

The Dissemination of Gender Ideology by the State, Changing Gender Roles, and
the Gender Gap in Employment in Post-2008 Financial Crisis Japan

by

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DEDICATIONS

For Mom, Ms. Margaret, Yvonne, and all of the strong, intelligent, and independent women I have always looked up to, and for Dad, for always believing in me.

For Hali and my few other classmates I look up to, in sisterhood, for your intelligence, strength and kindness during those high school years and beyond.

For my beloved cousins Ayano and Mitsuki Yoshida, my students Akari and Yukika, with the hope that you will challenge everything and shatter to pieces any system that tells you to be anything other than yourself.

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TRANSLATIONS AND ROMANIZATION OF KEY WORDS

Note about translations: For this paper, I have used “official” or “correct” translations for words and documents for which I have been able to find these “official” or “correct” translations. Other translations are my own.

Japanese Term	Romanization	Translation
良妻賢母	ryōsai kenbo	good wife, wise mother
正規社員	seiki shain	regular worker
非正規社員	hiseiki shain	non-regular worker
一般職	ippanshoku	general track job
総合職	sōgōshoku	regular track job
セクハラ	sekuhara	sexual harassment
家事ハラ	kajihara	“housework harassment”
イクメン	ikumen	“a father that participates in childrearing”
共働き	tomobataraki	dual income family (a family in which both the mother and father work for income)
専業主婦	sengyō shufu	full-time housewife
男女共同参画社会	danjo kyōdō sankaku shakai	gender-equal society
ジェンダー	jendā	gender

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The *Kokkai Yaji* Scandal and Disentangling Gender Issues in Japan Today

It was June of 2014 when I was contacted by a family member about a political scandal in Japan that may be of interest to me: a story about a politician under fire for insulting another member in the diet. I re-watched the video of the lawmaking session on the websites of major Japanese news outlets, many of which covered the incident. A young, female member of the diet, Ayaka Shiomura, stands at the podium and begins to explain her proposition: that there are not enough child support laws, and that the state should dedicate more resources so that women could both become mothers and hold jobs.¹ I recognized that this proposition was not new; the idea of promoting laws that would allow women to participate in the workforce more freely had been the topic of public interest for a few years now, and the slogan “for women” was now almost obligatory in political campaigns. I continued to watch, wondering what was so novel about this. As the member of the diet continued to explain her plans for laws that would aid childrearing, a shout echoes through the diet, referencing her divorce: “Why don’t you hurry up and get married?”² She is taken back for a moment, but continues. Then, another member shouts at her: “Well, you have to make the babies first,” and similar jeering continues, and she struggles to finish her proposal, almost in tears.³

The incident made headlines the next day, and the whole scandal was eventually named “*Kokkai Yaji*” (“National Assembly Insults”). The public reacted with anger, exasperation, and disgust; popular opinion was that the insults hurled at her were inappropriate and borderline sexual harassment, and one of the diet members admitted to shouting the comment about marriage.⁴ One of the men responsible for making these comments during assembly, Akihiro Suzuki of the Liberal Democratic Party, apologized, stating that he “wanted her to get married quickly.”⁵ This reaction also garnered criticism: popular opinion was that this was a non-apology, or that it was a blatant lie that this was the reason for making these comments. I agreed, and still believe strongly, that the latter is true. The reason he made these comments was not because he was concerned about her future in any way. What I saw behind the comments Mr. Suzuki and these other politicians made at her was underlying scorn bordering on hostility, towards firstly a young woman speaking her mind as their equal, and secondly, a woman who did not conform to their idea of what a woman should be – married, and a mother. I began to wonder about these particular men, influential individuals in charge of one of the world’s most powerful economies, and why it was so difficult for them to grasp the concept of gender⁶ equality in this day and age. Was it not clear to them that this type of attitude was precisely the

¹ “Shiomura Ayaka giin ni sekuhara yaji! Soshite namida.” *YouTube* video, 0:50, posted by “The BEST,” June 19, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuOrYXkZAD8>.

² “Shiomura Ayaka giin ni sekuhara yaji! Soshite namida.” *YouTube* video.

³ “Tokyo assemblyman admits to sexist taunting; Shiomura says 'too late',” *The Asahi Shimbun*, June 23, 2014, and “Shiomura Ayaka giin ni sekuhara yaji! Soshite namida.” *YouTube* video.

⁴ Kameda, Masaaki. “Assembly member loses bid to punish sexist hecklers.” *The Japan Times*, June 20, 2014, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/06/20/national/politics-diplomacy/assembly-member-loses-bid-to-punish-sexist-hecklers/#.VRhIjvF__U.

⁵ “Tokyo gikai Suzuki Akihiro no yaji shazai kaiken.” *YouTube* video, 21:37, posted by “ジョナサンワドワーズ (*Jonasanwadowāsu*),” June 23, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H20t3C0H_yE.

⁶ The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender as “socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women,” and distinguishes this from its definition of sex, “the “biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.” I use the WHO’s definition of gender in this paper. Drawing on this definition, I refer to “gender roles” as societal roles people are expected to play based on their gender, “gender stereotyping” as stereotypes based on gender, and “gender ideologies” as ideology based on gender.

reason why she had to push for these laws to be made in the first place? Was Mr. Suzuki not aware of the fact that he exposed the hypocrisy between his party's slogan "for women," that I had heard so often while back home in Japan, and his actions during the assembly?

