): 291–94. Also targeted are the career women, who were formerly dismissed as "Old Misses" but are now flattered as the "New Misses" and whose tastes are avidly courted through such product development strategies as LED (Ladies' Eye Development) teams. The government has given official sanction to this view in its annual *White Paper on National Livelihood*. See especially the 1985 edition (Tokyo: Economic Planning Agency, Prime Minister's Office, 1985) and the commentary on it in Hikaru Hayashi, "Lifestyle in the 1980s," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan Supplement* (New York: Kodansha International, 1987), 28–30.

Marxist academic literature and despite continuing leftist political opposition.[25] It successfully imputed a bland homogenization to the population, but the horizontal typologies of high, middle, and low, the vertical sectoring of consumer groups, and even the reported status inconsistencies of Tominaga's new middle-class concept nonetheless remained as a constant counterpoint of differentiation.

Generational Cohorts, from Shōwa Hitoketa *to* Shinjinrui
Yet a third ideological theme of postwar public debate has been a typologizing of "generations" (*sedai*). Cohort distinctiveness and stereotyping has been a popular public passion since at least the Meiji period, but it has had particularly wide currency in the postwar years. The first postwar "generation" controversy was about responsibility in and for the war, particularly about differences between those of the Meiji/Taishō generation with experience before the fifteen-year period of war (1931–45) and the generation that knew no other kind of society than that after the invasion of Manchuria. The debate was sparked by Honda Shūgo's tripartite model, published in 1945 in *Kindai bungaku*. His was an effort to distinguish those whose experiences extended from Meiji "nationalism" through Taishō democracy to the militaristic nationalism of Shōwa; those whose experience extended from Taishō democracy through Shōwa nationalism to the postwar democracy of the American occupation; and those whose lives began under Shōwa nationalism and now extend well into the postwar democracy.

Very soon after that, however, the focal point of commentary shifted to Honda's third group, the so-called *Shōwa hitoketa* generation of those born in the single-digit years of Shōwa (1926–34). This was the generation whose childhood and youth spanned the "dark valley" (*kurai tanima*) of the depression and the war, the generation that was old enough to have suffered but young enough not to have inflicted suffering. They had managed the psychological divide and social chaos that was the transition to peacetime to become the bedrock of postwar recovery and boom. They became, in the popular imagination, the workaholic company-men (*mōretsu shaiin*) and the education mamas (*kyōiku-mama*), whose selfless efforts on behalf of company and children insured present and future prosperity.

The *Shōwa hitoketa* have been a departure and measure for much of the subsequent generational talk, even more definitively than their rough equivalents, "the children of the Depression," have defined postwar American age-grades.[26] For

25. See the Gordon and Dower essays in this volume. Recent sociological analysis has made much of the concerns about growing "class disparities" (*kaisō kakusa*) in the EPA's 1988 *White Paper on National Life*. An important article by Nishimura Yoshio traces growing income differentials in Japan to the structural changes in the economy during the mid-1970s, especially those introduced under the rubric of Japan as the "information society" par excellence of the future. See his "Jōhōshakai wa kaisōka suru," *Aestion* 15 (Fall): 60–83. Tessa Morris-Suzuki's renaming (and reanalysis) of "information society" as "information capitalism" is helpful; see her *Beyond Computopia: Information, Automation, and Democracy in Japan* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1988).

26. Glen H. Elder, Jr., *Children of the Great Depression: Social Change in Life Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). In several respects, my argument about the shape that this

example, judgments of the postwar population are often cohort-stratified by weakening social commitment and rising personal indulgence, although declining parochialism and growing internationalization is another continuum along which they have also been arrayed. The second decade of Shōwa produced the "double digits," or *Shōwa futaketa* (despite its literal meaning, the term usually refers only to those born from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s). Reaching middle age in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they have been to many commentators the *mai hōmu-gata*, home-oriented types, who nonetheless retain a commitment to the workplace, if only to secure the status and resources to enable a prosperous home. Of more dubious commitment are the "new family types" (*nyū famirī-gata*), that is, the postwar baby boomers (especially those of the so-called *dankai sedai* of 1947–51),[27] who are believed to be primarily concerned about a personal life-style and who lack any direct experience of the hardships prior to the high growth decades. To some commentators and analysts the decline continued unabated with the children of the 1960s and 1970s (including the second "baby boomlet" of 1971–74). Much was made of the *shirake sedai*, the "reactionless" youth of the 1970s, who, it was despaired, lacked enthusiasm for everything, work and home. More recently the *shinjinrui*, the "new breed" youth of the 1980s, have been alternately feted and feared for their misplaced, though voracious, consumer appetites.

Thus, much of the "generation" talk also has an ideological effect of divide-and-unify. That is, it rhetorically age-grades the postwar experience, but in stratifying the population into such horizontal cohorts along a moral cline, it also reinforces a single scale of commitment to societal roles and responsibilities.

Life Cycles and Life Course, from the Fifty-Year to the Eighty-Year Lifetime
Yet a fourth construct that has framed public debate in the postwar decades with both an ideological force and sociological significance is the "life cycle" (*raifu saikuru*) or "life course" (*raifu kōsu*). These terms gained currency somewhat later than the other three, but since the mid-1970s "life course" has come to both reinforce and crosscut cohort imagery. "Life course studies" are now a thriving branch of academic research.[28] More important, it has become an influential rubric in several areas of political-economic policy as an instrument for regularizing people's thinking about normal behavior and decisions about life planning.

The widespread notion of an "appropriate age" (*tekireiki*) for marriage is one such example, but the banking industry was among the earliest to mobilize this

generation — or rather the discourse about this generation — has given to the postwar period is similar to Carol Gluck's discussion (in this volume) of private histories, public events, and collective memory.

27. *Dankai sedai*, the "clump generation," was a tag drawn from the title of the novel *Dankai no sedai* by Sakaiya Taichi (Tokyo: Bungei Shunka, 1980). See also Hitoshi Katō, "Japan's First Postwar Generation," *Japan Echo* 10, no. 1 (1983): 79–84.

