

Marital Relations and Personal Communities in Two Japanese Cities: Structural Effect and Cultural Context

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Abstract

This study examines the structural effect of husbands' and wives' personal networks upon their marital ties in terms of the socio-cultural context of modern Japan, using quantitative and qualitative data from married couples in a suburb city of metropolitan Tokyo and a more traditional regional-center city. Couples with larger local kin networks tend to be emotionally interdependent in the context of the traditional Japanese patrilineal family system. Suburban Tokyo couples seem to be increasingly 'liberated' from the binding effect of traditional local kin as their kinship networks are more spatially dispersed, and their gender role segregation tends to be structurally enhanced by the wives' commitment to neighbor networks and their husbands' commitment to co-worker networks. This study suggests that patterns of family-community interface are dependent on the socio-cultural context in each society, but it echoes previous studies of Western and non-Western societies in that the overlap of husbands' and wives' networks seems to structurally promote spousal emotional interdependence regardless of cultural context.

Key words: marital relations, personal networks, Japan.

1 . Introduction: Marital relations and personal networks reconsidered

Since the mid-twentieth century, marriage has been studied not only in its isolation but also in the structural context of spouses' personal networks of kin and non-kin ties (for reviews, see Milardo, 1988; Stain and Russner, 1995, Wellman, 1990). The long quest for the link between marital ties and networks of other ties, mainly in Western societies, has evolved since Elizabeth Bott's classic study appeared in 1957 (Bott, 1971), which hypothesized that married couples' closely-knit networks undermine marital jointness. In other words, what she discovered is the marriage-dividing effect of solidary or 'constraint-generating' networks (Burt, 1992).

Later studies have not fully substantiated Bott's hypothesis, however. Beyond long discussed theoretical and methodological problems in her hypothesis-building (see Bott, 1971: 248-330; Lee, 1979; Milardo and Allan, 2000), Wellman and Wellman (1992), based on their Toronto research, contend that substantial social changes are occurring to the point that the personal networks of husbands and wives have largely lost the marriage-dividing forces. As personal networks of married couples are increasingly composed of structurally ramified and spatially dispersed network ties, they are now 'liberated' (Wellman, 1979) from the solidarity of once local and kin-dominated networks. Any strong normative pressure is unlikely to emerge from these less interconnected networks containing many ties with diverse non-kin, such as friends and co-workers, as well as kin members scattered over a wide area (see also Fischer, 1982b).

Wellman and Wellman (1992) also argue that the community life has become privatized and home-centered (see also Allan, 1989; Wellman, 1999). While wives play the key roles in network-keeping, both husbands and wives give priority to their domestic life and share many of their network ties. Husbands and wives mutually exchange support, and receive further support from other network members according to their domestic needs which vary with the stage in family life cycle, the wives' employment

situations, and so on. In sum, urban husbands and wives today tend to be interdependent and, based on these strong marital ties, maintain and mobilize their supportive networks from inside their households, without being greatly affected from outside (see Oliveri and Reiss, 1981 and Reiss and Oliveri, 1983 for a similar argument). This vision is also congruent with the argument that the Western modern family is a historically crystallized unit of strong emotional bonds (Shorter, 1975).

Yet, a few North American studies show some evidence indicating kinship ties exert an influence on marital interdependence even in contemporary Western societies (Hill, 1988; Burger and Milardo, 1995). Furthermore, some modal network attributes such as network density may vary across societies (Fischer and Shavit, 1995), and by degree of urbanism within a society (Fischer 1982a). Thus, it is probable that the link between marriage and network varies across societies, and even across more and less urban settings within a society.

It is important to note that the contents of norms shared by densely knit network members are dependent on socio-cultural contexts. For example, Bott's argument that a wife's strong ties with her own mother and other female kin members can compete with the wife's tie with her husband is plausible only under the social condition of dominantly bilateral kinship norms in British (or Western) society (see also Young and Willmott, 1957). Spouses' involvement with kinship networks might exhibit different effects, either binding or dividing marriage, if it was under the influence of other types of dominant kinship norms such as the patrilineal tradition in Japan (which is discussed in the next section). Moreover, the kind of link that Bott found is most plausible under the condition of normative approval for gender role segregation among network members (see Lee, 1979: 35). The content of norms shared by network members should not necessarily be this kind, but could also be any other kind (including radical feminist views or traditional patriarchal views) in different social contexts (Milardo and Allan, 2000: 127). The structural effect of networks is not totally free from socio-cultural contexts.

