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PRO GRADU THESIS

**Attitudes Toward Future Japanese Families among Japanese
University Students: Tradition, Ideals and Stigmas**

Centre for East Asian Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences

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UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Centre for East Asian Studies/Faculty of Social Sciences

HEIKKINEN, MILLA MARIELLA SUSANNA: Attitudes Toward Future Japanese Families among Japanese University Students: Tradition, Ideals and Stigmas

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Abstract

This MA thesis studies the attitudes of university students toward family ideals during the heightened demographic issues present in society in 21st century Japan. The *ie* ideology, the traditional conceptualization of family with a patriarchal head of house and dutiful wife who cares for the children and husband's parents in one household, has created remnants that have furthered already present stigmatizations of nontraditional family formats, heightening the need for further research as family ideals are rapidly changing. This research study sets out to explore the attitudes of university students who have the potential to be the future generation of parents, to gather information on family-related ideals as a way to formulate a comprehension of the changing family ideals that are in part causing the demographic crisis.

Through the use of qualitative research methods, the research results indicate that there is not just one culprit towards declining birthrates, but that there are several in that the changing family ideals have created multiple ideal families as suggested by university students. These ideals include, but are not limited to, multigenerational households, nuclear households, and single person households, with or without marriage and children, clearly distinguished from previous generations. Family has also begun to incorporate non-blood related individuals into the embodiment of family, completely changing the traditional concept for family as mandated by *ie* ideology. With the inclusion of more individualistic tendencies that are subsequently delaying marriage and children until later, perhaps even indefinitely, as Japanese youth are dedicating more effort towards education, careers and individual indulgences. These changing perspectives on family have created attitudes that are normalized to have few to no children, due to the presence of nontraditional family tendencies visible within society, thus, then creating divergent attitudes for family formation.

These results incorporate the understanding of family from the perspectives of university students to better understand the fertility crisis, not from an economic perspective, but rather from a social science and sociology perspective. The inclusion of young adult ideals and views helps to further the research on the fertility issue, whilst also providing insight into the changing concept of family in the Japanese context.

Keywords: family ideals, Japanese families, Japanese households, family-related stigma, single parenthood, illegitimacy, nontraditional families, traditional families, university students, individual collectivism, fertility, declining population, Japan.

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1. Introduction

The understanding surrounding family has been much the same for millennia, with the distinction that “family” revolves around a commonality or “an operational manner” (Ueno, 2009, p. 4), such as a dinner table over which to share a meal, or a fire to cook over in prehistoric times. These views have changed to incorporate blood relations, usually a mother, father and their children, perhaps even a third generation, a mostly monolithic view towards family with gender normative ideals. This anthropologic view towards family cannot be used to distinguish “family” from “household” though, so defining family in respect to specific cultures is a necessity and adapting to cultural differences, and thus, the changes need to be fused into the definition of family. However, much like time, so-called “traditional” families are not unchanging from culture to culture (Ueno, 2009). The conceptualization of family has begun to incorporate ideals that individuals derive from their own beliefs on what family truly is, whether there is a blood relation, deviating from the preconceived notion that family is stationary. As such, it is imperative for empirical research to be done on Japanese families especially, because of the uniquely dire issue of the fertility crisis that is causing Japan’s population to shrink dangerously towards unsustainable levels. Research is particularly important in the Japanese context for the fact that family is a major player in the fertility crisis and evaluating the direction that the concept of family is heading towards could help with the fertility and societal issues plaguing Japanese society.

It is not merely for economic reasons that researching fertility and the modern Japanese family is important for Japan’s future; to understand the extent of the changes taking place in Japanese society, particularly in Japanese families and households, an understanding of the stigmas and stereotypes underlying the mindset of today’s youth who will be tomorrow’s parents is necessary to tackle the issue to help preserve the Japanese concept of family while indulging the necessity for adapting to changing family norms. At its essence, family is the building block for society and the deterioration of family could bring the downfall of society as the Japanese know it. As Kumagai (2008) highlights, “the essence of Japanese society is an integration of both modernity and tradition”, which can be used to describe both society and the Japanese family system with the underlying stigmatization that is creating an undue precedence for the changes taking place in the conceptualization of family by today’s youth and tomorrow’s parents. The stigmatizations of marriage and family have created further changes that are drifting the traditional family structures heightened for the existence of the salaryman husband and

stay-at-home wife with their educationally minded children, towards that of a nontraditional model focused more on individuality and less on the attitudes toward childrearing, inevitably decreasing fertility and rapidly causing a crisis to emerge.

Research into Japanese families is of particular interest today, because of the presence of Japan's fertility crisis within society. Professor Hisao Endo, Director-General of the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, deems Japan's population challenges as "complex and difficult" as the rest of the world is attentively watching to see how Japan will react and combat the low-fertility issues, rapidly ageing society, and other demographic challenges. He indicated that other Asian countries and the Western world as well will face similar population issues in the coming years, and that how Japan reacts will assist those countries in finding their own solutions (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2017). The issues Japan is facing in terms of population is the first ever encounter, making it essential for Japan to take precautions and not to misstep on their mission to solve the fertility crisis.

Japan's total fertility rate (TFR)¹ has been waning since the end-set of the second world war, with more than halving from 4.54 in 1947 to 2.04 ten-years later in 1957. The famed "1.57 shock" in 1989 brought the fertility crisis to the forefront of the government's agenda with government initiatives targeted at improving childcare placements, parental leave practices, and incentives for having more children. The government initiatives have done little to increase the TFR and as recent as 2005, the TFR dipped to 1.26 children per woman, becoming the lowest the TFR has been in the post-war era (Ogawa, 2011, p. 167). The staggering decreases in rates heightens the imperativeness of figuring out exactly what the route cause in the change in attitude towards having children is and finding a solution to upping the rates closer towards the sustainable rate of 2.1. Ogawa (2011) hypothesizes that if the current rates continue at a steady pace, the future generations would decrease by "approximately 35 percent per generation", heightening the dangers of the constant decrease for future generations. The trends in Japan's demographic changes are being termed as Japan's second demographic transition by demographers and denotes post 1973 era trends in TFR but lacks in describing the age-gap that has occurred subsequent to the fertility declines.

¹ The total fertility rate (TFR) is calculated by averaging the total number of children birthed by women during their entire lifespan. The OECD estimates that a total fertility rate of 2.1 would ensure population stability when including migration and mortality rates into a given society (OECD, 2019).

Another issue related to family are stigmas. Stigmas have become a part of everyday life, with negative attributes being applied to families away from the “ordinary family” in which a husband works, wife takes care of the children, household, and the grandparents. As stigmas have become a major undercurrent in the family formation scene in Japan, could stigmas be viewed as a pseudo “invisible hand” that is pushing values and attitudes towards a transformational period never before seen in Japanese society? With next to no literature pertaining to the existence of stigmas in Japanese families, but rather generalized mentions written in passing, is there an increasing need for research steered toward understanding this new wave of family-related stigmas is necessary to understand the direction the concept of family is moving towards within Japanese society? According to Dovidio, Major and Crocker (2000), stigma is viewed as “a social construction, shaped by cultural and historical forces”, combined with high density populations within major metropolitan areas, limited natural resources for agricultural output, and long, extensive history dating back millennia (Matsumoto, Kudoh, & Takeuchi, *Changing Patterns of Individualism and Collectivism in the United States and Japan*, 1996), the said definition of stigma fits perfectly into understanding how stigmas are an underlying current within Japanese society, as well as many other countries with collectivist periods in the past. The historical prejudice towards having children out of wedlock, adopting outside of blood relations, marrying a non-Japanese partner, and raising children as a single parent, have created stigmas that are implicitly forbidden within society. Stigmatization within Japanese society is majorly implicit and comprehensive research needs to be conducted to further understand how stigmas are having an influence on the changes within Japanese families as fertility continues to decline to detrimental numbers.

1.1 Family-related Issues in Contemporary Japan

Japanese traditional cultures, specifically those of family dynamics, roles, and structures demand holistic analysis for the causes behind the dramatic reduction in fertility rates that have taken place in recent years. Cultural changes in today’s Japan are seen through the observations of single-and-nuclear-family households as they witness changes happening to and within their populations with the changing perspectives on having children and getting married. These changes show the influence of internationalization in Japan after isolationism ended and the onset of the economic crisis and stalemate at the end of the 1980s. Through the reinforcement of family planning practices and schemes, the Japanese government has made it evident that the demographic crisis is of utmost importance, with

needs for further research to be done to help alleviate the pressures from future generations.

Research into the topic of traditional family cultures, specifically those pertaining to family formation and the stigmas that are preventing the systematic acceptance of new family models in society, are essential to fully understand the detriment Japan's population is facing and will continue to face in the coming years and how the concept of family is shifting to fit the new views of young adults. Previous research has been conducted to understand aspects of the fertility crisis and have even spurred the Japanese government to implement family friendly policies to ensure that there are incentives for having children, and yet, there are very little signs of improvement for the future of improving the state of the fertility rates, with projections showing that the population will continue a downward spiral as the total fertility rate decreases below the replacement rate. With the clear lack of research done on the stigmas that are halting the transition of thoughts and views for the acceptance of nontraditional family types, including, but not limited to, single parenthood, and children out of wedlock, or illegitimate children, Japan's ineffective governmental plans are catering to old traditional family models and fail to acknowledge nontraditional families effectively. Additionally, there is the evidence of a void in the research toward fertility in Japan, which I hypothesize is the increased focus towards family planning and lack in actual family formation programs for the potential future generations that will have children in the years to come who are more inclined to have attitudes toward nontraditional family models with the increase in education pushed for by Japanese parents and the government (Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, & Rindfuss, June 2014, p. 242). The void is a direct result of the government formulating policies and incentive programs for their generations and the generations prior to the future generation of parents, causing the new implementations to not work for the mindset of potential future parents, particularly those Japanese men and women who are currently 18 to 30 years of age and will begin forming their own families, hypothetically, in the next five to fifteen years.

The 1.57 shock has not seen improvements in recent decades. As of 2015, Japan's fertility rate has been at approximately 1.5 according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD estimates that a "rate of 2.1 children per woman ensures a broadly stable population" (OECD, 2018), showing that Japan is far from being stable in the coming years, and that Japan will remain in their state of societal and developmental stagnancy that has been present since the 1.57 shock occurred in 1989.

OECD's 2014 dataset on the share of births outside of marriage estimate that 2.3 percent² of births are ones out of wed-lock (OECD, 2014) with statistics on childless women ages 40-44 unavailable through data collected by the OECD.

In Japan, it is estimated that every “1 in 6 children live[] in poverty” with 55 percent of children in single parent families (Hagiware & Reynolds, 2015), making it increasingly necessary to research the attitudes of university students who will potentially be the new generation of parents. With “relatively equal access to education,” children in families in poverty have less chances to continue their education as they age, with about 90 percent of children in poor families being able to go to high schools, and the remaining 10 percent going straight to the workforce. After high school, only less than 20 percent of impoverished students go on to university (Hagiware & Reynolds, 2015). A reason for these statistics is the income of the parents, since higher education costs in Japan. The financial burden placed on parents makes it difficult to have children, much less likely for men and women to decide to have children on their own or even potentially adopt. Furthermore, career centric individuals hold off on marriage and children until later due to the increased costs of having children and the demands of the work life in Japan.

However, prevailing stigmas are not deterring determined women from being able to be “single mothers by choice”. In 2017, Japan Times reported about the organization SMC, or Single Mother by Choice, an organization established in 2014 that is dedicated to providing women comprehensive information on reproduction as well as giving single mothers by choice the opportunity to interact with like-minded mothers, since such groups have not been represented previously (Masangkay, 2017). The organization's definition of a “single mother by choice” is a mother who “chooses before pregnancy to give birth without getting married and raise the child on her own”, a definition that goes against many societal rules that have been in place for over a century. In addition to societal stigmas, the lack of sperm banks and third-party sperm donation options lower the options available for hopeful single mothers to be, leaving many women with only the choice of getting pregnant without marriage being in the picture (Masangkay, 2017).

Single parenthood is difficult financially, but single mothers have the added stress of societal stigmas associated with having children out of wed-lock. To help lessen the

² During the decade prior to and the decade after the 1.57 shock, the illegitimacy rate was at a steady one-percent, however has been growing slowly, but steadily in recent years (Goodman R. , 2002, p. 13). From a differing perspective, the birthrate for illegitimate children has increased the overall fertility rate, and the decreasing prioritization of marriage could help increase the TFR for years to come.

burdens on single parents in general, the Japanese government has enacted a child support allowance for children of single parents, but the allowance did not factor in the differences between single mothers and single fathers until August 2010 (IPSSR, 2014, p. 48). Single fathers have higher chances of finding employment, while the employment rate of single mothers in Japan is only at 81 percent (Brasor & Tsubuku, 2015), which explains the delayed changes in child support allowances. Additionally, the governmental programs have income thresholds that have strict guidelines that a person might be disqualified from if their income is just barely over the limit (Hagiware & Reynolds, 2015). On another note, for nearly every 6 single mothers, there is only 1 single father, showing a disparity between single parents (Brasor & Tsubuku, 2015) and a heightened need to decrease the gender gap that is creating further stigmatization.

Even though financial support exists for single parents, these laws on childrearing support does not include single parents by choice. Thus, single mothers by choice are not eligible for state support that single mothers by divorce or death are, such as tax-reductions, lower fees on childcare placement or monthly assistance money for food. In most cases, single mothers are relying on the assistance of relatives, but in cases where no relative is available to assist, childhood poverty rates are increasing, at an astonishing 21.9 percent for single parent households (Shirahase, 2014). However, in 2018 the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare plans to review the current laws to give unmarried parents state support to help pay for their childrearing costs, to give their children better opportunities for success (Kyodo, 2017). Better assistance could also lessen the burden of paying for childcare centers as well as finding placements, which are becoming exceedingly more difficult, even when there is a shortage of children (Wingfield-Hayes, 2013). A lack of support has increased the rate of poverty among single-parent households, especially for single mother households due to the employment and income disparity present. Until better support is offered to a wider spectrum of parents, the present problems will prevail with both fertility, poverty rates and balance of work and daily life, with single parent households remaining in the minority (Shirahase, 2014).

1.2 The Purpose of This MA Thesis

With the combination of changes in fertility and family-related stigmas, this thesis focuses on examining the attitudes of young people in Japan, many of whom will be parents in the future, to get an understanding of and analyze the changing family culture that is helping to create the fertility crisis in Japan and, thus, fueling the changing family

ideals through nontraditional values that are becoming predominant amongst educationally driven individuals. Through a structured questionnaire targeted towards Japanese university students in the 18 to 30 age cohort, group discussion with a small similar-in-age group of university students, and in-depth research on theories, concepts and literature pertaining to fertility, family, households and the stigmas associated with family, such as single parenthood, and illegitimacy within the concept of family, this thesis examines how stigmas are creating changes in attitudes toward having children and the future family formation³ by parents in five to fifteen years. Additionally, this study looks to find answers to the following questions:

- What is the relationship between traditional Japanese family models and the family ideals imbued by today's youth?
- How has family changed, from the traditional *ie* family to the new nontraditional family ideal?
- Have traditional family ideals created stigmas in the development of Japanese family ideals?

With the assistance of a conceptual framework dedicated towards highlighting the conceptualization of family within Japanese society, stigmas within family changes with the presence of historically rooted modern-day taboos, and last but not least, individual collectivism and the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis as concepts in explaining attitudinal changes among young adults and potential future parents. By focusing on different aspects of the fertility crisis, but not focusing directly on fertility, I hope to understand the underlying causes for fertility within Japanese society through the changing perspectives and ideologies within family and the attitudinal changes that are preventing the TFR from increasing nearer towards the replacement level.

For the purpose of the research study, this MA thesis will be structured with the following format. First, I will highlight the key literature available on the concept of family in the Japanese context, with special attention paid to the traditional versus the nontraditional

³ For the purpose of this MA thesis, I have purposefully decided to steer away from using the term “family planning” and have decided to instead use the term “family formation”, since the focus of this thesis is the conceptualization of the Japanese family and the future formation of families with respect towards the prevailing stigmas. As such, this thesis is not written for the purpose of understanding the changes happening to views toward the actual act or decision of creating a family, such as deciding on when is the right time to have a family, birth control, assisted reproductive technology (or ART for short), etc., nor will this study examine fertility as its main focus, but rather the idea of family in itself. Using “family formation” will provide an easier distinction towards explaining the two and, thus, differentiate the two in terminology and meaning, and not confuse the topic, purpose or target of the research.

family ideals, the *ie* ideology and concepts connected, family formation patterns, and single parenthood and illegitimacy as stigmas within Japanese society. Secondly, I will formulate a framework for processing and analyzing the attitudes toward Japanese families by university students, which include a conceptualization of family with definite meanings laid out, stigmas within Japanese society, individual collectivism as an explanation for decreasing family formation, and the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis as further reasoning for nontraditional family ideals. Thirdly, I will discuss the analytical tools for conducting this research thesis with insight into the research process and fieldwork. Fourthly, I will detail the results of the fieldwork and answers to the questionnaire on family ideals and attitudes as answered by university students. The analysis will then make way for the discussion chapter where I will answer the thesis questions as well as further analyze the data results with the compilation of literature, conceptual framework and research results as laid out previously. The format mentioned above will, therefore, bring this thesis to the culminating points in concluding chapter as well as highlight further research opportunities and possibilities this thesis brings into light.