28. For a useful review of this Japanese scholarship and its Western referents, see Susan Orpett Long, *Family Change and the Life Course in Japan*, East Asia Papers No. 44 (Ithaca: Cornell University China-Japan Program, 1984).

construct in exhorting customers about prudent household savings and spending practices.[29] David Plath, for example, has discussed a 1972 savings and loan advertisement, "For an Unhurried Life Plan" (figure 8.1). In effect, the bank was urging its customers to match a "timetable for family obligations" with a standard schedule for their financial planning.[30]

Of course, such self-interested advice is hardly foreign to any bank customer in Europe and the United States. The difference here is that this life-cycle talk has also proved useful to worker interests, though in ways that drew them ever more into the organizational fold, as illustrated by Rokurō Hidaka's recent reminiscence:

> During the term of the Miki cabinet in the mid seventies, theories about life cycles proliferated. At that time, I had occasion to read one life cycle schedule that had been drawn up by a large labor union in the private sector. The plan saw workers thru graduation from high school and the search for employment to retirement. It included such items as what durable consumer goods were necessary, when to purchase a house (on loan, of course), when to marry, how many children to raise, how many years of schooling these children should be given, and how to secure one's living after retirement. . . . But what is the aim of it all? It is this: that even shop-floor workers should be able to enjoy living standards comparable with section managers.[31]

A major reason for the state attention to the "life cycle" by the mid-1970s was its new vision of Japan as an aging society (*kōreika shakai*) and its nightmare of escalating public entitlements. State ministries began increasingly to refer to the "life cycle," as in the white paper on national livelihood. In particular, the official discussions came to identify an "eighty-year life span" (*jinsei hachi-jū-nen*) as a generalized schema for the population. This phrase has recently been popularized as a contemporary counterpart to the retrospectively labeled prewar "fifty-year life span" (*jinsei go-jū-nen*).[32]

For Japanese, like the populations of the rest of the industrialized world, living into one's fourth quarter of a century is now the statistical expectation, and much state concern focuses on how to (re)organize the third quarter—as in fact the *Shōwa hitoketa* generation leads the society toward "mass longevity." As has been noted for the United States, an earlier population pyramid is becoming an upright rectangle (figure 8.2). Thus, the rhetoric of the "eighty-year lifetime" also aims to reformulate one's later years as part of national planning for an "aging society."

29. The Prime Minister's Statistical Office conveniently collects public opinion on the proper age for marriage and reports in its *Yoron chōsa nenkan*. For the late 1970s, it was 22–25 for women and 26–30 for men. See Walter Edwards, *Modern Japan Through Its Weddings: Gender, Person, and Society in Ritual Portrayal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 63–64.

30. Plath, *Long Engagements*, 87–90.

31. Rokurō Hidaka, *The Price of Affluence* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984), 70–71.

32. Again, the life cycle has been discussed cogently by David Plath, "The Eighty-Year System: Japan's Debate over Lifetime Employment in an Aging Society," *The World & I*, May 1988, 464–71.
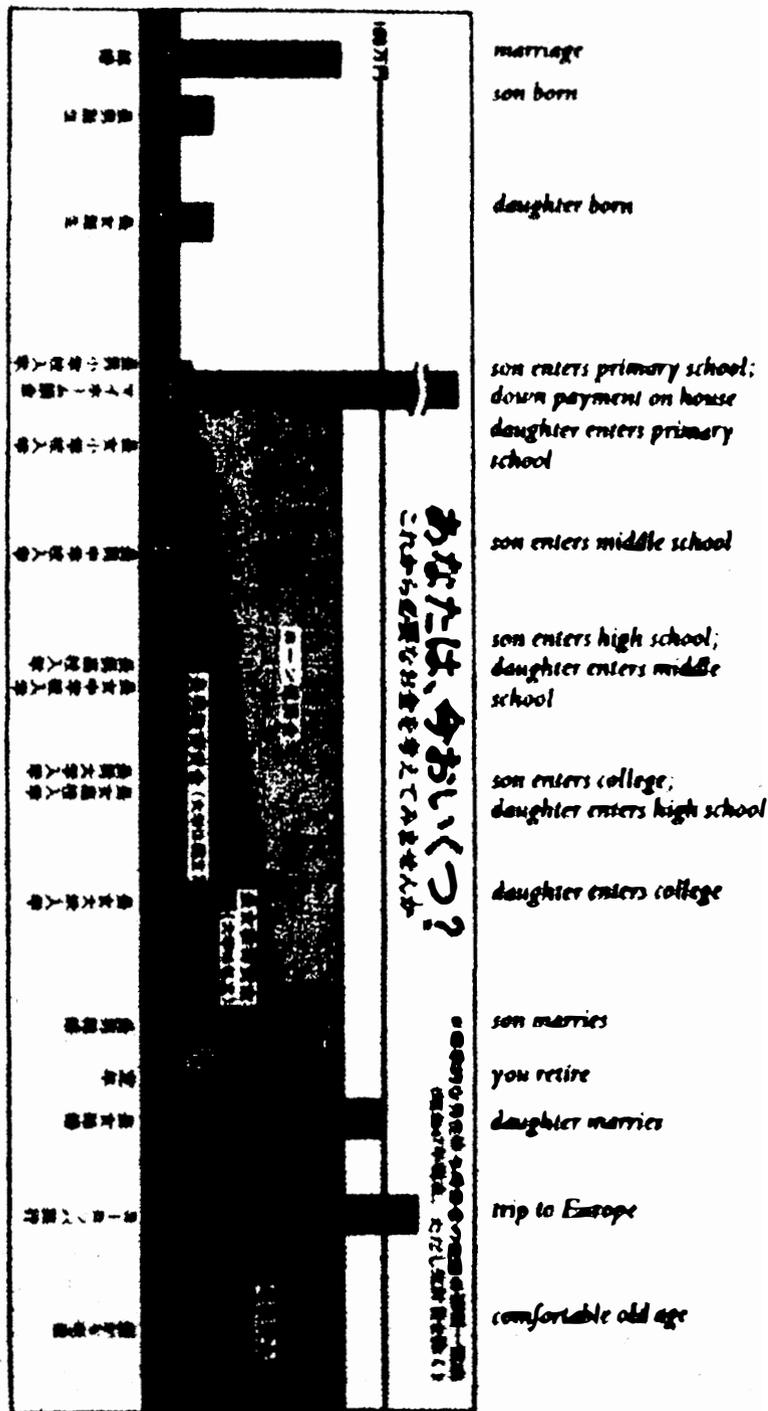
Figure 8.1. "For an Unhurried Life Plan": a 1972 savings and loan association advertisement. SOURCE: David W. Plath, *Long Engagements: Maturity in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980). Reprinted with permission.

Figure 8.2. The population pyramid of Japan. SOURCE: Population censuses, Prime Minister's Office.

