Winter 12-15-2017

Japan's Employment 'Catch-22': The Impact of Working Conditions for Women in Japan on Japan's Demographic Population Crisis

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Japan's Employment 'Catch-22': THE IMPACT OF WORKING CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN IN JAPAN ON JAPAN'S DEMOGRAPHIC POPULATION CRISIS

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by Mary H. Perkins
November 21, 2017

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

Adviser  Date 12/15/17

Academic Director _____ Date _____

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ACRONYMS, TERMS, AND DEFINITIONS

English

ASCJ - Asia Studies Conference Japan, a scholarly exchange on Asia in the English-language
EEO - Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985
EEOC - United States of America Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
JSNC - Japan Society of Northern California, non-profit organization promoting Japanese culture in the Bay Area
JTUC - Japanese Trade Union Confederation
LDP - Liberal Democratic Party, political party of Japan
Saving face - An attempt to preserve one's personal dignity
PD - Pregnancy discrimination, when a workplace does not accommodate a pregnant worker, harassment of an employee due to her pregnancy
UN - United Nations

Japanese

BG - Term used in the past to label working women in Japan: Business Girl
Dankai no sedai (団塊の世代) - Baby boomer generation, those born soon after World War II ended
Honne (本音) - True sound, one's true opinion
Mata-hara (マタハラ) - Maternity Harassment
Nomikai (飲み会) - Drinking time, usually at a bar after work; an informal business meeting at a bar
Ochakumi (お茶くみ) - Women perform tea serving task
OL - New term used to label unmarried working women in Japan: Office Lady
Salaryman (サラリーマン) - Full-time business man in Japan
Sengyo shufu (専業主婦) - Full-time housewife
Shoganai (しょうがない) - Translates to the phrase: there's no helping it
Tatemae (建前) - Front/façade, one's false opinion, providing a false opinion to protect someone's honor, similar to a 'white lie'

FIGURES

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Japan's aging population crisis and gender inequalities in the workplace. This topic presents an interesting and challenging phenomenon for Japan, as Japan's economy and technology have developed more rapidly than almost any other country, establishing Japan as one of the Group of Seven industrialized nations. Yet Japan still significantly lags behind other industrialized nations when it comes to women's rights and opportunities for advancement in the workplace. This is in turn hampering efforts for Japan to address a population crisis, with an older population growth rate far outpacing the growth of demographic groups that would support the older population. This study examines the primary causes that hinder women's ability to advance in Japan's employment market, and the related factor of Japanese women attempting to balance maternity and career goals. Critical research questions include: How has Japan's work environment affected women's mobility and advancement opportunities in Japan's labor market? Has the aging population crisis produced more awareness of gender equality and how to improve equality in the workplace? Has it also produced a backlash towards more women entering the workforce? Widely reported information shows that Japan is currently suffering from an aging population crisis, with younger population growth not approaching levels needed to support the increasing older generation. Through research on Japan's workplace and maternity care policies, a societal legacy of gender discrimination that is not easily offset by new laws and policies, and a continued rigid workplace environment, this study seeks to demonstrate and explain that the lack of gender equity in the Japanese workplace is greatly contributing to, and not alleviating, the aging population crisis, creating a downward spiral for Japan's population crisis.

Keywords:
Japan, Pregnancy Discrimination, Maternity Harassment, Female Employment, Workplace Policy, Abenomics, Womenomics, Gender Equity, Gender Equality, Women, Aging Population Crisis

INTRODUCTION

Thesis

Japan's economy and technology has developed further than any almost any other country, yet Japan is still largely lacking when it comes to women's rights. This study seeks to identify restrictions and hindrances women in Japan have faced—that men have not—within their employment in a white-collar office environment. My research questions are as follows: How has the aging population crisis influenced gender norms in the Japanese workplace? It is widely known that Japan is currently suffering from an aging population crisis. The demographic trend of a low birth rate among the population will further challenge Japan's ability to support an increasing older generation. Through my current research, I believe that the aging population crisis in Japan has greatly impacted the Japanese workplace when it comes to gender equality. I also believe that the gender equality gaps in the workplace are resulting in a vicious circle, further contributing to, rather than alleviating, the aging population crisis. This thesis will then eventually address these questions in the Conclusion section: How has the aging population crisis influenced women's reproductive rights and rates within the Japanese workplace? How has it affected their mobility and advancement opportunities in Japan's labor market? Has the aging population crisis produced more awareness of gender equality and how to improve equality in the workplace? Has it also produced a backlash towards more women entering the workforce? Through research on Japan's social welfare policy, Japan's history of gender discrimination, and its societal constraints against feminism, this thesis seeks to demonstrate and explain that **the lack of gender equality in the Japanese workplace is contributing meaningfully to the aging population crisis**.

The research, including data archive and public records research, participation in National Conferences in Japan, and a range of interviews and surveys to gather firsthand data from Japanese citizens, all support the major three trends happening in Japan's society, economy and social welfare structure. Covered in the Findings section, these trends are the 'graying' of the Japanese population, fewer career development and advancement opportunities for women, and reduced national birthrate demographic trends for working women. Through research, I have demonstrated that significant

roadblocks (described in detail below and characterized as Major Causative Trends) have led ultimately to a burgeoning aging population crisis for Japan. The latter scenario will present major policy and societal challenges for Japan's future success , described in the conclusion of this thesis. The hypothesis of this thesis are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The aging population crisis greatly increases the number of employment positions available to women in the workplace in Japan.

Hypothesis 2: The working conditions that employed women experience in Japan are greatly contributing to the aging population crisis.

Causative Trends

'Graying' of the Japanese population: With a significant decline in the national birthrate, there has been a marked shift in Japan's population demographics, with a decline in the younger population relative to a steadily increasing older population forming (Seen in *figure 1* below). With less youth, more women are working to fill positions once held by men. While on the one hand this may present more opportunities for them to participate, on the other hand these women must acclimate to the social norms tilted towards a male-dominated workplace. One source says, "The Japanese have become increasingly concerned about the future as social security costs, such as pension contributions and insurance premiums for medical care and nursing care for the elderly, as well as tax burdens, are expected to keep rising sharply amid declining birth rates and the rapid greying of society." (Centre for Public Impact 2017). This relatively rapid shift in the demographics of Japan's population, where the aging population is significantly exceeding the younger demographic, upon which future aging populations are supposed to rely for their social welfare in retirement years, is not a one-time occurrence, but rather is a long-term trend (Seen in *figure 1* below).

Fewer Career Development and Advancement Opportunities for Women: Based on preliminary research, it appeared that women in Japanese society in general do not have as many opportunities at work in Japan, to either develop a fulfilling career in terms of compensation or to attain professional acknowledgement/competence, as recognized by Japanese society.

Reduced National Birthrate demographic trend for Working Women: And as a result, to thrive, if not just survive, the research has borne out the trend that women have increasingly less opportunity to have children, demonstrated with data in the Findings section.

This trend, if continued, will lead to great challenges for Japan's future success as a thriving economy and society. These primary and secondary causative trends will be examined in more detail.

Background

Because of the aging population, there are not enough men to fill in the typical salarymen employee roles, so companies are being 'forced' to hire women. These women are entering an inflexible work environment geared towards primarily male employees, and experiencing many challenges in the workplace, including unequal pay, sexual harassment, and family planning issues.

> One of the reasons for fewer children is the difficulty women face in raising children while working. In the past among Japanese farm families, grandparents often took care of children while the parents worked, but present-day urban Japan consists mostly of nuclear family households, which cannot count on help from grandparents. Moreover, there is a great shortage of daycare facilities where working mothers can leave children. Even when mothers are fortunate enough to utilize a daycare center, the hours of service are limited. Many companies allow childcare leave or reduced work hours for childcare for mothers but not for fathers. (US-Japan 2003, n.p.).

There is much research on such inequality in Japan, but there is little research regarding how the aging crisis has impacted the Japanese workplace. After much background research and firsthand surveys and interviews, evidence and trends point to the aging crisis as having impacted workplace inequality in Japan today both negatively and positively. Public evidence of this is seen in Prime Minister Abe's new policies called Womenomics that aim to support women and combat workplace inequality. It is noteworthy that, despite many efforts to improve the status of women in Japan's workplace, today there are few results to show. Based on the thesis research and surveys, there are many hindrances that come with simply being a woman looking for paid work in Japan. One of the biggest social pressures on the women of Japan is to raise a child. It is expected by society that the woman quits her job when she is married and that she should focus on raising a child. This leaves women who want to pursue a career also often wanting—but unable to have—a family. Japan's societal infrastructure makes it impossible to balance both family and career. As a result, women are choosing their professions over starting families;

thus, not as many Japanese children are being born and the elder to youth ratio is increasing at an alarming rate, “If women expect to hold career jobs, they may also choose to postpone marriage and childbearing or to reduce the number of children they bear (the cost of children to families is directly related to women's earnings)” (Edwards 1992, 13). Currently, less young people are entering schools, as the population is drastically smaller. In result, there is a higher demand for student enrollment to keep the private and public schools open. This allows more women to receive higher degrees of education, and thus be more likely to work full-time jobs with a high paying salary. This change in social structure allows for rapid change in a society, in this case, more women becoming employed (Garnova 2016, n.p.). Even though there is an increase of representation, Japanese women still have very limited opportunities within the work world. It is also difficult to get women more involved in the community if they are employed, as they have many obligations with family care and support, with education not being considered a priority. Therefore, women also often quit working. In 1947, Japanese women were granted the right to vote, run for parliament, and attend university (Calder 1988, n.p.). Therefore, as an industrialized nation, Japan appears to have the foundation and capacity to make plans to address its aging crisis. Unfortunately, the struggle for women’s workplace rights in Japan has shown little results largely due to the gap between legal regulations and social norms.

This thesis will trace the recent history of women in Japan since World War II and their status today, with examples of what society imposes upon them and what they expect of themselves. Mary Brinton’s writing on Japanese women and the Economic Miracle describes the female’s change in roles after World War II, “The past few decades of experience in Western industrial nations, both capitalist and socialist, have suggested that a high female labor force participation rate does not necessarily mean the rapid extinction of sharply delineated sex roles in the economy or the disappearance of the male-female wage gap… Japan demonstrates this more clearly than any other industrial society.” (Brinton 1993, 1). While many women are beginning to work in Japan, they face a high amount of discrimination, which will become evident in the Findings section. This thesis will also look at specific cases and general data about the level of involvement in political careers, as these women have the most influence within a

society. It will also analyze the influencing factors that most recently created President Abe's Abenomics. Abenomics focuses on having women participate more actively and politically within the workforce in order to revitalize the economy. He created a strategy and goal of having no less than 30 percent of leadership positions in all areas of society filled by women by 2020. But this strategy is a work in progress, as there is still little political participation shown by women in Japan (Dales 2009, Mun 2016). The study will further discuss Prime Minister Abe's *Womenomics* below. It will also examine men's experiences at work, and how they compare to and impact the rights of women today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The thesis literature review will allow for examination of Japan's societal formation and an understanding of how Japan has developed into a country facing many distinct challenges. Drawing from many different subjects and types of literature will display the major debates surrounding the topics of Japan's aging population crisis and gender equality. Crucial to this analysis is the comprehension of new government policies aiming to improve the situation for women in Japan called 'Abenomics', formulated by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as those policies that preceded Abe's (Calder 1988, n.p.). This section will then discuss different topics relative to women at work and the aging population crisis. The bodies of literature that are the most distinct in this area of study are Japan's aging population, Japanese workplace policies/workplace culture, and Japanese feminism and sexism.

Japan's Aging Population

Thorough explanation of the existence of Japan's current aging population crisis is needed. The statistics from *figure 1* below displays Japan's aging crisis. *Figure 1* clearly shows the demographic trend of decreasing birthrates. The left side shows 2014's population data. While there is a fluctuation of population trends from ages 90 to 30, one can also see the population younger than 30 is decreasing. The right side of the image shows a projection of population trends in 2039, 25 years after the left side image of 2014. A news article from *The Japan Times* brings public attention to the shrinkage of family sizes and a large increase of elders entering welfare facilities, as the baby boomer generation (*dankai no sedai*) is growing too old to live alone. (Yoshida 2016, n.p.). If trends continue, the country will have a significantly small population of youth to care for the older population. In the journal "Population Aging," the authors describe some very illuminating statistics that signify Japan's aging population crisis (Anderson 2000, n.p.). These comparative statistics have come from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, along with the United Nations (UN). Demographers have discovered that,

> Between 1980 and 2000 the proportion of the population age 65 and older increased only slightly in seven of the eight countries. The exception was Japan, where it nearly doubled. Between the years 2000 and 2020 the relative size of the population age 65 and older is projected to increase rapidly in all countries. The United Kingdom is projected to have the smallest rise (from 16.0 to 19.8 percent), and **Japan, the largest (from 17.1 to 26.2 percent)**. In 2020 the percentage of the population over age 65 is projected to range from a high of 26.2 percent in Japan to a low of 15.6

> percent in New Zealand. Between 1970 and 1995 the percentage of workers age 60 and older declined in all countries except Japan. (Anderson 2000, n.p.).

Similarly, author Calder's writings on Japan's 1950 population crisis involving public policy and political stability describe how the country was once in a similar critical state long ago and exemplifies how history does in fact repeat itself,

> I believe the rate of population growth will probably fall from the 2.2 percent of 1948 to 1.0 to 1.2 percent in the next ten years. But I do not believe this is fast enough or will occur soon enough to permit a substantial increase in per capita production under the conditions prevailing today and likely to prevail in the next few years… Hence, I find myself highly skeptical regarding the outlook for the future of Japan… A real catastrophe involving millions of persons may be in the making, and it may very well be precipitated by the rather sudden withdrawal of American support from the economy of Japan, before the Japanese have been able to make any workable adjustment of population to resources. (Calder 1988, n.p.).