This study was conducted for a master's thesis, and as such, acknowledgement needs to be voiced on the limitations of the study and methodology. The originality of this thesis shows that prior research has not been done of this nature in reference to university students' attitudes toward families and family-related stigmas as a way to gauge student opinions on the demographic issues taking place in Japan. As such, it should be noted that this study has seen trial and error. It is acknowledged that aspects of this study could have been carried out differently, such as different methods for acquiring data, different questions with a possible pilot study to weed out questions unnecessary for the expected outcomes, different sample as well as wider sample size that grasps other young adult cohorts, etc. Even with the limitations this MA thesis has posed, it is firmly believed that this study has provided invaluable, though limited, information towards the study of the attitudes of university students. As such, it needs to be noted that any and all faults and errors in the thesis are those of the author.

2. Previous Research on Japanese Families, Fertility and the Underlying Stigmatization

Through the review of literature, I hope to briefly synthesize a comprehensive perspective on Japanese families, historically and presently, the concept of *ie* as a manifestation of the Japanese family, the fertility crisis and its role in society, the current governmental implementations targeted at improving the benefits of having children, as well as literature associated with the stigmatization of nontraditional family models. By creating a clear understanding of Japanese families and society, I envisage the beginning of my research towards understanding the wants and needs of the future generation of parents for methods to incentivize Japanese family formation practices, and, thus, to help understand how Japan could best proceed towards increasing fertility rates and lessening the impact of stigmas on single parenthood, illegitimacy and adoption.

2.1 Studying the Transformation from Traditional to Contemporary Family

To fully comprehend the trends developing in Japanese society towards family planning, it is important to understand the core of the Japanese family structure. Family, or *ie*, in the Japanese context was initially created through government planning in the late 1800s by the Meiji government. Prior to the creation of the Meiji Civil Code, multigenerational families dominated the family scene during the dominion of the samurai class, with 10 percent of the families in Japan being represented by the samurai and their extended family households, while the remaining 90 percent composed of a more varied structures of family (Ueno, 2009, p. 63). According to Ueno (2009), the “conventional” definition of *ie* is that of a physical household regarded as a being away from the individual family members, meaning that *ie* as “an extended family ha[s] its physical foundations: shared family business, shared family name, shared family house, shared family property and shared family finances” (p. 5), with the unconventional definition as a family form deviating from the perceived notion of family. Sugimoto (1997) explains that “*ie* represents a quasi-kinship unit with a patriarchal head and members tied to him through real or symbolic blood relationship” (p. 137) emphasizing the male dominance asserted as the central component, which helped generate the family value system visible today. The notion that the *ie* is an extension of the physical family shows the high regard given to family and that regard is persisting still today, with high emphasis still given to families within Japanese society. Therefore, subtle stigmas are placed upon nontraditional family

models, like the ones that diverge away from the normal family institution as dictated by the *ie* ideology.

Traditionally, Japanese families have been rooted with Confucian beliefs, especially those of filial piety and a dedication towards family, with an emphasis on the patriarchal household (Alexy & Ronald, 2011) where a woman would move into her husband's family after marriage and she would then have "two families of procreations: her own and her son's" (Kumagai, 2014: 5) where she would live with her son's family in the future, in a stem, or multigenerational, family. However, the New Civil Code of 1947 brought the official destruction of the Japanese family system, taking away the emphasis on multigenerational, or stem-family households, and brought gender equality with the destruction of the patriarchal household system of the old code (Sugimoto, 1997).

Additionally, the post-war era saw a surprisingly slow increase in the already dominating nuclear families with correlated rising need for productivity for the salaryman husband and the diligent housewife (*sengyou shufu*) who raises the educationally driven children (Alexy & Ronald, 2011: 5; Vogel & Vogel, 2013). Though the popular belief is that the Japanese nuclear family is skyrocketing, in all actuality there has been a steady fluctuation in nuclear families with different types of households, from multi-generational families to single-person households. However, with stem-families becoming continuously less popular in projections for 2030, (Kumagai, 2008, 2014) and 2065 (IPSSR, 2018) single-person households are expected to dominate in years to come (Kumagai, 2014, p. 14), showing a grim future for the sustainability of multi-generational households, and even nuclear households.

Hendry (2012), in *Understanding Japanese Society*, gives a detailed structuring of family through history as well as how the *ie* family system has been changing through Japan's globalization and that there is "no longer a physical *ie* which has been passed down through the generations" (Hendry, 2012, p. 31). Additionally, Hendry explains that the discord between the current childrearing generation and the elders is increasing the distance from *ie* and respect for the ancestors who have passed on, giving multiple perspectives on the changing family cultures in Japan (p. 33), with differing perspectives to those of Kumagai (2014) and Alexy and Ronald (2011). Hendry conceptualizes the term *ie* with its basic Japanese meaning of "house" and referring to it as a physical shrine for the ancestors, present family, and the future generations (Hendry, 2012, p. 25).

Furthermore, Kumagai and Hendry analyze how marriage has changed, marrying for love, an increase in couples living together without children, to even families consisting of a child or multiple children and only one parent, deviating away from the traditional nuclear family scheme, and touch upon the impacts these changes are having on the population and elderly in the long term. Goodman (2002) and Mackie (2002) point out that “politicians not only work on this assumption, but they also help to legitimate, reinforce and even possibly construct it” (Goodman, 2002, p. 15) that “people live in heterosexual nuclear families with a male breadwinner and female primary caregiver” (Mackie, 2002, p. 206) to fit the popular traditionalistic viewpoint towards family. Matsumoto (2002) takes another look at Japanese families and marriage patterns by looking at the changing patterns of men and women wanting to get married, and the lessening stigmatization towards divorce, highlighting the term *batsu ichi*, or “one strike”, to emphasize that having “one or even two divorces are really ‘no big deal’” (Matsumoto, 2002, p. 83), bringing to the forefront that views towards marriage, children and relationships are changing. However, these sources are lacking in research dedicated to the connection of the trends and patterns that could lead to further data dedicated to the understanding of the voices of the next generation of parents and how to improve family formation that better fit the needs of the next childrearing generation with the increases in the focus on stigmatization, nor do they point towards stigmas as a major cause for concern in the hinderance taboos are creating within Japanese society.

2.2 Literature on Patterns in Family Formation, Single Parenthood and Illegitimacy

To explain the low fertility rates seen in Japan, two common reasons are given: firstly, people are waiting until later to get married and have children, so as not to miss out on promotions within their companies, and secondly, married couples are not having children at all or just having fewer than their previous counterparts due to rising costs of having children (Shirahase, 2014). These reasonings for the current state of affairs for fertility in Japan have resulted in the acceptance of low fertility as well as lessening acknowledgement by future parents to their responsibility in becoming parents and helping increase fertility rates, creating a societal and an economic issue. As Goodman notes in his research on Japanese society through an anthropological lens, it is a “mistake...[t]o suggest that the state can impose its social policy on a passive populace” who do not follow the heed of societal crises over those of their purely selfish reasonings for existence, making it so that when the state implements policies from the crying

demands of the population, such as the parents of yesteryear, the needs of the population have shifted towards those of the parents of tomorrow, the present generation of university students. Hence, the current policy implementations are not having the desired impact in society as the government predicted. Goodman invokes that it is a necessity of the “intermediary institutions such as mass media” to embody the needs of the population, however, mass media tends to fixate on other issues over those of long term issues such as the current fertility crisis (Goodman R. , 2002, pp. 6-7).

With times changing and long traditions of arranged marriage waning and discrimination against illegitimate children and inheritance laws slowly lessening as of late 2013 (Kumagai, 2014), an increasing number of young women are choosing to not have children at all. However, a new pattern has emerged where women are choosing to have children, but without the assistance of the fathers. These changing patterns have led to lower birthrates due to the reverberation of social stigmas and pressures from olden times due to the need to follow the *ie* ideology of marriage between a man and a woman that is still persisting today. According to Kumagai, Japan’s traditional family system, *ie*, is one of the leading reasons many are discouraged from “challenging the social norm” because of the fact that marriage is supposed to be based on a contract between man and woman; thus, creating a stigma about single parenthood as well as illegitimate children and non-heteronormative relationships. Sugimoto (1997) explores the issue of illegitimacy as a consequence of the traditional *ie* ideology, emphasizing the concept of *koseki*, or household registration, that is a part of the patriarchal design of the Civil Code. The *koseki* establishes a household register with the husband as the head of household, connecting family members with a common surname, so children born out of wedlock have less advantages within society if they are not a part of their father’s household register. Furthermore, under the Civil Code, children born out of wed-lock were not entitled to the same inheritance privileges as siblings who are born to wed parents, with only the right to claim half of what the other siblings are eligible to inherit until the discriminatory regulations were repealed only in 2013 (Sugimoto, 1997; Yuki, 2013), showing a clear stigmatization towards children born out of wedlock and parents who have children before marriage.

2.3 Stigmas as Road Block for Family Formation

In Japanese society, it has become more common for young people to want to marry for the sake of love or not have kids at all, transforming the traditional *ie* family. With the idea of women in the workplace increasing, men and women are starting to marry later in

life to focus on their careers, thus, having children later or not at all, and many publications support these notions with visible evidence that the *ie* concept of family is transforming (Alexy & Ronald, 2011; Government of Japan, 2016; Hendry, 2012; Sugimoto, 1997; Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013, White, 2002). According to Kumagai, Japan has a “social norm that ‘everyone should get married’” (Kumagai, 2014, p. 56), making it difficult for women to even have children when they are not married, because of the societal stigmas associated with illegitimate children. On the other hand, White (2002) explains that “most people say that without children life is incomplete” (p. 100), showing the dilemma that arises from the pressures to marry and have children. The stigmatization of marriage and children are due to the lingering presence of the *ie* family structure and the long history of pressures to marry within Japanese society, have created a rift where it is less usual for young generations in Japan today to abide by the long held ideals.

New phenomenon emerging in Japan are the concepts of “ikumen”, or fathers rearing children, as well as the Iku-Boss Project Alliance by Fathering Japan and MHLW that is trying to encourage executive level fathers to become models for others as “family dads”. These projects are new methods created to try to increase the Work-life Balance of parents in Japan. The Child Care Leave Act gives fathers 52 weeks of paid paternity leave, so that they can be a part of raising the children. The 2010 Ikumen Project by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare was created to encourage more fathers to take paternity leave, because only about 4% of fathers take the guaranteed leave (MHLW, 2014). Could the apparent removal of societal stigmas associated with fathers staying at home and caring for children, provide women with further opportunities for their paths in the workforce and potentially create less stigmatization for women to not stay at home with children? However, removing the stigmas from men only and not women, shows a distinct paradox in gender relations that is preventing women from being able to have the same attitudinal changes that men are easily given opportunities for, especially with the constant pressure to get married and have children that have stigmatized having children outside of wedlock.

Roberts (2002) and White (2002) explore other efforts for increasing childbearing, such as the Gold Plan (1990), the later New Gold Plan (1995) and Gold Plan 21 (2000) to increase the availability of short term nursing homes and community centers (Goodman, 2002, pp. 14-15), the revised Angel Plans (1999, 2003) that were termed as the Five Year Plan for Emergency Childcare that provide assistance in childcare placements (Roberts,

2002), Comprehensive After-School Plan for Children (2014), and the Family-Care Leave Act which promotes partial paid leave to care for family members (White, *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*, 2002, p. 101). According to Roberts and White, these programs show the benefits of the programs that the Japanese government has implemented to try to incentivize individuals and couples to have children, while still maintaining careers outside of the home (Government of Japan, 2016). These programs also emphasized important tasks to take up for the “improvement of childrearing support measures” to help with childbearing and to better understand the “realization of young people’s hope for marriage and childbirth” (Government of Japan, 2016, p. 29); however, these measures have not seen the desired outcome of increasing the birthrate to 1.8 per household (Government of Japan, 2016), as these government initiatives have failed to raise awareness of societal issues surrounding having children. White (2002) further emphasizes the discord between the national leaders and institutions versus those of the public in terms of the meaning and definition of “childbearing and child rearing” (p. 101), showing that the views for having children are not as aligned horizontally as they should be, tearing the presumptions of the governing bodies away from those of university students and young adults who will potentially be having children in the coming years.

Kumagai also clarifies statistics and tables related to Japanese families, especially in relation to family size and the increase in the aging population with the top-heavy distribution of the elderly in comparison to the new generations as the birthrate continually decreases. Kumagai demonstrates that in 2010, 88.7% of households were outside traditional stem-family norms, showing a clear decrease contrary to the “future projections [...] suggest[ing] that the nuclear family” might not become a universal occurrence, with projections suggesting a decrease of nuclear families to 51.5% and single-person household to increase to 37.4% by 2030 (Kumagai, 2014: 14; Fig. 2.2). The future typical Japanese family will, hence, resemble the much idolized nuclear family or the increasingly popular individual person household model, making the future of family formation unclear in terms of predictive patterns, with the possibility of the destruction of stem-families and nuclear households as today’s youth and tomorrow’s parents inch closer to individualistic ideals as gathered by the new conceptualization of “individualistic collectivism”.

As the focus of my research centers around the attitudes toward family ideals by Japanese university students, it is essential to understand the future generation of parents, i.e. the

young adults in Japanese society, particularly those on the path of education who will begin rearing children in five to fifteen years' time. Though societally collectivist throughout various points of history, Sugimura and Mizokami (2013) emphasize that Japanese youth are becoming more individualistic in values, thus, leaning further towards a value system centered around "individualistic collectivism" where individuals look out for themselves, while still being willing to work towards the common goal of improving society. White (2002) explores the resilience of the Confucian *ie* in that the family becomes an extension of the nation, that prospering within the household benefits the nation as a whole. These have been evident in the changes from the school-to-work formula to the school-to-university-to-career formula, thus, making it so that adolescents begin to think about their futures earlier than their parents and grandparents (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013, p. 135); hence, pushing marriage and children until much later on in life. The struggle between "individualism" and "collectivism" is seen through the want of young adults to have children, but through the entrance into the workforce, it becomes clear that it is much harder to give up on a career path for a childrearing path without high intrinsic needs for wanting children. Further research by White (2002) on Japanese families from the "child-centered" family perspective gives insight into the overzealous attitudes of parents for rearing their children towards the path of education with the heightened idea that not pursuing education is a failure and "deviant" from the expected course of life (p. 102). White's perspective of the "elemental" Japanese family also shows that getting married and having children are an expected part of life, rather than "part of a dream of individual happiness" (p. 99). These ideals that family is an extension of the nation show that there is a dire need to fully reevaluate the concept of *ie* in terms of the nation versus the public.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Existing literature shows that the concept of *ie* has transformed within the past century. Research by Japan experts helped develop literature into the transformation of the modern concept of the Japanese family, one which heightens the importance of family within the Japanese context and how the definition of *family* has changed from prehistoric times to incorporate modern definitions and ideals. With the evolving concept of households, a decrease has been seen through the depletion of multigenerational households, in contrast to the increasing amounts of nuclear households that have been on the rise since the 20th century, but there have been surprising increases in single-person households, as young adults are living alone and choosing not to marry nor create their own families as they

continually dedicate their time towards careers and educations. With the changing household types, stigmas have become ever present with nontraditional family formats, such as single parenthood as well as children born outside of wedlock. These nontraditional families have, thus, seen discrimination by their traditional family counterparts within society and their communities.

3. Conceptual Framework

Whilst the previous chapter focused on the definition of family within the Japanese context in literature, the prevalence of the fertility crisis in Japanese society, changing patterns and trends in the evolution of traditional Japanese families to nontraditional ones, and the underlying stigmatization associated with present-day attitudes towards having children today and in the future, this next chapter will focus on the conceptual framework. With the conceptual framework I will make way for the final analysis on the family ideals by Japanese university students, and the issue of stigmas from the view point of university students as family models are constantly adapting to the new mindset of potential future parents. A conceptual framework will provide the grounds for understanding the main aspects and views towards Japanese families and the current changes taking place in hopes of fully comprehending the views on family by university students.

For the purpose of this conceptual framework, I have decided to explore the following concepts and phenomena: the meaning of the Japanese family, from nuclear and multigenerational to single-person households as the ever-changing concept of the family, *ie*; stigmatization of Japanese taboos to help differentiate stigma from taboo to better understand the interconnectedness of the underlying stigmatization towards changing family attitudes and nontraditional family ideals; individual collectivism and its role in the internal and external influences on Japan's youth for wanting children but retaining workforce eligibility and personal freedoms; and finally, the vicious circle of the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis that is creating a skewed attitude toward family. Through a conceptual framework that includes each of these separate entities geared towards understanding Japanese families and social stigmas, I hope to create a comprehensive framework that analyzes the primary issues surrounding changing family ideals to pave a path for the forthcoming analysis chapter with clearly defined principles.

3.1 Conceptualization of Family and its Meaning

Family, or *ie*, in the Japanese context was initially created through government planning in the late 1800s by the Meiji government as aforesaid. Prior to the creation of the Meiji Civil Code, multigenerational families dominated the family scene during the dominion of the samurai class, with only a fraction of families represented by the samurai and their extended family households and the majority with more varied forms of family (Ueno, 2009, p. 63). Sugimoto (1997) explains that “*ie* represents a quasi-kinship unit with a patriarchal head and members tied to him through real or symbolic blood relationship”

(p. 137) which helped generate the family value system that is still present today. Furthermore, Ueno's notion that the *ie* is an extension of the physical family shows the high regard given to family and that regard is persisting still today, with high emphasis still given to families within Japanese society, and subtle stigmas being placed upon nontraditional family models, such as the ones that diverge away from the normal family institution as commanded by *ie*.