This does not mean, however, that generalizations are entirely impossible, but it does mean that Simmel (1955) should be followed here in seeking generalizations in terms of universal structures and processes, not in terms of particular contents in any specific culture. For example, the degree of network overlap between spouses seems to promote marital interdependence, being relatively independent from cultural factors. A largely shared network of husband and wife should structurally foster deeper involvement between the two and lead to a marriage that is more 'joint', because it enlarges the opportunities for couple's joint activities and common daily concerns (see Harris, 1969; Kapferer, 1973; Milardo, 1986). Research in different cultures supports this line of thinking. Findings by Kapferer (1973) on Zambian couples, by Chatterjee (1977) on Indian couples, and by Gordon and Downing (1978) on Irish wives, as well as above mentioned findings by Bott (1971) and Wellman and Wellman (1992), basically agree that the more overlap between husband's and wife's networks, the more joint the conjugal relationships. What previous studies generalize cross-culturally is not the role of relational contents (kin-keeping or neighboring can bring different things in different cultures), but the role of relational structure (husband and wife with more overlapping networks tend to interact jointly).

2 . Cultural and social contexts in modern Japan

Marital relations in Japan have been largely believed to be of the 'segregated' type with husband and wife living in separate social spheres. In a study of the emerging 'salary men' families in a Tokyo suburb at the beginning of Japan's high economic growth period (from the mid 1950s until the early 1970s), Vogel (1963) points out that the conjugal role segregation is even more rigid than before in such new urban families where each of the spouses separately belongs to mutually exclusive communities: the husband's community at his work place and the wife's community in the neighborhood (see also Blood, 1967; Wimberley, 1973). Cross-cultural analyses of couples in

Japan and the U.S. demonstrate the segregated nature of Japanese marriage still remains (Kamo, 1994; Ingersoll-Dayton *et al.*, 1996). However, it has not been fully explored what kind of network structure strengthens or weakens the segregated nature of marital relations specifically in cultural and social contexts of Japan.

Only Wimberley (1973) has tested Bott's hypothesis with data from a Japanese city. However, he did not find any evidence supporting or modifying Bott's hypothesis; there was no association between the interconnectedness of a family's friendship network and marital relations. His selection of social relations among friends, rather than local kin, neighbors, or co-workers, as the primary measure of network connectedness resulted in an obscure picture of the Japanese phenomena, missing the point of potential network influences upon marital relations.

First, the issue of traditional norms in Japanese family and kinship relations is of great importance. Unlike the bilateral kinship norms in many Western societies, Japanese families have been formed around, and now transformed away from, the dominant influence of the patrilineal stem family tradition. As Dore (1978) summarizes the rules of the traditional Japanese stem family as 'a self-perpetuating unit', a household is supposed to be maintained in a way that 'the eldest son in each generation succeeded his father as head of the household' and that 'marriage for the eldest son, meant bringing a bride into his family' while 'marriage for women was a matter of "going", of "being sent"' (Dore, 1978: 138). In this patrilineal and patrilocal family tradition, a newly married wife is incorporated into a rather formal aspect of kinship relations among the households on her husband's side. Marriage locates her in a position to support her husband (as head of the household or his future successor) in his kin-keeping (and also often neighboring) enterprise. She operates as a practitioner and sometimes as a delegate of the head, in the midst of a preexisting structural matrix of inter-household relationships passed on from the preceding generations. This traditional Japanese kinship pattern based on patrilineality and formality characterizes the structural interdependence between husband and wife in

the past and, to a lesser extent, present rural Japan. Theoretically, it can be hypothesized that, in Japan as compared to the bilateral kinship of the West, a couple's involvement in a kinship network (particularly on the husband's side) facilitates, rather than undermines, marital interdependence and coordination.