Although the experience was frustrating – re-watching the video and trying to come to terms, again, with the state of gender equality in my country today – I now had a very recent, relevant starting point for my thesis. My original motivation to write on gender inequality in Japan stemmed largely from my own experiences as a Japanese woman, born and raised in the country for the first twenty years of my life before finishing university in the United States. Navigating through societal expectations of how a woman should behave had been an extremely confusing experience for as long as I could remember. As a little girl, I remember being tired of the portrayal of young female characters in the cartoons and television shows I watched: it was always good to be *kawaii*. *Kawaii*, or cute, is a word used so often in Japan that many non-Japanese speakers now know what it means. As a teenager, I began to notice how societal expectations of *onnarashi* (like a girl) and *otokorashii* (like a boy) were reinforced. In particular, I remember wondering why there was so much emphasis on being a "good" girlfriend, getting married, and being a wife. The expectation to be innocent and dependent on someone stronger if you were a girl was exceptionally suffocating. What made these experiences even more confusing was the difference in these behavioral expectations between my life within Japanese society and my life as a student within the cultural bubble of an international school community. I could not help but notice that, within my international school, and later, during my time in the United States, that many of my educators would make an effort to hold a discussion about, and often challenge these gender roles. This eventually prompted me to write a thesis on gender in Japan. However, the scope of topics and the volume of literature on gender and Japan were so vast and interconnected that it was difficult to discern a clear starting point.

Now, with the *Kokkai Yaji* scandal, I was able to draw more clearly the connections between my experiences and the state of gender equality in Japan. I realized that the perpetuation of gender stereotypes within Japanese society was not a simple matter of individuals and their opinions of how women should behave. There was something much more systematic and larger in magnitude at work that influence and shape the experiences of women in Japan. I noticed a striking connection between the current, ever-popular political movement to include more women in the workforce and the expectation that women get married and have children: they both dictate how the women would function for the Japanese nation. The way in which these gender roles were being established now for the sake of the State seemed eerily familiar to the pre-World War II nationalist mantra of *ryōsai kenbo*, the idea of "good wife, wise mother" that I had felt boxed women into roles of mother and wife. Thus, this paper seeks to break down the connections between gender ideology⁷ and nationalism in present-day Japan in context of the gender gap in employment.

In this paper, I first propose that the Japanese state currently promotes the gender ideology of women as workers, mother and wife, albeit in a subtle manner. This exacerbates the state of gender inequality in Japan in the present, and manifests in the gender gap in employment, which I focus on due to the recent attention it has received and its persistence despite attempts at closing it through time. Furthermore, the rationale behind the promotion of these gender roles are often stated to be "tradition," which I argue is a technique used by the

⁷ In this paper, I use the singular form "gender ideology" to refer to ideology about gender at a given time, and use the plural form "gender ideologies" to refer to sets of ideals, typically in context of talking about multiple time periods.

State to justify the perpetuation of gender roles in the past, and is also being used in the present to promote the idea of women as mothers in a family structure that places women in subordination to men. Although the current movement to include women in the workforce seems progressive and is presented as a movement away from past gender roles that restricted women to the home and out of the workplace, it is, in fact, another example of the dissemination of gender roles, this time of women as workers and child-bearers. Ultimately, I argue that the gender gap in employment is so difficult to close due to the promotion of gender ideologies by the State, through time and in the present.

Chapter 2, a literature and data review, follows this introduction. It begins with an overview of the state of women's employment in Japan today in comparison to other countries of similar development levels. It describes trends and patterns of the gender gap in labor force participation specific to Japan, and reviews the various attempts to close this gap. I then give an overview of the popular theories that explain the persistence of this gap despite these attempts, such as the practicality of implementing laws and the lack of childcare facilities. I conclude that the underlying problem with implementing laws and policies that promote a positive workplace is the existence of gender stereotyping.

Chapter 3 examines how gender ideologies have been created and disseminated by the Japanese state as a part of a national agenda such as military and economic growth through time. In particular, I focus on the pattern of placing women into the role of child-bearer, mother, and worker through time. The second half of Chapter 3 is a critique of how the development of gender roles has been framed in existing literature: gender roles today are often framed as a "legacy" of the past and Japan's current attempts to fix the gender gap in employment a fight against "tradition". This narrative of the "struggle against tradition" today is a testament to how the State has been successful, through time, in establishing what "traditional" gender roles are. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to show that socially accepted gender roles are the result of its repeated dissemination by the State, as opposed to a legacy from one specific time period in the past.

In Chapter 4, I propose that that there is a conscious perpetuation of gender roles as a part of an agenda in post-financial crisis Japan to the present. That is, there is resurgence in the State's promotion of the ideal of women as mothers, child-bearers and workers. A large part of this analysis will be a close reading of the Liberal Democratic Party's political manifestos and how the woman's role is defined: the explicit promotion of women as workers, and the implicit promotion of women as mothers and a wife in a specific family structure. I reveal how the State does not address the issue of gender inequality per se, instead using it as a front for agendas of economic growth and increasing the birth rate. I then evaluate the continued success of state-sponsored gender ideologies through time and in the present using opinion survey data and specific case studies. I demonstrate how the State's dissemination of gender roles does have an impact on what the public perceives as ideal gender roles, which prevents women from joining the workforce and explains why, despite constant political campaigning to include women in the workforce, the gender gap in employment persists.