Traditionally, Japanese families have been rooted with Confucian beliefs, especially those of filial piety and a dedication towards family, with an emphasis on the patriarchal household (Alexy & Ronald, 2011) where a woman would move into her husband's family after marriage and she would then have "two families of procreations: her own and her son's" (Kumagai, 2014: 5) where she would live with her son's family in the future, in a stem, or multigenerational, family. However, the New Civil Code of 1947 brought the official destruction of the Japanese family system, taking away the emphasis on multigenerational, or stem-family households. Additionally, the post-war era saw a surprisingly slow increase in the already dominating nuclear families with correlated rising need for productivity for the salaryman husband and the diligent housewife (*sengyou shufu*) who raises the educationally driven children (Alexy & Ronald, 2011: 5; Vogel & Vogel, 2013). Though the popular belief is that the Japanese nuclear family is skyrocketing, in all actuality there has been a steady fluctuation in nuclear families with different types of households, from multi-generational families to single-person households. However, with stem-families becoming continuously less popular in projections for 2030, (Kumagai, 2008, 2014) and 2065 (IPSSR, 2018) single-person households are expected to dominate in years to come (Kumagai, 2014, p. 14), showing a grim future for the sustainability of multi-generational households, and even nuclear households.

The Japanese *ie* has seen dramatic changes in recent decades, with shifts from multigenerational, or stem, family models with high filial piety, or respect for elders, to nuclear families with a gender normative couple and their educationally driven children. The abolishment of the official *ie* system came with the new constitution in 1947, giving equality to wives and not just husbands in previous establishments of the *ie* (Himeoka, 2008). Additionally, attitudes have been changing in regard to family in recent years to incorporate an increasingly popular conceptualization of family in respect to the physicality of families, such as single person households with few to no children, with majority of households consisting of nuclear family styles as opposed to those of

multigenerational households from previous generations. These changing attitudes are in line with the changing perspectives of the youth and young adults that will be discussed further in chapters 3.3 *Individual Collectivism as a Downfall for Family Formation* and 3.4 *Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis as a Vicious Circle for Nontraditional Family Ideals*. Hendry (2012) structures the Japanese family throughout history and how the *ie* family has been changing through Japan's globalization and that there is "no longer a physical *ie* which has been passed down through the generations" (Hendry, 2012, p. 31), which heightens the notion that Japanese families are changing. Hendry also notes that the discord between the current childrearing generation and the elders is increasing the distance from *ie* and respect for the ancestors who have passed on, giving multiple perspectives on the changing family cultures in Japan (p. 33), with differing perspectives to those of Kumagai (2014) and Alexy and Ronald (2011). Hendry and Alexy and Ronald conceptualize the term *ie* with its basic Japanese meaning of "house" and referring to it as a physical shrine for the ancestors, present family, and the future generations (Alexy and Ronald, 2011; Hendry, 2012, p. 25).

Kumagai and Hendry analyze that marriage in Japan has changed dramatically in that young adults and adults are marrying for love or not marrying at all, a concept that has been stigmatized societally with the ingrained idea that everyone needs to marry. Additionally, the act of divorcing has become more prevalent at higher rates with lessening stigmatization that Matsumoto (2002) indicates through his research on individualism and collectivism within the youth and adults in Japanese society, and that there has been an increase in couples living together without children and/or without marrying in common-law marriages. Each of these observations denote an underlying shift in attitudes towards family formation as validated by Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, and Rindfuss (2014) in their analysis on nontraditional attitudes toward family with increasing emphasis on pathways toward education and pushing family formation until later in life; however, they stress that their results do not show great change, even with the shift away from traditional changes. Additionally, Himeoka (2008) expounds that *ie* and the "modern family" are separate entities and that *ie*-like characteristics can be used to frame Japanese families, but that *ie* does not define the family (pp. 237-8), furthermore stressing that the traditional *ie* is falling away from current family formation patterns. Additionally, Himeoka illustrates that there is a separation of private family life with the workplace within the modern family, with the mother devoting herself to housework and the children as the father works (p. 242). but this view is not visible in today's model of family as

women are continually joining the workforce, begging the question of what is the “modern family”?

Special attention is paid by researchers to shifting family models. Such models include couples living without children to even families consisting one parent, generally a single mom as single dads are rare, and one to few children, deviating away from the traditional nuclear family scheme that has been praised as the norm and ideal in Japanese society. Goodman (2002) and Mackie (2002) point out that “politicians not only work on this assumption, but they also help to legitimate, reinforce and even possibly construct it” (Goodman, 2002, p. 15) that “people live in heterosexual nuclear families with a male breadwinner and female primary caregiver” (Mackie, 2002, p. 206) to fit the popular traditionalistic viewpoint towards family to try to deviate others away from nontraditional family models, which is supported by Takenobu (2004) and White (2002). Matsumoto (2002) takes another look at Japanese families and marriage patterns by looking at the changing patterns of men and women wanting to get married, and the lessening stigmatization towards divorce, highlighting the term *batsu ichi*, or “one strike”, to emphasize that having “one or even two divorces are really ‘no big deal’” (Matsumoto, 2002, p. 83), bringing to the forefront that views towards marriage, children and relationships are changing. However, these sources are lacking in research dedicated to the connection of the trends and patterns that could lead to further data dedicated to the Japanese family will look like for the next generation of parents. Additionally, the sources hesitate to formulate how to improve family formation that better fit the needs of the next childrearing generation with the increases in stigmatization, nor do they point towards stigmas as a major cause for concern in the hinderance taboos are creating within Japanese society.

The Japanese family is shifting in such rapid succession that finding one true definition has become obsolete. Journalist Mieko Takenobu expertly summarizes the Japanese family in her article in *Women's Asia 21: Voices from Japan* (2004): “Although a high value placed on ‘family bonds,’ people continue to seek a new form of community. The reason is simple; more people find it difficult to depend solely on family bonds, as drastic change occurs in our structure of life” (p. 23). The increasing focus on community building, as Takenobu suggests, shows the internal and external impacts of a need to rely on family members that is shifting the attitudes of young adults to form communities rather than start families. On a different note, White (2002) points out that in the West, people delineate having children as “starting a family” while as in Japan, family is

constantly within an individual's existence, even if it is merely through word of mouth in the form of stories and quips about the older generations who had passed (p. 99), highlighting that the constant presence of family in Japanese culture does not create the same want of having children as in the United States. Takenobu's article heightens the value placed on bonds, but that "family bonds" and "community" are not "dependent on a simplistic view of the family structure: man as breadwinner and woman as unpaid laborer" (pp. 23-24), showing that it has become an impossible task to simply define the family and *ie* in the direction that Japanese families are embarking. However, the one commonality is that family creates a sense of security and stability that make one comfortable (Akaishi, Suda, Takenobu, & Motoyama, 2004), but that it is a lingering of the past need for certainty and fear of change. The historical view on *ie* by the aforementioned authors give excellent historical context, as well as heighten the changing landscape of *ie* in modern times. However, the lack of theory in the Japanese context of changing family formation and conceptualization show that there is much research left to be done in years to come to clearly define family in its changing habitat.

3.2 Stigmas within Japanese Society

As previously mentioned, social stigmas, though pervasive in sociological research, are very rarely the main topic of research within a particular society, but rather at a societal level in reference to disabilities or mental illnesses within the social psychology sphere. The lack of concrete research within a given society has led to numerous academic texts to speak about stigmas importantly in passing but have led to next to no texts purely on social stigmas and their definitions. In reference to Japan, stigmas are of especial importance due to the taboos that have been present as a reverberation of the family ideology, *ie*. As such, defining stigmas is of crucial importance and distinguishing it from taboos. Dovidio, Major, and Crocker (2000) define stigma as "a social construction, shaped by cultural and historical forces" and that stigmas are "determined by the broader cultural context (involving stereotype, values, and ideologies)" (p. 3). Similarly, Crocker and Quinn (2000) add that "the central feature of social stigma is devaluation and dehumanization by others" (p. 153), emphasizing that negative attributes are placed upon individuals who deviate from the majority. Taboos, on the other hand, are furthermore less written about in social sciences in the Japanese context but can be applied to stigmas as the social construct that is stigmatized. Taboo is defined as "the prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behavior is either too sacred and consecrated or too dangerous and accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake" (The Editors of

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016), meaning that the concept is based solely on the beliefs of a certain group of people and, thus, shows variances from culture to culture. In the Japanese context, taboos are less stressed as forbidden and more as “not discussed in principle” or historically not allowed, within the concept of family to include anything that deviate traditional views and attitudes away from the classic *ie* ideology to create a nontraditional model of family. These nontraditional family models include, but are not limited to, single parenthood, singleness, childlessness, and deviation from the salaryman and *sengyou shufu* model of a nuclear family as imbued by societal pressures and the Civil Code. Thus, for the purpose of this MA thesis, I will define stigma as a historically bound concept that creates societal prejudice and attaches negative attributes to the person as a result of societal taboos in the Japanese context. As little academic research exists on stigmas as an entity within Japanese society, I will instead propose a framework of the different aspects that I deem as stigmas as outlined by Japan Studies experts: single parenthood and illegitimacy.

Single parenthood within Japan has been on the rise since industrialization but is still lower than other developed nations, at a steady 2.3 percent, while in countries like the United States, the rates are above 40 percent (Kumagai, 2014). These percentages show the differences in societal acceptance towards giving birth outside of wedlock, even between two highly developed nations. Kumagai (2014) hypothesizes that the low birthrates in Japan among single unmarried women “could be due to factors within Japanese society and culture” (p. 56) that are preventing more women to give birth outside the institution of marriage.

Single parenthood may be by far the most stigmatized part of Japanese families in the modern era, because of the precarious nature of being able to afford being a single parent in a developed nation (Semuels, 2017). With majorly traditional viewpoints on having children, research by Choe et al (2014) illustrates that only 20 percent of participants perceive having children outside of marriage as acceptable with minimal change since 2000 (p. 251), heightening the societal stigma towards accepting both single parenthood and illegitimacy while it is more acceptable for couples, both men and women, to be satisfied in life without children according to 33 percent of respondents (p. 250). These contradicting views by Japanese men and women demonstrate the dual nature of nontraditional attitudes that are furthering the stigmas within family.

As previously mentioned, Japan's traditional family system is one of the pivotal reasons many are discouraged from "challenging the social norm" because of the fact that marriage is supposed to be based on a contract between a man and a woman. This contract between a man and a woman, though, has had another side to it in the historical context, that that contract allows for a child to not be illegitimate at birth. With illegitimacy come future issues for the child, because the transferal of the *koseki*⁴, or family registration, is necessary for children to be placed in schools and applying for government approved documents (White, 2002, p. 93), creating a stigma about single parenthood as well as illegitimate children and non-heteronormative relationships (Kumagai, 2008), even though they are not as rare within society as previous decades (Akaishi et al, 2004). Sugimoto (1997) explores the issue of illegitimacy as a consequence of the traditional *ie* ideology, emphasizing the concept of *koseki* as a part of the patriarchal design of the Civil Code. As mentioned, the *koseki* establishes a household register with the husband as the head of household, connecting family members with a common surname, so children born out of wedlock have less advantages within society if they are not a part of their father's register.

Sugimoto emphasizes that with the *koseki* comes the derived *seki*, which is the "view that, unless one is formally registered as belonging to an organization or institution, one has no proper station in society" (p. 141), bringing a distressing issue for every aspect of life in Japan. The *seki* can thus be applied to school with the *gakuseki*, or school registry, to even the death registry, *kiseki*. These registers create a "cause for anxiety" (p. 142), because of the denial of being able to be a part of the *koseki* for illegitimate children, what with the *seki* dictating much of the ability to choose one's own path in family forming. Furthermore, under the Civil Code, children born out of wed-lock were not entitled to the same inheritance privileges as siblings who are born to wed parents, with only the right to claim half of what the other siblings are eligible to inherit (Sugimoto, 1997; Yuki, 2013), showing a clear stigmatization towards children born out of wedlock and parents who have children before marriage. Children birthed outside of wedlock is estimated at 2.3 percent, considerably lower than other countries, but illegitimacy is stigmatized more so in Japan than in the US or Europe for example. Additionally, Kumagai suggests that the discrimination towards illegitimate children to not be able to have similar inheritance privileges could have an impact on the low birthrates to single women. However, these

⁴ The family registration system was disbanded in 1976 after years of discrimination towards the burakumin, or former outcast society members (White, 2002).

discriminatory laws were repealed in 2013, making illegitimacy less controversial for inheritance purposes (p. 56). Furthermore, Kumagai states that “the traditional *ie* system is still operating underneath the Japanese psyche, discouraging births out of wedlock” (p. 57) and encouraging that marriage is between a man and a woman in which a common-law marriage is not acceptable, heightening the stigma towards having children away from these traditional boundaries of *ie*.

Stigmatized individuals in Japan hold an oppressed connotation that is creating an image that being a single parent or illegitimate is viewed as a “pity” by others, which is a negative attribute being applied to the concept of family.

3.3 Individual Collectivism as a Downfall for Family Formation

As a periodically collective state, Japan has abided by the constitutionality of *Kokutai* principles of the Meiji Constitution that focused on the Emperor and the idea of Japanese society being made of a community adhered to as “one family” under the Emperor beseeching the destruction of any notion towards individualism and individuality among the *ie*⁵ as a way to try to steer clear of Western ideologies and obey the Emperor as the Head of State and the household prior to the 1947 Constitution (Goodman C. F., 2017, pp. 34-38). However, the concept of *Kokutai* can only loosely be applied to Japan today, since it is only a remnant of the past. Furthermore, Sugimoto (1997) describes Japan as a country with “friendly authoritarianism” as a way for the “deterrence of deviant behavior...to comply with the expected norms and standards” (p. 245) as dictated by the society at large. As such, the society adheres to the concept of collective responsibility, *rentai sekinin*, for any misconduct by the members of the group. This conceptualization of the Japanese State as collective has led to predominantly so-called ordinary attitudes and, thus, stigmatized nontraditional family ideals held by the Western influenced youth and young adults who will become the parents of tomorrow in Japan. With an up-spike in education centered pathways, nontraditional family ideals are becoming increasingly evident within the attitudes of students and career centered individuals.

As the focus of my research centers around the future of family formation and family ideals, it is essential to understand the possible future generation of parents’, i.e. the young adults’ and adolescents in Japanese society’s, viewpoint and rearing in a collectivist

⁵ *Ie* is used in a different romanization of *iye* in Carl F. Goodman’s 2017 article, *Contemplated Amendments to Japan’s 1947: A Return to Iye, Kokutai and the Meiji State*, but does not differentiate the definition nor terminology, only the spelling and romanization in the source text.

society, particularly those on the path of education who will begin rearing their own children in five to fifteen years' time. As aforesaid, Japan has been societally collectivist for centuries where individual desires were tamped down in order to favor the considerations of the community as a whole, however, Japanese youth are becoming more individualistic in values, and are now leaning towards a value system centered around "individualistic collectivism" (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013) where individuals look out for themselves, while still being willing to work towards the common goal towards society's favor. Matsumoto (2002) coins this predicament where the youth are more individualistic in nature than their parents and grandparents who still value higher collectivistic tendencies, as "IC⁶ duality" (p. 101). This has been evident in the changes from school-to-work formula to a school-to-university-to-career formula, thus, making it so that adolescents begin to think about their futures earlier than their parents and grandparents (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013, p. 135), which can be seen for other developed nations as well. These changing ideals and life parameters are, hence, pushing marriage and children until much later on. The struggle between "individualism" and "collectivism" is seen through the want of young adults to have children, but through the entrance into the workforce, it becomes clear that it is much harder to give up on a career path for a childrearing path without high intrinsic needs for wanting children, because of the increasing opportunity cost associated with marriage and childrearing, while the costs of staying single and childless are falling (Schoppa, 2006, p. 68).

The fulfillment of individual desires prior to the newly conceptualized "individualistic collectivism" in the past two decades is seen through the popular concept of "parasite singles" coined by Yamada Masahiro, which, in essence, is used to describe young adults and adults still living with their parents while working, with no need to pay for housing, and spending their income on luxury goods, travel, and nights out (Schoppa, 2006, pp. 77-78). These "parasite singles" are a prime example of Matsumoto's concept of "IC duality" in that with the decrease in functional population replacement, there are more resources available for the youth and young adults, decreasing their desire for having children or even living on their own. According to Matsumoto, with increases in resource availability and decrease birthrates, these combined "lead to an inevitable decrease in collectivistic behaviors, values and group consciousness" and, thus, led to an increase in "individuality, uniqueness, and separateness" (Matsumoto, 2002, p. 107) that are having

⁶ IC is an acronym for "individualism vs collectivism" and is used by Matsumoto et al (1996) to describe a world with both individualistic and collectivist tendencies present as aspects of a societal culture.

an undue reaction in birthrates and fertility by young adults who are choosing to wait until later to get married and have children, if even doing either in the long run. As Sugimoto explains, Japanese society is stuck “between collective integration and individual dignity” (p. 258) in terms of moving towards the changes taking shape in recent years.

Triandis (2001) stresses that in “collectivist cultures, child rearing emphasizes conformity, obedience, security, and reliability; in individualist cultures, child rearing emphasizes independence, exploration, creativity, and self-reliance” (p. 912) and differentiates the two as separate entities in the sciences, while as Matsumoto (2002) synthesizes the separate entities in describing Japanese society particularly with the prevalence of collectivist ideologies historically and the continually changing values towards individualism by Japanese youth as the aforesaid “IC duality”, however, in referring to Matsumoto’s research, Sugimura and Mizokami combine the terms as “individualistic collectivism”, with Matsumoto not referencing the term in his works, though being given the credit for the conceptualization. With the terms forged into one, individualistic collectivism and IC duality give synchronicity to the wave that is making its way through Japanese society as individuals, particularly the youth and young adults, are beginning to look out more for themselves, but still holding fast towards familial and societal obligations and bonds that bound their parents and grandparents during the 20th century’s economic boom and later stagnancy.