Through Japan's rapid urbanization since World War II especially during its high economic growth period, the traditional norms formed and maintained among local kinship members had waned to the extent that those kin became spatially dispersed. Koyama (1970) reveals that urban families maintain most of their ties with kin at distant places, and that rural families have many relatives residing nearby. He also observes that urban kinship relations have been in transition from formal and ritualistic contacts based on rites de passage and seasonal festivities toward more informal exchanges of social support based on the needs in everyday life and more frequent contacts with wives' rather than husbands' kin. The marriage-binding effect of the local kin network based on the Japanese traditional kinship norms may be less prevalent among urban families than among their less urban counterparts.

This implies general 'community liberated' (Wellman, 1979) features of the urban Japanese families. Many Tokyo suburban wives seem to have differentiated supportive ties in accordance with their diverse needs and interests over the life-course (Imamura, 1987). A personal network study (Otani, 1999) of residents in Japanese cities suggests that in Japan, as in North America (Fischer, 1982a), the more urban a person's place of living, the better her/his personal network fits the 'community liberated model' (Wellman, 1979): fewer ties with kin and neighbors, and more ties with friends.

However, this does not necessarily mean that, as urbanization proceeds, Japanese families have been changing toward exactly the same pattern that Wellman and Wellman (1992) found among North American urban families; becoming more home-centered and marriage-based in their network management with little informal control from outside the household. Urban

Japanese residents' networks are similar in composition to their North American counterparts, but there is still some difference in that the Japanese tend to have more ties with co-workers and neighbors, and fewer ties with kin (Otani, 1999). Many white-collar husbands in Tokyo linger after work in sticky webs of empathetic but instrumental relationships (*tsukiai*) of sociability with their co-workers, whether willingly or reluctantly. These *tsukiai* relationships are based on social necessity or a feeling of obligation and should be distinguished from private friendships which develop out of mutual liking or attractions (Atsumi, 1979). A study based on interviews with twenty child-raising Japanese couples suggests that Japanese husbands' limited involvement at home is partly due to their fear of being ostracized by their colleagues (Ishii-Kuntz, 1993). Those urban Japanese husbands who make strong commitment to their colleague-communities seem to be under structural pressure to lead a gender-segregated domestic life.

Parallel to this, urban Japanese housewives have 'professional friends' in neighborhood, in addition and in contrast to personal friends who live further away (Imamura, 1987). These housewives, at their peak years of child-raising in particular, form friendships with mothers of their children's local friends, and these 'professional friends' are essential sources of information and assistance for the domestic roles of house-keeping and child-rearing. Similar to their urban white-collar husbands' *tsukiai* relations with their workplace associates, these housewives' domestic-role-related friendships in limited localities are based more on necessity and less on personal choice, characterized by a normative feeling to treat everyone in the group equally at rather public places (Imamura, 1987: 88-103).

In sum, many Japanese (sub)urban families may be experiencing a marriage-dividing effect from both husbands' involvement in co-worker networks and wives' involvement in neighbor networks. As long as these structural forces from spatially and socially separate networks of spouses persist, it can be hypothesized that the spouses' stronger commitment to these networks will lead to more segregated marriage. This tendency may be clearer among couples in suburban areas of a metropolis like Tokyo, since

husbands' long commuting hours in these areas make the effect of husbands' *tsukiai* networks more salient in that they have even less time at home to get involved with domestic affairs.

The examination of previous studies on families and communities in Japan as compared with those in the West yields the following three hypotheses for the link between marriage and network. (1) In more traditional, stem family oriented places in Japan, couples (especially husbands) involved with larger local kin networks tend to have more interdependent marital relations. (2) In the metropolitan suburbs, both husbands' commitment to their work-related networks and wives' involvement with their neighbor networks tend to undermine jointness in marriage. (3) As implied by almost all the above-cited studies, the overlap in couples' social networks tends to foster communications and involvements between husband and wife.

3. Methods and data

The data were drawn from a comparative study of Asaka City and Yamagata City in 1993. Asaka is a suburban city, in Saitama Prefecture, constituting a part of the Tokyo metropolis; many husbands have a round-trip commute to inner Tokyo of two hours by train or subway. By contrast, Yamagata is a prefectural and regional center city, surrounded by farming areas and smaller towns, in northeastern Japan. Particularly in the northeastern rural areas, the traditional patrilineal stem families remain more viable. For instance, the percentage of elderly parents who live with their married child (mostly a son) in Yamagata Prefecture is at the highest level in Japan.