Chapter 5 is an analysis of how the public is beginning to challenge this gender ideology disseminated by the State. It details how opportunities for individuals to speak about gender issues are increasing due to two factors: the avid promotion of gender ideology by the State itself, and the presence of social media platforms on the Internet and other forms of online communication. This chapter will firstly establish how discussion of gender issues was, and still is, largely limited to the academic sphere in present-day Japan. I then analyze how discussion of

gender is slowly moving into the public sphere using a recent rare case of a media broadcast that stimulated widespread discussions about gender issues. I make an optimistic prediction that this movement of discussions of gender from the academic to public sphere will be the first steps towards gender equality in employment, and in other areas of life in Japan.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Putting Japan's Gender Gap in Employment in Perspective

It is first necessary to contextualize Japan's state of gender equality in employment in order to draw its connection to gender ideologies presented by the Japanese state. This chapter draws on existing literature to prove, firstly, that the gender gap in employment does exist, and certain characteristics of this gap are specific to Japan. This chapter also reviews theories that explain the persistence of this gap, many of which point to expectations to conform to certain gender roles as the underlying cause.

2.1 Gender Inequality in Japan: An Overview

Japan is a highly developed country in terms of human and economic development, a high-income OECD country with correspondingly high human development levels.⁸ Its Human Development Index is similar to that of other OECD countries, typically ranking in the highest 20 out of the 185 or so countries with measured HDIs through the past two decades.⁹ There have been several attempts to quantify how these countries perform in terms of gender equality, one of the more recent attempts being the construction of the Gender Inequality Index (GII) by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).¹⁰ The three dimensions factored into this index are health, empowerment, and participation in the labor market, which are in turn measured by five indicators: maternal mortality, adolescent fertility, secondary education levels, representation in parliament, and labor force participation rates.¹¹ The GII is constructed with the recognition that levels of human development differ between genders; women typically have lower levels of development in these three dimensions.¹² Japan is ranked 25th of the 187 countries listed in the 2013 rankings, in the mid-range of other highly developed countries such as Germany, which stands at 2nd, and the United States at 47th.¹³ At first glance, these indices seem to indicate that, at least among countries of similar economic and human development levels, Japan seems to fare well in terms of gender equality.

⁸ Human Development Report Team, *2014 Human Development Statistical Tables*, Table 4: Gender Inequality Index and Table 2: Human Development Index Trends, 1980-2013. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Human Development Report Team, United Nations Development Programme, "Gender Inequality Index (GII)," accessed March 16, 2015, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>.

¹¹ Human Development Report 2013 Team, United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 2013 Technical Notes," accessed March 16, 2015, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2013_en_technotes.pdf.

¹² "Gender Inequality Index."

¹³ Human Development Report Team, *2014 Human Development Statistical Tables*, Table 4.

Table 1: Gender Inequality Indices, Top 20 HDI Countries, 2013

HDI Rank	GII Rank	Country
3	2	Switzerland
6	3	Germany
12	4	Sweden
10	5	Denmark
4	7	Netherlands
1	9	Norway
20	12	France
13	14	Iceland
9	15	Singapore
19	17	Israel
15	17	Hong Kong, China (SAR)
2	19	Australia
11	20	Ireland
8	23	Canada
17	25	Japan
7	34	New Zealand
14	35	United Kingdom
5	47	United States
15	N/A	Korea (Republic of)

Data from the Human Development Report Team, *2014 Human Development Statistical Tables*, Table 4: Gender Inequality Index and Table 2: Human Development Index Trends, 1980-2013, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

The UNDP recognizes the limitations of using the GII as a comprehensive measure of gender inequality, citing reasons such as the exclusion of measures of gendered violence, empowerment at different levels of governance, and unpaid labor and domestic chores.¹⁴ However, the five indicators used to calculate the GII are useful in that they provide an insight into where gender inequality manifests. Japan's measurements are characterized in particular by high measures of maternal health and equality in education. The country's indices are also characterized by comparatively low measures of equality in political representation and labor force participation. In 2013, Japan ranked the 8th lowest out of the 49 highly developed countries for the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, and also ranked 10th lowest in adolescent fertility, at 5.4 births per 1000 women aged 15-19.¹⁵ The percentage of the adult population with secondary education or above was over 85% for both men and women, with the fraction of women with secondary education and above two percentage points higher than the fraction of men.¹⁶ The country ranked the 5th lowest in terms of female representation in parliament in 2013, measured as the percentage of seats held in parliament by women.¹⁷ Finally, the labor force participation rate for the population aged 15 and older for women and men were 48.1% and 70.4% respectively.¹⁸ Of the countries with the 20 highest HDIs, the difference in the

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, "Frequently Asked Questions - Gender Inequality Index (GII)," accessed March 16, 2015, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/faq-page/gender-inequality-index-gii>.

¹⁵ Human Development Report Team, *2014 Human Development Statistical Tables*, Table 4.