Research by Sugimura and Mizokami (2013) differs slightly from an aforementioned interview I conducted with a female Japanese language instructor in March 2018 but is evidenced as individualistic tendencies by Matsumoto et al (1996), Matsumoto (2002), and Triandis (2001). Through conversations with her, it became apparent to me that though she is a career centered woman in the workforce who wants to remain in the workforce for years to come, her intrinsic wants for having children will not be swayed by her desire for a career or helping Japanese society in a collective manner by helping increase the population. The respondent’s answers towards questions regarding the decreasing fertility in Japan matched the majority of answers in a 2009 Declining Birthrate White Paper by the Government of Japan where nearly half of the respondents (49.9%) voiced that the decreasing fertility is “very dangerous” and 33.1% that it is “more or less dangerous” (Winter & Teitenbaum, 2013, p. 198), showing an understanding towards the dilemmas Japan is facing, but little incentive towards acting upon the societal pressures. In continuing, the respondent, when further asked whether Japan’s current situation would impact her decision to have children, she was adamant that it is through

purely her selfish wants of having children, even if she feels that the path Japan's population is heading in is "not very good," because it has been her dream to have her own family with a husband and two children, and maybe even pets, since she was a little girl (Anonymous, 2018). The interview begs the questions for whether family formation schemes to increase fertility rates can only occur with genuine want for having children or Japan's current status little impact on the decisions and whether the future generation will lack the basic desires for children through family formation and, in the end, having a detrimental impact on family formation.

3.4 Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis as a Vicious Circle for Nontraditional Family Ideals

Going along with a similar theme as the previous subchapter, this subchapter will focus on attitudinal changes for childbearing and rearing through the approach of the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis (LFTH) formulated by Lutz, Skirbekk, and Testa (2006). The LFTH can be seen as an alternative towards the low-fertility issue during a time when there are next to no usable theories on when, if or how fertility will rise in the aftermath of dangerously low TFR projections. Though the LFTH is written and researched for the European context, this pseudo-theory can be applied to Japan with its unique goal of creating a conduit towards future discussions on governmental interference on fertility related issues when the TFR is below 1.5. Low-fertility is impacting Japan at a much faster rate than any other developed nation with the widening gap between the mortality age and birth and the top-heavy ageing society. As such, the LFTH and other research similar to it can be likewise used to dissect Japan's fertility crisis and the changing attitudes towards family formation as a framework.

The essence of the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis is that the current generation of future parents have been socialized to think that it is acceptable for them to have few to no children at all, due to their parents and elders having fewer children than their earlier counterparts (Lutz, Skirbekk, & Testa, 2006). This perception is well-matched to the study on nontraditional family attitudes at the macro and micro levels by Choe et al (2014) that also include that furthering one's education and pushing childbearing until later results in the social acceptance of dedicating time to careers, rather than family formation. The hypothesis assists in putting the need to say one wants to have children into perspective, but that to do exactly that could be driven only by intrinsic thoughts rather than a deep-rooted societal pressure imbued by the previous generations. Though the

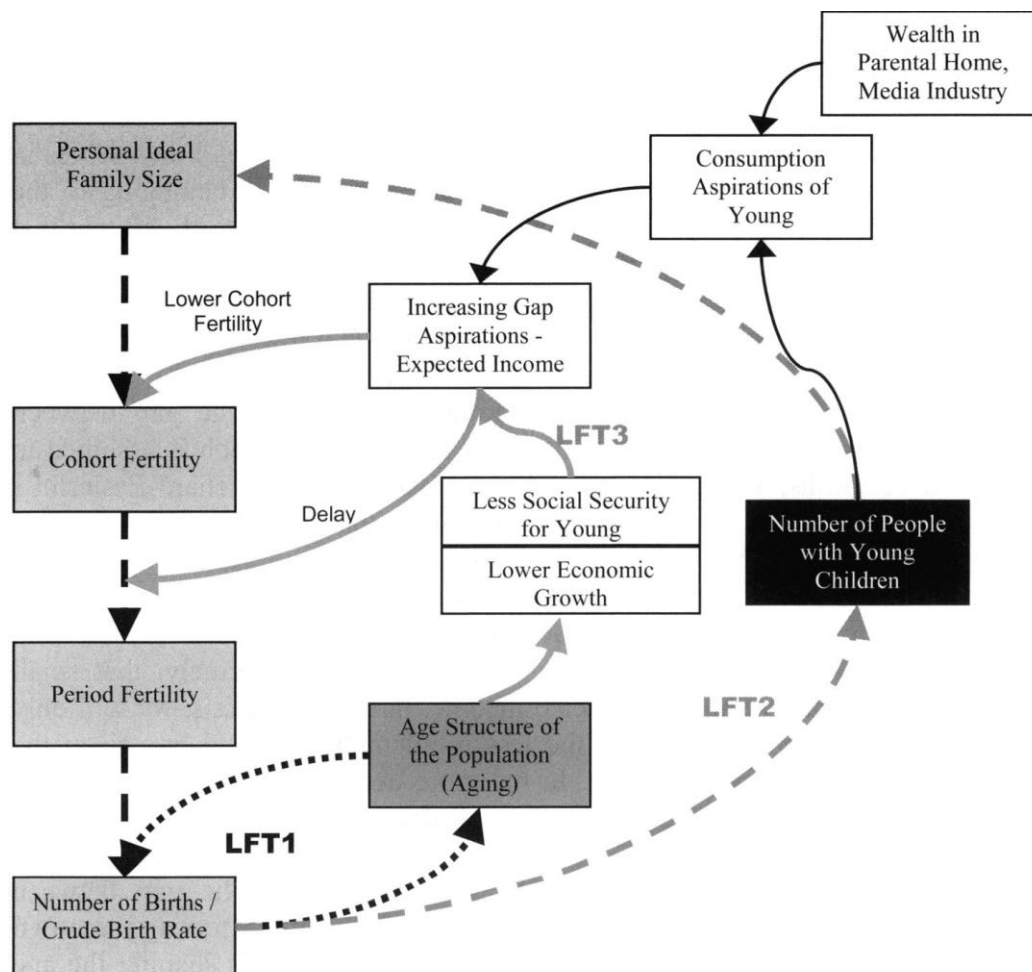
hypothesis presented in the 2006 research paper establishes a basis for low birthrates in Europe, the same principles can be transferred to the case of Japan, since Japan is having accelerated issues in terms of decreasing population replacement way beyond those of the levels witnessed in Europe. Lutz et al (2006) rationalize the discussion of lowering birthrates on whether governments should interfere in their country's population crisis or leave it entirely up to the general populace to maintain at their own discretion, but the authors do not necessarily believe that, when considering all aspects of their research, that fertility will continue to decline (Lutz, Skirbekk, & Testa, 2006, p. 168). In culmination with their research, the results argue towards a pessimistic viewpoint for the future parents being able to right the rapidly declining birthrates, that the issues will only persist in coming years as the acceptance of fewer children becomes more widespread and commonplace.

Lutz et al (2006) illustrate their hypothesis via a representative chart with three separate aspects of the hypothesis: population dynamics, sociological reasoning, and economic rationale, each emphasizing the three aspects they believe to be the main driving forces in attitudinal change in terms of population decline. For the purpose of framing this MA thesis, focus will be applied to LFT-2, sociological reasoning, but that LFT as a whole creates a symphonized understanding of the fertility issues in a societal construction. Furthermore, it should be noted that LFT-1, population dynamics, depicts the issue that fewer births today will result in fewer potential parents in the future generation of fertility cohorts and LFT-3, economic rationale, creates the hypothesis that an amplified need for consumption will increase the comparable expectations for future income; therefore, bringing a lower future fertility as a vicious circle for Japan's population projections in coming years.

Sociological reasoning as the basis for changing attitudes towards lower fertility and ideal family size in LFT-2 demonstrate that with the normalization of witnessing fewer children within age cohort groups and in passing throughout one's formative years, will result in smaller personal ideal family structures by the potential future fertility cohort. Simply, as young adults witness smaller families within their communities, such as parents with one to few children, or no children at all, they will normalize the idea that it is acceptable to have fewer or even no children in the future. Societal acceptance of fewer children will eventually translate to marrying or not marrying as less stigmatized, creating an unnatural declining population for the future as attitudes are changing. This vicious circle creates issues in the fertility decline issue that is "triggered by declines in actual fertility" from

recent history (Lutz, Skirbekk, & Testa, 2006, pp. 175-6). Furthermore, as ideals for family size and structure continue to shift, the possibility remains for fertility increase as well as decline, but only the societal attitudinal changes in aspirations and ideals versus reality can correct further decline.

Figure 1: Low-Fertility trap Hypothesis (LFT-1-3)



Source: Model representing the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis as the “demographic (LFT-1), sociological (LFT-2) and economic (LFT-3)” to give a visual representation of the research. The figure was taken from the original publication: Lutz, W., Skirbekk, V., and Testa M. R. (2006).

Through my fieldwork, I came to an alarming epiphanic thought: maybe the problem is not the incentives that the government brings, but perhaps the intrinsic motivation of today's youth to not have children at all. Through my research subsequent to my fieldwork, I stumbled across the aforesaid “low-fertility trap” hypothesis by Lutz, Skirbekk, and Testa (2006) that matched my findings prior to analyzing and discussing the issues of low fertility and declining household sizes to a certain degree, in that the current generation of potential future parents have been socialized to think that it is acceptable for them to have few to no children at all, due to their parents having fewer children (Choe, Bumpass and Tsuya). The theory helps put into perspective the need to

want to say one wants to have children, as many responded in such a manner in the questionnaires, but that to do exactly that could be driven only by intrinsic thoughts rather than a deep-rooted societal pressure imbued by the previous generations. Though the hypothesis presented in the 2006 research paper establishes a basis for low birthrates in Europe, the same principles can be transferred to the case of Japan, since Japan is having accelerated issues in terms of decreasing population replacement. The main contribution of the paper is to rationalize the discussion of lowering birthrates on whether governments should interfere in their country's population crisis or leave it entirely up to the general populace to maintain at their own discretion, but the authors do not necessarily believe that, when considering all aspects of their research, that fertility will continue to decline (Lutz, Skirbekk, & Testa, 2006, p. 168).

3.5 Chapter Summary

As the definition of *ie* is constantly changing and adapting to the newly “modern” world, stigmas are emerging as remnants of the historical Japanese family structure as the attitudes of the possible parents of tomorrow are evolving beyond those of traditional norms. With the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis by Lutz et al (2006) and individual collectivism/IC duality as distinguished by Matsumoto (2002) and Sugimura and Mizokami (2013) as frames for understanding the changing attitudes towards family formation and childbearing tendencies by potential future parents, a solid understanding is applied to the fertility issues plaguing Japan. Now that I have laid out the conceptual framework in reference to the changing attitudes on Japanese family, from the definition and meaning of family to defining and expressing the stigmas present within Japanese family and society in general to the individual collectivism taking shape amongst young adults to finally the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis, I will now move towards the methodology chapter to further discuss my methods for studying Japanese families and the changing attitudes for family formation as well as prepare the thesis for the analysis chapter following the methodology.

4. Methodology: Research Approach and Data Acquisition

Researching the ideals and attitudes of the next generation of parents, today's university students, will provide an understanding of the needs and wants of university students for their families and provide further comprehension towards young adults' understanding of family and family-related issues. It has become apparent that with people focusing on their educations and careers, families are continuously decreasing in numbers per household, and people are becoming less enthused about having children with their already busy lives. White (2002) stresses the resilience of the Confucian *ie* in that the family becomes an extension of the nation, that prospering within the household benefits the nation as a whole, which has been evident in the changes from the school-to-work formula to the school-to-university-to-career formula, thus, making it so that adolescents begin to think about their futures earlier than their parents and grandparents (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013, p. 135); hence, pushing marriage and children until much later on in life. As such, the following chapter will detail the methodology behind my research on the attitudes toward family-related issues and on family in general by university students, such as the qualitative research approach for analysis and discussion, justification and methodology for using surveys and group discussions versus expert-or otherwise-interviews in gathering data and will briefly detail other aspects of the research process.

4.1 Approach to Research and Questions for Data Acquisition

As the focus of my research centers around the ideals and attitudes toward family formation by current university students, it is essential to understand the future generation of parents, i.e. the young adults in Japanese society, particularly those on the path of education; hence, I have chosen to pursue qualitative research approaches for studying changing family ideals. Focusing on the future parents who are currently pursuing educational paths in metropolitan areas, such as the Tokyo region to name one, will shed light on the target population that whose age and economic cohorts tend to value families differently than their counterparts in rural settings. Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, and Rindfuss (2014) emphasize that those individuals with higher educational upbringings and levels will have non-traditionalistic attitudes towards family. They also accentuate that relationships are a compilation of "kin ties, neighborhoods, the workplace, and friendships" (Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, & Rindfuss, June 2014, p. 242), meaning that backgrounds enter into a large part of the attitudinal shifts towards family formation. As Maxwell (2005) emphasizes that the qualitative approach is particularly good for research where the objective is to understand "context within which the participants act, and the

influence” of the said actions for a relatively small sample size, rather than a large sample (p. 22). Maxwell additionally heightens that qualitative methods will, thus, “preserve the individuality” of each participant’s participation, adding to the later analysis.

Japanese youth are becoming more individualistic in values and attitudes after periods of stressed collectivism and are now leaning towards a value system centered around “individualistic collectivism” (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013) where individuals look out for themselves and their best interest, while still being willing to work for the common goal of improving society. This has been evident in the changes from aforementioned school-to-work formula to a school-to-university-to-career formula, thus, making it so that adolescents begin to think about their futures earlier than their parents and grandparents (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013: 135), hence pushing marriage and children until much later in life, or never at all. The struggle between “individualism” and “collectivism” is seen through the want of young adults to have children, but through the withdrawal from educational institutions to the entrance into the workforce, it becomes clear that it is much harder to give up on a career path for a childrearing path without high intrinsic needs for wanting children, making the issue of having children dependent on the wants of individuals as well as the ability to economically sustain a family in the long term.

For my research and methodology, a focus on the school-to-university-to-career formula is essential in understanding why the educated adults are not choosing to have children. Thus, I plan to pursue two forms of data acquisition to research the family ideals university students have. First, I created, translated, and distributed a questionnaire survey geared towards Japanese university students using the snowball distribution method as a way to randomize the students who answer the questionnaires and gives equal chances of receiving answers from male and female students. The alternatively called snowball sampling method is an excellent method for having participants and contacts distribute the survey to those whom they deem to fit the needed criteria (May, 2011). Choosing to conduct survey research derives from the lack of financial resources for conducting interviews in Japan as well as the time constraints. Survey research, however, is a common methodology in social sciences, particularly in sociology, towards which this thesis leans toward. Sociologist Robert J. Franzese, P.h.D. (2009) emphasizes that survey research has been made of particular importance through the efforts of sociologists, and the “successes[...]with the survey method have spilled over to other fields” (p. 15) over the last century. Survey methods are particularly good for conducting research on

deviance, which, as an umbrella topic, includes stigmas and taboos as well, fitting perfectly for the small niche within my research. Secondly, I organized an informal discussion with university students at Senshu University in October 2018 through a university contact. The discussion ended up with eight participants, who were surprisingly evenly distributed with the male to female ratio with an age range from 22-30. The combination of distributed questionnaires and a discussion with potential future parents gave insight into the internal and external wants and needs of the young adults of Japan, so that further analysis can be done to understand the mindset of Japan's potential future parents.

The questions used for the questionnaire survey took the route of asking about what the ideal family is from the stand point of the cohort that might have values and attitudes of nontraditional families from extensive educational backgrounds, but used standardized, nonleading questions to help guide the students to describe their current and ideal families. To be precise, the questionnaires consist of questions relating to family, family demographics, ideologies, what Japanese students want in a family, and what government implementations they would find more enticing for starting a family, or if there is anything that could change their minds into having kids if they do not want to have kids. The questionnaire is not similar in style to the International Social Survey Programme surveys with a range of questions with a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, but rather consists of open ended questions that provide more qualitative responses for future analysis. I chose to refrain from using the ISSP survey style for the fact that, from the research viewpoint of Japanese Studies, many of the participants tend to be in the neutral category, therefore, creating the potential for inaccurate data and inability to analyze. The open-ended questions, on the other hand, comprise majorly on family ideology and personal beliefs on ideal households, desire for marriage and children, work-life balance as well as viewpoints on single parenthood, as single parenthood is a small niche case I analyze further as stigmatized in Japanese society.

The main questions I focused on are the stigmas that are present in Japanese society, such as single parenthood and illegitimacy, and, thus, stigmatized characteristic towards preventing successful family formation and family inclusiveness in society. With the current state that Japan's fertility crisis is in, a focus directed at the future childrearing generation and assisting in shifting the ever-present stigmas, but the implementations of the government lack in researching and implementing ways to further incentivize career-oriented individuals to have children and allow single parents to be accepted in society.

Other questions I research deal with how family formation is currently failing with the increased attention the government is putting on making it easier for parents to take time off to care for their children. These questions are by no means fully answered through this research project, but the topic is brought to light to increase awareness of the areas that are lacking emphasis and research in the previous chapters.