Surveys were conducted with two random samples: 620 married couples from each site with the age of the husband ranging between 20 and 65 years old. Valid cases of 402 couples from Asaka (response rate: 64.8%) and 453 couples from Yamagata (73.1%) were obtained. Semi-structured case interviews were conducted afterwards with five married couples at each

site, a purposive sample (three couples with husbands in their forties and two couples with husbands in their sixties) collected independently of the survey sample. The husbands and wives were interviewed simultaneously in separate rooms for approximately ninety minutes about their marital relationships and personal networks. The qualitative data from the case interviews were used to help interpret the results of the quantitative survey data analyses.

Two measures of marital relations are dependent variables.

1. As for the *emotional level of marital relations*, the degrees of emotional dependence on one's spouse reported by both husband and wife were measured. By asking both husbands and wives how frequently they turn to their spouses for (1) conversation in times of stressful events, (2) advice in decision-making in times of vacillation, and (3) opinions about future life plans, and then by adding six scores from these questions for both husband and wife, scales of 'couple's emotional dependence' ($\alpha = .74$, for pool data) were constructed.

2. As for the *practical level of marital relations*, the degree of husband's domestic role performance was measured by asking wives how many household chores their husbands did in the previous week. The seven items in this scale are cooking, washing dishes, cleaning rooms, doing laundry, shopping for groceries, disposing of garbage, and cleaning bath rooms ($\alpha = .58$).

Couples in Asaka indicate lower levels of jointness than in Yamagata in both of the marital relation scales and these differences are statistically significant (Table 1). The low level of domestic role performance by husbands in both Asaka and Yamagata implies that the overall rigid conjugal role segregation in modern Japan continues, especially among urban families.

To examine the hypotheses, six network variables are independent variables:

1. The size of the husband's local kinship network,⁽¹⁾
2. The size of the wife's extra-local kinship network,

Table 1
Means and standard deviations of marital and network variables in Asaka and Yamagata

Variables	City		Means	S. D.
Couple's emotional interdependence	Asaka	(N=401)	8.11***	2.56
	Yamagata	(N=447)	8.76	2.39
Number of household chore items done by husband (out of seven items)	Asaka	(N=402)	1.47*	1.48
	Yamagata	(N=453)	1.74	1.58
Average number of husband's & wife's local kin (only supportive and intimate ties)	Asaka	(N=389)	1.79***	2.50
	Yamagata	(N=453)	3.12	3.05
Average number of husband's & wife's distant kin (only supportive and intimate ties)	Asaka	(N=377)	4.38**	3.99
	Yamagata	(N=452)	2.72	3.26
Number of husband's co-workers (only supportive and intimate ties)	Asaka	(N=386)	4.31	5.75
	Yamagata	(N=448)	4.53	6.74
Number of wife's neighbors (only supportive and intimate ties)	Asaka	(N=398)	3.39**	3.05
	Yamagata	(N=450)	2.74	2.83
Parent-child support reported by wife	Asaka	(N=383)	2.42	2.00
	Yamagata	(N=427)	2.61	2.03
Couple's close friends overlap	Asaka	(N=361)	6.85***	1.44
	Yamagata	(N=414)	7.22	1.25

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. (two tailed t -test)

3. The size of the husband's co-worker network,
4. The size of the wife's neighbor network,
5. The degree of parent/adult-child tie supportiveness reported by the wife as assessed with six items of both emotional and practical support ($\alpha = .80$),⁽²⁾
6. The degree of close friendship overlap between husband and wife as measured by asking both husbands and wives how well their spouses know each of his/her two closest friends). This was scaled by adding all the scores for the four closest friends ($\alpha = .64$).