It has been almost 30 years since the above study, and yet the government has made minimal and ineffective attempts to remedy the issue of the aging population. Attempts to promote childbirth in Japan started with the Angel Plan. Beginning in the 1990s, the Japanese government launched a barrage of efforts to increase birth rates, including the Angel Plan, the New Angel Plan, and the Plus One Policy. The Angel Plan enacted in 1994 was a five year plan which aimed to assist Japan's couples in raising their children. Its goals were to create better child health care and maternal health care facilities, improve on housing for families with children, provide aid in the costs for raising children (26,000 Yen per child each month), and create better childcare services. The New Angel Plan of 1999 was a similar enhanced plan, and the Plus One Policy is more recent, enacted in 2009. The Angel Plans resulted in a small increase in children being born, but it was not significant enough. The government could not pay these families the benefits that it had promised. These plans failed mostly because of lack of funding (Centre for Public Impact 2017, n.p.). These efforts have had a minimal impact in improving birth rates due to social disagreement over these policies and a lack of resources. These policies were implemented when, in 1989, Japan hit an all-time low of Total Fertility Rate seen in *figure 7*, which is the average number of children each woman is estimated to give birth to. From 1989 to 2005, this number continued to decline until 2005, reaching an estimated Total Fertility Rate of 1.26 children to each woman. It has been predicted by the Japan Aging Research Centre that this number will fall to 1.16 in 2020. The United

Nations has predicted that the Japanese population in 2100 will decrease to about 83 million people at this steady rate (Centre for Public Impact 2017, n.p.). This source says as well, “Economic concerns are one of the most frequently cited reasons for Japanese people to get married later in life or remain single. Women who need, or want, to work face difficulties in combining employment and child rearing, due to the limited availability of childcare services, unfavourable employment practices, and a lack of flexible working conditions.” (Centre for Public Impact 2017, n.p.). Another source says that youths are no longer interested in getting married and raising a family, which could be cause for decreased childbirth. An article from *The Economist* states that marriage rates are beginning to fall as people are waiting longer to get married, “Women are retreating from marriage as they go into the workplace. That's partly because, for a woman, being both employed and married is tough in Asia. Women there are the primary caregivers for husbands, children and, often, for aging parents; and even when in full-time employment, they are expected to continue to play this role…. The decline of marriage is also contributing to the collapse in the birth rate.” (The Economist 2011, n.p.). Another dimension of the problem is demonstrated in this statement,

> There seems to be a trend among Japanese youth that has been called ‘sekkusu shinai shokogun’ or ‘celibacy syndrome’, where young people do not want to date, be intimate, get married, or have sex. Some of the statements collected from young people include: ‘I find women attractive but I’ve learned to live without sex. Emotional entanglements are too complicated' or 'I don’t earn a huge salary to go on dates and I don’t want the responsibility of a woman hoping it might lead to marriage' (Centre for Public Impact 2017, n.p.).

Thus, the Angel Plan was unsuccessful, “The birth rate has continued to drop and reached 1.36 in 2000. An average lifetime birthrate of 2.1 is needed in order to maintain the current population size. With the current low birthrate, it is predicted that Japan’s population will be reduced by 20% in the next fifty years” (US-Japan 2003, n.p.). There are many other reasons speculated for why the government’s attempts to remedy this aging crisis keep failing, including inability for working women to raise children, and lack of daycare facilities.

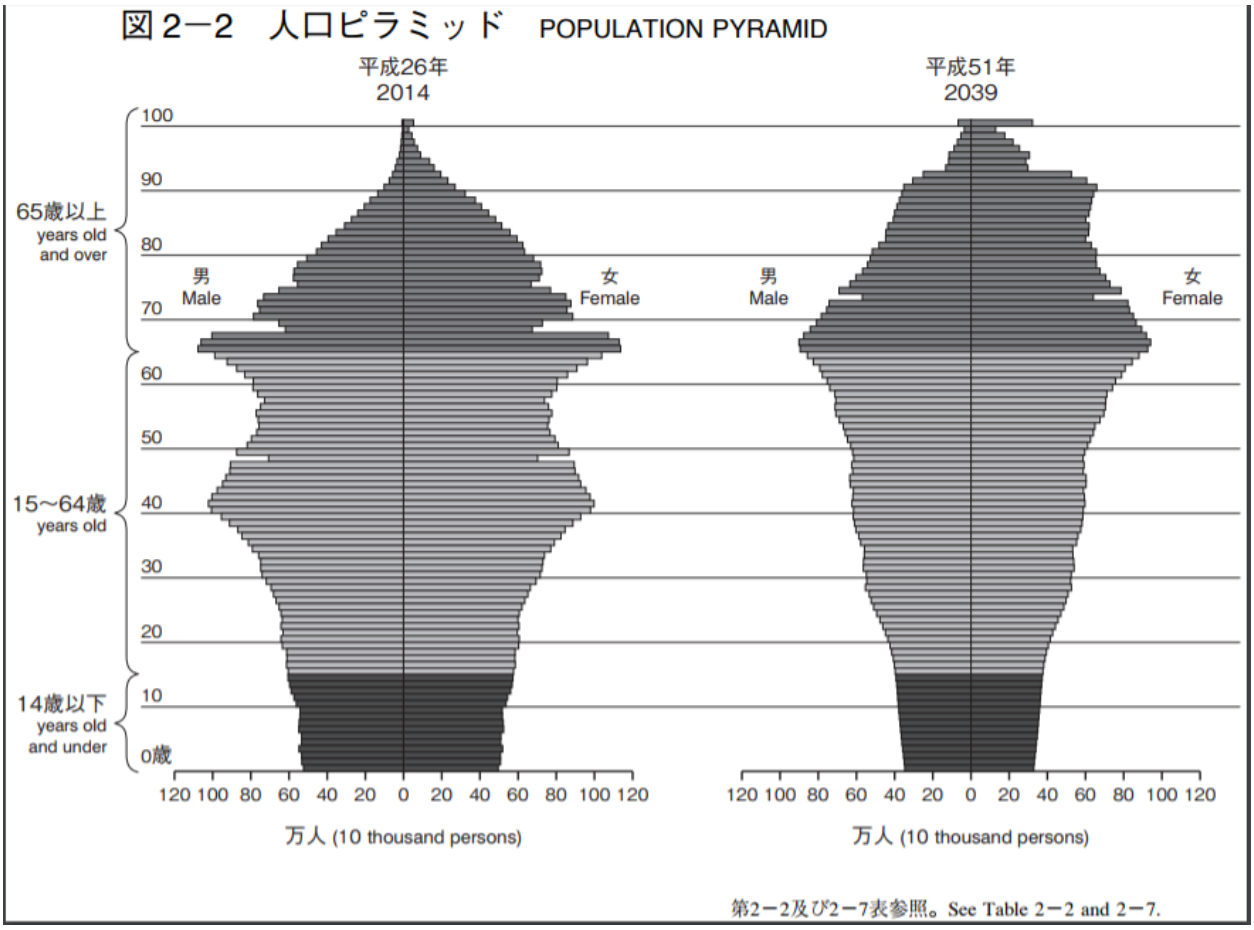

Figure 1: Population pyramid of 2014, with predictions of 2039.

Japanese Workplace Policies and Culture

Before delving into the more theoretical and statistical literature, it is critical that one understand what the country and its government are currently doing to change gender gaps in Japan. In 1947 Japanese women were granted the right to vote, run for parliament, and attend university. The UN Conference in 1995 at Beijing gave great momentum to the women's movement in Japan (Calder 1988, n.p.). Japan seems to have the foundation for becoming the grounds for forward thinking activism. To push against current gender gaps in the country, Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe, has invoked a new set of policies called Abenomics to improve Japan's economy and productivity (World Economic Forum 2016). A subset of Abenomics is a group of policies that aim to bring forth gender equality in the workplace called Womenomics. Womenomics has a goal of bringing more women into the workforce, encouraging women to continue working after they give birth, and to break down the glass ceiling women

face when it comes to promotions. Prime Minister Abe's womenomics pushed "to build a society in which women can shine", by promising to have a third of high management positions held by females and by creating thousands of more daycare options for mothers. These plans fell to pieces due to lack of funding and dissatisfaction with women being employed as tokens (Assmann 2014, n.p.). There still remains today tens of thousands of young children waiting on lists to enter daycare schools. (Kikuchi 2017, n.p.). While Prime Minister Abe and the Liberal Democratic Party that he represents saw Womenomics as the first step to reaching gender equality, many citizens believe the policies to be false promises, as Japan has dropped to 111th place in the gender equality rankings. (World Economic Forum 2016). In the past couple of decades, there have been many efforts to rectify the gender inequality in Japan. The most noteworthy is the Equal Employment Opportunity Law for Men and Women of 1985. Edwards explains the law's purpose, "This law prohibits gender discrimination with respect to vocational training, fringe benefits, retirement, and dismissal. It also urges firms to try to equalize opportunity with regard to recruitment, hiring, job assignment, and promotion." (Edwards 1988, n.p.). While in 1988, it was too early to witness and analyze the results of this law, Edwards returns in 1992 to analyze its impact. In 1992, a new law--the Childcare Leave Law--was enacted to allow women to take childcare leave: "This Law asserts that the realization of a society in which 'men and women respect the other's human rights and share their responsibilities, and every citizen is able to fully exercise their individuality and abilities regardless of gender' is 'a top-priority task.'" (US-Japan 2003, n.p.). This new law strengthened the EEO, but still left women struggling to keep their jobs after having children.

The Act on Securing of Equal Opportunity and Treatment Between Men and Women in Employment within Japanese law states that the workplace must allow a pregnant woman to take time off of work for pregnancy check-ups, the woman must be allowed to take shorter work days as per her doctor's recommendation, and the employer is not allowed to ask the woman to work after childbirth until eight weeks have passed. Paid maternity leave does exist, but only under insurance up to two-thirds of your salary (Parkinson 1989, Nagoya International Center 2016). For comparison purposes, most

countries in the European Union must provide at least 14 weeks of paid maternity leave (Gault 2014, n.p.).

Joyce Gelb has written a comparison of the gender policies of the U.S. and Japan, in her *Gender Policies in Japan and the United States: Comparing Women's Movements, Rights and Politics*. This book's comparison puts the current state of Japan into perspective with a thorough look into the complexities of gender policy making in the U.S. and Japan. As both countries are democratic, they have many similarities; it is especially noteworthy that the U.S. sponsored the authorship of Japan's modern constitution (Molony 1995, n.p.). Gelb breaks down the parallels between the two countries among certain gender-related policies-- equal employment, reproductive rights, and domestic violence policy. Most important to the research are these two policy areas: equal employment and reproductive rights. The literature contains information on this legislation as well, passed in 1999: the Japanese Basic Law for a Gender Equal Society. This law was enacted as a result of Japanese feminist activism (Gelb 2003, n.p.). Not covered in this book is Prime Minister Abe's new *Womenomics/Abenomics* policies, but analysis of past law will further explain Abe's new law. Here Gelb discusses the relationship between Japan and the US when it comes to gender equality in the workplace,

> [As of 2003,] The Gender Empowerment Measure of the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) ranks Japan forty-first and the United States eleventh. These ratings take into account such variables as income, female administrators, parliamentary seats held and share of income. The data suggest that women in Japan are engaged in a far more difficult struggle to gain true equity… Feminism has existed for over a century in Japan and has developed its own concerns rooted in culture and societal tradition (Gelb 2003, 1-2).

The feminist activism that has been recently occurring in Japan was not caused by Western movements but was greatly influenced by them. Gelb's goal in writing her book and compiling data for analysis is to provide a deep comparison of the U.S. and Japan's gender policy, thus pointing out that this was a widely ignored topic of study and requires attention to eventually remedy Japan's problem of gender inequality. Gelb, though her book was published in 2003, determined that Japan is falling behind in its societal development and needs to attend to this issue as soon as it can (Gelb 2003, n.p.).

Joyce Gelb's chapter on the reproductive rights of women explains certain attitudes towards this controversial topic (Gelb 2003, 85). She discusses how Japan was the only country in 1990 to allow legal abortion, yet provided no form of contraception pill to its people. Gelb's statistical data on abortion in Japan and the US show trends that are concerning regarding the aging population crisis in Japan,

> Both nations share relatively high rates of abortion: 2.3 percent of Japanese women have an abortion by the age of 49 and twice as many do in the United States. In the United States teenagers are most likely to have abortions, while in Japan they have been more likely to be mothers with children, ages 30 to 39 for whom abortion is utilized as a kind of birth control. In contrast to the United States, married women get the majority of abortions in Japan; varying from about 30 percent to 40 percent during the 1960s to the 1990s. (Gelb 2003, 83-84).

In Japan, these high abortion rates are seemingly inevitable as it is very difficult for a woman to have a child while she needs to continue working to support the rest of the family (be that through paid office work or unpaid housework).

One cultural concept in Japan's workplace that is often not addressed in all of the bodies of literature is the unspoken concept of *shoganai*. Its prevalence in the Japanese workplace was confirmed during interviews with many native Japanese workers. Although not mentioned in the literature, it is necessary to understand this uniquely communal mindset that many people in Japan possess in order to have a basis of cultural understanding of how they approach the workplace. The Japanese live with a communal idea of *shoganai* which translates to "it cannot be helped." It is a philosophy that guides the Japanese people to quietly accept any troubles they come across in life; it is a self-command to accept one's fate. This attitude often leaves women in a position to accept situations in which they are being mistreated. Because the country has *shoganai* deeply ingrained in its culture, it is difficult to find first-hand accounts of discrimination cases. When women fall victim to this discrimination and abuse, they feel that it is their duty to live in the manner society has created. However, as more recent literature is published arguing for gender equality, one can see more attitudes and approaches presented by women of Japan, who do not adhere to *shoganai*.

Other key terms were introduced by Keiko Sakurai, who presented on workplace ethics in Japan at University of San Francisco in Fall 2017. As an expert on Japan's workplace culture, Sakurai noted that

employees in the Japanese workplace function in an indirect style. Two Japanese terms, *honne* and *tatemae* represent this idea. *Honne* translates to "one's true opinion," while *tatemae* means "one's false opinion" (Sakurai 2017). According to Sakurai, Japanese people in general, but especially in a formal setting, are very hesitant to disagree with someone in order to maintain the dignity of both parties. If someone was to disagree with an idea, thus making that person's idea wrong, it would greatly shame the person who brought up the idea. Sakurai said, "one must not interrupt, or say someone is wrong"(Sakurai 2017) and she explained that negative feedback is taken very personally. So, Sakurai explained that Japanese people are very good at reading "in between the lines" when discussing something by looking at facial expression, body language, and tone of voice. Hesitation is often a sign of disagreement, even if the opposing party is agreeing with the other. The simple act of scratching one's head or folding the arms in thought is also a sign of disagreement (Sakurai 2017). This is something I witnessed during my time in Japan. Social rules such as this make it very difficult for women to come forward to express any discomfort with their work environment.