4.2 Data Acquisition Procedures in the Field

Japan is seeking to ensure the possibility of a positive and prosperous future through the reinforcement of family planning practices geared towards the ideals of the next generation of parents. In recent years, the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare has created incentive programs to lessen the burden of having children, but according to the most recent data compilation released in April 2018, Tokyo has the lowest fertility rates as of 2016 in Japan (Vital, Health and Social Statistics Office, 2018), making the root cause of the low fertility in the capitol region questionable even with the corporate incentive programs that should attract businessmen and women alike to have more children. According to population projections, the current course of Japan's fertility crisis will send Japan's population to between 88.08 million and 94.90 million by 2065, depending on the low or high projections released for the 2017 population index (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2018). These projections are staggering for the Japanese workforce and officials with the impossible task ahead of maintaining Japan's economy and future. Thus, it is imperative to investigate ways to make it easier and more reasonable for the future generations of Japanese parents to have options and incentives that will fit their ways of life, and not the lives of the parents of today nor yesterday, to increase these projections to stability for an economically better future. However, could there be a more pressing need that has to be addressed, away from giving further incentives and programs to the next generation of parents, that would explain the continually dropping numbers of children being born?

Through the use of a questionnaire geared towards the potential future parents in Japan on the path to education and vis-à-vis those wishing to then push creating families until later in life, I hope to contribute qualitative data on opinions and attitudes towards families, children, marriage, and the stigmas associated with families, to create a holistic perspective on changing family attitudes. The questionnaire began distribution in July 2018 through university contacts in Tokyo and the associated fieldwork was conducted in October 2018 during my fieldwork trip partially funded through the CEAS Travel

Grant.

4.2.1 Locating Fieldwork Sites and Informal Discussions with Potential Future Parents

Preparations into working in the field in Japan began in September 2018 through booking flights and finding accommodations, the general logistics of fieldwork in itself. A month prior to departure, I contacted organizations in Japan that dealt with family planning and policy implementation, or the statistics that are essential for my research. Some of these organizations included the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the Office for the Promotion of Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan, and the WAKUWAKU Network. Unfortunately, the only response received was from the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS), in which they referred me to the Cabinet Office of Japan after consulting their fertility experts. The Cabinet Office of Japan, after further research and inquiry, did not come out to anything feasible since the Office for the Promotion of Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan did not respond either.

The lack of responses created justifiable worries and anxieties not foreseen for the fieldwork and readjustments were necessary in methods for gathering data. A chapter in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan* gave the idea of showing up to an organization without prior notice, with the author Ian Reader praising his method of doing fieldwork as an “effective fieldwork strategy” for many reasons, with one being that coming unannounced prevents prior preparation on the organization’s end and, thus, is “unable to utilize avoidance tactics” (Reader 93), bringing the research into an entirely new realm of ideas. However, after consulting with others, doing unannounced visits to ministries and government sector organizations, the plan seemed less feasible in all actuality, due to the security aspect of these offices and needing prior clearance in entering. As such, the only place available to visit was the WAKUWAKU Network located in Toshima Ward, near Ikebukuro.

The WAKUWAKU Network⁷ is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing assistance to single parents and low-income households through children’s cafeterias at little to no cost to parents (Mainichi Japan, 2018). However, the WAKUWAKU Network

⁷ Also referred to as Toshima Kodomo WAKUWAKU Hoikuen

does much more than offer *kodomo shokudo*, or children's cafeterias, two times a month. Through funds provided by the MHLW and other state and private sponsorships, the network is able to provide daycare services, elderly assistance, and create a "sense of family and home" (Suzuki, 2018) that the children might not otherwise be able to experience. During the visit, I conducted an impromptu interview with the curator with the help of fellow MA student, Yejee Choi. Further information about the visit can be found in the annex section of this thesis.

Another part of fieldwork in Tokyo that provided valuable information was an opportunity given by Ben Norton, an International Coordinator and English Language Teacher at Senshu University and fellow alum of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Through Norton's assistance and coordination, I was able to have a 30 minute informal discussion with his eight advanced level English language students about Japanese fertility and learn about their perspectives on children and parenthood. Conducting a group discussion in addition to surveys gives more opportunities for investigating the norms and dynamics within the decided target cohort (May, 2011, pp. 137-8). May (2011) emphasizes that group interviews provide invaluable information when conducted in a controlled manner and facilitated properly by the person leading the discussion. Conducting the group discussion in the students' familiar classroom at Senshu created a sense of ease for the students, where they were used to using the English language and having discussion, making it the best place to conduct the discussion to gather the utmost data from the group. Additionally, group discussions provide further opportunities for qualitative data acquisition through the comparison of responses between survey data and interview data from similar cohort groups. However, May heightens the importance of being mindful to the fact that group discussions may produce differing perspectives to the survey data due to the interaction of the group discussion participants that may enable a different path in discussion than independent thought during survey response.

4.2.2 Questionnaire and Distribution

The idea to send a questionnaire to Japanese students in university through the assistance of a university contact in Tokyo came into play after thinking about the logistics surrounding the research period. Overall, the idea to do a questionnaire over interviews works better in the context of family, since the students are then able to anonymously provide details of their families and future ideals, while conducting interviews could have prevented honest answers from forming when revealing family details to a stranger. The increased anonymity proved to be fruitful in the responses given, since the respondents

were not shy in responding fully to the questions given. Additionally, in the sociology realm, surveys have become an important tool for revealing information, with Franzese (2009) hailing it as a perfected tool in the study of sociology. Revealing information on topics such as family and potential stigmas associated within the realm of family definitely require a research tool that give opportunities for digging underneath the surface to gain a full understanding of the attitudes of potential future parents in the topic of families and family ideals. According to May (2011), surveys can be used to gather data on attitudes in particular, such as “what people think about life in general and events in particular” (p. 95) and can also gauge aspirations, such as ideals in this research project’s case.

The questionnaire I distributed stems from the research this thesis topic has developed into inquiring about personal ideals in family-related situations, such as household size, marriage and children. The questionnaire also ended up including certain stigmas, such as the viewpoints university students have towards single parenthood and adoption. However, much to my chagrin, defining “stigmas” to the students proved more challenging due to the aforementioned confusion in terminology and definition. Incorporating multiple aspects of family into the questionnaire took approximately four weeks between development in English and then translating using proper Japanese *ankeeto* terminology⁸ and preventing the questions from leading the respondent’s answers. The final version consists of approximately 25 questions, aside from the general demographic questions, and helps provide an overview on family ideals, family household size and the education levels of their parents, views on nontraditional families and whether the respondent thinks that they will be able to have their ideal families in the future.

Ben Norton assisted in distributing the questionnaire amongst his students, as well as his colleagues’ students at Senshu university during my time in Japan, with soft dispersal with the snowball distribution method. After dispersal, five to seven responses by September ended up at 23 responses, with expected results ending at maximum ten, that have given insight into the future of Japanese families and show a wide variety of ages, genders and perspectives than initially expected.

⁸ Translations were done with the assistance of Ms. Yejee Choi, fellow CEAS MA student, and Ms. Ayano Nagata, former CEAS Japanese teacher. Initial English questions were first translated with Ms. Choi’s assistance and final translations and corrections by Ms. Nagata.

4.3 Overview of Data and Methods for Analyzing Data

For the analysis chapter I will use qualitative analysis techniques to dichotomize the problem of declining fertility and attitudinal changes towards family formation by Japanese university students, and the potential stigmatization of Japanese families as a result.

The questionnaire received 23 responses from university students in Japan and were gathered July to October 2018. The age range for the respondents is 18 to 30 years of age, with the majority of the respondents between the ages of 19 and 21. Of the 23 respondents, 17 were female and six were male, making it disproportionate in terms of getting an equal or true representation of the views of university students in comparison to actual numbers of male-to-female students in university in Japan. Male students significantly outweigh the numbers of female students, with 1,627 male students to 1,264 female students in universities across Japan (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan, 2018), showing the opposite representation that my questionnaire gained.

For analyzing the data, I systematically grazed the data I received by converting the questionnaire responses into a well-organized excel document that contains all the responses for easy access and cross referencing. For coding methods, I decided to use deductive coding, and categorizing my data into sections of similar questions helped to create themes, such as household types in the ideal family scenario, want for having children and getting married, family-related stigmas, etc. I compiled these similar questions into groups and within those groups found similarities in responses that allowed me to further analyze the data and find patterns that would give insight into the issues at hand. For example, in terms of family ideals, I took the questions “What kind of family do you want to have in the future? What is the ideal family for you?” and “What kind of family is the ideal Japanese family? Is it similar to your ideal future family?” and compared the answers within the two columns to see how the responses differed, and then cross-referenced responses to their demographic information, such as age and the household type from their childhood, to see how they connect with their future ideals. Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that asking further questions during the analysis stage of research allows the researcher to probe, develop provisional answers, think outside the box, and become acquainted with the data, which allow the researcher to delve deeper into and within the data, rather than only scratch at it on the surface level. I found that coding the data in this manner by hand made it easier for me rather than using a coding platform. I decided to steer away from using coding software and tools, such as NVivo,

because analyzing the data is the role of the researcher and a data analysis software would only compute the data to be handled easier, but for me, dealing with the data on my own works better than computing it through software. To create a better visual, I also color coded the genders, purple for women and blue for men, to better understand the viewpoints of the respondents as well as easily make deductions from the responses without referencing back to the gender all the time.

5. Analysis

The following chapter contains the data analysis and research results on attitudes toward family by university students and will be outlined with in the following. The first subchapter will highlight the responses towards the meaning of family from the viewpoint of the university students and will be followed by a close examination of the preference toward household types as an ideal family format. These two subchapters go into detail about the perception of family and the ideals that university students hold to get an understanding of patterns in the household types from growing up to then the potentially desired household in the future. Additionally, the third and fourth subchapters examine the desire for children and marriage as well as the necessity of children within a marriage from the perspective of university students. Alternatively from the previous themes, the fifth subchapter will study the responses toward the issue of declining birthrates to receive an understanding of the demographic situation to see how students view the issue or whether there is an issue with the demographic declines, while the sixth subchapter will look at stigmas within Japanese families from the perspective of Japanese university students to gather information on whether there are clear indicators for stigmatization within Japanese families as remnants of the *ie* ideology to further develop an understanding of the view towards an ability to achieve the ideal family in the future. The responses to the questionnaire and group discussion assist in answering the research question and family-related issues that will be further explored in the discussion chapter that is forthcoming.

The concept of family is an intricate topic that needs finesse to dissect and analyze. As such, asking university students about their ideas about family needs an approach that requires some forethought and preparation. A finely picked questionnaire and discussion questions can produce honest answers from young adults on their path to education, or unintentionally sidetrack their answers towards the researched hypothesis with leading questions. As such, the following subchapters are the production of a structured questionnaire that gives insight into the attitudes university students have on family formation and what the ideal Japanese family is, if there is one in existence.

5.1 The Meaning of Family

A major component of family is the perception one has of their family as they age and the meaning they instill onto their understanding of family from childhood to adulthood. Thus, understanding the meaning university students imbue onto their view on family is

important for the comprehension of university students' attitudes towards the increasing fertility crisis and changing family ideals. Commonalities among the respondents showed that their families bring the connotations of love, support, understanding, an absolute importance, and fun memories. These connotations conjure images of childhood memories and meals together at the dinner table, and "casual conversation in everyday life" (Tsuchiya, age 23) to help formulate the meaning of family from the perspectives of the university student respondents.

Of the 23 respondents, four mentioned that the meaning of family is the entity that understands them the best, making family an immensely important part of the students' lives. Understanding is seen as the most important aspect of family with views toward family as an objective being greater than oneself without romanticized opinions:

"People who understand me more than myself. A family that sees me objectively, who know me more than I know myself" (Koshiishi, age 20),

showing that there is deeper meaning towards family than just frivolous emotions. Additionally, family is seen as a solid entity that will remain because of the trust that understanding brings and the understanding that one will not stray in times of trouble:

"A partner who can speak without suffering. Trusting that you will not be disliked" (Rio, age 21),

heightening the need for absolute acceptance by family members. These emotions attached to the concept of family show the increasing value placed by students onto their connotation and interpretation of family. The concepts of love and happiness can be seen as an extension of understanding and acceptance as well, as a female 21 year old university student highlights that family incorporates love with individuality, but that family is able to have acceptance even during times of disagreement.

Nami: "I feel that there is love. While each has individuality, I think that it is a good family that makes concessions while arguing".

The respondent's conceptualization of family provides a deeper understanding of family, with the emphasis on being true to oneself as well as accepting the other members of the family at the same time because of the presence of love within the household. Individuality is also mentioned in another response and brings the concept of mutual respect in to the equation of family:

Ayaka, age 22: “A family that can be respected and respected independently by each individual”.

An increased importance placed upon family away from the concept of romantic love is also mentioned within the responses. A female respondent mentioned that “‘having a family’ has a serious meaning, a little more than that it is not just an extension of romance” (Nami, age 21), highlighting the importance of family beyond the romantic sense of love, accentuating the meaning of family towards the future. Further evidence was witnessed through responses that deal with “fun memories” and childhood memories. The connotation that is left with these responses points towards a further importance being placed on family as well as the past, making it apparent that family is still as relevant today as it was in the past, but also that family is changing constantly, though at a slow pace, much like memories and time.

When thinking about family, many students showed differing attitudes, particularly if they have divorced parents or live within a single parent household. The absence of a parental figure, however, did not lessen the impact family has on the individual. For example, 21 year-old Mina referenced her family as divorced, but that even though her family is split up and now living apart, her siblings helped create an air of livelihood within the household growing up, making it so that she is happy to see her family no matter how long they go without seeing each other, adding to the importance of the emotion that family holds in her view:

“My parents are divorced, but since I have three brothers, I think that it was a lively and busy family when I was young. My brothers live by themselves, so I cannot meet them every day, but I try to meet them regularly. No matter when we meet, I am happy to see my family” (Mina, age 21).

The mention of siblings as the first thing that comes to mind was also mentioned by Natsuki, age 20, since she has 6 siblings who are taken care of by their single mother. She mentioned that when she thinks of family, the thing that comes to mind is “the face of everyone the most. I hope everyone is happy!”, accentuating the shared vision of happiness when thinking about family.

One respondent stood out from the rest, in that they mentioned being able to return to family at any point in time, but the response to “When thinking about your family, what comes to mind? What kind of family is your family?” her response was: “Perfectionism,

academics first, funny” (Koyomi, age 21). The participant’s response brings the topic of education as the forerunner within the household, greatening the pressure placed on students to gain an education. The earlier quote by the oldest respondent within the cohort mentioned that the respondent would like to make “education the center of freedom” (Akiko, age 30) as a main component in their ideal family, showing that education is still deemed as important on both sides of the age range, with the respondents 21 and 30 years of age, respectively. The pressure within the family to succeed and find careers is thus changing students’ viewpoints on family, and potentially changing it rather slowly over time with the solid grip of education still holding fast.

5.2 The Modern Japanese Family Ideal as Described by University Students—Special Attention to Household Types

Family ideals are typically derived from the influence of the household within which one grows up in, making it likely that individuals will be expected to form families from their previous experiences with family. 21.7% of the students who responded to the questionnaire are members of stem-family households, with the remaining 78.3% within the typical nuclear household model. In terms of the ideal family the respondents would like in the future, only two of the respondents gave any inclination towards a stem-family model, with attitudes towards having families with children and the husband’s parents under one roof:

“I want to raise my own child while taking care of my and my husband's parents, making love and education the center of our independence and making friends and family” (Akiko, 30 years of age);

“A family where three generations live together. Not like my own [current] family” (Yui, 20 years of age).

While two students mentioned a stem-family as an ideal, one of these particular students was surprisingly the oldest student among the participants, aged 30, making it a question of the divide between the younger students and their older counterparts within the university system in Japan. However, the other student who responded an ideal towards a multigenerational household is only 20 years old, showing that family ideals are unique in any given age cohort. Additionally, the mention of including friends within the concept and manifestation of family shows a further diverting definition of family that is only heightened by the inclusion of independence in the definition.

In addition, 15 respondents expressed their wants for having a nuclear family model in the future, consisting of a partner and children, five expressed desire for a family with respect, love, calm and friendly or with a deep connection, while five individuals expressed that they “will not get married”, but then one responded that their ideal family is one where they “work together and make time for family” (Ryosuke, age 20), contradicting their earlier response. The opposing respondent could, thus, want a family, but plans to have a family without marrying, which sadly cannot be deduced solely by the responses gathered, or could even be an error in computing the responses.