While Yamagata husbands report having an average of three supportive and intimate kin living nearby, the number in Asaka is less than two. By contrast, Asaka wives maintain more than four spatially distant supportive

Table 2
Summary of regressions predicting marital relations in Asaka and Yamagata

Variable	Couple's emotional interdependence		Household chores done by husband	
	Asaka	Yamagata	Asaka	Yamagata
Couple's average age	-.03	-.09	.05	.14+
Husband's length of education	.01	-.03	-.04	.07
Wife's length of education	.09	.08	.10	.16*
Having children under age of 13	.02	-.11	-.10	-.07
Extended family household	.04	-.08	-.10+	-.16**
Husband employed in a white-collar job	.13*	.03	.06	-.06
Wife employed in a full-time job	.08	.01	.19**	.23***
Household's annual income	.11+	.10+	-.15*	.03
Number of couple's local kin	.00	.13*	.02	.01
Number of couple's distant kin	.11+	.10+	.11+	.09
Number of husband's co-workers	.07	.03	-.11+	-.00
Number of wife's neighbors	-.01	-.06	-.10	-.08
Parent-child support reported by wife	.23***	.10+	.15*	.06
Couple's close friends overlap	.26***	.23***	.05	.04
R ²	.24***	.13***	.14***	.12***

+ $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

kin on the average, exceeding the mean number of two and one-half for Yamagata wives. These findings suggest the spatial dispersion of kinship networks in more urbanized places. However, in Yamagata, the number of the wife's supportive neighbors is smaller, and the degree of the couple's close friends overlap is larger. The other two network variables do not differ significantly between the locations (Table 1).

Eight variables measuring household/personal characteristics are also included in the analysis as predictors to the dependent variables (the marital relations):

1. The couple's average age,⁽³⁾
2. The husband's length of education,
3. The wife's length of education,
4. Having children under the age of thirteen (1=yes, 0=no),
5. Extended family household (1=yes, 0=no),

6. The husband's employment in a white-collar job (1=yes, 0=no),
7. The wife's employment in a full-time job,
8. Household's annual income.

The two samples differ in some of these domestic or personal traits. Couples have average ages of 44.7 years in Asaka and 48.2 years in Yamagata ($t(1,853)=-4.98, p<.001$). The husband's average years of education is slightly longer in Asaka (12.73 years) than in Yamagata (12.24 years) ($t(1,851)=2.92, p<.01$). The difference in the wife's education is even smaller and non significant (12.09 in Asaka and 11.92 in Yamagata). The average annual income is also higher in Asaka (7.45 million yen) than in Yamagata (6.67 million yen) ($t(1,808)=3.44, p<.01$). The percentage of couples having children under the age of thirteen is a bit higher in Asaka (42.8%) than in Yamagata (32.8%) ($\phi = -.10, p<.01$). The rate of having the extended family household (typically including more than two married generations in a household) in the sample is far higher in Yamagata (42.0%) than in Asaka (14.1%) ($\phi = .31, p<.001$), reflecting the viability of traditional family norms in the former. At least partly as a result of higher availability of adult kin's help for child-rearing inside and around the household in Yamagata, more wives are employed on a full-time basis (22.7%) than in Asaka (14.4%) ($\phi = .11, p<.01$). In contrast, the percentage of husbands employed in a white-collar job in Asaka (43.4%) and that in Yamagata (38.6%) do not differ significantly ($\phi = .05, n.s.$).

In sum, along with these differences in their domestic or personal traits, the couples in both cities have some differences in their marital qualities and personal networks, though the differences are relatively small. Emotional and practical jointness of marital relations is slightly higher in the traditional city than in the modern Tokyo suburb. The less urban Yamagata couples tend to have more kinship ties in a geographically confined area -- inside and around the households. They also tend to share their core friendship networks with each other. By contrast, the more urban couples in Asaka have more liberated networks. Yet Asaka husbands and wives seem to be engaged in at least as large 'local' non-kin networks as their Yamagata counterparts, with ties to husbands' co-workers and wives' neighbors.

4. Results

The three hypotheses discussed above were tested in a series of multiple regression analyses for the Asaka and Yamagata samples independently with the measures of the couple's emotional interdependence and the husband's domestic role performance serving as criterion variables and with the six network measures and the eight domestic/personal characteristics as predictors (and controls). Table 2 summarizes the results of these analyses. Comparison of the results between Asaka and Yamagata is the main concern here. Over all, the results more or less support the expectations discussed above, although the network effects found are not necessarily as decisive as Bott (1971) argued.