Government policy initiatives have been designed to encourage a more active and independent old age (e.g., "self-care" programs, Silver Volunteers, etc.) and, for the disabled and most senior elderly, to promote "home care" and continued privatization of caretaking responsibilities.[33]

For late Shōwa Japan this has been a preemptive rhetoric. Its population profile during the 1970s and 1980s was among the youngest of the countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. However, it is rapidly aging, and by 2000, with 16 percent of the population over sixty-five, it will have one of the oldest profiles. Anticipation of this situation has heightened the urgency and frequency of appeals to the "eighty-year life span." Private industry and government planners now use it, for example, in legitimating a shift in the retirement policies of major corporations—as in the calls for raising the common mandatory retirement age from fifty-five to sixty. Recognition of an expanding "life cycle" also underlies the many policies and programs of "lifelong education" that have proliferated in late Shōwa to inculcate a longer-term attitude toward cultural recreation and vocational (re)training.[34]

A unique Japanese culture, a new middle class, the *Shōwa hitoketa* generation and its offspring, and a new eighty-year life-cycle norm are among the most potent and characteristic ideologies of postwar Japan. There are certainly others that both reinforce and counterbalance these four. As Kathleen S. Uno discusses elsewhere in this volume, there is a ubiquitous gender ideology of persistent male prerogative and, in the postwar valorization of the nuclear family, of what Edwards has labeled the complementary incompetence of the husband-wife couple. A Confucian idiom of relational hierarchy and performative obligation has proved to be a durable idiom of social conduct. And despite the reticulations that draw the population into a single metropolitan society, a renewed discourse of locality reinforces the antipodes of center and region, town and country.[35]

However, I wish to emphasize that the ideological themes selected here have complex, even contradictory effects. As students, readers, consumers, and viewers,

33. David W. Plath, "The Age of Silver: Aging in Modern Japan," *The World & I*, Mar. 1988, 505–13.

34. On the "age-sixty retirement system" (*rokujū-sai teinensei*), see Plath, "Eighty-Year System." Lifelong education programs include the culture center movements of local governments and private companies (especially department stores, broadcasting companies, and newspaper companies). Imamura's mid-1970s research in a western Tokyo suburb was located in part in the city's first culture center (*Urban Japanese Housewives*); see also Takeshi Moriya, "The History of Japanese Civilization Through Aesthetic Pursuits," *Senri Ethnological Studies* 16 (1984): 105–16.

35. See Edwards, *Modern Japan Through Its Weddings*, 116. On the Confucian idiom, see especially Thomas P. Rohlen, "Order in Japanese Society: Attachment, Authority, and Routine," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 15 no. 1 (1989): 5–40; Ronald P. Dore, *Taking Japan Seriously: A Confucian Perspective on Leading Economic Issues* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); and Robert J. Smith, *Japanese Society: Tradition, Self, and the Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). On locality, see Kelly, "Rationalization and Nostalgia," and Robertson, "Dialectic."

postwar Japanese have been drawn into a powerful field of public culture through books, advertisements, white papers, programs, columns, speeches. The dominant yet shifting constructs of culture, class, cohort, and cycle—their pervasiveness and "publicity"—offer new and unifying frames of experience. At the same time, however, they also construct new categories of distinction, and this double effect lies behind my characterization of a postwar transposition of difference to a register of standardization.

INSTITUTIONAL PATTERNING

The rhythms of life experiences in postwar Japanese society have been both idealized and routinized by three broad institutional arenas—the workplace, the household, and the school. Early postwar actions substantially reshaped each of these institutions—for instance, the reorganization of businesses and labor force during the early economic recovery, the new Civil Code, and the Allied occupation's revision of the educational system. On the one hand, powerful typifications of these institutions have narrowed the preferred meanings of support in family, success in school, and security in work. That is, both official policy and public opinion came to idealize career employment in large organizations, meritocratic educational credentialing, and a nuclear household division of labor between the working husband and the nurturing wife. The ideological effect of valorizing serious students, diligent corporate workers, and paired householders has been to define standards of achievement, images of the desirable, and limits of the feasible.

On the other hand, employment in large organizations, success in competitive college examinations, and a lifelong nuclear household have remained statistical minorities throughout the postwar period. The actual compositions of workplaces, schools, and families are far more diverse. That is, these ideals remain compelling and consequential even as they fly in the face of life's realities for many Japanese. Indeed, put differently, these institutional arenas have channeled postwar ambitions but have produced, indeed required, multiple outcomes. This managed differentiation contributes to the larger paradox of identity and difference in the construction of postwar society.

Work and Workplaces

The last four decades have seen a dramatic shift in the labor force. The decline of agricultural employment has been precipitous. In 1949 nearly half of employment was in agriculture; in 1986 that figure was 7 percent. In 1950 only 40 percent of all workers were employed outside of family businesses; another quarter were owners of independent enterprises, while a third of the labor force were family workers. By 1985 family workers were a mere 9 percent and independent owners but 15 percent of the labor force, while fully 76 percent were now employed workers. Paid work in postwar Japan has become overwhelmingly a matter of corporate or public organizational work.

The year 1955 was a widely recognized turning point in the postwar economy. Many levels of economic performance had finally returned to their prewar highs; mechanization was beginning to release labor in agriculture for industrial employment; and the economy was in an expansionary growth period (the so-called Jinmu Boom). Both the government and media commentators were announcing the "end of the postwar period." During the same year the American James Abegglen was working out a model of the Japanese large firm that was to have enormous influence within and outside of Japan. He identified as characteristically Japanese features those of lifetime employment, pay and promotion by seniority, entry from the bottom, and enterprise unionism.[36] His model was intriguing to foreign observers even though they were puzzled that "traditional" features could still serve efficient functions. It was precisely this theme of cultural legacy that initially discomforted many Japanese, who interpreted it as a measure of backwardness; they later embraced the description as flattering evidence of exceptionalism.

Abegglen's model has proved a tenacious image of work organization and conditions, but for at least three reasons it is also a seriously misleading one. First, as Andrew Gordon, Thomas Smith, and others have demonstrated, much of what he implied to be timeless, traditional, and "Japanese" was of recent, mixed, and negotiated origin.[37] Second, subsequent ethnographic studies have shown that even those large work organizations that appear to fit the model are more complexly and tensely structured. For instance, Rohlen shows in his study of Ueda Bank that the bank's promotion of both competitive drive and a cooperative ethic was not always easy for employees. Indeed, as with the bank's "spiritual training" programs, they are possibly contradictory: training to make one invulnerable and yet vulnerable, to simultaneously toughen and soften one's motivations and spirit, was held to be mutually reinforcing but could as easily be incompatible.

But getting ahead and getting along are not always reconcilable. At Ueda Bank as elsewhere, a stock motif of New Years' cards arranged a section's personnel in a circle of harmony (wa) around the section chief and his assistants.[38] In fact, the geometric rendering of such large companies is more like an overlay of circle, rectangle, and triangle. The centripetal force of company membership is crosscut by the rectangular stacking of entry-year cohorts into an age-grade hierarchy. It is further threatened by the inevitable, sanctioned competition among a cohort for the fewer and fewer positions of central responsibility and higher status, creating a pyramidal organizational chart. In sum, even the contemporary ideal of large

36. James Abegglen, *The Japanese Factory: Aspects of Its Social Organization* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958).