A recurring theme that came in the answers to the questions “What kind of family do you want to have in the future? What is the ideal family for you?” and “What kind of family is the ideal Japanese family? Is it similar to your ideal future family?” is that many of the respondents want more children than anticipated through previous research. Of the 23 respondents, nine respondents indicated that they would like “many children” or “2 or more” and four would like to at least have one child with their partners, showing a clear view that the ideal household in their opinions is a household with a couple and their children, further indicating that a nuclear family household style has become the ideal. However, a good point brought up by a 21-year-old female student, Hikari, from a stem-family, mentioned her views on ideal families, in that there is no sole ideal family, especially within the young adult spheres, but that there are clear constraints in the concept of “ideal family” by older generations that align with the *ie* ideology:

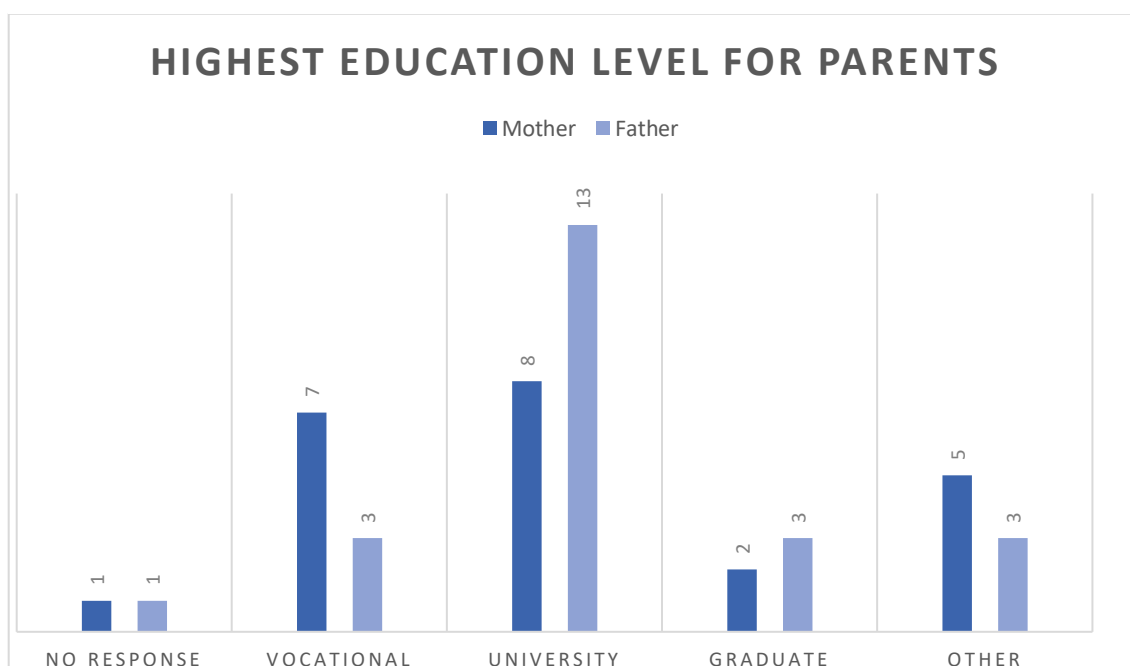
“I think that the ideal family in Japan is different between young people and those who are not. In the case of young people, there is no ideal family. For example, having no children is also an option. On the other hand, older people think that to the parents [the ideal family] is to have wives, husbands and children, and the couple take care of their parents”.

Hikari’s viewpoint shows that there are different types of ideals for every person, especially for different age groups, making it difficult to express the ideal family in any given culture, least of all in the Japanese context. However, this respondent did not mention whether her ideal family will include older generations under one roof like the family she grew up with or if she envisions it to be more towards the nuclear family model. Still, she mentions that she would like to “have two or three children”, showing a clear division towards nontraditional family ideals, as well as traditional family ideals. The clear distinction created by the respondent is on point with understanding the views of young adults as well as the previous generations, defining the conundrum of diverging

family ideals and the rift between the generations, even with the presence of the traditional ideals.

Household types were of specific importance for the students in describing their current and ideal families, making households a significant component of family. Ideal family and household preferences correlate in majority with the households the respondents grew up with, but also show variances when looking from the perception of the education levels of the parents. Figure 2 indicates the education levels of the parents for each respondent, with only one respondent absenting. Correlating the education levels of the parents helps further understand the traditional and nontraditional viewpoints with potentially matching of the education level to the indicated household type of the family as well as towards the attitudes of the current generation of students who will be potential parents in the future. With the inclusion of vocational, university, graduate as well as other to indicate high school or any other type of education level possible, the majority of parents have at least a university degree, with ten mothers and 16 fathers with university or graduate level degrees, and seven mothers and three fathers with vocational, or technical, level education. Though fewer mothers and fathers have a graduate level degree, but the questionnaire indicates that the majority of university students were raised by parents with above high school level education. The high levels of education can, therefore, be used to determine that a fraction of university students attend university with pressures from their parents, and this pressure helps facilitate the development of nontraditional family ideals.

Figure 2: Student Respondents' Parent Education Characteristics



5.3 Desire Towards Having a Family—Marriage and Children

Amongst the respondents, getting married was more prevalent, with 18 of the 23 indicating they would like to get married. Of those five respondents who noted they would not like to get married, three were female and the other two were male. However, in reference to having children, only three respondents said that they would not like to have children, but surprisingly three of the respondents would like to have children even without getting married, and one demonstrated a desire to get married but not have children, clearly showing nontraditional family ideals and attitudes. As previously mentioned, the desire to have more than the average number of children was witnessed in the responses by nine of the participants, heightening the importance of having children within the cohort.

Having a family was expressed as a central aspect of life by the respondents, taking precedence in life and even being illustrated as another meaning for life:

“Creating a family, no matter how many children there are, my life will become interesting, I wonder if [family] is another meaning for living” (Akiko, age 30).

The addition that the number of children does not matter within the concept of family, but that any number will create an increasingly interesting life that will add the meaning of family in the end. However, one respondent expressed that they have heard people change upon having children but failed to expand on the connotation that the notion of change brings, whether it is a good change or if the fact that parents change upon having children is a detriment in society.

From a differing perspective, the drive for wanting to have one’s own family could also come from having their family being taken away from them at a young age, that creating their own family will help fill that void from when they lost their parents:

“I am now lonely because I lost my parents, so I would like my own family” (Momoko, age 21).

The connotations of loss and loneliness heighten the need to create one’s own family as well as derive further meaning about the impact family has on individuals at any age.

In terms of having the desire to have children and get married, an interview I conducted with a female Japanese language instructor in March 2018 brought insight on the topic firsthand. Through conversations with her, it became apparent to me that though she is a career centered woman in the workforce, her intrinsic wants for having children will not be swayed by her desire for a career or helping Japanese society in a collective manner

by helping increase the population. The respondent's answers towards questions regarding the decreasing fertility in Japan proved that though she is worried for the sake of Japan, it is her wants and desires that will determine whether she will get married and have children. When asked whether Japan's current situation would impact her decision to have children, she was adamant that it is through purely her selfish wants of having children, even if she feels that the path Japan's population is heading in is "not very good," because it has been her dream to have her own family with a husband and two children, and maybe even pets, since she was a little girl living with both her parents and grandparents (Anonymous, 2018). The interviewee's thoughts on population decline were well-informed, making it obvious that she understands the issue at hand, but that it will not deter her in changing her viewpoint on having a family of her own. Her background in being raised in a multigenerational household could be an essential key to fully understanding her views on wanting children and getting marriage, which will be further discussed in the discussion chapter.

The topic of wanting children and marriage came up in discussion as well, but differently than from the aforementioned interview. The most essential aspect from the discussion with university students at Senshu University was that the need, or want, to have children stems from "personality" and a "sense of self," as one student eloquently put the issue of their generation of not wanting to have children, or even get married, for that matter. This shows a counter view for wanting children and family from the questionnaires and the interview as mentioned. The evolution of the manner family is viewed as has changed with the emergence of independent thought and gender equality, and many Japanese university students and recent graduates value finding jobs to maintain their economic and financial health, rather than focusing on relationships and having children and families. These changes are a major contributor in why people are not wanting to have children and the students imbued the same ideas on the matter.

The connection among the student's own wants to have children stemmed from their internal need to want to have children as well as their external ability to be able to have children and/or get married. Many voiced their concerns about being able to financially take care of children after they graduate and find stable jobs with the competition they are facing on the job market, and the pressure to find life-long careers like their parents and older generations. A common concern aside from financial stability was the ability to raise the children themselves, since the Japanese working hours are long and arduous; in their parent's generations, the grandparents assisted in caring for the children, making

childrearing much easier for the salaryman father and the not yet liberated housewives. The emergence of childcare facilities allowed for the mothers to find jobs outside the home and aspire for the same living standards as their male counterparts. However, the trust in the use and accessibility of daycare facilities has waned in recent years and does not appeal to the next generation of parents, since there is a level of uncertainty associated with finding adequate placements for their offspring, with many needing to establish and reserve spots six to twelve months in advance after the government's Angel Plan initiatives in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Between the financial responsibility and negative attitudes towards the ability of the government to provide enough jobs and benefits, or the general undesirable attitudes towards having children, the future of Japan's prosperity remains on the line with the next generation of parents according to my discussion with the students.

5.4 Necessity of Children and Marriage in Family?

White's earlier reflection shows the vast contrast between Western ideologies of "starting a family" happens when a couple has children, versus that of their Japanese counterparts, where family is an elemental aspect of life, that much like air, it is a constant entity surrounding people. Getting married and having children are not necessarily a necessity within Japanese culture for people to have families. However, it is clear that having children and getting married are expectations that have held steadfastly within societal norms. In response to the question "Do you think that marriage or having children are important in a 'family?'", the majority, 14 participants, responded "Yes", while nine responded "No", showing that the topic of family has a split view on terminology and definition. The divide also shows that perhaps children are not a necessary part of the equation anymore in terms of definitiveness.

As expressed by those who indicated that children and marriage are important in a family, family is rooted in tradition and history from generations ago as well as indicating that creating one's own home is a big stepping stone in life that produces further responsibility much like adulthood:

"Because we can inherit tradition and make family history. By doing so, you can have pride in what was born in that family" (Rio, age 19);

"Because having a new home yourself is a very important life's milestones and experience. By having a child, you can do whatever you can to protect the child.

And by having a big sense of responsibility that is not so far, I will raise one more”
(Yui, age 20),

The viewpoints emphasize the point of reference that family is a strong component of the culture within Japan. Additionally, voices towards family and children as a possible outcome for a family showed that

“if a person of trust and love becomes part of their own daily life, the format does not need to be so much obsessed about” (Rei, age 21),

but rather that “It is possible to live alone in this day and age” (Ryosuke age 20) without marriage or children as parts of the equation for family, “Although it is rare in Japan, you can have a family without marrying” (Tsuchiya, age 23). The points of view by the male respondents show less emotion towards the issue of family formation and ideals than the responses given by the female respondents, which could be attributed to gender bias in the ability to have careers even with families. However, the responses also show an empathy towards the fact that there are many definitions of family that are not dictated by the principles set by *ie*. An attitude towards the progressive attitude of accepting communities, friends and even pets as “family” brings a new light for the conceptualization of family with the addition that blood relations are not a necessity:

“Because I think that we will call communities that live together, such as friends, not married partners, pets etc. as family” (Koyomi, age 21).

“Because I think there are various shapes of families. Even without marriage, even though not connected by blood, I think that if you think that you are a family even if you are not family member in the eyes of the law, you can call it family” (Kurumi, age 21).

This specific view is along the lines of Western ideals where family has begun to adopt new definitions to include non-blood related individuals, as well as animals, into the fold of family-related entities. The heightened acceptance of those not traditionally family in the eyes of the law provides a new meaning for the conceptualization of family as well as the inclusion of nontraditional ideals.

Nonetheless, having children was deemed as an experience that many of the respondents would like to experience, even if children and marriage are not necessarily prerequisites for a family to be officially termed a family.

“I do not often think that children are cute. Maybe some parents do not like children so much. Therefore, even if there are no children, there is no problem and I think that it is totally up to individual freedom. Still I am planning to have children as well because I believe that childbirth and childrearing are wonderful experiences” (Hikari, age 21).

The variations in responses show that even within similar ideals for what a family is, there are differing opinions from those who wish to have children, and those who plan to get married. These differences show an increased individuality that are not dictated by the thoughts of others.

On a virtually different note, a commonality within the answers was that “fun”, “happiness”, “support” and “being happy” are the key to a family, even if the indicated answer pointed towards either or. These indications show that any form of family can represent an acceptable view towards what a family is, and that family is up to interpretation by the people involved rather than for society to dictate by obsolete ideals. This further validates the notion that there are increasing amounts of nontraditional family ideals emerging among Japanese university students that are helping to change the overall concept of family in the Japanese context.

5.5 Attitudes Toward the Declining Birthrate as an Impact on Individual Lives

A major issue impacting family formation in Japan is declining birthrates. As previously mentioned, a replacement rate of 2.1 TFR is needed to sustain the population at its current state; however, with the decreasing number of children being born to eligible couples as well as women in their fertility years, maintaining the demographic numbers has become a predicament in recent years. As such, one of the major questions I posed for the questionnaire, as well as the discussion at Senshu, deals with the attitudes of university students toward the declining birthrate and whether they think that it will impact them in the future.

Between the questionnaire and the discussion, a major theme that came up is for the connotation towards “worry” in reference to the impact of the declining birthrates. 20 out of 23 specified that they do worry about or that there have been impacts that have come with the declining birthrates, with 2 not clarifying in what manner they will be impacted or about what specifically they worry about. Major concerns were raised in terms of

pensions, less prioritization of the young as the government is forced to dedicate further funds toward the ageing population, economic decline, neglect towards the elderly, and the decreasing demographic availability to take over jobs to help support the economy and nation in years to come.

Excellent points were brought up about the reasoning for the declining birthrates, such as interest towards intimacy and romantic relationships and a lack in the ability for balancing work and life:

“I consider two aspects why Japan is declining birthrate. The first one is a physiological issue, because there are more Japanese people who are not interested in falling in love, getting married or having sex in the first place [...] The second is the problem of the external environment, and despite the increasing number of women who value their careers, at this stage there is not enough environment to balance career, childbirth and parenting. Many working women are afraid to give birth in their twenties in their proper birth period. As Japan has a low birthrate, I think it would be nice if I had three children. It is sad that Japanese people will disappear in the future” (Hikari, age 21).

These ideas about the population decline show there is a common understanding on the impact of the fertility crisis, but there remain those students who do not understand the consequences that are possible with the continuing decline in births per capita. The understanding is seen through the acknowledgement of the crisis and the impact the decisions the potential parents make in regards to children and marriage. As Hikari pointed out, having three children for her would be a way to help alleviate the strain on the birthrate, but unfortunately, the actions of only one does little to outweigh that of the rest of the nation's and individuals' lack in desire towards having children.

On another note, with the increased pension funds going to the ageing population, there is an increased worry that the future children will not be taken care of by the society, showing a differing view towards having children by members of the same cohort.

Rio, age 19: “With the introduction of the pension system, we feel that much of the money we worked on is often retired, and young children are less likely to be prioritized”.

The doubt towards the current pension system proves to be a source for concern by the student respondents and deters trust to be instilled on the system as a way to promote

childbearing but should be used as further traction towards having an increased number of children.

As with the questionnaire respondents, during the discussion with Senshu University students it became apparent that the students, ages 21 to 30, some barely knew about the dire impact the demographic crisis will have on their lives. However, it became apparent that social media and the press are impacting their view on the topic, with many agreeing that the government is striving to provide more daycare facilities in the future in hopes of increasing the incentives for having children, but that the current situation does not make them feel optimistic about the future of childbearing. Alternatively, an increasing response by the students showed a differing view to those who responded to the survey. Multiple students during the discussion mentioned that creating more robotics in the years to come will help offset the decreasing population in terms of replacing the lost labor forces. The loss of available people to replace jobs was acknowledged in the survey as well, in that the main industries will lack the labor necessary to maintain the society and economy, impacting all the people in Japan:

“It is because I think that a declining birthrate will bring about a decrease in Japan's working population and a decline in consumers. I think that this will reduce the Japanese economy” (Sosuke, age 22);

“Because there will be no successor to various occupations (especially in the primary industries)” (Yui, age 20).

These views, though understandable, indicate that there is a discord in governmental messaging with the general populace that have created views that do not address the main issue, as Goodman (2002), Mackie (2002), and White (2002) highlight in their research. This will be further discussed in the next chapter, *Discussion*.

5.6 Family-related Stigmas within Japanese Society

The complexities of the definitions for stigma and taboo make it relatively difficult to translate properly into the Japanese contexts, with the use of *katakana*, or Japanese characters for foreign words, needed to display the terminology properly. As such, receiving data on stigmas from university students was impeded with the terminology needed to be translated into the Japanese context for the proper understanding on the respondents' sides. Thus, comparing “stigma” to “taboo” was a necessity required in explaining stigmas, but led to a misconception of stigmas as taboos, which, as previously

stated, are vastly different. However, with the use of “taboo”, the understanding of perhaps “not socially acceptable” was understood as the primary meaning, allowing for a loose understanding of the questions related to stigmas as related to family in the Japanese context.

A vast majority of respondents did not understand the meaning of stigma, with 18 of the 23 stating they did not comprehend the term, while only five noted that they understood prior to being given a definitive meaning to the concept. The inclusion of a brief definition, that stigmas are negative attributes pressed against an individual by others or social groups, gave a subtle introduction to stigmas, so that the respondents were able to name a few social stigmas that they have witnessed within society, although the stigmas referenced do not apply particularly well towards social stigmas within family as asked in the survey.

Four out of the responses given indicated that single parenthood is considered a social stigma, but one of these respondents also mentioned there is a “prejudice that one-parent children are unfortunate” (Ayaka, age 22), which follows the line of thinking that “pity” is an unfortunate byproduct of stigmas where the connotation that those in single parent households are considered “poor thing[s]” but that the “country should firmly take care of [the issue]” (Rio, age 19) of single parenthood and children within those households. This way of thinking is mentioned in the discussions by Akaishi et al (2004) discuss in *Voices from Japan*’s article, “Are You Afraid to See the Concept of ‘Family’ Change?”. Moreover, social stigmas within family are considered to originate from the “remnants of the old discriminatory hierarchy” (Nami, age 21) where the “wife must take care of her husband and the parents” due to the fact that she must be the *ryousaikenbo*, or good wife, while her husband works (Hikari, age 21). These remnants show the stigmatization being placed upon woman and men to continue with the old *ie* family system and gender roles as dictated by the state for centuries, especially with the notion that everyone must get married.