(1) Marriage-binding effect of local kinship networks

First, the size of the husband's local kinship network exerts a positive independent effect only upon Yamagata couple's emotional interdependence (Table 2). The finding suggests that, even in Yamagata, the marriage binding effect of a husband's extra-household local kin network appears only for the emotional aspect of marital interdependence, but not for the practical role allocation between spouses. This implies that, since most of the husband's local kin ties stem from his role as (future) head of his household, his strong commitment to the network structurally encourages not only himself but also his wife to coordinate with each other in sociability, apart from mutual help with domestic chores. The kinship relations in these cases may still retain, to some degree, some aspect of semi-formal sociability and obligatory reciprocity among related households in various occasions: gathering and gift-giving at seasonal and family ritual events as well as exchanges of practical and economic aid in cases of emergency.

By contrast with these effects of extra-household kinship networks, having parents or married children (in-law) inside the household is likely to reduce the husband's domestic role performance in both sites, and also

curtail the couple's emotional interdependence only in Yamagata (Table 2). The existence of adult kin other than one married couple in extended family households may decrease the burden of the husband's domestic roles as fulfilling the roles is substituted by other people. In the extended families, the couple's emotional interdependence may be lowered as the kin-keeping collaborations are also shared by more family members.

The case interviews with Yamagata couples who have sizable local kinship networks support these interpretations. Mr. Wagatsuma in his forties, who owns a judicial document preparation agency, describes his kinship relations, most importantly with his late father's eldest brother's household (*honke*) but also with his other uncles and aunts living predominantly in adjacent area, as something to be dealt with in coordination among his mother (living in the same household), his wife, and himself. He states 'whenever necessary to do so, whoever can do among us will visit them...my mother and wife do more often...and when we have time in advance, we would discuss it.' Mrs. Kitayama, a Tokyo-born wife of another Yamagata native man, adds: 'My husband and I visit his eldest brother's house (which he succeeded from their late father) quite often, at whatever occasion, about once in two months...In case of any emergency, I go there alone on behalf of my husband, for he has his work.' Two other Yamagata wives similarly report that such occasions of kinship sociability are times for marital communication and cooperation. Mrs. Kuramoto says 'when some event approaches, I talk to my husband, saying "now is the time of gift-giving for someone who entered a school or for new year's day, what shall we do?"' while Mrs. Nakamura says, 'we (wife and husband) both cooperate, going halves with each other and helping each other (for family rituals and ceremonies).'

For wives in these cases, this kind of network-keeping behavior on behalf of their husbands is normative. The wives of Yamagata-born husbands share their sensibility of maintaining appropriate contact with husbands' kin. For example, Mrs. Kuramoto says, 'I consciously try as much as possible to keep the balance between both wings, I mean, not to interact

more with my own relatives but equally with my husband's relatives.' This contrasts with a remark by Mrs. Tohyama who is a long-distant mover to Yamagata with no kin living nearby. Being asked if she and her husband have a talk about how to do kin-keeping, she responds, 'No. We don't have anything particularly difficult. I leave it to him.... He does in his way, and I do what I do.'

In sum, the interview data suggest that, for couples living predominantly in local networks, kin-keeping means a more or less obligatory matter of the traditional household for which wives and husbands have to collaborate. The inter-household local kinship interactions may structurally enhance the emotional interdependence between husband and wife from outside, while the intra-household kin ties may reduce it from inside. This process looks similar, in its working mechanism, to the 'consistent informal pressure' in closely-knit networks found by Bott. Yet the consequences are different, because the traditional positions of wife and husband in the family and kinship network differ.

(2) Privatization of kin-keeping

The second hypothesis concerning urban wife's kin-keeping is supported by the regression analyses in that there was no indication of any negative effect found in terms of wife's distant kin network and parent-child support (Table 2). However, unexpected strong positive independent effects of the wife's parent-child tie supportiveness emerge among Asaka wives upon marital emotional interdependence ($\beta = .24, p < .001$) and upon husband's involvement with household chores ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). In addition, the size of the wife's distant kin network also has a positive effect but only on the level of the Asaka husband's domestic role performance ($\beta = .13, p < .01$). Among Yamagata couples, by contrast, merely a moderate positive regression coefficient appears between parent-child supportiveness and emotional interdependence alone ($\beta = .11, p < .05$). The implications of these findings are rather ambiguous, but may be interpreted as the person in the key position to mobilize marital support and network support is the wife in Asaka but

not in Yamagata. Asaka wives may be in positions to connect the marital coordination and the various kinds of help mobilization from their kin (most importantly their parents or adult-children), and they also tend to mobilize their husbands for their kin-keeping activities (see Wellman and Wellman, 1992 for a similar argument for couples in Toronto). Probably parallel to this is the tendency that urban family's kinship relations are more of the matter of personal choice rather than semi-formal norms (see Koyama, 1970).