37. Andrew Gordon, *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan: Heavy Industry, 1853–1955*, Harvard East Asia Monographs No. 117 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); and Thomas C. Smith, "The Right to Benevolence in Japan: Dignity and Japanese Workers, 1890–1920," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984): 587–613.

38. See Rohlen, *For Harmony and Strength*, 140–41 (interleaf), for an example.

organization *sararīman* employment masks a field of opposing and often not easily balanced structural imperatives.[39]

Third, and perhaps most seriously, the large organization model is misleading because it fails to describe—or account for—the vast majority of postwar workplaces and careers, whose very presence is necessary for the existence of the large organizations. The postwar variant of "Confucian capitalism" is the uneasy articulation of a small core of full-time, lifetime, trained male employees and a peripheral cushion that includes female part-timers, second-career retirees, seasonal rural labor, and small regional subcontractors. These distinctions between the privileged and the peripheral are maintained both within large corporations and ministries and in their linkages to extensive subcontracting networks and subordinate agencies. Skinner vividly described, for example, the ways in which the pseudonymous JKII, a satellite public agency of a national ministry, was used both as a training ground for the ministry's elite track younger managers and as a dumping ground for its older, less talented executives. Within JKII, turnover at the top and permanently blocked avenues of advancement for its own employees had devastating consequences on morale and productivity.[40]

The subcontracting sector is one of medium and small firms, the so-called *chūsho kigyō* sector. These firms predominate in rural areas and depend heavily on seasonal male labor and "part-time" female workers.[41] However, it is crucial to realize that this sector cannot be characterized simply by subcontracting. About three-quarters of the Japanese work force is employed in companies with three hundred or fewer employees, and these figures have not changed appreciably in thirty years. There is enormous range in company autonomy, job mobility, technological innovation, career ladders, and authority structures. In fact, a number of recent studies are forcing a fundamental reappraisal of the distinctiveness and centrality of small enterprise to the postwar economy.[42] And as Sheldon Garon and Mike Mochizuki's chapter shows, the medium-to-small sector has agitated continually to improve its political position in the ruling conservative coalition.

In sum, despite corporate ideology, postwar patterns of work have been char-

39. See Gordon's essay in this volume for a different but complementary perspective on managerial and worker cultures within large companies.

40. Skinner, "Conflict and Command."

41. Kent E. Calder, *Crisis and Compensation: Public Policy and Political Stability in Japan, 1949–1986* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); David Friedman, *The Misunderstood Miracle: Industrial Development and Political Change in Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); and William W. Kelly, "Regional Japan: The Price of Prosperity and the Benefits of Dependency," *Daedalus* 119, no. 3 (1990): 209–27.

42. In addition to the books by Calder, Friedman, and Kondo, see the important essay by Hugh T. Patrick and Thomas P. Rohlen, "Small-Scale Family Enterprises," in Kozo Yamamura and Yasukichi Yasuba, eds., *The Political Economy of Japan*, vol. 1, *The Domestic Transformation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 331–84.

acterized by structural tensions within large organizations and uneasy and varied ties to the penumbra of medium-small firms. This description echoes those of other chapters in this volume—not only Garon and Mochizuki's essay but also Andrew Gordon's account of struggles between management and workers. Given this differentiated workplace patterning, adversarial work cultures, and political activity, one might properly wonder why moments of radical challenge were so few.

Kent Calder has noted two intersecting trends important for understanding these postwar class dynamics—the absence of sustained conflict over work and workplace organization despite the varieties and disparities. On the one hand, the near disappearance of agriculture and agricultural employment did not precipitate residential dislocation and regional unemployment in large part because many of the manufacturing jobs remained in the countryside. On the other hand, the role of organized labor has declined sharply, especially since the mid-1970s. The unionization ratio in 1949 was about 50 percent; in 1986 it was 28.2 percent (and days lost to labor disputes was less than one-tenth of 1949 figures). As Calder argues: "Private-sector labor, under the pressure of technological change and the growing export reliance of Japanese industry after the 1973 oil shock, forged closer ties with both management and the ruling Liberal Democratic party to protect its economic position; more militant public-sector labor was destroyed as a political force by the mid-1980s through extensive privatization."[43]

These developments suggest the ways by which difference has been both reproduced and contained. Nonetheless, the result has been not a docile and compliant work force but one that has actively shaped its workplaces. The structural imperatives of large organizations insure that the discipline and commitment achieved are at best contingent. Some of the medium-small sector provides the necessary and vulnerable flexibility for large organizations, but much of it remains dynamic and autonomous.

Schools and Schooling

Allied occupation authorities oversaw a thorough redesign of early postwar education: the multiple tracks of the prewar system were amalgamated into a single six-three-three progression; control was localized in district school boards; and curricular content was depoliticized by eliminating offensive moral teaching. Dore witnessed in 1950 Shitayama the residents' and teachers' enthusiasm for innovations like PTAs and "social studies." Although neither was well understood, the prospects of democratizing the process and widening the opportunities for educational advancement were powerful motivations behind the sharp drop in the birthrates in the 1950s.[44]

Within the next few years, however, many of the organizational trends were

43. Calder, *Crisis and Compensation*, 462.

44. Kozo Yamamura and Susan B. Hanley, "*Ichi hime, ni Tarō:* Educational Aspirations and the Decline of Fertility in Post-war Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 2, no. 1 (1975): 83–125.

reversed. The national Ministry of Education succeeded in reasserting crucial control over budgetary, personnel, and curricular affairs, the entrance exam system was strengthened to determine admissions at the high school and university levels, and an underfunded and poorly regulated higher education system was allowed to proliferate. Its actions in turn fed an emerging image of postwar education as rigidly egalitarian, offering broad and uniform basic education but measuring ability by an absolutely discriminating exam yardstick, which selected those who could achieve impressively in a narrow range of factual knowledge. The commonality of the learning experience and the objectivity of the standard are held to legitimate the fairness of the outcome, whose credentialing sorts the population into adult roles.

Nonetheless, as in the arena of work, this stereotype conveys a false uniformity about the postwar education experience. It focuses attention at one level—that of academic secondary education—of a multitiered institution whose other levels we now understand to be organized along often different principles. A fuller account of schooling would consider the contrasts and links between early and elementary education; junior high and secondary levels; the junior colleges and universities; and childhood schooling and adult in-company training. Lois Peak, Catherine Lewis, and Joseph Tobin, for example, have drawn compelling pictures of early education as both strikingly different and clearly preparatory to later pedagogy and patterns: the deemphasis on academic skills, the teachers' marked preference not to impose order, solutions, and discipline, and the mobilization of small groups for those purposes.[45]

Even within the level of high school education, Rohlen has pointed to the tensions in the education system, in the political and procedural disputes between the teachers' union and the Ministry of Education, in the individual nature of test taking and the small-group initiative in social problem solving, in the muting of achievement and aptitude within a school, and in the highly visible tracking among schools in terms of public reputation.[46] Even for those successfully climbing the steep educational pyramid, after-hours cram schools for academic preparation have dichotomized the schooling experience into a daytime pedagogy that stresses conformity and uniformity and an evening pedagogy that aggressively hones individual competitive skills and spirit.