Sakurai also presented that the core values in the Japanese workplace are, "hierarchy, harmony, formality, saving face, loyalty, and long-term relationship" (Sakurai). Saving face is a common phrase in describing many societies in Asia. Sakurai defined this term as an attempt to preserve one's personal dignity, as the phrase 'lose face' means to "be humiliated, or lose one's reputation" (Martin 2017, n.p.). This concept originated in China, "Lose face began life in English as a translation of the Chinese phrase *tiu lien*. That phrase may also be expressed in English as 'to suffer public disgrace,' that is, to be unable to show one's face in public." (Martin 2017, n.p.).

Wanting to preserve the honor of the company through being loyal to the company by remaining employed for a length of time also deters women from coming forward with their experiences at work. According to Sakurai, it causes employees to not even want to take time off of work; they become so loyal to the company that personal life and work life become blurred. Full-time workers in Japan receive 15 paid vacation days, but these workers feel guilty when they are not working, so they allow those vacation days to expire. Sakurai even said that when Japanese people introduce themselves in a business

setting, they state their company name before any other information is given, including their own name, as the company becomes your identity (Sakurai).

Japanese Feminism and Sexism

Laura Dales writes in depth about Japanese feminism. Japanese feminism is distinct from that of other regions, which she demonstrates through many thorough interviews with Japanese women. Her writings focus on women in feminism, sexuality, and work. She writes about the role of being a woman as follows,

> In a role-based analysis of an act, it is the role, rather than the actor, that is central. In Japan the act of being female, married and not engaged in (full-time) paid labour thus become the role of being a *sengyo shufu*, or full-time housewife… furthermore, it is in the repetition of these acts that gender is affected and the meaning and implications of gender are created and conveyed. (Dales 2009, n.p.).

Japanese women already have little opportunity within the work world. It is difficult to get women more involved in the community if they are employed, as they already have many obligations with family care. Goldstein-Gidoni explains in her *Housewives in Japan* the typical role of women and what society expects and demands of them. Women in Japan has always been expected to carry the heaviest burden of housework within the family. Mothers raise their daughters to clean the house, cook for the family, and even practice caring for children if they have younger siblings (Goldstein-Gidoni 2012, n.p.). This provides one reason why women often quit working, as they must carry out the responsibilities necessary to run the household.

The struggle for women's rights in Japan has shown few results though due to traditional constraints. It is significant that Japan took a low 111th place on the 2016 Global Gender Report list, which measures gender equality within each country according to a set scoring system. Japan received a meager score of .66 out of 1 (World Economic Forum 2016). Why has Japan struggled so much in closing the gender gap despite its efforts to support women at work? Prime Minister Abe has not pushed for the people of Japan to develop a feminist attitude as a whole. While egalitarianism pushes for every person to have equal rights, feminism pushes for Japanese society to develop a more positive view of women. In the findings section of this thesis, the negative treatment that women workers in Japan have experienced as a

result of a lack of feminist attitude will be elaborated on in more detail. Sakurai suggested non-Asian women have an easier time in the workplace when it comes to facing inequality, and that if you are a Japanese woman, it is much harder (Sakurai 2017). Expectations for Japanese women are higher, while Japanese people are becoming more accustomed to Western society as American movies and culture make their way to Japan through the internet. It is acceptable for Americans to behave "rudely" by dressing informally, being loud, and being too direct (Sakurai 2017). Female foreigners find the Japanese work environment difficult to grow accustomed to. An article from *The Japan Times* describes how the stigma behind becoming a victim seals the mouths of women shut, as they are to fearful to speak up and 'rock the boat', author Yamasaki explains how many women carry safety pins with them when using the train to commute, so they have a means to protect themselves when groped in a crowd (Yamasaki 2017). An example of this difficulty is found in the statement from Chiara Terzuolo, a seven year resident of Tokyo, as she describes workplace sexism that she experienced in Japan,

> Deeply entrenched beliefs and assumptions... [sexism] flourish[es] in Japan's traditionally-minded office culture. This goes for office environments across the country, where due to the cultural focus on *wa* (harmony) and *gaman* (basically, 'grin and bear it'), many women go along with uncomfortable situations and remain silent, since fighting back would paradoxically make them 'a troublemaker.' (Terzuolo 2017, n.p.).

There is an act that protects employees from unfair treatment, losing their job, or salary cuts called The Whistleblower Protection Act, yet many employees do not voice experiences of misconduct (Mure 2017, n.p.). Some Japanese women do freely vocalize the sexism and discrimination they have experienced at work. Partially the inspiration for this thesis stemmed from an article read many years ago, about a Japanese woman who has suffered from discrimination in the workplace. A woman's rights activist named Sayaka Osakabe was a victim of pregnancy discrimination (CNN Money 2014). Pregnancy discrimination (PD) has been deeply explored and defined by Akira Kawaguchi of Doshisha University as, "PD is discrimination in workplaces against women based on pregnancy or childbirth, which may violate laws that aim to achieve gender equality and maternity protection" (Kawaguchi 2017, 1). Osakabe attempted to take time off during pregnancy, but suffered from two miscarriages as her boss harassed her to resign from her work. On one occasion, her boss went to her home and asked her to stop trying to have

children. This kind of harassment is illegal in Japan, but commonly happens to working women, as shown in my own survey results discussed in the Findings section. It was also found by Kawaguchi, "The Japanese Trade Union Confederation (JTUC) implemented a survey on PD in 2013, and found that a quarter of working women who have children alleged to have been victims of PD" (Kawaguchi 2017, 2). While most workers are hired immediately after they graduate, they are expected to demonstrate life-long loyalty to the company, as it is typical for a salaryman to remain with his company until he retires with great benefits provided by the company. Because of this, it is close to impossible for an adult to change careers, or re-enter the working force after taking time off. This is due to a lack of work discrimination policy in Japan. Companies would much more prefer to hire a young malleable worker than an older one. This means that women often leave work forever after having children. Nothing in the EEO Law protects women from finding themselves in this situation. (Edwards 1992, 4-5).

I recently attended the 21st Annual Asian Studies Conference Japan from July 8-9th, 2017 at Rikkyo University, located in Mitaka-shi, Tokyo. The most valuable panel presentation from the ASCJ was previously mentioned Akira Kawaguchi's paper on Maternity Harassment and Japanese Style Human Resource Management (Kawaguchi 2017). I have been in contact with him since, and he has mailed me his paper. Kawaguchi's research on Japanese *mata-hara*, or maternity harassment, re-terms the phrase as Pregnancy Discrimination (PD). His presentation described the definition of maternity harassment and renamed the phrase as pregnancy discrimination, as he described word for word in his lecture, "Discrimination in workplaces against women based on pregnancy or childbirth, including violation of laws for maternity protection and gender equality" (Kawaguchi 2017). At his presentation, his findings have shown that less than 25% of women were in the labor market after their first childbirth between 1985 and 1999, and this figure started to increase, but this data is surveyed only every 5 years, so current numbers after 2015 are unknown. (Kawaguchi, 2017) Kawaguchi's research follows: women who do not conform to gender stereotypes have a higher risk of pregnancy discrimination. He surveyed a sample group of women who were 20-44 years old when pregnant, the size of his sample being 1908 participants. He asked each woman whether she experienced each of the following 11 types of treatments which could

be classified as pregnancy discrimination. Some examples include, (3) My request to leave the workplace because of illness was not approved, (4) I was forced to work overtime, and (10) I received a pay cut. In the end, his results show that there is not a correlation between women being non-conforming and experiences with pregnancy discrimination. He did find that among the post-graduate women group, these women have a lower probability of experiencing pregnancy discrimination (Kawaguchi 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This thesis utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods of research to present supportive evidence in a comprehensive way. For its qualitative analysis strategy, themed content data analysis and deductive data analysis will be utilized; and for its quantitative analysis strategy, descriptive analysis will be utilized. This thesis relies on four primary resources on which it bases its findings. They are interviews, survey data, Japan's official census data, and second hand data gathered from the Asian Studies Conference Japan (ASCJ). This thesis compares all of these resources in the Findings section to support the thesis on whether the lack of gender equity in the Japanese workplace is greatly contributing to the aging population crisis.

Data Gathering, Research, and Analysis

To examine whether the lack of gender equality in the Japanese workplace is contributing meaningfully to the aging population crisis, we must in turn take a closer look at the **causative factors,** using a range of research tools and methods:

- **'Graying' of the Japanese population**
- **Fewer Career Development and Advancement Opportunities for Women**
- **Reduced National Birthrate Demographic Trend for Working Women**

The investigative research to test the validity of the thesis is based on data gathering from online as well as publicly available resources (e.g., Government of Japan National Census Statistical Information and Records); participation and discussion among participants in National Conferences in Japan on Workforce Trends; and first hand interviews, surveys and information gathering from Japanese citizens currently participating in the Japanese workforce. While it is helpful to research nationally assembled census data, specific and more recent trends can best be informed by firsthand data, such as the surveys and interviews. All survey and interview participants will be given pseudonyms to maintain privacy. In addition to data gathered from a range of cited sources, the fieldwork survey and interview, data will also be reviewed to determine whether or not they support the thesis. This thesis discusses the significance of the survey data results through various methods of research, including descriptive, thematic, and deductive data analysis, as they provide a solid and reliable framework to test the thesis. Using a range of forms of data gathering and analysis allows for a more thorough breakdown of personal experiences of

those who have worked in Japan. The interviews will be described by utilizing thematic data analysis. An analysis of Japan's official census data, as well as second hand data I have gathered from the Asian Studies Conference Japan (ASCJ) (which addressed many of these workforce issues and their impact on the future of Japan) supports this thesis with official government data. By looking at the many hindrances and inequalities that women face at work, this thesis will demonstrate that these problems are negatively impacting (i.e., exacerbating) Japan's aging population crisis. With this broad compilation of resources, data and evidence, there is solid support for the thesis.

Surveys

The survey results were analyzed using three different types of analysis, two qualitative and one quantitative strategy. The first was themed content data analysis, similarly to this thesis's interview section. This method organized the qualitative data collected by the surveys into themes of similarity. By comparing the survey responses, many correlations and patterns appeared. As the 21 question survey is quite long, this was the best way to clearly present the collected information in a significant way. These different pattern analyses then formed stories of their own, which is explained in the narrative that follows the theme organization. The second type of qualitative data analysis was deductive data. Deductive reasoning uses the presented data to come to a conclusion in a logical way, by taking information to form a logical analysis. This strategy fit perfectly into the analysis, as it allowed an even deeper analysis of the survey data previously mentioned. After using themed content data analysis, followed by deductive reasoning analysis of the organized themes and narrative, survey information was compiled to support many different conclusions that both supported the thesis yet pointed out certain holes in the thesis that prompted additions to the Literature Review. The third data analysis was quantitative, so I chose descriptive data analysis as the best fit. Descriptive data analysis utilizes graphics (i.e. a graph or chart) to exemplify observations about the collected data sample. Using Microsoft Excel, the survey data was inputted and then compared, creating summaries about the participants' responses. This type of analysis fit the survey data best as running large regression analysis proved to be too complex for this thesis looking at societal trends, norms and history, not just Japan's demographic trends. However, it is a

possible method for future study on this topic (i.e. comparing Japan's policies with every other country's). This method of study allows this thesis to still fully explore the relations of the responses received while conserving research time for reliable methods and utilizing national data records, such as using Japan's national census data as comparison.

This thesis will now discuss how the survey questions elicited information that may or may not provide answers to the research question. The survey was distributed to approximately 600 people through the internet, and 30 in person. Each survey was expected to take around 10 minutes. Two survey options were provided; one was written in Japanese and one was written in English. The language coordinator at the Japan Society of Northern California generously translated the English version into Japanese. This opened the research to a wider and more authentic audience. The participants were a diverse group of varying gender, ages, ethnicities, and nationalities; all having had work experience in Japan. After presenting the participant consent form and clarifying that this survey is anonymous, the surveys were taken either privately online, or by pen and paper in presence of the researcher. The online survey was carefully designed and distributed via SurveyMonkey, an online survey application, that allowed one to format the online survey to best obtain results that may or may not validate the thesis. Website links were provided to candidates through email and Facebook groups. This proved to be the most effective and efficient method of gathering a diverse group of participants. An extensive list of email contacts has been accumulated through my network of contacts which I have gathered throughout my life, through friends and colleagues I met in Japan, those at my homestays with Japanese citizens, a large number of people I met through my internship at the Japan Society of Northern California, my study-abroad in Japan as an undergraduate, Japanese students I met in college, Japanese language professors across many schools, and many other resources. They were the starting network, and I requested they leverage their networks to expand the number of survey participants. Thus, in addition to completing the survey, via email and Facebook, recipients forwarded the survey on to appropriate survey participants, thus creating a wide net in accumulating surveys from various people, called a multiplier effect. After surveying many people, I accumulated 90 valid surveys. Students Hiroki Taguma and Kenya Oba from

Oberlin University helped greatly as undergraduate assistants. These undergraduate assistants in Japan translated the completed surveys that were filled out in Japanese into English, so there would not be misunderstanding of any indirect language or context.

Regarding the survey questionnaire design, the first question disqualifies participants who are under 18 years of age or who have not had work experience in Japan. In total, 21 questions were asked, beginning with general demographic questions, which were followed with the questions involving my thesis question. Most questions were answerable with "Yes" or "No" options, but some contained text boxes for comments. These comments allowed participants to divulge the thoughts brought on by the survey questions, as they were optional and had general instruction to simply "Explain." The comparison of these demographic questions with the answers of Q2-Q21 with the previously discussed methods of analysis will bring the results of this survey to a greater, more accurate conclusion.