Interviews with Asaka wives illustrate this. Mrs. Watase maintains an intimate relationship through frequent telephone calls with her mother-in-law who lives in a distant city in southwestern Japan. She says she knows better than her husband does how his parents are. When his mother has any trouble, Mrs. Watase asks her husband for help. She also has a 'quasi-sisterhood' relationship with her husband's cousin in Tokyo, because they get along so well emotionally.

By contrast, Mr. Amino recalls that his wife had a unfriendly relationship with his late mother who lived in a distant place. Although Mrs. Amino visited her parents on seasonal vacations, she avoided visiting her husband's parents. She recalls that one day she said to her mother, 'I care for my husband, but I can't stand his mother.' Her husband sympathizes with his wife, and he has become more involved with her kin. For example, he has often given advice to his wife's mother on the phone. In this case, the wife controls kin keeping and mobilizes her husband rather than being mobilized by his kin.

(3) Marriage-dividing effect of co-worker and neighbor networks

The third hypothesis predicts that urban couples would experience stronger marriage-dividing effects of involvement with husband's co-workers and wife's neighbors. This is marginally supported by the multiple regression analyses. As expected, both the husband's co-worker network size and the wife's neighbor network size are the only network variables negatively associated with marital jointness (Table 2). The urban Asaka husband's performance in household chores is reduced moderately by their

wife's involvement with neighbors and by their own involvement with co-workers. In Yamagata, while the size of the wives' neighbor network has a comparable effect upon their husbands' domestic role sharing, there are no other significant effects. In sum, the potential negative effects from non-kin 'local' networks may affect practical, but not emotional, marital interdependence, and these effects are slightly larger in the more urban setting.

In the cases of two typical couples in the Asaka interviews, these underlying processes of negative effects appear clearly. Mr. Amino, a business man in his sixties, says 'as I still commute to work in Tokyo, my home is something like a place to sleep.' He describes his personal social activity as follows. 'Ninety percent of it has been *tsukiai* relations with work-related people including my co-workers, especially till I became fifty years old ... I got close to the people in the same and related business worlds in a group, drinking together and playing mahjongg together.'

Mr. Watase, in his forties, who works hard for a construction company as a manager in Tokyo, has been in a similar situation. He and his wife both admit, as if it were natural, that he has been doing nothing about their domestic affairs including child rearing. Mrs. Watase states 'we have never had a quarrel with each other.' This taken-for-granted gender division of labor seems to be structurally formed by some social force from these husbands' work-related networks and also enforced by their wives' helpful and sociable ties with neighborhood wives. Mr. Watase's case further illustrates the structural forces from co-worker networks. These days he feels more reluctant to engage in his *tsukiai* activity, because now he wants to have supper at home more often than before. Among other things, he would like to mend alienated relations with his teenage daughters. But he has been having a hard time going home earlier without being criticized by his colleagues for not drinking with them (for a similar interview case, see Ishii-Kuntz, 1993: 55).

Parallel to these husbands' behavior are their wives' attempts to build and maintain non-kin ties in the neighborhood for mutual support in their

daily activity as housewives and mothers, since urban wives have fewer supportive kinship ties close at hand (see Imamura, 1987). For example, Mrs. Watase recalls how much help she received from her neighbor-friends (who were also child-rearing mothers) when she was sick in bed for two months and her pre-school children needed to be cared for, while her husband was busy and away from home on business trips.

(4) Marriage-binding effect of spouses' overlapping networks

Lastly, as the fourth hypothesis predicts, in both Asaka and Yamagata, a couple's overlapping network has a marriage-binding effect upon their emotional interdependence. The more husbands and wives know their spouses' best friends, the more they rely on each other emotionally (Table 2). Among all the variables examined here, sharing important friendship ties is the best predictor of emotional interdependence in marriage across both the modern, urban and the traditional, rural, parts of Japan. This is generally compatible with findings of studies in other societies, and may reflect a universal aspect of the link between marital relations and couple's personal networks.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Ever since Bott (1971), the potential marriage-dividing effect of kinship solidarity has been explored in the cultural contexts of the West. By contrast, the above findings suggest that in Japan, there is a positive effect of extra-household kinship networks on marital interdependence. Local kinship interactions tend to reinforce marital emotional interdependence. In the suburban Tokyo city of Asaka, husbands and wives are more liberated from kin-keeping duties as their kinship networks are increasingly dispersed. An additional finding is that couples living in the extended family households (predominantly in the less urban place of Yamagata) have less marital jointness.