Drawing out the divisions within schooling highlights the parallels and points of articulation with the workplace. There is a close fit, for example, between core and periphery of work opportunities and the pinnacle and base of the education

45. Catherine C. Lewis, "From Indulgence to Internalization: Social Control in the Early School Years," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 15, no. 1 (1989): 139–57; Lois Peak, "Learning to Become Part of the Group: The Japanese Child's Transition to Preschool Life," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 15, no. 1 (1989): 93–123; and Joseph J. Tobin, David Y. H. Wu, and Dana H. Davidson, *Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China, and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

46. Rohlen, *Japan's High Schools,* and Rohlen, "The Juku Phenomenon: An Exploratory Essay," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 6, no. 1 (1980): 207–42.

pyramid. There are also instructive similarities between the organizational reliance on delegated responsibilities to the small work group, to the school homeroom, and to the preschool "squad." And Rohlen's observations about how the closely bounded high schools in his Kobe sample stifled student counterculture may have parallels with the ways in which enveloping corporations can co-opt autonomous worker organization.[47]

Families and Family Life

Certain developments, especially legal and demographic, have precipitated major changes in family form since 1945. In particular, the postwar Civil Code eliminated the mandate to continue family lines and primogeniture rules for succession and inheritance. Better health and nutrition rapidly extended life expectancy and the life course; a large proportion of the population is now living up to a third of their lives as grandparents.

Samuel Coleman has demonstrated both the standardization and the shifts in key elements of family formation that have resulted, including a later age of marriage, tight timing of first birth, the bunched birth of a second child, negligible premarital childbirth, and low divorce rates.[48] There is now a strong, age-specific association of marriage and fertility (figure 8.3). New middle-class ideology further legitimizes these patterns by stressing the full-time commitment of the *sararīman* husband to provide secure household income, the full-time commitment of the "professional housewife" to manage household expenditures and nurture the children, and equal commitment by the children to apply themselves to school success.

However, in many respects family form and marital experience remain diverse. The frequency of working married women belies broad salience of new middle-class norms of domesticity. In cultural terms one can see other ambiguities of family form in the changes in the marriage ceremony itself, which Walter Edwards has recently described. He shows that although much commentary on marriage change has posited a postwar shift from arranged to "love" marriages, such a view masks the still common experience that often combines some introductions and some initiative by the two individuals, some concern for objective characteristics and some importance to the "feelings" of the couple. In fact, the less noticed but much clearer shift has been the commercialization of postwar marriage. It would appear from Edwards's figures that about 75–85 percent of all marriage ceremonies and receptions are now conducted at professional wedding halls or hotels with similar services.[49] What is fascinating about his accounts of the ceremonies is their dramatic juxtaposition of themes of romance and responsibility, of dependence on and independence from a network of family and associates,

47. See Gordon's essay in this volume.
48. Samuel Coleman, "The Tempo of Family Formation," in David W. Plath, ed., *Work and Lifecourse in Japan* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 183–214.
49. Edwards, *Modern Japan Through Its Weddings*, 50–51.
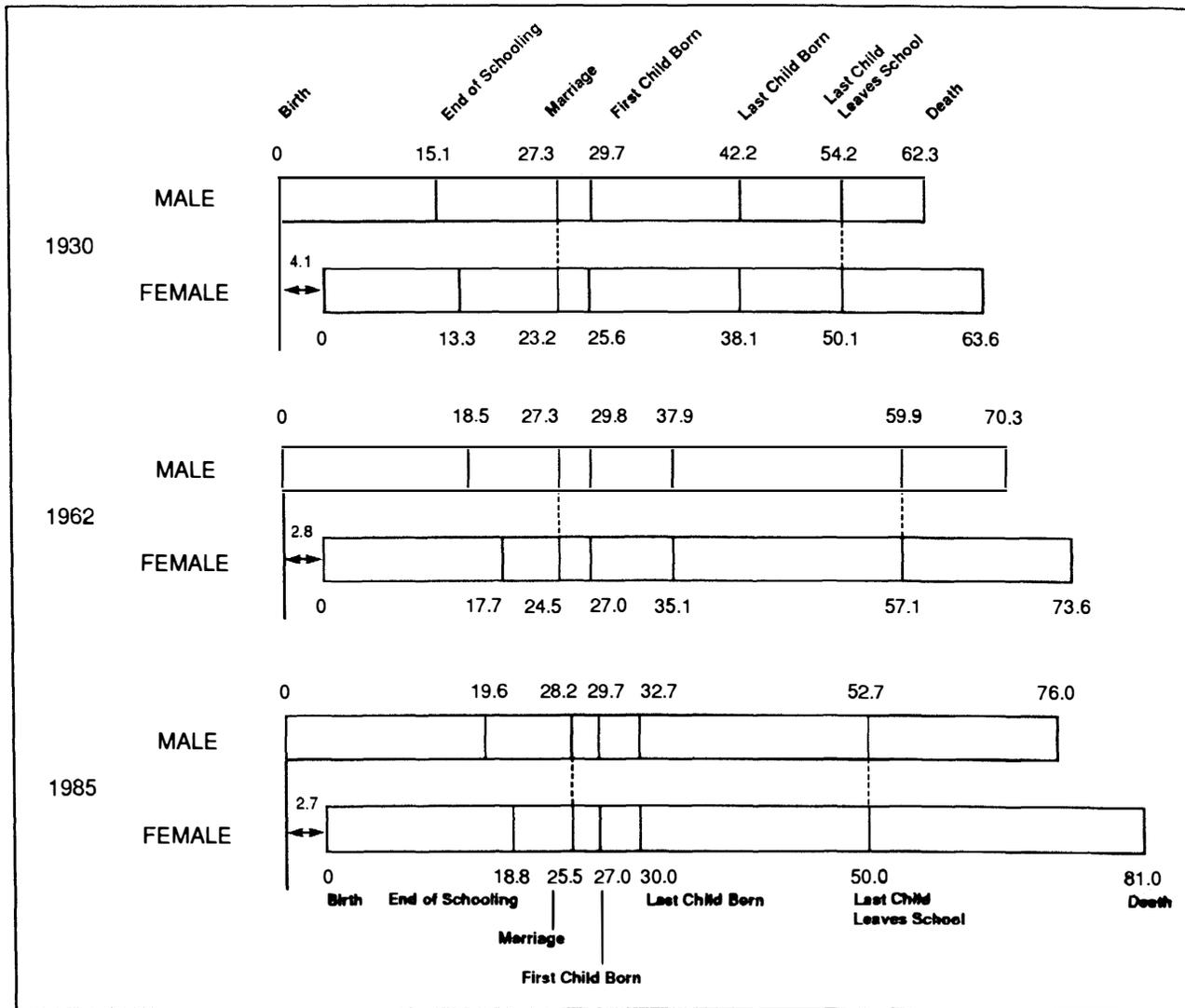
Figure 8.3. Mean life trajectories of Japanese males and females born in 1930, 1962, and 1985. SOURCE: Economic Planning Agency White Paper for 1985.

and the interdependence of the "complementarily incompetent" householder pair.