Interviews

The interviews were analyzed by using thematic content data analysis, as they gathered qualitative data. Thematic content data analysis involved gathering the data and then searching for any significance in data patterns. This thesis organizes these patterns into different themes, 'Graying' of the Japanese population, Fewer Career Development and Advancement Opportunities for Women, and Reduced National Birthrate Demographic Trend for Working Women. By the division of different correlations and patterns, one is now more able to clearly understand the different aspects of the data collected. Then followed a narrative explanation of the interviews that quoted the participants' responses. This strategy was the best fit for the research interview data, as it both expressed the experiences of the participants while making the empirical data comprehensible. In total, I interviewed 12 people that have worked in Japan. This study through interviews was designed to make the best use of individual experience in supporting the thesis. The organization of themes with a following narrative analysis allowed for comparison of interview data and other sources utilized, as well as quotation of crucial facts and opinions spoken by the participants to exemplify more accurate participant acknowledgement of their

workplace and aging population. Other methods of analysis did not create this themed organized structure that reforms complicated data into more understandable significance.

The interview questions served as an extension of the survey. When comparing the interview and the survey, one can see that they are similar, yet the interview allows for unlimited conversation. The interviews asked, for example, whether men and women are expected to perform different duties at work. The interview allowed the participant to tell extensive stories rather than constricting their answer as the survey does because of limited word space. These conversations allowed for extended comments, questions between the participant and me, and unprompted stories of experiences working in Japan. Interview subjects were those have worked in Japan in some capacity in order to accrue the needed data and conversation. The interview subjects included ten women and two men who had worked in Japan and were age 18 or older. The interviewees were a diverse group of ages, who all grew up in Japan and who all spoke fluent Japanese. These women could speak English, though some were more advanced than others. Interviews were in English, with undergraduate assistants providing Japanese translations for each question in order to prevent communication error. They further helped to explain cultural differences and context after the interview, when needed.The interviews all took place in Japan in the cities of Tokyo, Kamakura, and Kawasaki. Each interview was around 20-30 minutes long. These women greatly enhanced the understanding of the Japanese workplace and aging population based on previous research. They also provided many firsthand confirmations and explanations of why Japanese society struggles still to this day, more than most other industrialized societies, to overcome these issues.

Census Data

In addition to quantifiable survey results, for quantitative research this thesis also used information from Japan's Statistics Bureau, which contains national census data and national surveys. The country of Japan's census is run by Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Statistics Bureau and meticulously takes place every five years, with the most recent being in 2015. Now presenting a crucial comparison, this thesis compares national Japanese census data with data accumulated in my survey data analysis. This official quantitative data providing statistics was analyzed using a descriptive

method of analysis. By meshing this data along with the descriptive data analysis done on my surveys, a truly logical conclusion can be made regarding the Japanese workplace and aging population. This method of analysis was again the most time efficient, and worked well with the survey data analyzed with the same method. This data was critical in providing society-wide data in the workplace, and changes that may or may not have validated my thesis. As Japan is a very developed country that values efficient yet effective data collecting, it was anticipated that comparing the government's data with first-hand data would result in some worthwhile and interesting findings. This Bureau has in-depth data on the thesis subjects, including population census, population estimates, survey of household economy, employment status survey, system of social and demographic statistics, etc. that were useful.

Conference Data

This thesis also utilizes information from individual presentations during the ASCJ 2017 Conference. I collected data during this conference by typing transcripts of the ASCJ presentations and panels on my laptop. This data is second-hand qualitative and quantitative data that had already been analyzed by the presenting professors and scholars. I utilized their analyses to support the thesis and compared directly gathered data and data analyses to their own.

Limitations

Limitations include being an outsider to Japan, the language gap and barrier, any cultural misunderstandings or assumptions made about Japanese workplace culture, and temptations to make comparisons to American workplace conditions. One must strive to remain objective in conducting research so that these limitations do not adversely affect the validity of the findings. One issue was that, upon presenting the survey, interviewed participants would always avert their eyes and delay or prolong the taking of my survey. Their body language and sudden quietness demonstrated that the pressure of the researcher's presence and insistence that they take the survey during an in-person meeting was too imposing or forceful for them. It became quickly apparent that in Japanese culture, one must not put pressure on someone else to do something, or it comes across as rude, especially if one is younger than most of the participants. They would often say something along the lines of, "Let's do it later," and eventually part ways, leaving me empty-handed. Once aware of this dynamic, I began to meet with

candidates and explained survey as before, but instead of asking them to do the survey during our meetings, I instead asked for their email addresses so they could complete the survey online during a time of their choosing. It turned out that the absence of both pressure and interviewer presence while completing the online survey encouraged and resulted in significantly greater participation. Interviewer then decided to complement these surveys by also sending surveys out by email without any prior meeting. The largest limitation to this research is something discovered while distributing surveys. The surveys taken in privacy online may be more truthful due to the completely anonymous nature of the task. As local Japanese citizen, Professor Hiroki Nishimura, explained in Tokyo, "Japanese people will not want to say negative things about their country or workplace, especially if a foreigner is present." Each individual will consider their own experiences differently, as Akira Kawaguchi stated about his own research, "It is not easy to observe discrimination objectively. When two women encounter the same treatment or behavior, one may think it amounts to discrimination, but the other may not. If a woman does not feel that she is treated unfairly, it is not regarded as discrimination, or at least it is not fully observed by researchers." (Kawaguchi 4). But, while the frankness in the survey answers may vary, the results still remain valuable. This is something considered when analyzing the data collected, especially when comparing it to Japan's official national data. Variation in this first-hand data compared to Japan's national data could mean some embarrassment or shame in one's own particular workplace, which could result in some level of dishonesty. People may be ambiguous when they must acknowledge something is wrong in the truth; in this case, the Japanese workers may know that workplace policy is lacking in protecting employees from discrimination, but may prefer not to face or admit it. Another issue while doing first hand research is that many Japanese citizens are too uncomfortable to discuss discrimination, which I will discuss more in the Findings section. Many of the Japanese worker interviewees were too embarrassed to freely discuss discriminatory experiences—too embarrassed to even talk about them, or they are so used to living in Japan's patriarchal culture that they do not appear to give accurate accounts of their experiences.

By using qualitative and quantitative methods of research, the research proved to present many valuable conclusions through comparison graphics, themes, and narratives. A mixture of many methods strengthened the eventual findings of the research. Through use of interviews, survey data, Japan's official census data, and second hand data gathered from the Asian Studies Conference Japan, this thesis thoroughly explores the lack of gender equity in the Japanese workplace and its considerable contributions to the aging population crisis.

FINDINGS

The research accumulated 90 valid surveys to support the thesis, and the participants were a diverse group of varying gender, ages, ethnicities, and nationalities; all having had work experience in Japan. For the purpose of understanding each aspect of the conducted survey, the basic demographic questions will be described (seen in Appendices). The survey conducted was taken by a wide range of participants, as *figure 2* below displays 34 male and 56 female participants. Q3 of my survey asks the participant's gender, the inclusive options being 'Male,' 'Female,' or 'Other (please specify)'. It was important that the survey was not distributed to only females, as the goal was to analyze the experiences of the entire workplace, not solely women's experiences. As a strong indicator of men's influence on Japan's workplace environment, including labor laws, most of Japan's Diet is made of up men, therefore it is very important to consider their experiences at work to incorporate as part of the survey research. Q2 asks about age range since, depending on the age group, the participants will have different experiences and mindsets. An older worker will have more experience, and may be jaded by lengthy experience and exposure to the practices of Japan's social norms. A younger employee may tend to be more observant of their new work environment, and compare it to their knowledge of other work environments, as they learn to work within it. The age groups range from: less than 20, 20-29, 30-39, and 40 and above.

Q4 asks the participant's ethnicity, with a blank space which allowed the participant to write what they consider themselves. This method of questioning was used in order to remain inclusive. People from all over the world participated in my survey, not only Japanese people. Q5 asks again with the same blank space answer, for the participants to write the country of citizenship. The survey aimed to gauge the experiences of both native Japanese people and foreign nationals living and working in Japan. Labeling someone in this way is very difficult, which the translator pointed out, as she is Japanese American. She is a native Japanese woman who has lived in the United States for the past 22 years, so she is actually in many ways a foreigner in Japan even though she is Japanese. It is important to know one's background as it may affect one's answers. While most of the participants were Japanese, a large number were from other countries, including China, USA, and Taiwan. Q6 asks the participant what occupation they held in

Japan The survey did not generalize occupation choices for participants; an example being an office worker. Office workers can have many different jobs, and the survey sought to specifically know which jobs correlate with the answers to the other questions (Q7~Q21). The occupations were most often Office Worker, Teacher, Manager, Executive Director--all professional occupations. According to the results of Q11 (Do you have children?), seen in *figure 3* below, asking whether the participant has children, 41.1% of participants said 'Yes,' while 58.9% said 'No.' This close to equal distribution of participants experiences will prevent skewed data. The rest of the survey questions and answers will be discussed below, as answers are organized into different themes of similarity--as per the method of analysis being used. By organizing these answers, it will be easier to finalize conclusions from any correlations found in the survey data.

The interview participants included 14 people, both women and men, who had worked in Japan and were ages 18 and older. They spoke fluent Japanese, fluent English, and some were bilingual in both languages. Five of the interview participants had their own children, some had an only child, while another had three children. Speaking to people who have experience raising children in Japan proved to be enlightening. They generally worked for different companies, hospitals, and universities. They were all from the Tokyo Prefecture, Saitama Prefecture, Kanagawa Prefecture, and Nigata Prefecture. When asked, there was an equal amount of appreciation and dislike for the individual's work.

The national data from Japan utilized in this thesis is sourced from Japan's Statistics Bureau, which contains both national census data and national surveys. The country of Japan's census is run by Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Statistics Bureau and meticulously takes place every five years, with the most recent being in 2015, along with other surveys collecting data during various time periods. This reliable data allows one to understand the society as a whole, showing widespread changes over time periods and prefectures. The valuable data personally collected during the ASCJ 2017 Conference corralled scholars of women in Japan from around the world, allowing for firsthand discussion and "question and answer" with the authors. After speaking with various presenters, one professor agreed to send his study on women and maternity leave in the workplace. Utilizing analyses

such as this aligns this thesis with modern research on this topic, allowing for more innovative conclusions and support.

Figure 2: Gender demographics of my survey participants, 2017.

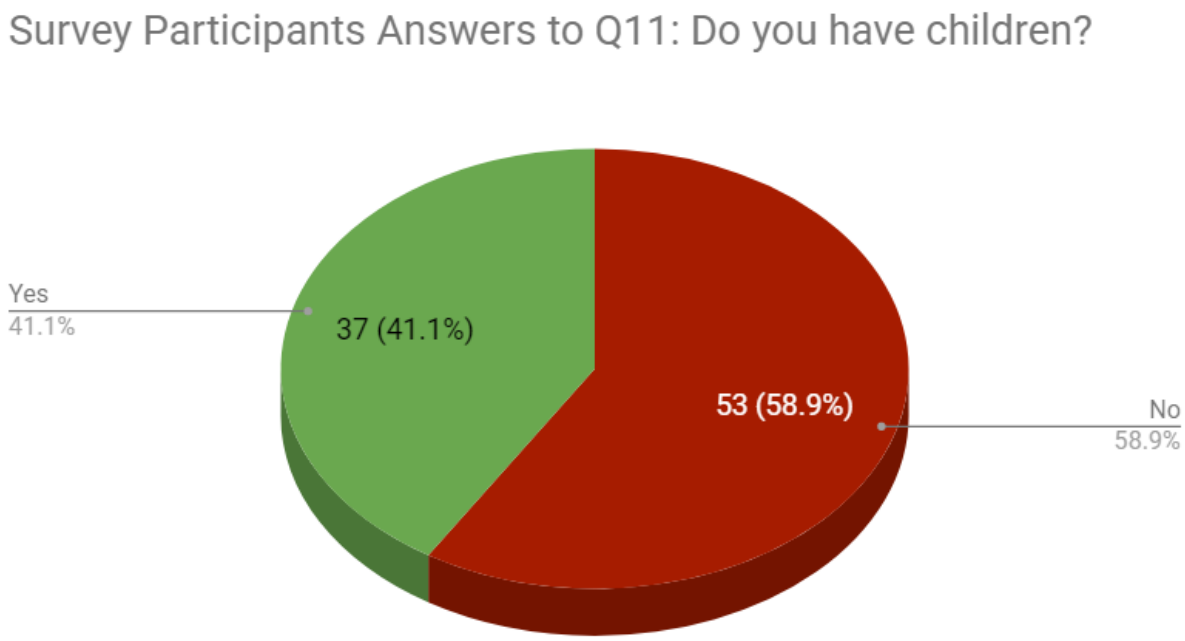

Figure 3: Parental status of my survey participants, 2017.

7.1 Finding 1 - 'Graying' of the Japanese Population

The Japanese population has steadily been growing older as the years go by. This changing demographic has many impacts on Japanese society, the most grievous being that a shortage of youth will cause an inability to support the older population as well as the societal infrastructure built by the older population. With this changing demographic, a larger percentage of Japan's population is represented by an older generation of ages 40 and up and it is forecasted that this trend will only continue. This data is displayed in *figure 1* of the Literature Review section of this thesis, a data set from Japan's Statistics Bureau showing two influxes of older generations around age 40 and age 65. The figure also shows a steady decline in population, especially emphasized when looking to the right of the figure. The earlier age 65 surge has passed away, yet the age 40 surge remains in year 2039 at age 65. This demographic trend will only continue, as birth rates in Japan continue to be on the decline. This is displayed in *figure 4*, also provided by Japan's Statistics Bureau. One can easily see under the *Live Births* column, that beginning in year 1973, birth rates have been on the decline. *Figure 7* makes the decreasing birth rate in Japan clearly evident, as it shows the rate as far back as 1970 eventually drops to an all time low around

the turn of the century, with no sign of redemption even in most recently documented year 2013. In result, the working age group is shifting from younger employees to older employees, because not enough children are being born to completely staff the once competitive workplace.