Unexpectedly, in terms of stigmas present within Japanese society, three respondents named Japanese taboos as being “*burakumin*” or “discriminated by their birthplace or household” (Tsuchiya, age 23) that prevent individuals from being able to live similar lives as those from so-called “ordinary families”, such as being able to find jobs or even get married. The presumptions that certain individuals are unable to live regular lives denotes an underlying, as well as visible, stigmatization of individuals within the social

sphere of existence in Japan, so much so that the Japanese characters for *burakumin*⁹ denote the person as “non-human”, dehumanizing the individual to the point of unacceptance within society. Nevertheless, these views do not translate properly into the understanding of stigmas in the context of Japanese families, leaving the issues of social unacceptance of single parent households and illegitimacy unexplored amongst these responses when unprompted.

The notion that single parenthood is seen as a stigma by university students, as well as society at large, emphasizes that family cultures are changing, but that there is hope yet for the acceptance of single parenthood, as well as other nontraditional family models, which will be discussed in the following subchapter with loose consideration toward the work-life balance dilemma. As said, the viewpoint toward single parenthood was also touched upon in the questionnaire with the straightforward question, “What do you think about single parenthood?” that followed the topic of stigmas. The majority of students responded positively towards single parenthood, rather than with a negativity as most stigmas are associated with, though there were concerns raised with the economic burden possibility.

Nami, age 21: “Upon entering the university I understood that there are various family forms when meeting a wide range of people. In that respect, there is no negative image about single parents, but I think that there are various parentage relationships among single parent families. A sense of responsibility may be born even among the children, parent-child bonds may be strengthened.”

Yuuno, age 22: “Because my family is so, there is no particularly bad image. It is very hard, but we can live if we cooperate together.”

Hikari, age 21: “It is natural that you do not want to divorce and become a single parent, but that is not to say that being a single parent is not bad. Single parents are respected [in society].”

These views on single parent households show that those who are from single parent households, and those not, still view single parent households in a mostly positive way, but that there are difficulties much like any other family type would have. Additionally,

⁹ *Burakumin* are a part of the “Others” demographic in Japan, in that they are Japanese citizens, but their cultural identities are in question with the majority of Japan (Murphy-Shigematsu and Willis, 2008). The *burakumin* class are discriminated against their other Japanese counterparts due to their history of partaking in occupations that were not among the most desirable, such as executioners, in the Edo Period (Lützel, 1995).

those students who are members of “stigmatized” households would like to create different families to the ones they grew up with:

“Because my family is so, there is no particularly bad image [toward single parenthood]. It is very hard, but we can live if we cooperate together[...] in the future I would like to build a different type of family” (Yurino, age 22).

Though single parent households are difficult to uphold, the perception of the students who grew up in such a household where the mother or father was able to succeed in parenting, show a more optimistic view towards the family unit.

Twelve of the 23 respondents indicated that there are stigmas within Japanese families when prompted, while only 2 mentioned that “there are not” and 9 abstained or responded with “I do not know”. The high rate of abstentions and answers as “I do not know” show the lack of understanding of stigmas within households and families as well as the discord in willingness to further explore stigmas as a possibility within society. Nevertheless, the responses indicating that there are stigmas within Japanese society validate the presumption that stigmas are an undercurrent within Japanese families and households that need further research and media coverage.

5.7 The Ideal Family: Possible Aspiration or Fantasy?

The ideal family by the vast majority of respondents, as aforementioned, is one in which consists of a couple and their children, much like the ever popular and persisting nuclear family model. However, in addition to a partner and potential children, connotations towards helping each other grow as individuals, making time for quality time together, joy and happiness even without wealth, but most importantly, the ideal family is similar to the families the respondents are striving to have in their futures. These associations bring the meaning of family to a greater importance. Nevertheless, there still remains the question of whether the ideal family scheme is achievable in the future by university students.

Looking at the perceptions for having the ability to fulfill the family aspirations, 19 of the respondents indicated that they think they are able to have their ideal families in the future. These respondents were among the ones who indicated that their ideal families included both the nuclear family ideal as well as the multigeneration ideal, making it difficult to create further connections to indicate exactly which aspect of family makes them think they can achieve their ideal.

The manifestation of the ideal family is an underlying wish for many, but that life does not always go as expected makes having the ideal family a dream that may not come true. Three of the 23 respondents indicated that they do not think that they could make their ideal family come true in the future, with one person absenting from responding. Surprisingly enough, the ones who noted that they do not think they can achieve their ideal families were among the respondents who also do not plan on getting married in the future, with two of the respondents not wanting children as well. However, the majority of the respondents do feel that they are able to create their ideal families, making the achievement perhaps more than a fantasy in reality.

6. Discussion

The following chapter focuses on discussing the data collected by further analyzing the attitudes of university students towards Japanese families through the questionnaire responses gathered and the discussion by connecting both to the previous literature on the topic of family and changing attitudes as outlined in the review of literature and the conceptual framework. A discussion of the three entities of this study will allow for a comprehensive analysis to help dig deeper into the issues at hand. As such, the discussion chapter will ultimately answer the thesis questions as outlined in the introduction chapter of this MA thesis:

- What is the relationship between traditional Japanese family models and the family ideals imbued by today's youth?
- How has family changed, from the traditional *ie* family to the new nontraditional family ideal?
- Have traditional family ideals created stigmas in the development of Japanese family ideals?

Answering these questions will thus give an in depth understanding of the view of university students on family and how their attitudes align with the literature on traditional *ie* values and those of nontraditional ones in a time of demographic dismay.

6.1 The Japanese Family: Attitudes Away from *ie* Toward New Family Ideals

The changes that have taken place within the Japanese family prove that there are many remnants of the traditional *ie* ideology present, but that there are also new families coming into existence. As Hendry (2012) expresses, there is no longer a physical family that lasts generations and stands today, but that families are changing to incorporate ideals that are void in the traditional *ie* household. As mentioned previously in the analysis, a common view that the ideal family in Japan is diverging between the new generations and the old, where the traditional *ie* conceptualization is more present in the older generations, where as in the new, it is not so strict.

“The ideal family in Japan is different between young people and those who are not. In the case of young people, there is no ideal family. For example, having no children is also an option. On the other hand, older people think that to the parents

[the ideal family] is to have wives, husbands and children, and the couple take care of their parents” (Hikari, age 21)

This shows that perhaps the *ie* family system is approaching a new terminology in coming years as further generations begin to have different ideals and attitudes in terms of family. Furthermore, Kumagai and Hendry analyze that marriage in Japan has changed dramatically where adults are choosing to marry for love rather than through arranged marriages set up by their parents, or perhaps choosing to not marry at all as five of the 23 informants in the questionnaire indicated, that they do not want to get married in the future. As furthering away from the traditional *ie* ideology, one respondent also mentioned that they would like to not marry, but still plan to have children, validating Matsumoto’s research on individualistic collectivism where he notes that couples are choosing to live together with or without children, but never choosing to have a typical marriage, but rather common-law marriages. These changes were readily seen in the responses by the university students questioned, validating that attitudes are changing in terms of marriage and children.

Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, and Rindfuss (2014) argue that these changing views toward marriage are the result of an increased drive towards education, that nontraditional family models are bred through the pressure for education and careers, rather than dedicating time for family. As seen within the views of the university students, each of whom is a university attendee, education is a main part of life. When looking at the education levels of the parents, the majority of the respondents’ parents, both mother and father, had high levels of education, with 17 of the mothers with above high school level education and 19 of the fathers with higher education levels. The high emphasis on education by the parents’ generation as well as the current generation correlates to deepening nontraditional family attitudes. It will be interesting to see the future correlation of education with the changing family models.

Takenobu’s article heightens the value placed on family bonds, but that “family bonds” and “community” are not “dependent on a simplistic view of the family structure: man as breadwinner and woman as unpaid laborer” (pp. 23-24), showing that it has become an impossible task to simply define the family and *ie* in the direction that Japanese families are embarking. However, as aforesaid, the one commonality is that family creates a sense of security and stability that make one comfortable (Akaishi, Suda, Takenobu, & Motoyama, 2004), but that it is a lingering of the past need for certainty and fear of change. These alternative views on family among university students when presented

with the literature, show that the clearly defined boundaries of *ie* have been loosened to allow for nontraditional forces to take root, changing the Japanese concept of family further away from traditional to an entirely new definition that knows no limits. The increasing focus on community building, as Takenobu suggests, shows the internal and external impacts of a need to rely on family members that is shifting the attitudes of young adults to form communities rather than start families. Kurumi, age 21, mentioned her view on family, that family is not defined solely by blood, but rather through acceptance of another into one's life, and that that it is family as well:

“Because I think there are various shapes of families. Even without marriage, even though not connected by blood, I think that if you think that you are a family even if you are not family member in the eyes of the law, you can call it family”.

This further validates that family has no specific boundaries and that a community in itself can be called a family as well. Detracting the blood-relation away from the concept is a clear deviation away from the traditionalistic view on *ie*, dissolving the strict components gradually over time.

When the idea of family comes to mind for American researchers like me, typically children come to the forefront of the image of family. As White (2002) describes in her comparison of family between American and Japanese family cultures, she reflects that:

“There is no question that children are important in Japan, the more so for the assumption that you will have them, that it's ‘like air’—natural, expected, needed, elemental. But children don't *start* a family. Rather, they continue it and help focus and shape relationships within the household. They also influence the virtues and values that shape a sense of family beyond its walls. Further, having children is not part of a dream of individual happiness—apparently, neither is getting married—or at least so the representations of young women's dreams would indicate” (pp. 99-100).

Though accurate to a certain degree, White's research is not validated entirely with the analysis of the respondents' views on family. A female respondent mentioned that “‘having a family’ has a serious meaning, a little more than that it is not just an extension of romance” (Nami, age 21), highlighting the importance of family beyond the romantic sense of love, accentuating the meaning of family towards the future. The sense that “‘having a family’ brings for the student is different than White's own research, that once

the student begins their own family, that is when the family starts, rather than having the family already a formulated idea, especially with the data that shows not all the students plan to have their own family fully equipped with marriage and children. Nevertheless, evidence to White's research is briefly witnessed through responses that deal with "fun memories" and childhood memories, bringing the idea that a different form of family is at the forethought. These differing ideas on "starting a family" show that no one right form is alone in existence, that perhaps the students are heading towards ideas that are more in alignment with the Western ideas of family, away from the traditional Japanese family, but with remnants of the old ideology steadfastly holding on. The connotation that is left with these responses points towards a further importance being placed on family in the past during childhood, making it apparent that family is still as relevant today as it was in the past, but also that family is changing constantly, though at a slow pace, much like memories and time.

Attitudes toward single parenthood and illegitimacy were different than expected, but also held similar attitudes as mentioned in Akaishi et al., in that stigmatized individuals in Japan hold an oppressed connotation that is creating an image that being a single parent or illegitimate is viewed as a "pity" by others, which is a negative attribute being applied to the concept of family, thus, a stigma. Four out of the responses given indicated that single parenthood is considered a social stigma, but one of these respondents also mentioned there is a "prejudice that one-parent children are unfortunate" (Ayaka, age 22), which follows the line of thinking that "pity" is an unfortunate byproduct of stigmas (Akaishi et al, 2004) where the connotation that those in single parent households are considered "poor thing[s]" that need to be taken care of. This way of thinking is mentioned in the discussions by Akaishi et al (2004) discuss in *Voices from Japan's* article, "Are You Afraid to See the Concept of 'Family' Change?". Moreover, social stigmas within family are considered to originate from the "remnants of the old discriminatory hierarchy" (Nami, age 21) according to one particular respondent, where the "wife must take care of her husband and the parents" due to the fact that she must be the *ryousaikenbo*, or good wife, while her husband works (Hikari, age 21). These remnants show the stigmatization being placed upon woman and men to continue with the old *ie* family system as dictated by the state for centuries, especially with the notion that everyone must get married. However, as already mentioned, these notions are departing from the conceptualization of family with new definitions being bred.

6.2 Changing Attitudes and Ideals as Culprit for Declining

Birthrates

The topic of declining birthrates as well as attitudes for having children by university students can be associated with the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis by Lutz et al (2006) and Matsumoto's concept of "IC duality". The LFTH, as aforesaid, takes into consideration three aspects that are changing the views on childbearing: demographic, sociological, and economic, with the sociological perspective fitting those of the university students questioned for the purpose of this study. In short, the essence of the LFTH is that the current generation of has been socialized to think that it is acceptable for them to have few to no children at all, due to their parents and elders having fewer children than their earlier counterparts (Lutz, Skirbekk, & Testa, 2006). Like mentioned, the perception is well-matched to the study on nontraditional family attitudes by Choe et al (2014). When combined with the results of this study, it becomes apparent that the increased desire for individual freedoms and educationally driven paths have resulted in varied views on family, including nontraditional attitudes as well as attitudes have remnants of the old *ie* ideology. These views, therefore, have led to decreasing wants for having children within society, but that not all young adults share these views on childrearing.

Sociological reasoning as the basis for changing attitudes towards lower fertility and ideal family size demonstrate that with the normalization of witnessing fewer children within age cohort groups and in passing throughout one's formative years, will result in smaller personal ideal family structures by the potential future fertility cohort. However, this cannot be said as true for all cases as the results of the questionnaire indicate. Many of the respondents mention that they would like to have anywhere from one to perhaps three children, showing that not only are there students who would like to have more children than the average per capita seen in today's statistics, but that there are students who were raised in households with more than a couple children, making it so that their conditioning towards accepting the notion of having fewer children did not come directly from their own household circumstances, but rather a combination of internal family factors as well as societal ones. One of the students mentioned that she grew up with six siblings who were taken care of by their single mother, but that her ideal family is a family in which there is a couple and a child (Natsuki, age 20), making it so that her views on family are not only formulated through her experiences within her family, but also through external influences, much like Lutz et al indicate in their research. The normalization of society

having fewer children from the perspective of individuals is, thus, gradually moving towards the societal acceptance of fewer children as desires are changing for the youth and young adults who will perhaps be parents in the coming years.

As the youth are becoming more individualistic in values and are now leaning towards a value system centered around “individualistic collectivism” (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013) where individual desires come first, but an underlying concern and effort is made for society comes second. Matsumoto (2002) coins this predicament where the youth are more individualistic in nature than their parents and grandparents who still value higher collectivistic tendencies, as IC duality. This has been evident in the changes from the school-to-work formula to a school-to-university-to-career formula, thus, making it so that adolescents begin to think about their futures earlier than their parents and grandparents (Sugimura & Mizokami, 2013, p. 135), but the futures that they are thinking of revolve around their careers rather than the families that they will begin. These views are accentuated through the young age of students entering university, as evidenced by the age range of the respondents in the questionnaire as well as the high levels in education by the parents of the university students, showing that the drive for education and careers already begins much earlier than with the preceding generations. According to Matsumoto and Sugimura and Mizokami, the increased pressure for higher education are therefore pushing marriage and children until much later on in life, shifting the balance in terms of birthrates and family formation. The struggle between “individualism” and “collectivism” is seen through the want of young adults to have children, much like the majority of the respondents where only three indicated that they do not want children in the future, but through the future entrance into the workforce and increased drive to fulfill careers, it becomes clear that it is much harder to give up on a career path for a childrearing path without high intrinsic needs for wanting children, because of the increasing opportunity cost associated with marriage and childrearing, while the financial costs of staying single and childless are dropping (Schoppa, 2006, p. 68), showing that the financial pressures of higher educated careers with higher living costs are creating less opportunities for childrearing while at the same time preventing time available to dedicate to one’s family.

Research by Sugimura and Mizokami (2013) differs to some extent from an aforementioned interview I conducted with a female Japanese language instructor but is further evidenced as individualistic tendencies by Matsumoto et al (1996), Matsumoto (2002), and Triandis (2001). The interview brought to mind the dedication one has to their

career, but that individual desires for having children help in determining the ability of one's career as well as financial situation for childbearing. Through conversations with her, it became apparent to me that though she is a career centered woman in the workforce who wants to remain in the workforce for years to come, her intrinsic wants for having children will not be swayed by her desire for a career nor helping Japanese society in a collective manner by helping increase the population. The interviewee's answers towards questions regarding the decreasing fertility in Japan were similar to answers in the 2009 Declining Birthrate White Paper by the Government of Japan in which nearly half of the respondents indicated that the decreasing population and fertility rates are not good for the nation as well as that they "more or less dangerous" (Winter & Teitenlbaum, 2013, p. 198). This shows that there is an understanding towards the issues Japan is facing in terms of fertility and population decline, but also that there are few to little incentives towards acting upon the societal pressures as the government would like. Additionally, the respondent indicated towards whether Japan's current situation would impact her decision to have children, to which she was adamant that purely her individualistic wants for having children will motivate her towards having children, even if she feels that the path Japan's population is heading in is "not very good," because it has been her dream to have her own family with a husband and two children, and maybe even pets, since she was a little girl (Anonymous, 2018). The interview helps further beg the questions for whether family formation schemes to increase fertility rates can only occur with genuine want for having children or Japan's current status little impact on the decisions and whether the future generation will lack the basic desires for children through family formation and, in the end, having a detrimental impact on family formation.

During the discussion with Senshu University students, it became apparent that the students, ages 21 to 30, barely knew about the dire impact the crisis will have on their lives. To begin my discussion, I decided to show them the statistics that were projected by the IPSS in April and see their reactions. Surprisingly enough, they were staggered at the numbers projected for 2065, 88.08 million to 94.9 million depending on the low or high projections as aforementioned, versus those today, 126 million, and appeared genuinely concerned for the prospects of Japan's prosperity in the sight of the dramatically dropping population forecasts (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research). One of the name questions I asked during our discussion was, "what do you think your generation and Japan in general can do to combat the shortage of people in the work force by 2065" and the general consensus was that "robots will take over the

jobs,” showing the lack of attentiveness in thinking about the future of Japan in a sustainable manner.