Indeed, a constructive ambiguity surrounds contemporary society's measure of full maturity. When is one considered adult? When do young people "enter society"? At the "ceremony of adulthood" at age twenty? With employment, in this age of nearly universal wage work after graduation? At marriage? Or with the birth of the first child, that is, at parenthood? To many, it would seem, the marital ideal is a household of *parents,* not newlyweds, thus lending an air of anticipation and incompleteness to the wedding itself.

It is curious that the proportion of nuclear families has remained roughly constant through the postwar decades (figure 8.4). Other circumstances, it appears, have slowed further nuclearization. Among them are state policies that have dealt ambivalently with the family in the last four decades. On the one hand, promotion of the nuclear family has facilitated greater mobility of the work force and has multiplied family units of consumption. On the other hand, there have been strong reservations about possible escalating calls on public resources for children (in the provision of day care), adults (in the provision of expanded housing stock), and the elderly (in the provision of health care). Thus, while characteristics of the *ie* "system" were disparaged in favor of the *katei* (household) or *kazoku* (family), in many respects a new opposition was introduced between the *sansedai kazoku* (the three-generation family) and the *kakukazoku* (the nuclear family). As a residential unit rather than patriarchal line, the three-generation family is promoted in a number of ways, including recent programs of two-generation mortgages. This is a low-interest housing loan offered to those who build *sansedai jūtaku,* designed with multiple bathrooms and kitchens to provide living space for elderly parents.

In short, despite the valorization of the conjugal couple and the nuclear household, it is likely that family experience for much of the population has and will continue to include phases of nuclear and extended household living. Inadequate day care compounded by the difficulties and expense of housing offer some advantages to remaining with parents. Later in life, the limitations of elderly hospitalization policy (which increasingly stresses "home care," *hōmu kea*) create pressures for generations to reassemble in some joint living arrangements. These and other circumstances contravene the homogenizing effects of legal and demographic change and insure a continued diversity of family form.

INDIVIDUAL LIFEWAYS: CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Still, neither homogenizing institutions nor hegemonic ideologies work inexorably. It is only through a close reading of individual lives as they embody and animate social forces that we can understand both the strength of these ideologies and institutions and their variable and imperfect manifestations in social patterns.

Single-member
households

| Nuclear families | Extended families | ↓ | other |

| 1920 | 54% | 31 | 7 | 8 |
1955	60.6	32.6	3.4	3.4
1960	60.2	28.6	4.1	7.1
1965	62.5	24.3	7.9	5.3
1970	63.5	22.5	10.8	3.3
1975	63.9	20.2	13.5	2.3
1980	63.4	20.7	15.8	
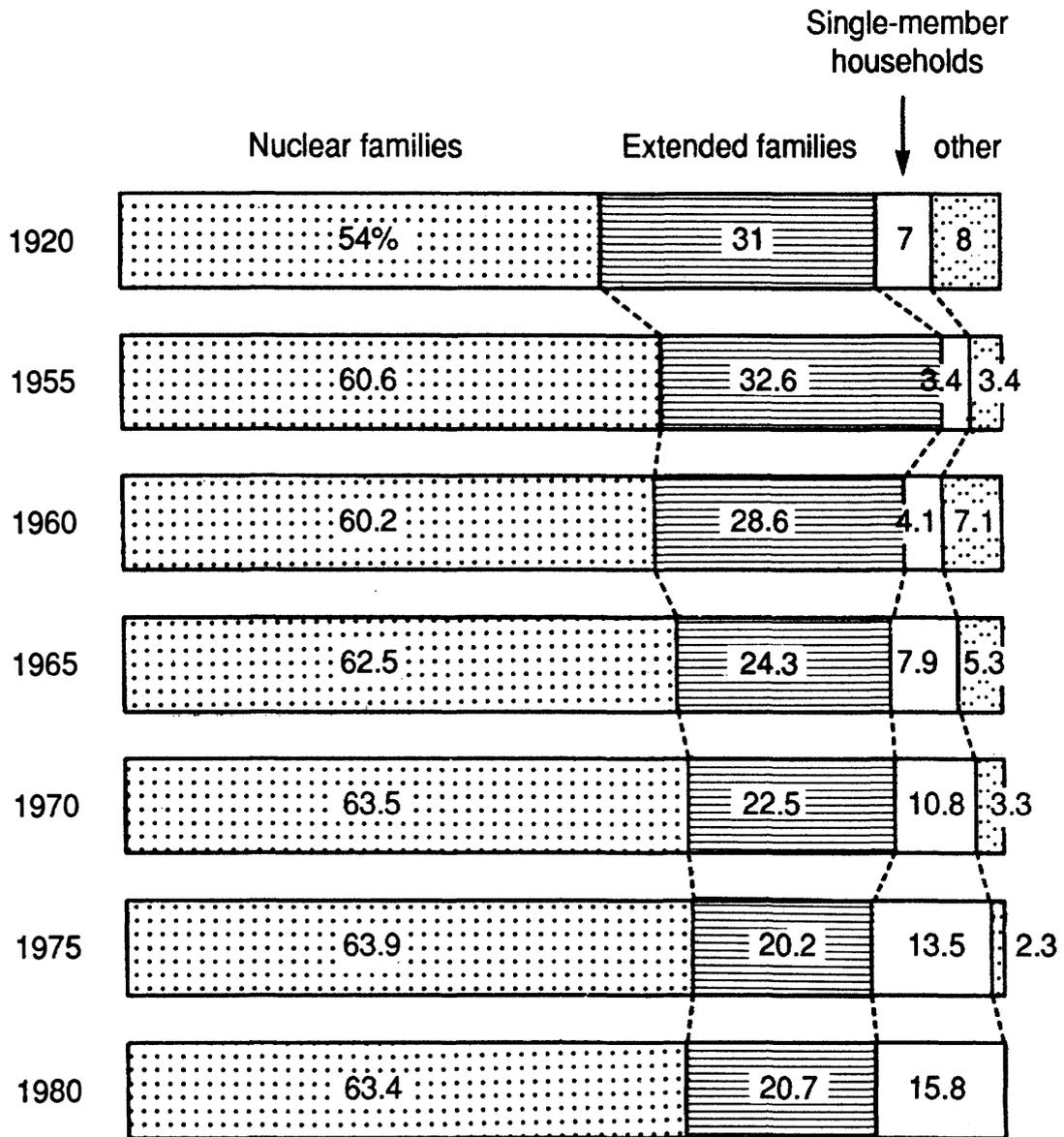
Figure 8.4. Trends in the structure of Japanese household membership. SOURCE: Population censuses, Prime Minister's Office.