Despite the scale of this demographic shift my survey demonstrates that a large number of people are unaware of this current change. A lack of acknowledgment was shown when the survey asked the participant if they noticed more older workers in their company, clarifying that this represents an aging society (Q19: Do you see the aging society at work?). I found that looking at responses from the younger generation, the larger response at 54.5% was 'Yes', indeed the youth have taken notice of older employees, rather than their youthful comrades. These results are displayed in a chart in *figure 5* below. Even more evidently displaying the aging population crisis, Q20 clearly asked the general question, asking if the workforce of Japan is aging. Whether or not the participants acknowledge this phenomenon will show how educated Japanese workers are on this issue and whether or not more information on this nationwide problem needs to be distributed. The results showed 83.1% of participants are aware of the aging population, while 16.9% said that there was no population aging (seen in *figure 6*). These results are still significant, as around 17% of the sample fail to recognize Japan's aging population crisis.

During the interviews, I attempted to ask more probing questions about the aging population, but there was hardly any affirmation that the participants knew about the aging crisis. When asked "Japan has an aging population. Do you notice this at work?," only three interviewees acknowledged this crisis in some way, while others said they didn't know much about it and wanted to move onto the next topic. A now retired woman, "Mayu", said "Yes, I notice the older employees increased when I worked." Interestingly, one woman said that she noticed young employees quitting their job very quickly after their employment. The most affirmation I received was from a man, "Kenji", that said, "this isn't a question, it's a fact that the workforce is aging. You should be able to find government data which confirms this." This quote prompted me to include data from Japan's Statistic Bureau, seen below in *figures 3, 4,* and *7*. As there are too few employees to fully staff these large companies, women are now more likely to be hired into a position that was once held by a man. This obvious new trend has brought these women into

an environment that is not too familiar with bearing or raising children. As the data in this section shows, there are less people to employ as the population has grown too old to work, so women are being hired much more often.

2−22 出生，死亡，死産，婚姻及び離婚数（大正14年～平成25年）

LIVE BIRTHS, DEATHS, FOETAL DEATHS, MARRIAGES AND DIVORCES (1925～2013)

「人口動態調査」（29ページ参照）による。日本において発生した日本人に関するもの。昭和22～47年は，沖縄県を除く。

Data are based on the Vital Statistics (see page 32). Occurred in Japan in regard to Japanese. From 1947 to 1972, excluding Okinawa Prefecture.

年次 Year		出生数 Live births (1,000)	死亡数 Deaths (1,000)	(再掲) 乳児死亡数 (Re-grouped) Infant deaths (1,000)	自然増減数 Natural change (1,000)	死産数 Foetal deaths (1,000)	婚姻件数 Marriages (1,000)	離婚件数 Divorces (1,000)	人口1,000につき Per 1,000 population 1) 出生率 Live birth rate	死亡率 Death rate	自然増減率 Natural change rate	婚姻率 Marriage rate	離婚率 Divorce rate	乳児死亡率 Infant mortality rate 2)
41	1966	1,361	670	26	691	148	940	79	13.7	6.8	7.0	9.5	0.80	19.3
42	1967	1,936	675	29	1,261	149	953	83	19.4	6.8	12.7	9.6	0.84	14.9
43	1968	1,872	687	29	1,185	143	956	87	18.6	6.8	11.8	9.5	0.87	15.3
44	1969	1,890	694	27	1,196	139	984	91	18.5	6.8	11.7	9.6	0.89	14.2
45	1970	1,934	713	25	1,221	135	1,029	96	18.8	6.9	11.8	10.0	0.93	13.1
46	1971	2,001	685	25	1,316	131	1,091	104	19.2	6.6	12.6	10.5	0.99	12.4
47	1972	2,039	684	24	1,355	125	1,100	108	19.3	6.5	12.8	10.4	1.02	11.7
48	1973	2,092	709	24	1,383	116	1,072	112	19.4	6.6	12.8	9.9	1.04	11.3
49	1974	2,030	711	22	1,319	110	1,000	114	18.6	6.5	12.1	9.1	1.04	10.8
50	1975	1,901	702	19	1,199	102	942	119	17.1	6.3	10.8	8.5	1.07	10.0
51	1976	1,833	703	17	1,129	102	872	125	16.3	6.3	10.0	7.8	1.11	9.3
52	1977	1,755	690	16	1,065	95	821	129	15.5	6.1	9.4	7.2	1.14	8.9
53	1978	1,709	696	14	1,013	87	793	132	14.9	6.1	8.8	6.9	1.15	8.4
54	1979	1,643	690	13	953	82	789	135	14.2	6.0	8.3	6.8	1.17	7.9
55	1980	1,577	723	12	854	77	775	142	13.6	6.2	7.3	6.7	1.22	7.5
56	1981	1,529	720	11	809	79	777	154	13.0	6.1	6.9	6.6	1.32	7.1
57	1982	1,515	712	10	804	78	781	164	12.8	6.0	6.8	6.6	1.39	6.6
58	1983	1,509	740	9.4	769	72	763	179	12.7	6.2	6.5	6.4	1.51	6.2
59	1984	1,490	740	8.9	750	72	740	179	12.5	6.2	6.3	6.2	1.50	6.0
60	1985	1,432	752	7.9	679	69	736	167	11.9	6.3	5.6	6.1	1.39	5.5
61	1986	1,383	751	7.3	632	66	711	166	11.4	6.2	5.2	5.9	1.37	5.2
62	1987	1,347	751	6.7	595	64	696	158	11.1	6.2	4.9	5.7	1.30	5.0
63	1988	1,314	793	6.3	521	60	708	154	10.8	6.5	4.3	5.8	1.26	4.8
平成元年	1989	1,247	789	5.7	458	55	708	158	10.2	6.4	3.7	5.8	1.29	4.6
2	1990	1,222	820	5.6	401	54	722	158	10.0	6.7	3.3	5.9	1.28	4.6
3	1991	1,223	830	5.4	393	51	742	169	9.9	6.7	3.2	6.0	1.37	4.4
4	1992	1,209	857	5.5	352	49	754	179	9.8	6.9	2.9	6.1	1.45	4.5
5	1993	1,188	879	5.2	310	45	793	188	9.6	7.1	2.5	6.4	1.52	4.3
6	1994	1,238	876	5.3	362	43	783	195	10.0	7.1	2.9	6.3	1.57	4.2
7	1995	1,187	922	5.1	265	39	792	199	9.6	7.4	2.1	6.4	1.60	4.3
8	1996	1,207	896	4.5	310	40	795	207	9.7	7.2	2.5	6.4	1.66	3.8
9	1997	1,192	913	4.4	278	40	776	223	9.5	7.3	2.2	6.2	1.78	3.7
10	1998	1,203	936	4.4	267	39	785	243	9.6	7.5	2.1	6.3	1.94	3.6
11	1999	1,178	982	4.0	196	38	762	251	9.4	7.8	1.6	6.1	2.00	3.4
12	2000	1,191	962	3.8	229	38	798	264	9.5	7.7	1.8	6.4	2.10	3.2
13	2001	1,171	970	3.6	200	37	800	286	9.3	7.7	1.6	6.4	2.27	3.1
14	2002	1,154	982	3.5	171	37	757	290	9.2	7.8	1.4	6.0	2.30	3.0
15	2003	1,124	1,015	3.4	109	35	740	284	8.9	8.0	0.9	5.9	2.25	3.0
16	2004	1,111	1,029	3.1	82	34	720	271	8.8	8.2	0.7	5.7	2.15	2.8
17	2005	1,063	1,084	3.0	-21	32	714	262	8.4	8.6	-0.2	5.7	2.08	2.8
18	2006	1,093	1,084	2.9	8.2	31	731	257	8.7	8.6	0.1	5.8	2.04	2.6
19	2007	1,090	1,108	2.8	-19	29	720	255	8.6	8.8	-0.1	5.7	2.02	2.6
20	2008	1,091	1,142	2.8	-51	28	726	251	8.7	9.1	-0.4	5.8	1.99	2.6
21	2009	1,070	1,142	2.6	-72	27	708	253	8.5	9.1	-0.6	5.6	2.01	2.4
22	2010	1,071	1,197	2.5	-126	27	700	251	8.5	9.5	-1.0	5.5	1.99	2.3
23	2011	1,051	1,253	2.5	-202	26	662	236	8.3	9.9	-1.6	5.2	1.87	2.3
24	2012	1,037	1,256	2.3	-219	25	669	235	8.2	10.0	-1.7	5.3	1.87	2.2
25	2013	1,030	1,268	2.2	-239	24	661	231	8.2	10.1	-1.9	5.3	1.84	2.1

1) 昭和41年以前は総人口（日本に在住する外国人を含む）を分母に用いている。 2) 出生1,000につき。

1) Up to 1966, the denominator is the total population (including resident non-Japanese). 2) Per 1,000 live births.

資 料 厚生労働省大臣官房統計情報部人口動態・保健社会統計課「人口動態統計」

Source: Statistics and Information Department, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Figure 4: Japan's birth rates decreasing throughout the years.

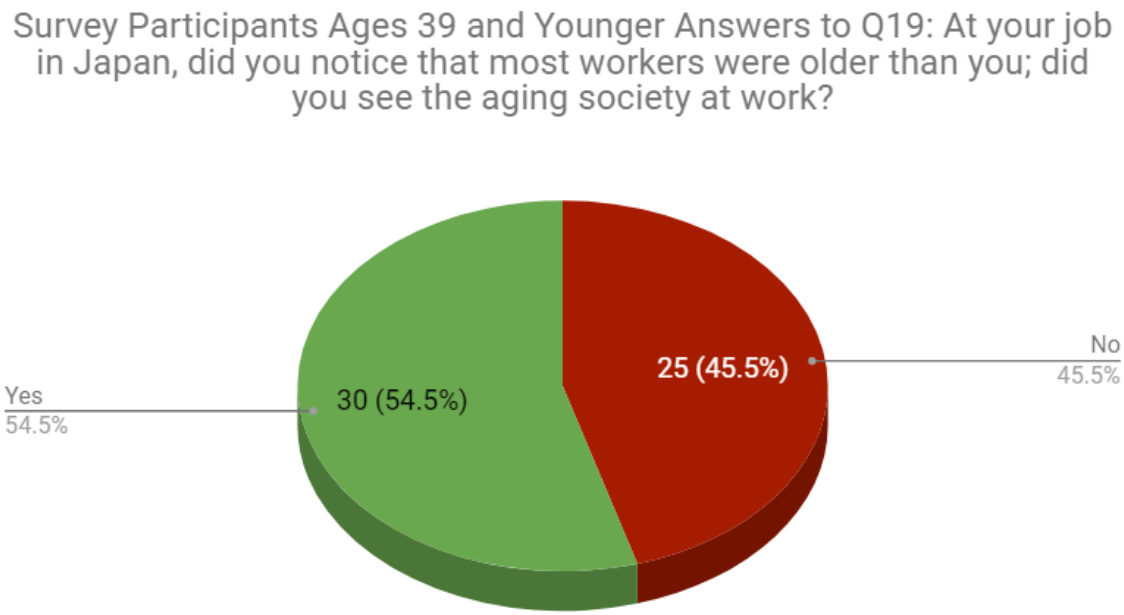

Figure 5: Survey participant data displaying observations from younger generation of an aging society at work, 2017.

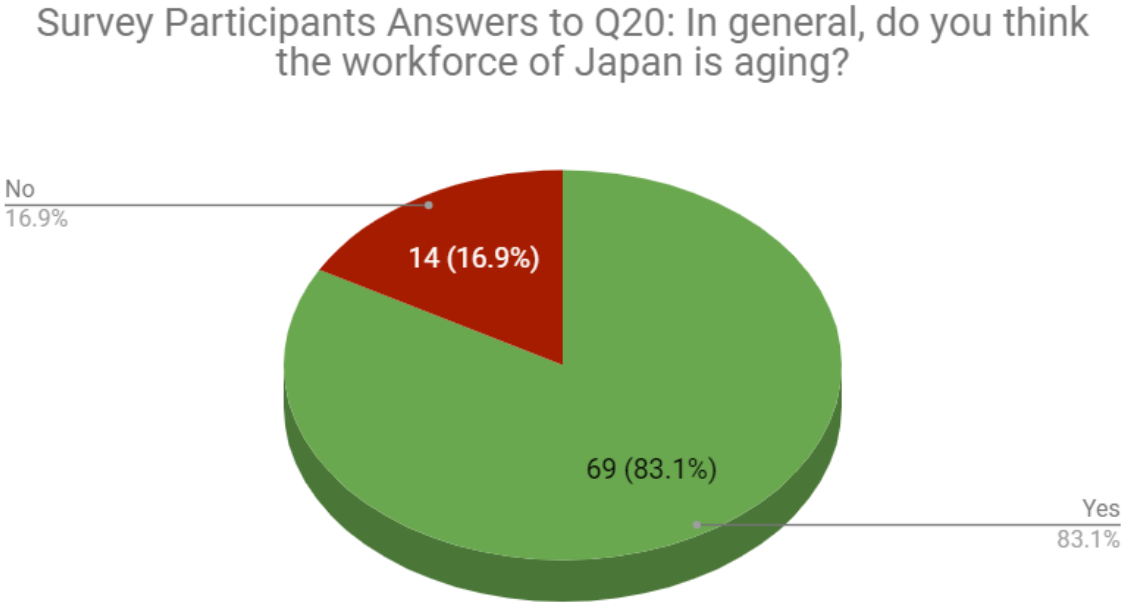

Figure 6: Survey participant data of opinions on Japan's aging population, 2017.

2−25 標準化人口動態率及び女性の人口再生産率（大正14年～平成25年）

STANDARDIZED VITAL RATES AND REPRODUCTION RATES (1925～2013)

29ページ「標準化人口動態率」及び「女性の人口再生産率」参照。率算出の基礎人口は，昭和15年以前は総人口（日本に在住する外国人を含む）を，22年以降は日本人人口を用いている。昭和22～47年は沖縄県を除く。

See page 32 "Standardized vital rates" and "Reproduction rates". The population base used for calculation of rates is, Up to 1940, the total population (including resident non-Japanese), and from 1947, Japanese nationals. Okinawa Prefecture is not included in the figures from 1947 to 1972.