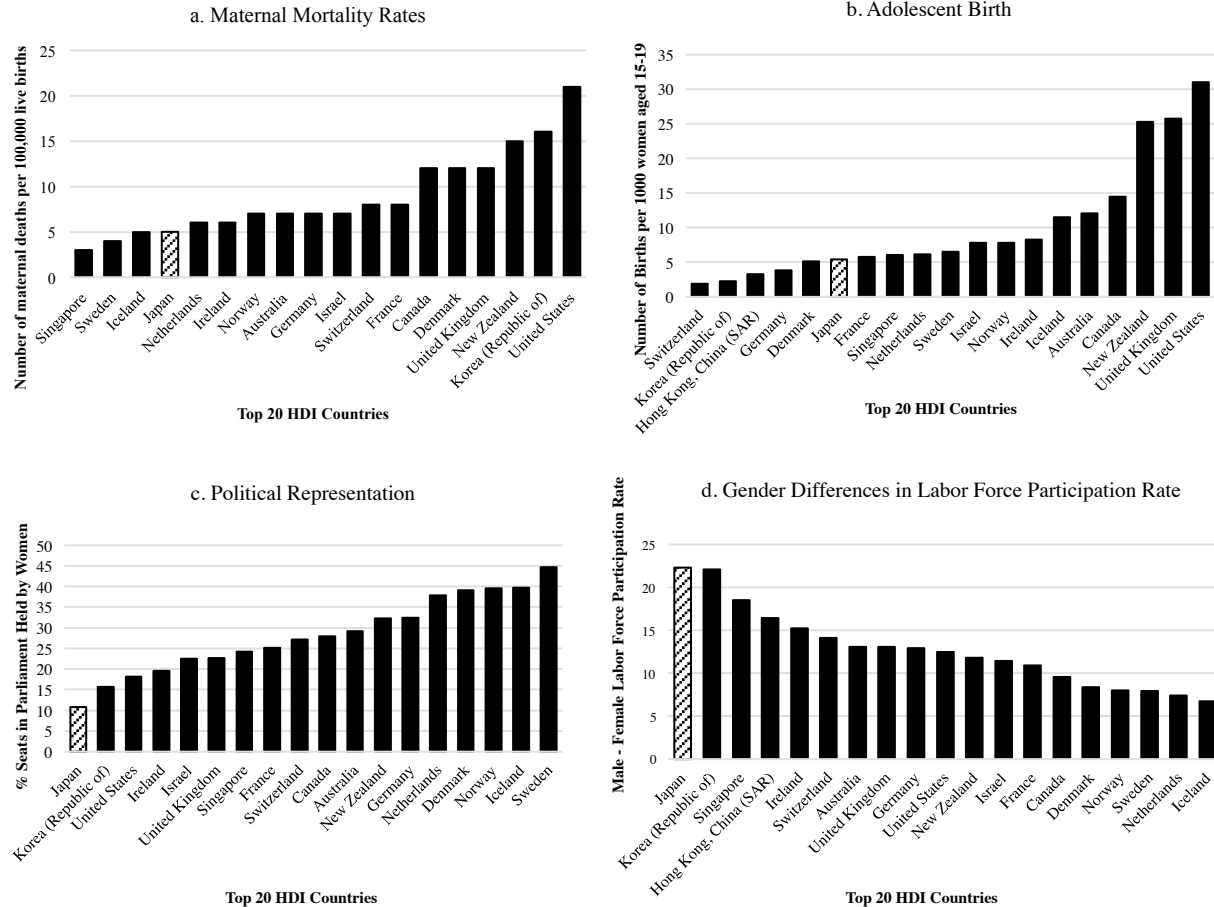
¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

labor force participation rate between men and women was the highest at 22.3 percentage points.¹⁹

Figures 1a - d: Indicators for the Gender Inequality Index, Top 20 HDI Countries, 2013



Data from the Human Development Report Team, *2014 Human Development Statistical Tables*, Table 4: Gender Inequality Index and Table 2: Human Development Index Trends, 1980-2013, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2014, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>.

2.2 Japan's M-Curve of Female Labor Force Participation

A comparison of the labor force participation rate for men and women in 2013 reveals a difference in labor force participation by age.²⁰ The labor force participation rate is the highest for women near age 20, and then drops rapidly between age 20 until age 30 for women, when labor force participation rate increases again.²¹ The lowest labor force participation rate for women is observed in the 25-29 age group.²² The labor force participation rate for men similarly increases until age 20, but stays at a high of about 90% until the retirement age, represented by the 55-59 age group.²³ The shape of the labor force participation rate curve for women has been

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ OECD iLibrary, *Statistics Library*, Country: Japan, Indicator: Labor Force Participation Rate, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, accessed March 11, 2015, doi: 10.1787/data-00285-en.

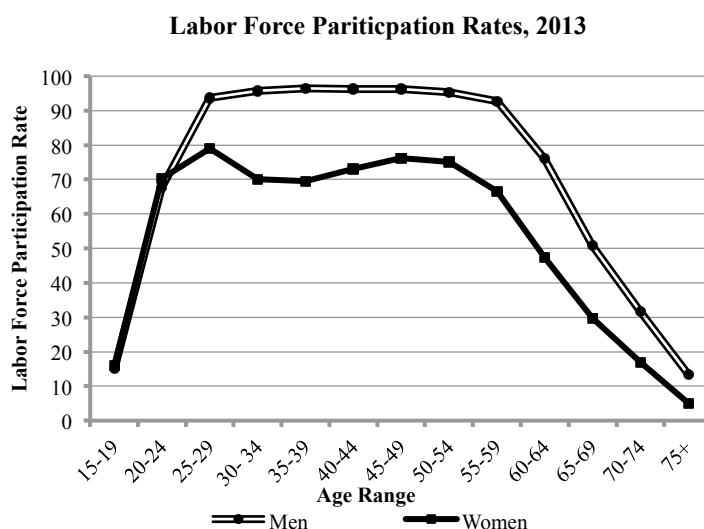
²¹ OECD iLibrary, *Statistics Library*.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

called the M-Curve, and is prominent in literature on gender roles and employment in Japan. In the present day, Japan's M-Curve stands out in that it is different from that of Western countries with similar development levels, which tend to have labor force participation rates similar to that of Japan's labor force participation rate curve for men.²⁴ This curve is a starting point to describe the nature of the gender gap in employment in Japan, as it is telling of how the life course of women in Japan typically differs from that of women elsewhere.