In concluding this essay, I wish to briefly illustrate this dialectic of embodiment and animation with profiles of two sets of postwar siblings, the Itōs from a rural region in the northeast, and the Kimuras from a suburb of Kyoto. In their details the six life trajectories are widely diverse, yet in the regularization of their transitions and in their encounters with institutional demands, they are all recognizably and representatively postwar.[50]

The three Kimura siblings were all born in the first postwar decade in a town

50. This material comes from my own ongoing research. All names are pseudonyms, and details necessary to preserve anonymity have been changed. The Itōs figure briefly in Kelly, "Rationalization and Nostalgia," and in Kelly, "Japanese Farmers," *Wilson Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1990): 34–41, from which I have borrowed several paragraphs.

on Kyoto's western border, which was then being suburbanized as was the Vogels' research site of Mamachi. Their father had been born in 1920 to a Kyoto merchant; he graduated from Kyoto University and served in the military in southern China for several years before exaggerating an injury and being returned to Kyoto. In 1945, through a family relative, he was introduced to and married the daughter (born in 1925) of a farmer whose land on the western edge of Kyoto was beginning to appreciate. With a gift of a land parcel from her father, they built a comfortable middle-class home. The father went to work for a large private railroad company in the region and rose through assignments in four of its various subsidiaries. He was a diffident company man who eschewed much of the normally obligatory after-hours socializing. His final position as labor relations specialist in one of the company's hotels suggested to him a postretirement "second career" as a labor consultant to small businesses in the Kansai area. He now has the requisite license and plans to practice as long as his health permits. His wife, having recently borne the burden of caring for her senile parents in their final five years, is supportive and insistent on his working. Her own efforts, however, to stay "busy" between visits to her children are limited to foreign language classes in the private Culture Center in her neighborhood.

The oldest child, the daughter Rumi, was born in 1946; her father encouraged her to pursue her education at a private university. In 1972, at twenty-six, she married a Swedish academic scientist whom she met while working as a tour guide for foreigners. They soon moved to Sweden, where they continue to live. She gives both piano and Japanese language lessons at home, as their three children approach adolescence.

The second child, the son Tetsuya, was born in 1947. He majored in engineering at a local private university; on graduation, with his advisor's recommendation, he was selected for a highly competitive position in the research institute of a major construction company on the outskirts of Tokyo. He met his wife through an introduction by one of his university professors and married in 1975 at age twenty-eight. They moved into a rental apartment in Tama New Town and in 1983, at odds of seven hundred to one, won a lottery drawing for a house site in a new development adjacent to their apartment complex. With company mortgage money and a two-generation bank loan, they had a modest $600,000 house built by 1988. His wife had quit her clerical job at marriage to raise two children; they are now entering high school, and she has returned to school to study bookkeeping. She has a part-time accounting job and hopes to free-lance, both for her children's school expenses and for the new house.

The second daughter, Mariko, was born in 1950. She followed her older sister to private university and then a master's degree in English literature. She stayed at home through several brief jobs teaching in private high schools. These years coincided with the period during which her mother's bedridden parents moved in. After several struggles with her parents over boyfriends and job frustrations, she sought refuge with her sister in Sweden, where she studied Swedish sufficiently to secure a job at the embassy in Tokyo. In 1982, at age thirty-two, she met and

married Akira, a Japanese executive of a Swedish company. His father had just died, and they inherited his condominium in the center of Tokyo. Akira's mother divides her time between her son and daughter-in-law and her daughter in Kanazawa, the family's original home. Mariko adamantly resists Akira's occasional expressions of a desire for children.

For the moment the parents are among the healthy and active "young old," but the recent experience with the mother's parents has led to some discussion across the generations about future arrangements. Despite the parents' fond hopes that one of their children will return to Kyoto, careers clearly prevent that. In their own ways all three siblings have thought contingently about assuming a share of the caretaking, but there are no joint plans.

The three Itō siblings are rough contemporaries of the Kimuras from a rural region in the northeast. The oldest of the three, Noboru, was born to *Shōwa hitoketa* parents in 1949, just as the postwar land reform gave his grandfather clear title to the two hectares of rice paddy that the household had tenanted. His grandfather and his parents farmed this land through the 1950s and early 1960s while encouraging the three children to continue through high school.

Noboru's younger brother, Shōji (born 1950), graduated from the regional technical high school and went to work in a Yokohama auto parts factory. After holding a series of machine shop jobs in the Kanto area, he has settled into employment with a small pollution-control company in Yokohama. He now lives in a public rental apartment with his wife, who works part-time, and their two middle school children. The youngest sibling, the daughter Yumiko (born 1953), graduated from the regional commercial high school and immediately left for Tokyo to find work as a buyer for a Tokyo department store. After living with her boyfriend for a year, they were married in 1982 in an expensive ceremony at the Imperial Hotel in downtown Tokyo. She joined her husband in his family's small women's-clothing business; together they purchased a modest condominium in eastern Tokyo. The business went bankrupt, however, in the mid-1980s; the Itōs have complained since that Yumiko's husband had foolishly overextended himself. Yumiko and her husband were forced to rent out the condominium and live in a modest apartment with his mother while operating a small pet shop. His mother has provided day care for their one child, who will soon be in kindergarten.

Noboru's own decision to go to the agricultural high school was a difficult one, but he has stuck with farming long after nearly all of the young men of the settlement have given up. Noboru now handles three hectares of paddyland by himself, with only a bit of help at transplanting and harvest. In addition, he grows and pickles organic vegetables under a contract with a consumer cooperative in Tama New Town. He holds the contract with two acquaintances from nearby villages; each of them grows and processes independently, but they market under a common label. For his business he seasonally hires several older men and women of the village, including his own mother.