年次 Year		標準化人口動態率 Standardized vital rates (‰) 1)			女性の人口再生産率 Reproduction rates 2)		
		出生率 Birth rate	死亡率 Death rate	自然増加率 Natural increase rate	合計特殊出生率 Total fertility rate	総再生産率 Gross reproduction rate	純再生産率 Net reproduction rate
45	1970	15.26	5.18	10.08	2.13	1.03	1.00
46	1971	15.87	4.82	11.05	2.16	1.04	1.02
47	1972	15.96	4.66	11.31	2.14	1.04	1.01
48	1973	16.07	4.61	11.47	2.14	1.04	1.01
49	1974	15.47	4.45	11.02	2.05	0.99	0.97
50	1975	14.32	4.20	10.11	1.91	0.93	0.91
51	1976	13.65	4.05	9.60	1.85	0.90	0.88
52	1977	13.31	3.84	9.47	1.80	0.87	0.86
53	1978	13.25	3.73	9.52	1.79	0.87	0.86
54	1979	13.07	3.56	9.51	1.77	0.86	0.84
55	1980	12.76	3.57	9.18	1.75	0.85	0.83
56	1981	12.55	3.44	9.11	1.74	0.85	0.83
57	1982	12.75	3.28	9.47	1.77	0.86	0.85
58	1983	12.95	3.27	9.68	1.80	0.88	0.86
59	1984	12.96	3.15	9.80	1.81	0.88	0.87
60	1985	12.53	3.06	9.47	1.76	0.86	0.85
61	1986	12.26	2.94	9.32	1.72	0.84	0.83
62	1987	11.95	2.82	9.13	1.69	0.82	0.81
63	1988	11.66	2.84	8.82	1.66	0.81	0.80
平成元年	1989	11.02	2.73	8.29	1.57	0.76	0.76
2	1990	10.74	2.72	8.02	1.54	0.75	0.74
3	1991	10.78	2.66	8.12	1.53	0.75	0.74
4	1992	10.48	2.65	7.82	1.50	0.73	0.72
5	1993	10.14	2.62	7.52	1.46	0.71	0.70
6	1994	10.42	2.53	7.89	1.50	0.73	0.72
7	1995	9.90	2.57	7.33	1.42	0.69	0.69
8	1996	9.89	2.41	7.48	1.43	0.69	0.69
9	1997	9.65	2.36	7.29	1.39	0.68	0.67
10	1998	9.63	2.36	7.27	1.38	0.67	0.67
11	1999	9.35	2.36	7.00	1.34	0.65	0.65
12	2000	9.51	2.23	7.27	1.36	0.66	0.65
13	2001	9.29	2.16	7.13	1.33	0.65	0.64
14	2002	9.21	2.11	7.10	1.32	0.64	0.64
15	2003	8.99	2.09	6.90	1.29	0.63	0.62
16	2004	8.95	2.04	6.91	1.29	0.63	0.62
17	2005	8.72	2.04	6.68	1.26	0.61	0.61
18	2006	9.06	1.98	7.08	1.32	0.64	0.64
19	2007	9.16	1.94	7.22	1.34	0.65	0.64
20	2008	9.34	1.92	7.43	1.37	0.67	0.66
21	2009	9.31	1.86	7.45	1.37	0.67	0.66
22	2010	9.40	1.85	7.55	1.39	0.67	0.67
23	2011	9.40	1.91	7.49	1.39	0.68	0.67
24	2012	9.43	1.78	7.64	1.41	0.68	0.68
25	2013	9.53	1.74	7.79	1.43	0.70	0.69

Figure 7: Depicting Japan's national birth rate decreasing.

7.2 Finding 2 - Fewer Career Development and Advancement Opportunities for Women

With more women entering the workforce in Japan, as a result of an aging population, these new employees find their work environment unsupportive and even hostile. During my interviews, when asked 'with the aging population, do you notice more women working in the office recently?,' 7 of the 8 asked responded with an undeniable "Yes." They all noticed this within the past decade, or even earlier. This shows that there is a noticeable increase in female employees at work. Despite this, I have found that, in general, women in Japanese society do not have as many opportunities in the workplace as men. In result, they are often unable to develop a fulfilling career in terms of compensation (salary) or professional acknowledgement. There are many barriers that women face in the workplace, which I will discuss below.

Japan's workplace is an environment designed for men, as men are not expected to raise their children in Japanese traditional culture. Most of the interview results show that men outnumber women in the workplace, even though there is an influx of female employment. During the interviews, upon asking 'About how many men and women were employed at your office?,' the estimation for female workers versus male workers was often lower than half. One participant estimated there were about 1,800 male employees and 200 female employees at their workplace. Looking at Japan's Statistics Bureau, the 2016 Annual Employment record estimates that the annual average of employment across all industries were 36,390,000 men were employed while 28,010,000 women were employed (Statistics Japan 2016). As there are fewer women than men employed at work, women often face underrepresentation at work. It was especially rare for a woman to have a higher earning career, as they often worked part-time jobs that play subservient roles. In Japan, part-time workers are defined as not working less hours, but as receiving less benefits while working full-time hours:

> In the Bureau of Statistics Employment Status Survey and the Ministry of Labor Survey on the Status of Part-Time Workers, a part-time worker is defined as an employee whose position is classified as part-time by the employer; a part-time employee does not necessarily work fewer hours than a full-time employee. In 1990, 20.6 percent of workers classified as part-time by their employer worked as many hours as did regular, full-time workers. The set of personnel practices that applies to these workers distinguishes them as part-time. For example, in large- and medium-sized Japanese companies, regular full-time workers typically are given commitments of lifetime employment and the wages and promotions of these workers are determined to a large degree by seniority. Practices of lifetime employment and seniority-based wages and promotions rarely apply to part-time workers. (Houseman 1995, 10-11).

When asked during interviews,"Are there certain positions that only women occupy at your company?" most of the participants said yes--one even described blatant sexism at her unnamed university, nodding her head and saying, "The college president would secretly hire only women as his secretary." A different woman said that women were expected to serve tea to clients when asked, "Were the men/women expected to do different duties at work?" A couple of survey responses support this idea, as one respondent said, "Women were very much second class citizens in the office. This was in the late [19]90s. Women held only administrative roles and were required to bring tea daily to the male employees." Another similar response was, "A so-called "tea serving" (*ochakumi*) by female employees." This type of work allows a man to ask a woman to serve him, allowing males to attain dominance over female employees. While the majority of interview participants said that men and women were treated equally at work, two out of the eight participants told me that there were reported cases of sexual harassment at their workplace, but felt too uncomfortable to fully recounting what happened. When it came to asking whether men had an advantage over women at work, the answers were split down the middle as 'Yes' and 'No,' yet most of the participants did acknowledge that men did get paid higher salaries than women at their office. When questioned during the interview, "Do men and women make the same amount for the same job?" a couple of women seemed uncomfortable, moving in their seat, not making eye contact, scratching their arm, and thought on the question a bit before saying either "I think so…," "I don't think so…," or "I think it was the same…" and trailing off showing they were ready to move onto a different subject. Other more confident women quickly responded with, "There was a difference," or "There was a gap." One interview was with a Japanese American woman who described her experiences in witnessing the gender gap in the Japanese workplace over time, and how she took notice of Japan's societal expectations:

> I have represented Japanese pharmaceutical companies since at least the early 1990s. Starting at about that time, I went to Japan to meet with current and potential clients at least once a year... As to my perspectives, first, in the early 1990s, there were only a small handful of women patent attorneys in these companies (and most women employed were receptionists, you know). But by the time I retired, virtually every company or law firm with whom we worked had women patent attorneys on their staff. None of them were the heads of any sections, at least not four years ago, but the level of respect and comradery was striking: they were clearly peers. So over my career, I had the privilege of watching Japanese women enter the field of patent law, and it was

> impressive. Most of my clients were male and my gender generally did not seem to undercut my position. When I was a young associate in my mid-30s--during one meeting--a client was asking a question about a patent issue, and I spoke up. He then turned to me and apologized, saying that he had assumed that I was a translator, not an attorney. Once I made partner in my firm (in 1994), I was always introduced to new folks as a partner and they all responded with a bit of added respect [A/N: once they realized she held a higher position at her firm]. So, clearly progress is being made. There's still a long way to go (in our country as well[referring to the US]), but it is heartening to have seen it unfold before my eyes. - Sayoko

The discrimination described during the surveys and interviews quickly transformed into a more aggressive harassment as survey respondents wrote their experiences, which are included anonymously. These statements are very profound, as women often find it difficult to present these stories. They came about as answers to Q17, which asked 'At your workplace in Japan, did you witness any accounts of gender inequality?' The possible answers being 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Decline to State,' and 'Other (please specify or write explanation of account).' These answers allow the participant to continue with an optional explanation of the account if they wish. This question is worded in a way that does not identify the victim or the aggressor, but still allows for acknowledgement of the occurrence. As seen in *figure 8* below, the results of this question shows that 51.1% of participants have in fact witnessed or experienced some type of gender inequality, while 35.2% of participants say they have not, and 13.6% of participants declined to state whether they had any knowledge of this at work. Most of the participants have seen what they determined as gender inequality, and many wrote of their experiences, when provided an option to do so. One significant quote from a survey participant named "Mari" describes how workplaces make it difficult for mothers to become employed, "Men commonly speak over women. We had a difficult time hiring a new staff member because she had a young child and people thought she would not be dedicated enough as a result. We were successful hiring her in the end, thankfully." Similarly, working while being pregnant proved to be even more of a challenge, alongside other troubles according to one woman named "Kana", "Women were asked to resign if they got married and were fired if they got pregnant. Sexual harassment was widespread and there was more or less no safeguards to protect against it or any way to safely report it. There was a lot of social pressure from both men and women to push married women out of the workplace." The most notable quote was from a survey participant named "Rika",

> When I asked our head of HR why paternity leave in Japan is two days while at the same company in the US we get 20 days, the answer was "it's a woman's job to take care of kids, so it makes sense" that in Japan paternity leave is short. Also, Japanese managers write off the ability of women. As head of Legal, I tried to educate the company about "hidden" discrimination, but HR vehemently opposed it. As a result, you see that women are not given the same opportunities as men, they are excluded from the social meetings where decisions are made, and are treated as if they are a weaker sex. Of course, the women are just as complicit -- none complain when HR interviews them because they don't want to "rock the boat." They voice their complaints in private, but publicly state that everything is fair. - Rika

This quote is reminiscent of what Keiko Sakurai said during her presentation on Japanese work culture. A common phrase to describe Japanese society exemplifies the importance of fitting in, “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down” (Sakurai). Many other responses included a lack of female superiors, a lack of women working in the technology industry, general signs of disrespect towards women (not taking them seriously, dismissing their ideas, cutting them off mid-sentence), women being scrutinized more so than men, expectations for women to dress elegantly, as well as general comments on the wage gap. The statements of these participants are numerous and show a lack of opportunities for women in the working world of Japan. This is the general case in Japan. One respondent named “Yumiko” positively said, “My workplace had a good balance of women and men in the office. There were women who held higher positions, and all mothers were able to go on maternity leave. Paternity leave was also just beginning to be offered with new policies in place.” Some companies in Japan are taking the initiative to be more supportive of women. On the alternative, respondent Akihiko said,“Gender inequality is a given in Japan. It should not come as a surprise to anyone who works there. If you can't tolerate it, you should not work there.” This is a reminder that some people do not believe in change or solutions; perhaps some have given up fixing this issue.

Another barrier for opportunity that both men and women face at work are cultural/societal expectations and normalities. It is well known that Japanese people work long hours starting early in the morning to late into the night. A company survey showed that around 80% of companies have a strong desire to maintain employment for as long as possible and for as many employees as possible. Working long hours is an act of loyalty towards the company. (Fujimoto 2017). It was explained to me by Keiko Sakurai that workers are expected to stay at work as long as their boss is working (Sakurai). This leads to

many workers pretending to work, or working very slowly and inefficiently, as they do not get paid for extra completed work (Sakurai). One survey participant said in a comment, "Generally speaking, there is an expectation for all staff to clock in and do a little bit of overtime. I've seen fathers being exhausted and leaving the administration doors well beyond the closing time. I've seen of one case where a manager stayed back, leaving the employees in a little conundrum to decide whether they should leave or stay back alongside with the manager." Then there is *nomikai* which can be translated to 'drinking meeting.' When the boss finally completes their work, the boss may suggest to go to dinner or go to *nomikai*. It is rude to decline this invitation, especially if a worker is hoping to receive a promotion. This is why the Japanese 'salaryman' is famous for stumbling home under the influence of alcohol late at night. I witnessed this while doing fieldwork in Japan. I stayed with a Japanese couple I found on an online homestay site. The husband would come home after work, midnight or later, and I could hear him loudly vomiting in the bathroom next to my room every night. These working conditions are very unsuitable for both men and women, and prevent time for one's personal life. *Nomikai* is a form of pregnancy discrimination, as pregnant women cannot drink and must rest after a full shift of work, so everybody in the office knows that they cannot attend *nomikai*. Thus, pregnant women miss out on a chance to befriend the boss, which leads to promotions and salary raises. So, women that seek to improve their career will choose not to become pregnant.