Figure 2: Labor Force Participation Rate in Japan by Age and Gender, 2013



Data from the OECD iLibrary, *Statistics Library*, Country: Japan, Indicator: Labor Force Participation Rate, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, accessed March 11, 2015, doi: 10.1787/data-00285-en.

The popular explanation given for the presence of the M-Curve is the nature of the workplace environment that makes it difficult for women to stay in the workforce after giving birth. First, many Japanese companies hire workers based on what is called a “Course-Based Employment System,” in which the nature of the job and training, and potential for promotion and pay raises differ for each career track. A number of tracks exist, but close to 95% of companies offer and distinguish between two career tracks: *sōgōshoku*, or “regular track,” and *ippanshoku*, “general track”. Regular-track employees have a specific job, are trained to be professionals, and have possibilities of promotion. General track employees typically have no room for promotions, and consist of non-professional, secretarial jobs, and lower fixed wages for the career. The percentage of women to be hired in the *ippanshoku* track in 2011 was approximately 86%, as opposed to 11.6% in the *sōgōshoku* track.²⁵

It can be seen that a disproportionate number of women are hired on the *ippanshoku* track, which are non-professional, lower-paying jobs. Japan implemented the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEO) in 1985, which explicitly prohibits discrimination in the workplace on

²⁴ Atsuko Suzuki, *Gender and Career In Japan* (Portland: International Specialized Book Services (ISBS), 2007), 17.

²⁵ Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Employment Equality and Child Affairs Division, “Kōsubetsu koyou kanri seido no jissai/shidō jiyōkyō,” accessed March 30, 2015, www.mhlw.go.jp/general/seido/koyou/danjokintou/dl/course_joukyou.pdf.

the basis of gender.²⁶ It is therefore illegal to limit women's choices to one track, and companies must offer both tracks and the freedom to choose between them to both men and women.²⁷ The nature of the two career tracks, however, makes it difficult for women to choose the regular career track. Promotion and pay raises in work are still largely based on the individual's effort and time commitment to work.²⁸ Women in Japan typically dedicate long hours to childrearing and housework; however, there is lack of support for women who want to both raise children and work, discussed later on in this section.²⁹ It would therefore be difficult for women, especially after giving birth and taking leave, to dedicate long hours and overtime typically needed for promotion, where taking leave for childbirth itself is disadvantageous. The general track is therefore a more stable option for many women. This is also the case for female part-time workers: because part-time jobs offer flexibility in terms of working hours, many women choose to work part-time after giving birth. The inflexibility of a regular, full-time career has long been cited as the reason for the gender gap in employment.

There has been recognition of the gap in employment, and several attempts in the past few decades to close this gap. Since the establishment of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, Japan has established a number of legal measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender in the workplace.³⁰ The EEOL in 1985 was one of the first pieces of legislature introduced in Japan in response to CEDAW that explicitly addressed gender inequality in the workplace.³¹ The EEOL's revision in 2006 addressed the issue of indirect discrimination, and the most recent revision in 2014 clarified policies about discrimination in relation to taking childcare leave.³² In addition to revision to the EEOL, the Gender Equality Bureau of Japan established the Basic Plan for Gender Equality in 1999 dictating the government's commitment to addressing gender issues in Japan, including employment.³³ Updates to the Basic Plan in recent years have increasingly emphasized the importance of balancing work and childrearing for both men and women, called "work-life balance".³⁴ It can be said that here has been a shift from addressing overt discrimination in the workplace to addressing more subtle implications of the course-based employment system on the gender gap in employment, especially in the last decade. Although it is difficult to state whether this is a direct consequence of these laws and policies, there has been a noticeable change in the rate of labor force participation rates over time. The fraction of women ages 24-35 in the workforce have increased in the three decades since the enactment of the EEOL, as shown in

²⁶ Yuichiro Miuzmachi, "Issue Brief: Employment Non-Discrimination Legislation in Japan," *Newsletter of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo* (March 2011): 8-10, <http://newslet.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ssi44/ssi44.pdf>.

²⁷ Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, "Anata no kaisha wa daijōbu desuka? 'Cōsu betsu koyou kanri' no chūiten," February 2015, accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/06-Seisakujouhou-11900000-Koyoukintoujidoukateikyoku/0000074034.PDF>.

²⁸ Suzuki, *Gender and Career in Japan*, 12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-24.

³⁰ Megan I. Starich, "The 2006 Revisions to Japan's Equal Opportunity Employment Law: A Narrow Approach to a Pervasive Problem," *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 16, no. 2 (2007): 611, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/dspace-law/bitstream/handle/1773.1/599/16PacRimLPolyJ551.pdf?sequence=1>.