However, it became apparent that social media and the press are impacting the views of university students on the topic, because multiple students mentioned that creating more robotics in the years to come will help offset the decreasing population in terms of replacing the lost labor forces. These views, though understandable, indicate that there is a discord in governmental messaging with the general populace, as Goodman (2002), Mackie (2002), and White (2002) highlight in their research. Robotics as a method for replacing lost labor forces is not a solution to the issue of falling birthrates, but the attitude of university students towards robotics as a solution also show the success of the social media messaging on the topic, but further discussion and practice are needed to decrease the gap between successful and failed family formation incentives.

The changing ideals away from the traditionalistic conceptualization of family has led to a rift between the *ie* ideology and the ideals imbued by today’s young adults. These changes have led to further individualistic ideals that are decreasing the desires for marriage and children, and even changing the ideas on family where now friends and non-blood relatives can be the members of a family. These changes have brought further acceptance of nontraditional family formats, such as single parenthood and children out of wedlock, where students do not feel like they are as bad as in previous years. However, the social stigmas persist in the thinking that children in such families are pitied, making the issue of stigmas still very much a part of Japanese families.

7. Conclusion

Research based on questionnaires directed at and discussions with university students to gauge the attitudes toward family ideals in the midst of traditionalistic values, this study has shown the vastness in attitudes toward family in Japan and how student experiences in society help formulate their views rather than their experiences with their families as previously hypothesized. By bringing the perspectives of students to light, this MA thesis has contributed to the understanding of university student family ideals as well as into the prevalence of nontraditional families. Through the analysis of the questionnaire data and discussions, this study has shed further light into the individualistic nature of students that helps shape the newly found ideals students embody in Japanese society. Research into the current state of the Japanese fertility crisis is necessary, but further emphasis needs to be placed on the future parents of Japan as this study has established. From focusing on future attitudes for family formation towards the understanding of the remnants of the traditionalistic ideology of *ie* that have created stigmas for nontraditional families to the emerging ideals by young adults, this study helps evidenced the lessening of stigmas for the future creation a society geared towards inclusive parenting policies and societal acceptance of all family types, there are many aspects of the current attitudes and other aspects of Japanese families that need to be further researched.

Previous literature on the topics of *ie* and Japanese families, single parenthood and illegitimacy as well as young adult attitudes shows that the concept of *ie* has transformed within the past century and that there is no one definition of family within the Japanese context (Choe et al, 2014; Goodman, 2002; Hendry, 2012; Himeoka, 2008; Kumagai, 2008, 2014; Roberts, 2002, 2016; Ueno, 2009; White, 2002). Research by these Japan experts have helped develop the understanding into the transformation of the modern concept of the Japanese family to one which heightens the importance of family within the Japanese context and how the definition of *family* has changed from prehistoric times to incorporate modern definitions and ideals that are continuously changing. With the evolving concept of households, a decrease has been seen through the reduction of multigenerational households, in contrast to the increasing amounts of nuclear households that have been on the rise since the 20th century, but there have been surprising increases in single-person households, as young adults are living alone and choosing not to marry nor create their own families as they continually dedicate their time towards careers and educations. With the changing household types and ideals, stigmas have become ever present with nontraditional family formats, such as single parenthood as well as children

born outside of wedlock, among others not discussed in this thesis. These nontraditional families have then seen discrimination by their traditional family counterparts within society and their communities. These parallels have created a need for further research to be done on the attitudes of young adults to understand the visions of the potential future parents to help steer the future of Japanese family formation towards those better suited for the parents of tomorrow, rather than those of parents today and yesterday.

As the definition of *ie* is constantly changing and adapting to the newly “modern” world young adults are living in, stigmas are developing as remnants of the past Japanese family structure as the attitudes of the potential parents of tomorrow are changing beyond those of traditional norms toward nontraditional ideals. With the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis by Lutz et al (2006) and individual collectivism/IC duality as distinguished by Matsumoto (2002) and Sugimura and Mizokami (2013) as frames for understanding the changing attitudes towards family formation and childbearing predispositions by potential future parents who are university students today, a solid understanding is applied to the fertility issues plaguing Japan with the increases in individual desires coming before those of the traditional ideals where the husband works and the wife takes care of the husband’s parents and their children. Additionally, with the Low-Fertility Trap Hypothesis, an understanding is placed on the normalization of having few to no children as the youth are adapting to the ideas that a person or couple does not need children, nor marriage for that matter, in their lives. The external impact of others has created a wave of normalcy in the formulation of nontraditional families, such as single parenthood, bearing children outside of marriage, common-law marriages, etc.

The results of this MA thesis show that there are many facets to the issue of changing family ideals and the fertility crisis. Additionally, it has come to light that there is not only one culprit, but multiple, for the decreasing birthrates: the increasing number of changing attitudes that are creating varied family ideals away from those dictated by the *ie* ideology. One common take away is that nontraditional ideals are then imbued by the majority of respondents, nonetheless clear remnants of traditional *ie* ideologies are present as well in the attitudes of university students toward family ideals. A clear indicator for nontraditional family ideals is that idea that non-blood related individuals can be members of a “family”. The changing family ideals have begun to incorporate friends and community members into the concept of family, decreasing the importance of blood relatives outside the “ordinary” household. Additionally, the attitudes also showed that children and marriage are not a necessity for a family by today’s youth, that

common-law marriages and living alone are possible as well. These views have broadened the definition of family, where the commonalities that can be taken away from the respondents for the ultimate definition of family to include the connotations of love, support, understanding, an absolute importance, and fun memories. With the newfound definitions for family, a surprisingly supportive response was given by the students toward single parent households and illegitimate children where many indicated that individuals in such households are strong and heroes, though many still viewed these not-so-ordinary family parameters as pitiful and something that needs to be taken care of by the government.

As this study has contributed to the study of young adult attitudes toward family formation, I propose future studies be conducted to further analyze the impacts of stigmas within the attitudes of young adults. The limitations of this study prevented extensive research to be conducted on Japanese families, but I propose that rather than by staying within the realms of researching university students' ideals and perspectives on family, an intensive study on young adults in general in the 18 to 30 age cohort be conducted to gather further evidence of changing family ideals. This proposed future study will, therefore, not discriminate young adults based on education levels or currently being in a higher education institute. As this study has shown, the attainment of an education does not necessarily equal nontraditional family tendencies, nor do the education levels of the students' parents. To further discover the attitudes of young adults, studies that are inclusive to students in trade and vocational schools, as well as students who enter the workforce directly after finishing their secondary education, could provide concrete evidence for patterns in family formation and ideals, to get a sense of the meaning of family at a larger, societal scale, rather than the small one this study has given. Choe, Bumpass, Tsuya, and Rindfuss (2014) hypothesize that these changing views toward marriage and children are the result of an increased drive towards education, that nontraditional family models are bred through the pressure for education and careers, rather than dedicating time for family. However, I wonder if Japanese youth in the same age range, but with different career and life aspirations have similar changing ideals as the ones in higher education, or if education is the driving force for changing ideals seen today? As each of the respondents to this study were university students, finding alternative information from different cohorts, as well as different regions in Japan in the future could help better define the boundaries and definitions of family from the perspectives of both the educationally driven and the career driven individuals. Such a

study would further increase the understanding of family in the Japanese context, giving insight for further utilizations in the future, from government implementations to the betterment of solving the demographic crises.

I believe that the contribution of this MA thesis shows progress in the study of Japanese families, in that no previous research of this nature has been done before. Research on the future parents of Japan enables future government implementations to be enacted that are guided by the ideals of the current and new generations, rather than the ideals of those who are no longer becoming parents. I hope that future studies on the topic will find a way to counter the decreasing birthrates and divert the course that Japan's population projections are heading towards. However, the limitations of this study have prevented extensive research to be done but has opened a small entry towards understanding Japanese families to the full extent of the concept.

This study was conducted for a master's thesis, and as such, acknowledgement needs to be voiced on the limitations of the study and methodology. The originality of this thesis shows that prior research has not been done of this nature in reference to university students' attitudes toward families and family-related stigmas as a way to gauge student opinions on the demographic issues taking place in Japan. As such, it should be noted that this study has seen trial and error. It is acknowledged that aspects of this study could have been carried out differently, such as different methods for acquiring data, different questions with a possible pilot study to weed out questions unnecessary for the expected outcomes, different sample as well as wider sample size that grasps other young adult cohorts, etc. Even with the limitations this MA thesis has posed, it is firmly believed that this study has provided invaluable, though limited, information towards the study of the attitudes of university students. As such, it needs to be noted that any and all faults and errors in the thesis are those of the author.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire (Japanese Translation)

EU GDPR Regulation: 本調査の目的は、日本の社会中にある家族と関連されているスティグマを研究することです。追加研究のため、個人情報を提出することができますが本調査については必修ではありません。調査の回答はコーディングされて、回答者のお名前と関連された個人情報は全部とく名で処理されます。また、回答者の個人情報は第三者と共有されません。論文では、調査の回答と回答者の個人情報の間にどのような関連づけはしていません。調査期間中いつでも回答者は、調査者(Milla Heikkinen; mimarh@utu.fi)に連絡して、本人の情報を削除してくれることを要求することができます。本調査のデータは **Google Forms** を通じて収集され、トゥルク大学の **Seafile** に保存されます。研究参加に同意したら以下のボックスにチェックしてください。ご協力に感謝いたします。

☐ はい

このアンケートに匿名と、お名前のどちらで答えたいですか。該当するものを選んで下さい。

- 匿名
- お名前

お名前と、メールアドレスを入力してください（匿名希望の方は、メールアドレスのみで大丈夫です）。

あなたは何歳ですか？

あなたの性別は何ですか？

- 女性
- 男性
- 答えたくありません。

あなたは大学の何年生ですか？ *

- 1年生
- 2年生
- 3年生
- 4年生
- その他

お母さんの教育水準は何ですか。

- なし
- 専門学校
- 大学
- 大学院
- その他

お父さんの教育水準は何ですか。

- なし
- 専門学校

- 大学
- 大学院
- その他

自分にとって、家族の意味は何と思いますか。

家族を思う時に、どんなことを思い出しますか？ あなたの家族についてどんな家族ですか？

あなたの家族は核家族ですか、それとも拡大家族ですか？

- 核家族
- 拡大家族（三世代家族など）

将来、どんな家族を持てたいですか？ あなたにとって理想的な家族の姿は何ですか？

理想的な日本の家族とはどんな家族ですか？それは あなたの未来の家族像に似ていますか。

結婚する計画がありますか？

- はい
- いいえ
- 子供が欲しいですか？
- はい
- いいえ

結婚または子供を持つことが'家族'において重要だと思いますか？

- はい
- いいえ

なぜそう思いますか？

日本の少子化についてどう思いますか？ このことで何か心配になりますか？あるいは、あなたに何か影響を与えていますか？

- はい
- いいえ

なぜそう思いますか？

あなたは、ワークライフバランスを取ることができると思いますか？

- はい
- いいえ

一人親（片親）にとって、ワークライフバランスを取ることができると思いますか？

- はい
- いいえ

なぜそう思いますか。

スティグマ（Stigma；汚名、烙印；他者や社会集団によって個人に押し付けられた負の表象）の意味をご存知ですか。（日本の家族に対するタブーとスティグマ）

- はい
- いいえ

次に、よく家族と関係したスティグマを紹介します。あなたはどうを思いますか。
日本社会には、どんな家族のスティグマがあると思いますか。

日本の家族に対するスティグマがあると思いますか？

養子縁組についてどう思いますか？

一人親（片親）に対してどう思いますか？

自分にとって、養子縁組や一人親（片親）になることを考えてみたことがありますか？

養子縁組や一人親（片親）になるのは、社会にとって“スティグマ”だと思いますか？

- はい
- いいえ

どうしてですか。

あなたは、将来に自分の理想的な家族を作ることができると思いますか？

- はい
- いいえ

その他、ご意見等ございましたらご自由にお書き下さい
もし追加の質問がある場合、後日連絡をしても大丈夫ですか？

- はい
- いいえ

なにとぞご協力の程、よろしくお願い致します。

Appendix 2: Questionnaire (English Translation)

EU GDPR Regulation: The purpose of this study is to study families and family-related stigmas within Japanese families. Personal information can be submitted for additional research in the future, but this is not a requirement to take part in the study. Survey responses will be coded, and personal information associated with the respondent's name will be processed in full. In addition, personal information of respondents will not be shared with third parties. In the thesis, there will be no connection between the survey responses and the respondent's personal information if it is so chosen by the respondent. At any time during the survey period, respondents can contact the researcher (Milla Heikkinen; mimarh@utu.fi) and request that the information is deleted. Data from this survey is collected through Google Forms and stored in Seafile at the University of Turku. If you agree to participate in the research, please check the box below. Thank you for your cooperation.

☐ Yes

Do you want to answer this survey anonymously or by name? Please select the appropriate response.

- Anonymously
- By name

Please enter your name and e-mail address (If you wish to be anonymous, only your e-mail address if you want to provide it).

What is your age?

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- I do not want to answer

What is your level at university?

- 1st Year
- 2nd Year
- 3rd Year
- 4th Year
- Other

What is your mother's education level?

- None
- Vocational school
- University
- Graduate School

- Other

What is your father's education level?

- None
- Vocational school
- University
- Graduate School
- Other

Is your family a nuclear family or a stem-family?

- Nuclear Family
- Stem-family (three generation family)

For you, what does family mean?

When thinking about your family, what comes to mind? What kind of family is your family?

What kind of family do you want to have in the future? What is the ideal family for you?

What kind of family is the ideal Japanese family? Is it similar to your ideal future family?

Do you plan to get married?

- Yes
- No

• Do you want children?

- Yes
- No

Do you think children or getting married are important in a “family”?

- Yes
- No

Why do you think that way?

What do you think about Japan's declining birthrate? Are you worried about this or does it impact you?

- Yes
- No

Why do you think that way?

Do you think you can have a work-life balance?

- Yes
- No

Do you think that single parents can have a work-life balance?

- Yes
- No

Why do you think that way?

Do you know the meaning of Stigma (Stigma; Negative representation imposed on to an individual by others or social groups)? (Taboo and Stigma for Japanese Families)

- Yes
- No

Next, I will introduce stigmas often associated with family. What do you think about stigmas?

What sort of family stigmas do you think exist in Japanese society?

Do you think there is stigmas within Japanese families?

What do you think about adoption?

What do you think about single parenthood?

Have you ever thought about becoming a single parent or adopting?

Do you think that adoption and single parenthood are stigmas within society?

- Yes
- No

Why do you think so?

Do you think that you can make your own ideal family in the future?

- Yes
- No

Please write freely if you have any other comments.

If I have additional questions, may I contact you later?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix 3: Survey Respondent Characteristics Table Summary

Table 1 Summary of Respondent Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Household Type
Yurino	22	Female	Stem-family
Rio	19	Female	Stem-family
Tsuchiya	23	Male	Nuclear-family
Shota	18	Male	Nuclear-family
Koshiishi	20	Male	Nuclear-family
Mina	21	Female	Nuclear-family
Nami	21	Female	Nuclear-family
Kurumi	21	Female	Nuclear-family
Sosuke	22	Male	Nuclear-family
Misaki	19	Female	Nuclear-family
Namie	20	Female	Nuclear-family
Risa	19	Female	Nuclear-family
Natsuki	20	Female	Nuclear-family
Ayaka	22	Female	Nuclear-family
Koyomi	21	Female	Nuclear-family
Daiki	21	Male	Nuclear-family
Hikari	21	female	Stem-family
Momoko	21	Female	Nuclear-family
Rei	21	Female	Stem-family
Yui	20	Female	Nuclear-family
Akiko	30	Female	Stem-family
Akari	19	Female	Nuclear-family
Ryosuke	20	Male	Nuclear-family

Appendix 4: WAKUWAKU Network Visit

The WAKUWAKU Network¹⁰ is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing assistance to single parents and low-income households through children's cafeterias at little to no cost to parents (Mainichi Japan, 2018). However, the WAKUWAKU Network does much more than offer *kodomo shokudo*, or children's cafeterias, two times a month. Through funds provided by the MHLW and other state and private sponsorships, the network is able to provide daycare services, elderly assistance, and create a "sense of family and home" (Suzuki, 2018) that the children might not otherwise be able to experience in their family life.

The curator of the WAKUWAKU Network, Ms. Yoshiko Suzuki, was gracious enough to provide a brief interview¹¹ during my October 24th visit to the nonprofit organization in Ikebukuro, and explained that though the network does provide plenty of assistance for the children throughout the workday hours, the network also provides the occasional opportunity in the evenings where the parents are able to bring produce and cook for the children. These cooking sessions provide an essential opportunity for parents to teach cooking to their kids as well as socialize with other parents. Suzuki mentioned that since "all Japanese families are isolated today" that bringing a sense of community to parents is important for the wellbeing of children and for the parents. The assistance WAKUWAKU Network provides is pivotal for the development of the children of single parents and the for the work-life balance that single parents strive to have like their married and attached counterparts have.

Learning about the WAKUWAKU Network gave insights into single parenthood and low-income households in Japan and how exactly they manage with the stringent working conditions for parents. With the interview, I gained a valuable source for future information as well as information that will provide my future analysis more opportunities.

¹⁰ Also referred to as Toshima Kodomo WAKUWAKU Hoikuen

¹¹ The interview was translated and facilitated by Yejee Choi, a fellow CEAS student.