These workers push themselves to this extent because it is the expectation, and these workers feel a great loyalty to their company--to the point where they have to be forced to take vacation time. I met with a young woman, Ayaka Sasaki, who has recently come to work for a large Japanese company. When I interviewed her, she explained to me that she is now an 'OL' (office lady), and lives in very affordable, but exclusive, company housing with her coworkers. She described her life as practically living and breathing her career. Many women are unable to maintain a lifestyle such as this, so they must work part-time. 'OL' as a label is degrading in a way, as "Some working women dislike the description of OL as they feel the word's emphasis on femininity is discriminatory." (US-Japan 2003, n.p.). *Figure 9* displays the results of Q14, which asked whether the participant has ever worked a part-time job in the entirety of

their life. A higher percentage of women worked part-time jobs than did men, as 91% of women worked a part-time job, and 84.8% of men worked a part-time job. It is common knowledge that women are more often employed as part-time workers, as they might leave to have children; as participant Jun said, "Women are not taken very seriously. It's harder for women to get higher ranking jobs because it's assumed they will have children and quit." Women are assumed to choose having children over having a career, which is no longer the case in Japan, as less women are having children. Also relevant to this is *figure 10*, showing responses to Q13, 'currently, are you a full-time or part-time employee?'. The results for this sample were significant, showing 81.8% of the men working full-time, while showing only 66% of the women working full-time. Only 9.1% of the men in the sample work part-time, while 28.3% of the women in the sample work part-time. This significant data displays the lack of full-time representation that women currently have in Japan's workplace, where women receive less work and less pay due to being part-time. This data demonstrates that the Japanese workplace, while available to men and women employees, notably does not provide the environment or the schedule that female employees need in order to succeed in the workplace while pursuing a meaningful family life.

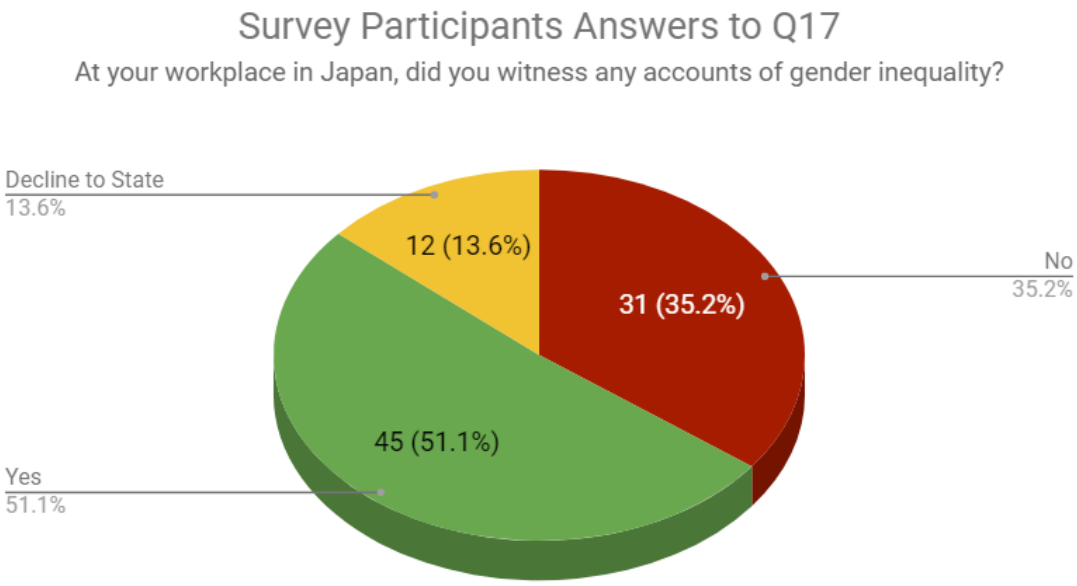

Figure 8: Survey participants on witnessing accounts of gender equality at work, 2017.

Q14 In your whole life, have you ever worked at a part-time job?	Yes	No
Men	84.8% (28)	15.2% (5)
Women	91% (51)	9% (5)

Figure 9: Survey participants, Men versus women on whether they worked a part-time job, 2017.

Q13 Currently, are you a full-time or part-time employee?	Full-time	Part-time	Retired or not currently working
Men	81.8% (27)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)
Women	66% (35)	28.3% (15)	5.7% (3)

Figure 10: Survey participants, Men versus women on current job position, 2017.

7.3 Finding 3 - Reduced National Birthrate Demographic Trend for Working Women

This research led to an examination of how and why women must work harder to thrive in Japanese society. And as a result, to thrive, if not just to survive, the research has borne out the trend that women have increasingly less opportunity to have children. These working women of Japan are unable to find time to have children, thus highly impacting the birthrates of Japan. The difficulties these women face are causing the aging population crisis. These women are unconsciously deterred from having children, as work in Japan is so demanding and they most often have no external support on which to rely. Workers in Japan face long working hours, often lasting up to 12 hours daily as a result of *nomikai*, a demanding and endless workload causing a slow working culture, demands of loyalty to the company (not wanting to take time off), and a lack of sympathy towards pregnancy issues and infrastructure supporting mothers-to-be (Sakurai).These workers also face the issue of lack of support when it comes to raising a child. Further covered below will be these themes of workplace difficulties and lack of support in raising a family.

The question, "Do you know anything about your workplace's policy on maternal leave?" was asked during the survey. One response that stood out said, "I used it, everyone else uses it," assuming that everybody is well-educated on maternal leave general policy, when my data shows that this is not the case, especially since some participants in my research have said that Japan does not provide maternity leave to women. Q12 asks 'yes or no,'for whether the participant feels that it is difficult to raise children while working. This question contains an optional space for further commentary, as comments for this question may strongly support my thesis that having children while working outside the home is so difficult that many women are not able to raise children, thus contributing to the aging population trend in Japan. *Figure 11* shows the results of Q12 survey responses to the question, "Do you find it difficult to have/raise children in Japan?." The majority of participants said 'Yes,' it is difficult to have and raise children in Japan, with 88.2% responding 'Yes,' and 11.8% responding 'No.' This sample group shows the general thought on raising a family in Japan is that is in fact difficult. Regarding those who said it is not difficult, one respondent said that it is not difficult, as long as one has outside assistance raising the

child. Here are some comments on this subject from respondents: Do you find it difficult to raise children in Japan? One answer from a woman named “Noriko” said, “Japan still does not look favorably at female workers who are pregnant or mothers. They give overtime work on purpose knowing that is going to be hard for pregnant women or mothers, and try to have those women quit without blatantly firing them.” Another woman, “Keiko”, similarly says that the work balance of raising children and working feels impossible, “Work and child-rearing are both stressful. Raising children is not rewarding enough to balance the stress of work.” Most answers describe battles finding proper daycare, along with finding time to both work and give attention to the child. A lack of daycare is the most significant difficulty according to these answers. Q7~10 asks the participant about work benefits, specifically whether their workplace offers maternity leave, paternity leave, and whether the participant’s family has taken advantage of either. Visible in *figure 13*, Q7 asked respondents whether their company offered maternity leave opportunities. The results show that 50% of men and 46.4% of women said ‘Yes,’ while 8.8% of men and an alarming 19.6% of women said ‘No,’ and 41.2% of men and 33.9% of women responded with ‘I don’t know.’ When I asked Q8 ‘did you or your spouse take advantage of maternity leave opportunities? Why or why not?,’ I was surprised that although some women described their experiences taking maternity leave, many respondents stated that maternity leave does not exist, even though it legally does in Japan. One man I interviewed explained maternity leave in Japan, “Companies are required by law to offer maternity leave, just like the US. After speaking with several Japanese friends, the general opinion is that it would be very “surprising (and illegal) if a company were not to offer it.” A few women said they they resigned from their job before they gave birth, but did not give further explanation. One participant even said, “It wasn't offered to us so we purposefully did not get pregnant.” **This again emphasizes the unsuitable environment that currently exists in Japan, which is in return ensuring that people do not form the desire to have children.** The results of Q9 are visible below in *figure 14*, answering the question asking whether their company offered paternity leave opportunities. Around half of the respondents did not know anything about their company’s policy on paternity leave, while 20.6% of the male participants said their company did offer paternity leave. I also asked regarding paternity

leave, ‘did you or your spouse take advantage of paternity leave opportunities? Why or why not?.’ Many responses to this question included that it did not exist when they had children, as well as having up to a week off from work. One respondent notably said, “Paternity leave is two days, so meaningless in any event. Recently increased to five days, which is equally meaningless. Our head of HR said "it is a woman's job to take care of the children, so it makes sense" why paternity leave is negligible.” HR is meant to support employees, yet in this situation, it dubbed women as only having a purpose of raising a child. Another participant said, ”I was there in between 1996 to 1999, and the idea of paternity leave was not as common as that of maternity leave. Even if it would be available back then, and I was in need of the leave, I am not sure if I would have taken it due to social and peer pressure.” Men are so often unable to support their spouse when their child is being raised due to societal expectations for them to show their loyalty to their company by working no matter the situation.

Women are unable to care for children when they have long working hours, so they often resort to utilization of external child care options. Mothers often have their family or daycare centers watch their young children. The Japanese public school system provides care for ages 6-18 from around 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. But, when the children are of ages 0-5, the child must be cared for by another resource. With a high demand for these daycare centers, lengthy waitlists remain a barrier to childcare in Japan. These daycare centers are very expensive, as well. If a mother has no family members to care for the child, and is put on endless waitlists, she then experiences extreme pressure to quit her job or become a part-time worker in order to care for her young child. But, in Japan, it is very difficult to support a family with a salary from only one family member (whether that be the mother or the father). Many families struggle to support each other as a result, building strong but stressful family dynamics. Women are often expected to choose to either have a child or a career, and more recently, women are choosing to nourish their career rather than have a child. One interviewee responded with “Yes” when I asked her, “Do you know any women that were unable to have children because of work?” I was able to ask eight participants this question, so even one single “Yes” is significant. When I asked, “Do you use daycare? If so, was it difficult to find daycare for your children?,” the participants that said they used some form of external

child care specified that rather than use daycare they had a family member care for their children while they were working, such as the husband, or the child's grandparents. Answer to Q12 "Do you find it difficult to have/raise children in Japan?" also received answers that resembled this response from "Kenta", "I feel it is difficult to raise children in Japan, as the mother is expected to stay home and look after the kids. Most children never see their fathers because they are at work all the time. If mothers want to participate in community activities, they bring their children with them. This can be sometimes distracting to other community club members. There is also a shortage of childcare as well, so this is difficult for mothers to return to work."

Q16 is displayed in *figure 12*, asking participants whether they took a break from working to have children. I divided the data into the responses of men and women. Twenty-five percent of women said that they took a break from working to have children while a significant zero percent of men took off from work to have a child. This shows the lack of support that women have from men when it comes to raising a child.

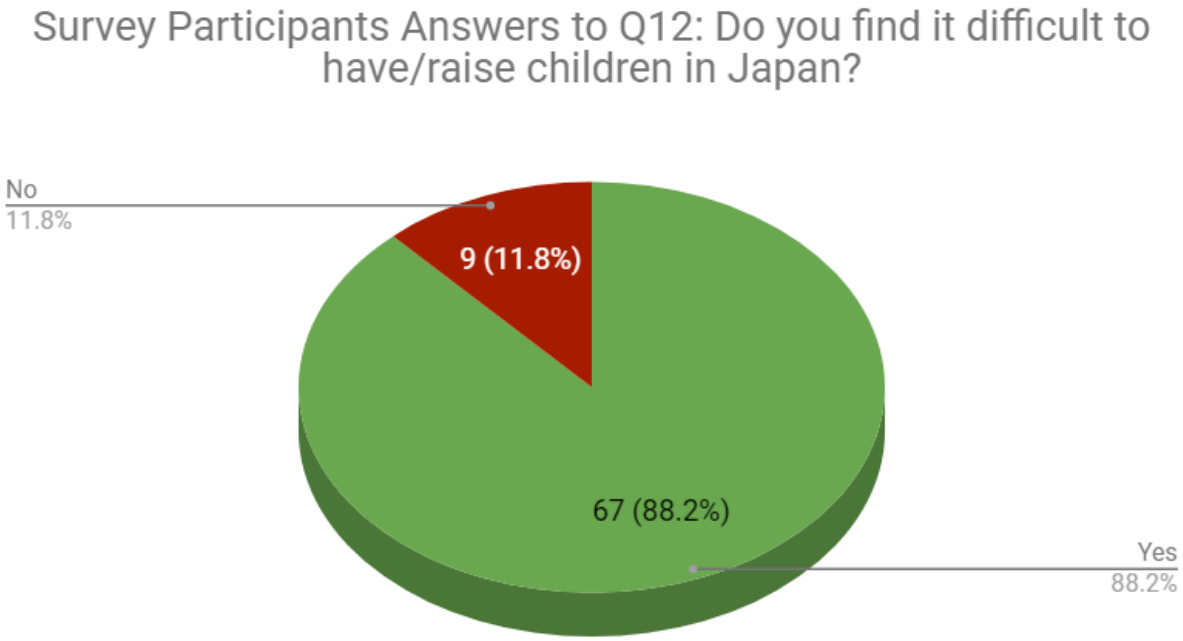

Figure 11: Survey participants on whether or not it is difficult to raise children in Japan, 2017.

Q16 Did take a break from working because you had children?	Yes	No	N/A
Women	25% (14)	37.5% (21)	37.5% (21)
Men	0% (0)	58.1% (18)	41.9% (13)

Figure 12: Survey participants, Men versus women on whether they took a break from work because they had children, 2017.

Q7 Did your company offer maternity leave opportunities?	Yes	No	I don't know	Spouse took advantage of maternity/paternity leave
Men	50% (17)	8.8% (3)	41.2% (14)	3 People
Women	46.4% (26)	19.6% (11)	33.9% (19)	5 People

Figure 13: Survey participants, Men versus women on maternity leave, 2017.

Q9 Did your company offer paternity leave opportunities?	Yes	No	I don't know	Spouse took advantage of maternity/paternity leave
Men	20.6% (7)	26.5% (9)	52.9% (18)	2 People
Women	16.1% (9)	32.1% (18)	51.8% (29)	0 People

Figure 14: Survey participants, Men versus women on paternity leave, 2017.