³¹ Starich, "The 2006 Revisions to Japan's Equal Opportunity Employment Law," 611.

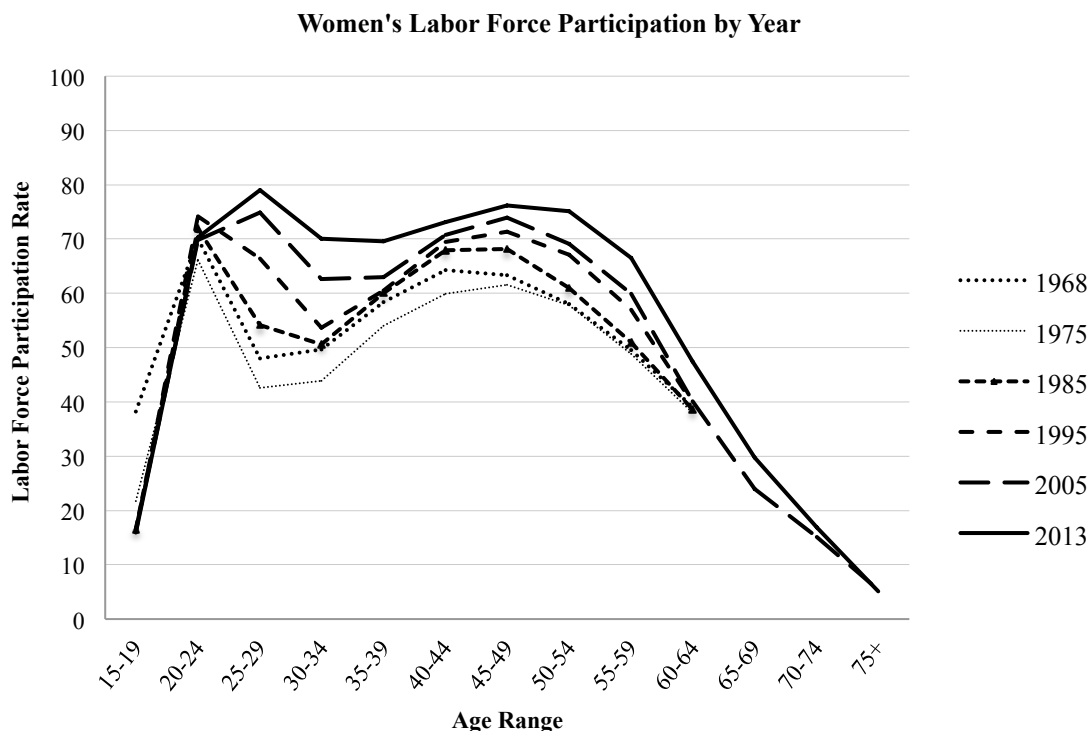
³² *Ibid.*, 565, and Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, "Ninshin/shussan wo riyū to suru furieki toriatsukai ni kansuru kaishaku tsūtatsu ni tsuite," accessed March 30, 2015, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/06-Seisakujouhou-11900000-Koyoukintoujidoukateikyoku/kaiseinogaiyou.pdf>.

³³ Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, "Danjo kyōdō sankaku kihon keikaku ni tsuite – Dai ichibu: Kihonteki kangae kata," December 12, 2000, http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/basic_plans/1st/1.html#anc_1_2.

³⁴ Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, "Danjo kyōdō sankaku kihon keikaku (dai niji) zenbun – Dai ichibu: Kihonteki kangae kata," December 27, 2005, http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/basic_plans/2nd/pdf/part1.pdf.

Figure 4. The lowest labor force participation rate for women has increased from 40% in 1975 to 70% in 2013.³⁵

Figure 3: Labor Force Participation Rate in Japan for Women by Age and Year, 1960-2013



Data from the OECD iLibrary, *Statistics Library*, Country: Japan, Indicator: Labor Force Participation Rate, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, accessed March 11, 2015, doi: 10.1787/data-00285-en.

2.3 The Current State of the Gender Gap in Employment

Despite recognition of the discriminatory nature of the course-based employment system and the recent movement to hire more women in the full-time career tracks, a number of factors remain that prevent women from joining the labor force. The change in the shape of the M-Curve over these past four decades, especially the trend in the past decade, can be attributed to other factors. Just as the GII has its limitations to measuring gender inequality, using differences in labor force participation rates as a proxy for workplace inequality has its limitations. For instance, there have been an increasing number of dual-income families in Japan since the 1980's, as seen in Figure 4. Furthermore, the tendency for women to exit the workforce after marriage and childbirth has decreased since the 1970's.³⁶ This is reflected in the labor force participation rate, but this does not take into account the nature of the jobs. A breakdown of the types of jobs held by women today by year shows that the majority of these jobs are still designated *hiseiki* ("non-regular" workers, which include part-time, temporary, and contract workers).³⁷ Of the jobs held