On the other hand, non-kin networks in the urban Japanese workplaces

and neighborhoods adversely affect domestic task sharing through structural processes similar to those depicted by Bott (1971). Most probably, the finding reflects consequences of large-scale social changes of urbanization and suburbanization in Japan during the 1960s and 1970s, when newly created urban couples with dispersed kinship networks were enmeshed in more rigidly gender-segregated and spatially-segregated non-kin local networks. Yet independent effects of these networks are rather small once other variables' effects are controlled. It implies that the urban Japanese married couples in general are now more 'liberated' than before from the influences of these non-kin local networks. They are more or less in control of them from inside the households, similar to the Canadian findings as illustrated in Wellman and Wellman (1992). However, there still is a possibility that the structural marriage-dividing effect of *tsukiai* networks in workplaces or neighborhoods as exemplified in the interview cases above was not well enough captured by the simple measure of intimate and supportive network size in this study.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that cultural contents should be taken seriously in understanding the interface between marriage and network. In the context of the patrilineal stem family tradition in Japan, having local kin solidarity promotes marital emotional interdependence, specifically because kin-keeping is a normative matter of the husband-wife team. On the other hand, another element of the traditional kinship norms -- a married (eldest) son and his wife residing with his parents -- reduces the marital interdependence. In Japan, the large impact of urbanization accompanied with the spatial dispersion of kinship networks has resulted in shrinking of these marriage-binding and dividing effects of kin. It is within these and other socio-cultural contexts that any changes and variations in marriage and network take place in either the East or the West.

This does not mean any cultural determinism. Instead, this paper proposes the combination of structural and cultural approaches. Since culture has its basis in social networks (Erickson, 1996), cultural explanations are not sufficient without structural ones. For example, the overlap of

friendship between husband and wife is the common factor promoting marital interdependence in both of the present research sites. This finding is compatible with the arguments of Bott (1971), Wellman and Wellman (1992), and others. To use Simmel's terms of 'concentric' and 'juxtaposed' circles (Simmel 1955: 146-7), husbands and wives in 'juxtaposed' circles tend to be less interdependent. It may be at least one element of universal structural effects, regardless of cultural contexts, found in the relation between marital ties and networks of other ties.

However, culture matters as well. Whether kinship networks, for instance, are likely to serve as 'juxtaposed' or 'concentric' circles for marriage is more or less determined by the content of national or local culture of the time. In addition, even though couples in 'concentric' circles are likely to be under the same structural effect, its consequence is not preconditioned by the network structures in which the couples are embedded. It is dependent upon the cultural content shared by the members of each 'concentric' circle. The cultural content could be either something to promote or prevent the division of labor between husband and wife in managing domestic chores or child rearing, for example, according to the place and the time. Culture and structure can intersect in this manner. This dual perspective seems necessary in order to understand marriages or any other close relationships in any social context.

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Notes

- (1) Respondents were asked 'how many supportive and intimate kin (friends, neighbors, and co-workers) do you have outside the household?' The number of kin and friends are divided into two categories according to the criterion of residential distance; the local ties are within the distance of thirty minutes by means of any transportation the respondent usually uses, while distant ties are further than that.
- (2) The supportiveness of the parent-child ties scale is based on how many out of six support items are available from any parents or adult children outside the household: (1) taking care of your house and mail while your family is away for a week; (2) help in case your spouse is hospitalized for a month; (3) financial aid or advice; (4) advice on your child's educational problems or your post-retirement life plans; (5) advice on personal troubles; and (6) companionship for chatting or recreational activities.
- (3) Since husband's and wife's ages are highly correlated ($r=.96$, $p<.001$), couple's average age is used instead in order to avoid multicollinearity in regression analyses done later in the text.

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