CONCLUSION

Japan's demographic trends examined in this paper, particularly the gender inequality in the workplace exacerbating the aging population crisis, may lead in the future to great challenges for Japan. The percentage of the older population is rising faster than the percentage of younger workers, in large part due to falling fertility rates. (In a separate but related factor, the mortality rate has fallen -- this places even further pressure on a relatively smaller younger worker population to support the growing retired, aging population.) In effect, Japan's demographic trends point to a situation where they do not have a sufficient 'replacement' rate -- there are not sufficient younger workers to support an increasingly larger older population. An exacerbating factor is that women are not working in equitable work environments, and so must in general work harder than their male counterparts for similar work (if they are even afforded the opportunity to advance to similar career positions), and it is often at the expense of forgoing having children while working in Japan's workplace. The key conclusion brought forth by this thesis and study is as follows: **the Japanese workplace is discouraging the desire to have children among workers in Japan, thus greatly contributing to the aging population crisis.** This is clearly depicted in *figure 15*, in my graphic titled, The Downward Spiral of Japan's Aging Population as a Result of a Decrease in Women Choosing to Have Children Due to Career Constraints. These inter-connected issues require Japan to address and enact solutions in policy, law, enforcement, funding, public communication, education and cultural practice areas if Japan seeks to sustain itself as a successfully growing, vibrant modernized nation.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

Japan needs to undertake significant initiatives in a range of areas, including changes and improvements in policies and laws; enforcement of these policies and laws; funding to support pro-active measures; public communication and outreach; expanded education and cultural practices.

Current laws and policies need to be revised to protect and further enhance gender equality protections and protect against pregnancy discrimination, to foster maternity support while women are

increasingly participating in the workforce. As part of enacting new laws and policies, Japan at national, regional and corporate levels needs to actively identify priority issues, criteria and barriers. Once these are identified and prioritized, both existing laws and policies can be revised and new ones established to address the most pressing barriers. This would help to encourage a boost in birth rates, for the increasing percentage of women who are joining the work world, to offset Japan's aging crisis dilemma. If left unaddressed, Japan will likely face serious economic, and hence societal and political upheaval, due to the aging population demographic trend. But the country seems unable to meet needed conditions as the surge in employed women, joining a maternity-unfriendly work environment, stifles desires and intentions to raise a family. Women need to be empowered through more equitable employment laws and policies, to improve their ability to balance maternity and career decisions.

Without an effective enforcement capability, the best system of laws and policies will not alleviate this crisis. Therefore, at national, regional as well as corporate/organization levels, enforcement needs to be emphasized and sustained. Both existing enforcement capability needs to be strengthened, as well as new enforcement mechanisms and organizations may need to be created. The U.S. has an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) which serves as a national resource and focal point to ensure laws and policies are supported. Japan's equivalent EEO organization needs to be similarly empowered to promote laws and policies across Japan's regions, corporations and integrate this as part of Japan's future well-being.

Without adequate funding, the best set of laws, policies, and enforcement organizations will have limited impact. Funding needs to be provided, not as a one-time measure but on a sustained basis, and at national, regional and at the corporate levels. In fact, the best funding measure at the corporate level is the adoption of total compensation packages to encourage women to work for companies. This would include, for example, for pregnant women the opportunity to temporarily take on lighter work assignments, be able to take disability leave, as well as be able to take unpaid leave and return later to their position after parental leave is taken. Such benefits are offered to temporarily disabled employees and should also be offered to pregnant women. Japanese companies should realize that this is a big issue

that is now increasingly prominent in U.S., European and other countries' companies, that compete against Japanese companies -- the concept of companies providing a total compensation package to employees. Beyond equitable pay, which remains extremely important, employees and therefore also the companies that employ and rely on them, are increasingly basing employment decisions on not only salary, but the benefits and working environments offered by a company. Due to our global interconnected economy, Japan and its companies will have to provide work environments that offer a broader range of benefits, including maternity-friendly workplaces. The sooner they address this, the sooner they can redirect the demographic trend that is taking them off course as a successful, modernized economy and society.

As one encouraging indicator, firms have increasingly begun to introduce programs targeted at women who have had children and are considering re-entering the work world [the census survey criteria are, those over the age of 30 or 35 years who want to work again]. The proportion of firms that introduced re-hiring programs for women after childbirth and/or child rearing went from 5.6% in 1986 to 16.6% in 1989 (Japan Institute... 1992, 9, 32). In addition to Japan workplace policies adopting more flexible, maternity-friendly options and benefits, as described above, there is more emphasis on human resources education, to emphasize a more maternity-friendly, ethical workplace.

Placing an emphasis on improved public communication and outreach at Federal, regional and throughout companies and organizations will help spread the message that this is a critical issue to Japan's future well-being and economic success. At the national level, there should be a consistent messaging program to remind Japan's population that basic employment should be based on ability, not gender. At the corporate level, companies should communicate that gender and pregnancy discrimination is costly for business, especially compared to what non-Japanese companies may do to support their employees. There are many initiatives that companies can undertake, such as mentoring programs as an example. With mentoring programs, women in the workforce can be paired with more experienced colleagues for career guidance and advice. For such programs, it is of course critical that mentors be

trained and counseled and knowledgeable in providing advice that supports gender equality and protects against pregnancy discrimination, and does not perpetuate past discriminatory practices.

Gender equality in the workplace and protection against pregnancy discrimination should be emphasized as part of Japan's education system, at national, regional, and at local/corporate/organizational levels. At the national level, the Japanese Government can fund academic institutions at all educational levels that include this as an area of study and coursework. Companies should include regular training, not just for its HR staff, but to all employees, of the benefits of such an approach and how it will benefit the company.

We have seen such changes from the top of Japan's Administration. With the recent re-election of Abe, Japan supports the LDP party and their platform and views on women. A more maternity-friendly future in Japan will be supported as well by the influence of new youth attitudes, the influence of other modernized societies' cultural norms and treatment of employees (observed much more easily and quickly via the internet and social media,) and the need to demonstrate progress in the face of upcoming international events such as the upcoming Olympics in 2020. In sum, Japan's recent election turnout has shown that the Japan population voted for a political party that supports women's rights, showing that positive changes in attitudes in Japan are possible. This could be further accelerated through measures such as required training of maternity-friendly laws and policies for HR and all company employees. The study findings point to trends such as the above as positive developments regarding whether Japan is willing to address the difficult decisions to alter the course of their aging demographic dilemma.

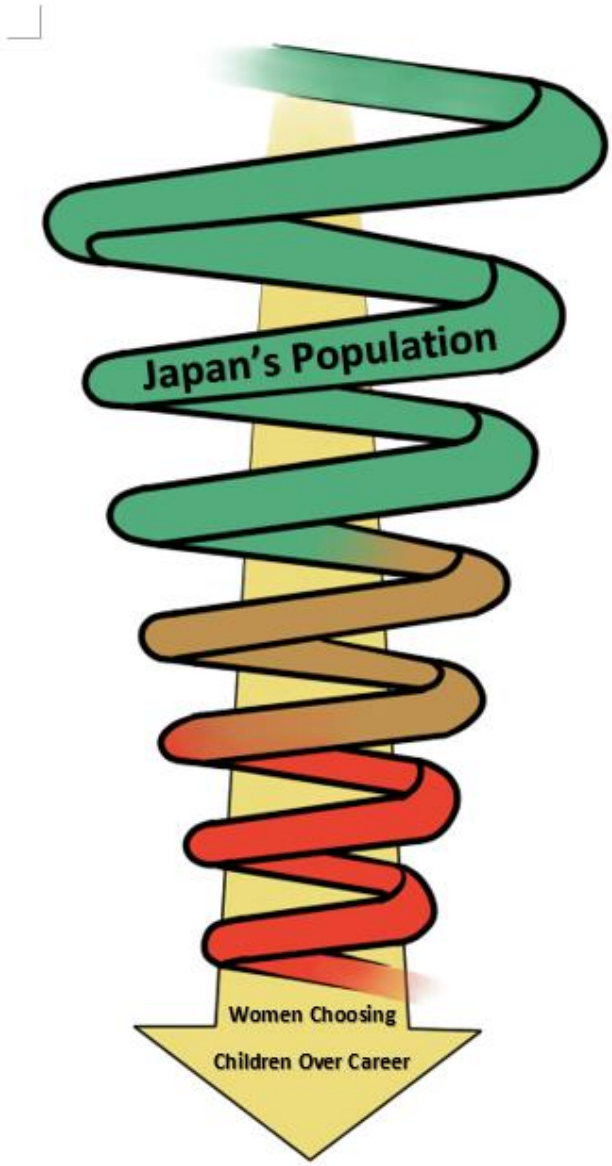

Figure 15: The Downward Spiral of Japan's Aging Population as a Result of a Decrease in Women Choosing to Have Children Due to Career Constraints.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Japan's Aging Population and Workplace Equality
Conducted by: Mary Perkins, 2017
Please do this survey. Please answer about your current company or your past company.
あなたの現在もしくは過去の職場について、下記のアンケートにお答えください。

Q1 Do you work in Japan in the past or present?
現在、日本で働いていますか、あるいは過去に働いていましたか。
(1) Yes (2) No
(1) はい (2) いいえ

Q2 What is your age?
年齢を教えて下さい。
less than 20 20-29 30-39 40 and above
２０歳以下 ２０歳から２９歳 ３０歳から３９歳 ４０歳以上

Q3 What is your gender?
性別を教えて下さい。
(1) Female (2) Male (3) Other (specify):_____
(1)女性 (2)男性 (3) その他:_____

Q4 JAPANESE version: Do you consider yourself Japanese? If not, what do you consider yourself as?
あなたは日本人だとご自身のことを認識していますか？
Yes No
はい いいえ

If no, I am (_____)
「いいえ」の場合（ 人）

Q4 ENGLISH version: Please write your ethnicity.
_____

Q5 Please write the country you are a citizen of.
国籍を教えて下さい。
_____

Q6 Please write your occupation.
あなたの職種を教えてください。
_____

Q7 Does your company offer maternity leave opportunities?
あなたの職場には産休制度がありますか。
(1) Yes (2) No (3) I don't know
(1) はい (2) いいえ (3)わからない

Q8 Have you taken advantage of them? Why or why not?

あなたは産休制度を利用しましたか。利用した理由、利用しなかった場合はその理由を教えて下さい。
(1) Yes (2) No
(1)はい (2)いいえ

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q9 Does your company offer paternity leave opportunities?
あなたの職場には父親の育児休暇制度がありますか。
(1) Yes (2) No (3) I don't know
(1)はい (2)いいえ (3)わからない

Q10 Have you taken advantage of them? Why or why not?
あなたは父親の育児休暇制度を利用しましたか。利用した理由、利用しなかった場合はその理由を教えて下さい。
(1) Yes (2) No
(1)はい (2)いいえ

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Q11 Do you have children?
子どもはいますか。
(1) Yes (2) No
(1)はい (2)いいえ

If so, how many children do you have?
（いると答えた方のみ）
子どもは何人いますか。

_____

Q12 Do you feel that it is difficult to raise children while working?
仕事と子育ての両立は難しいと感じますか。
(1) Yes (2) No (3) Other (specify):_____
(1)はい (2)いいえ (3)その他（具体的に）:_____

Q13 Are you a full-time or part-time employee?
あなたの雇用はフルタイムですか、それともパートタイムですか。
(1) Full-time employee (2) Part-time employee
(1)フルタイム (2)パートタイム

Q14 Did you ever work a part-time job?
あなたはパートタイムで働いたことがありますか。

(1) Yes (2) No
(1)はい(2)いいえ

Q15 How many years have you been working (total)?
あなたは今まで計何年働いていますか。
0-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21+ years
０－５年 ６－１０年 １１－１５年 １６－２０年 ２１年以上

Q16 Did take a break from working because you had children?
あなたは妊娠･出産･子育てが理由で仕事を一時的にやめましたか。
(1) Yes (2) No (3) Not applicable
(1)はい(2)いいえ (3)あてはまらない

Q17 Have you witnessed any accounts of gender inequality in the workplace?
職場で男女差別の事例を見たことがありますか。
(1) Yes (2) No (3) Unknown (4) Other (specify)
(1)はい (2)いいえ (3)不明/答えたくない (4)その他（くわしく）
_____
_____
_____

Q18 Did you have a male or female immediate supervisor?
あなたの直属の上司は男性ですか、女性ですか。
(1) Male (2) Female
(1)男性(2)女性

Q19 Do you see the aging society at work?
あなたの職場は高齢化していると感じますか。
(1)Yes (2)No
(1)はい(2)いいえ

Q20 In general, do you think the workforce is aging?
全般的に全般的に日本の労働力が高齢化していると思いますか。
(1) Yes (2) No
(1)はい(2)いいえ

Q21 In Japan, did you use any kind of childcare support?
(1) Yes (2) No

If yes, what type of child care did you use? (daycare, babysitter, etc.)
_____

Thank you so much for participating! Please e-mail me at mhperkins@dons.usfca.edu if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.
アンケートへのご協力ありがとうございました。ご質問、コメント、あるいは何かお気づきの点がありましたら、mhperkins@dons.usfca.edu までメールにてお問い合わせください。

Appendix B: Interview Question List

Japan's Aging Population and Workplace Equality
Interviewer's Guidelines
Conducted by: Mary Perkins, 2017

Q1 Where did/do you work in Japan?
Q2 What type of company did you work at in Japan?
Q3 How many people worked in your office?
Q4 About how many men and women were employed at your office?
Q5 How was your experience there?
Q6 Asking about their personal experiences:
Q7 Japan has an aging population. Do you notice this at work? Please elaborate.
Q8 With the aging population, do you notice more women working in the office recently?
Q9 When did you first notice this?
Q10 Do men and women make the same amount for the same job?
Q11 Are there certain positions that only women occupy at your company? (i.e. secretaries)
Q12 Does your company have women executives; women supervisors/managers?
Q13 What percentage of your workplace is women? Make an estimate. Has that increased in the last 5 years? (looking for recent change)
Q14 Do you know anything about your workplace's policy on maternal leave?
Q15 Did you know any women that wanted to have children while working?
Q16 Do you know any women that were unable to have children because of work?
Q17 Do you have children of your own?
Q18 Do you use daycare? If so, was it difficult to find daycare for your children?

Q19 Were there men/women with the same position title as you? (If "yes", continue)
Q20 Were the men/women expected to do different duties at work? Elaborate.
Q21 Do you feel that the men/women were treated differently at work? Elaborate.
Q22 Do you know if there were any reported cases of sexual harassment at work? (Yes/No)
Q23 Do you feel that men had an advantage over women in the workplace?
Q24 Do you know if men you worked with received higher pay than you? (If woman)
Q25 Do you know if women you worked with received lower pay than you? (If man)