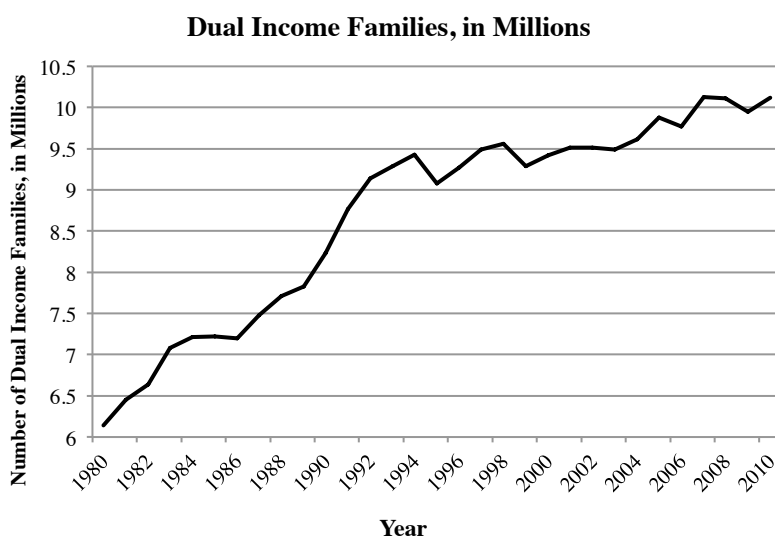
³⁵ OECD iLibrary, *Statistics Library*.

³⁶ Suzuki, *Gender and Career in Japan*, 8-12.

³⁷ Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Chouki Jikeiretsu Deita – Shuyo Komoku Zenkoku Tsukibetsu Kekka*, April 1, 2015, Link number a-1. <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/longtime/03roudou.htm>.

by women, the proportion of *hiseiki* jobs has increased from about 30% to 60% in the past three decades in conjunction with the increase in the number of dual-income families.³⁸ The proportion of jobs held by women that are *seiki*, (“regular” positions, which refers to long-term employment and roughly correspond to jobs in the *sōgōshoku* track) has decreased from about 70% to 40% in the past three decades.³⁹ Furthermore, the proportion of women in the highest managerial positions in corporations are still low at about 5% in 2011, an 4 percentage point difference from 1985 when only 1% of the highest managerial positions were held by women.⁴⁰ Although the labor force participation rate has increased steadily from 1985, it can be seen that this progress in gender equality in employment is minimal in terms of the kind of power women have in employment in relation to men. This can be interpreted as evidence that there are other barriers that prevent women from entering full-time and managerial careers, and direct them instead to part-time careers.

Figure 4: The Number of Dual-Income Households, 1980-2010



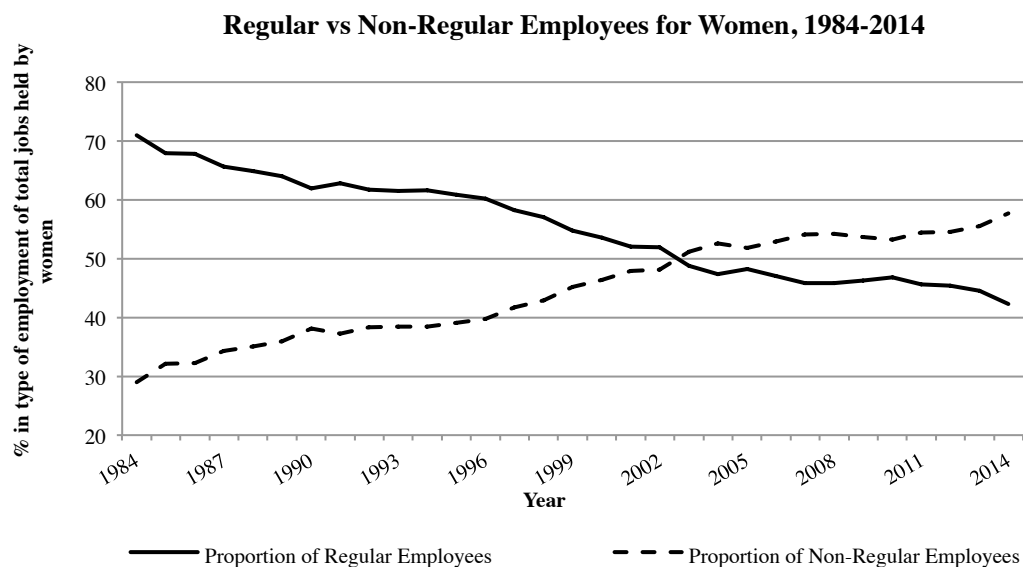
Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, “Dai issetsu – Hatarakikata e no henka,” dataset links under image 57 (single-v.s. double-parent households) and 67 (proportion of female managers), accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.mlit.go.jp/hakusyo/mlit/h24/hakusho/h25/html/n1213000.html>.

³⁸ Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Chouki Jikeiretsu Deita – Shuyo Komoku Zenkoku Tsukibetsu Kekka*, and Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, “Dai issetsu – Hatarakikata e no henka,” dataset links under image 57 (single-v.s. double-parent households) and 67 (proportion of female managers), accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.mlit.go.jp/hakusyo/mlit/h24/hakusho/h25/html/n1213000.html>.

³⁹ Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Chouki Jikeiretsu Deita – Shuyo Komoku Zenkoku Tsukibetsu Kekka*.

⁴⁰ Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, “Dai issetsu – Hatarakikata e no henka,” dataset at link under image 67.

Figure 5: Proportion Full-Time v.s. Part-Time Positions of Jobs Held by Women, 1984-2014



Data from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, *Chouki Jikeiretsu Deita – Shuyo Komoku Zenkoku Tsukibetsu Kekka (Historical Data 1 a-1 Major Items – Whole Japan, Monthly Data)*, April 1, 2015, Link number a-1, <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/longtime/03roudou.htm>.