Noboru and Keiko, a year younger, were married in 1973 after introductions

through mutual friends of their parents and a very brief courtship. She had agreed with the explicit stipulation that she could continue as a full-time salesperson at what was then the only department store on the plain. After nearly twenty years with the store, she remains on the sales floor; any advancement would have required assignments away from the region. In the 1960s the Itōs had been one of the first in the settlement to rebuild their house with tile roofing, full electrical wiring, and modern kitchen appliances. In the mid-1970s his parents built Noboru and Keiko a small, second-story addition to the house where the young couple have a bedroom and living room. Noboru and Keiko now look enviously on the layouts of more recent houses in the settlement that divide even more discretely the living and eating spaces of the adult generations.

Noboru's father now involves himself with local "good causes"—particularly school programs and senior citizen activities. He is a four-term town councillor, generally supporting the district's Socialist Dietman, and makes a little money as a school crossing guard. In the years since her own contributions to the paddy fields became unnecessary, Noboru's mother Fusae has risen most mornings at five o'clock to earn a bit of money doing piecework at home. For several years she did soldering for an electric-parts factory; recently she has been doing finish work for girls' clothing at 200 yen ($1.90) per piece. At six-thirty she stretches her sore back with the radio exercise program, and then she and Keiko prepare breakfast. While the children are at school, she tends the family's large vegetable garden and continues her piecework. She has been generally happy to assume much of the burden of raising her three grandchildren. As a young bride she had to return to the fields immediately after giving birth to her own three children, who were looked after by her mother-in-law. She enjoys this long-delayed chance to be a mother.

Keiko and Noboru's three children all moved up the educational ladder in 1990. The oldest, a daughter, passed a highly competitive exam to enter the region's preeminent high school; the second, a son and putative household successor, entered the town's junior high school, while the youngest, a second son, began elementary school. The Itōs' present educational concerns focus on the older two. Unlike students in other high schools, students in the daughter's high school are expected to go on to college, but the region's best school is still far from the top of the national pyramid. Personal ambitions and adult expectations push the students to aspirations for which even its regular, fast-paced curriculum cannot prepare them. In 1990 fully 120 of the 220 graduating seniors chose to take an extra year for intensive exam preparation, either by themselves (as so-called *rōnin*) or at special prep academies. As high school graduates Keiko and Noboru improved on their parents' elementary education, and they would undoubtedly be pleased with a college degree by their daughter. Yet they already recognize how bittersweet would be the satisfaction, not only because of her short-term pressures, but also because of the long-term probability that a college degree will take her, like many of the better educated, out of the region for work and marriage.

This prospect only heightens their anxieties about the older son. Given the three-year junior high system, they have eighteen months before they must decide which high school's entrance exam he will sit for. Is there a future in the family's farming? Is he interested? Should he be encouraged? How strongly should they encourage him? Noboru has a newfound enthusiasm for farming and the experience to develop a farming business partially independent of the cooperative network, but he still lacks confidence in the long-term future for local agriculture. Like virtually every other parent in the area, he will probably counsel his son toward other work.

In even this most cursory sketch of the basic life circumstances of this now middle-aged cohort, one can find ample evidence of how the ideologies and institutions of the postwar decades have shaped both the convergences and divergences of their lifeways. The three Itōs and the three Kimuras were born to parents attempting the common transitions of the immediate postwar: from tenancy to modern mechanized agriculture, from an old middle-class commercial background to new middle-class corporate employment. For all of the children schooling was crucial in their own development and emerging identity; it both synchronized their life transitions and sorted the opportunities available to them. Those opportunities led to a variety of jobs and careers, but what most shared, even Itō Noboru's farming and food processing, was a division of work and household and a high value on the security of the conditions and professionalism of the work.

In material circumstances and household income there are visible but not yawning differences among the six families. They have all been buffeted by the crosscurrents of saving and spending that simultaneously encourage thrifty households and spendthrift consumers. However, it is less in income than in assets that the gaps are wide and widening, through the good fortune and inheritance of the three Kimuras and Itō Noboru. As families, all six reflect the primacy of nuclear units (in physical space and social disposition) and persisting norms of organic solidarity (that is, the mutually exclusive spheres and complementary contributions of spouses). For both the Kimuras and Itōs the demands of career and attractions of work in metropolitan Tokyo have undermined connections to parents. Getting ahead and staying put are not easily reconciled. Nonetheless, there are important links across the adult generations, and it is likely that, despite the difficulties, several of the Kimuras will feel compelled to provide home care for their elderly parents later in the life cycle.

CONCLUSION

This essay has characterized postwar society by the wider subscription to ideological and institutional standards *and* the perpetuation of significant, antagonizing differences. How is one to resolve such an apparent paradox? What is the nature of the postwar societal order and what is the potential for disruption and societal

disorder? As other chapters have suggested, these have certainly been matters of sustained debate. Controversies about the shape and significance of the postwar political economy, for instance, frequently turn on different interpretations about how managed or how negotiated is the social order. Some analysts, either critically or admiringly, have found Japan a paragon (or prison) of administered efficiency, the ultimate "managed society" (*kanri shakai*). Other, quite different models locate its special nature in the reverse: in the *absence* of a strong center. Action—and order—are the products of negotiations among pluralist interest groups or between state ministries and political parties.

However, neither elite coercion nor negotiated consensus most appropriately characterizes the social order of middle and late Shōwa. Its order is better described as co-optive, complicit, and contested. Postwar society is a co-optive order in the sense that predominant ideologies and institutions have been remarkably inclusive, embracing much of the population and regularizing their lifeways. It is a complicit order in that the inclusiveness of these ideologies and institutions has defused much potential conflict and infused widespread commitment. And it is a contested order in that public rhetorics and institutions shape and constrain ordinary lives in ways that are neither direct nor mechanical nor complete. There are no ideologies of sameness masking a reality of differences, with coercion and false consciousness preserving the former while masking the latter. Ideologies of culture, class, cohort, and life cycle have themselves been fields of argument rather than consensual tenets. The tensions that have strained workplaces, schools, and families in the postwar decades render institutional hegemony a problematical and not inevitable achievement.[51] Within and between these arguments and tensions, the people of middle and late Shōwa have acted, effectively and creatively, to construct and "lead" their lives.

Yet it would be misleading to exaggerate their field of choices. Much has worked against questioning and toward acceptance. Like ideologies and institutions everywhere, those of postwar Japan "normalize" in two senses. Ideological representation both generalizes and naturalizes, claiming for specific interests a natural universality. And the power of institutions is the power to normalize in the twin senses of idealizing and routinizing certain patterns of conduct. The terms of the rhetorical and institutional embrace around the people of postwar Japan have entailed distinctions that have reproduced and legitimated social differences, albeit in new forms.

51. Another version of these final paragraphs concludes William W. Kelly, "Directions in the Anthropology of Contemporary Japan," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 20 (1991): 395–431. That article also gives fuller treatment to issues of gender and marginalized populations than I have been able to here.