2.4 Implementing Work-Life Balance Model and Lack of Child Care Services

As reviewed in the previous sections, the existence of the course-based employment system is often used as the explanation for the gender gap in employment. Recall that the course-based employment system is implicitly discriminatory against women given the amount of time women typically spend on childrearing and housework. A large barrier for women to join the workforce, therefore, is lack of support in these two areas. The difference in the number of hours dedicated to housework and childrearing between women and men in Japan is four hours.⁴¹ In perspective, Norway, which ranks 2nd in the GII, has an approximately 30-minute difference, and the U.S. has a 1.5 hour difference between women and men in the amount of time spent on housework.⁴² The disproportionate number of hours spent on housework between genders had been addressed in recent years such as the Basic Plan, and efforts to promote “work-life balance” have continued until the present.⁴³ A 2014 survey initiated by Asahi News asked the following question on work-life balance: “What is the largest problem to overcome to increase the number of women in managerial positions?”⁴⁴ Over half of the women and approximately 40% of men who took part in the survey cited “making household matters and work compatible,” – public awareness of this “work-life balance,” as this is called, is prominent in the present.⁴⁵

The problem of lack of childcare support is difficult to tackle in that, although attitudes towards work-life balance seems to have changed in recent years, Japan lacks policies and facilities that would support this. First and foremost, public childcare facilities are limited in both

⁴¹ “*Danjo ga ikiru*,” Asahi Shimbun, September 8, 2014.

⁴² “*Danjo ga ikiru*.”

⁴³ Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, “*Danjo kyōdō sankaku kihon keikaku (dai niji) zenbun – Dai ichibu: Kihonteki kangae kata*.”

⁴⁴ “*Jyosei kanrishoku zou 79% ‘sansei’*,” Asahi Shimbun, August 26, 2014.

⁴⁵ “*Jyosei kanrishoku zou 79% ‘sansei’*.”

quantity and in the type of service. The proportion of GDP allocated to childcare is low at approximately 0.4% of total GDP, which is similar to the United States; in contrast, countries like Norway spend approximately 20% of their GDP on childcare.⁴⁶ Few childcare facilities operate based on the assumption that both parents work until late hours, and typically run during regular business hours.⁴⁷ Again, this would limit the type of job the parent can take on to part-time work, and the parent that would give up their full-time job would typically be the mother. Furthermore, companies would have trouble adjusting to this work-life balance model quickly, taking into account the fact that many of these companies have been structured for many years to operate through this two-career track system.⁴⁸ There seems to be a lag between the implementation of new childcare facilities and gender equality policies in the workplace and the new idea of a work-life balance, which may be one explanation for the persistence in the gender gap in employment over the years.⁴⁹

2.5 Gender Stereotyping and Reinforcement of Gender Equality Measures in Work

However, this “time lag” explanation for the gender gap seems insufficient in that gender equality measures in employment have been proposed for three decades since the EEOL of 1985 until the present. Although attitudes and government policies increasingly support dual-income families and the idea of a work-life balance, there is evidence that sexism and gender stereotypes continue to exist in the workplace and in other government policies that place women into the role of wife, mother, and a subordinate worker. There is a sense of reluctance in the corporate sphere and in the government policies to actively challenge these gender roles. Avoidance of addressing the problem of gender stereotyping can be seen in tax policy, the lack of clarity and reinforcement of current gender equality measures, and finally, the gender stereotypes that permeate the actual workplace.

First, although government policies have promoted the idea of work-life balance, taxation policies remain that place working women at a disadvantage. Current laws on taxation and dependents place heavier taxes on an individual if they have a dependent spouse that earns more than 1.03 million yen in a year.⁵⁰ Because women tend to have part-time jobs for reasons explained in the previous section, a married woman is often a dependent of their husband. The presence of this tax law demotivates women from pursuing a full-time job, and the effect of this tax law on labor force participation rate for women is highly visible. The labor force participation rate curve for women who are dependents in the 25-34 age range was approximately 55% in 2013; for women who were not dependents, the labor force participation rate was approximately 85% in the same age range, much closer to that of men in the same age range.⁵¹ Furthermore, the labor force participation rate for women who are not dependents has remained at approximately 85% since 1993, while the participation for women who were dependents was in the mid-40% range in 1993, climbing up to the present-day value of

⁴⁶ “*Danjo ga ikiru.*”

⁴⁷ Suzuki, *Gender and Career in Japan*, 23-24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Mari Osawa, "It is the Government That Has Bigger Problems - Gender Issues in Japanese Society," *Newsletter of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo* (March 2011): 3-7, <http://newslet.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ssj44/ssj44.pdf>.

⁵¹ Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japanese Statistics Bureau and Statistics Centre, “Jyosei no shūshoku jyōshō – Emu kābu no henka,” January 31, 2014, www.stat.go.jp/data/roudou/tsushin/pdf/no11.pdf.

approximately 55% in two decades⁵². This is another strong indication that the flattening of the M-curve observed between the early 1990's and the present is due to the number of dependent women joining the part-time work force instead of the full-time work force. This is also consistent with the predicted effect of the 1.03 million yen tax policy in context of the increase in the number of dual-income families. In short, the number of dual-income families is increasing as women contribute to family income while staying a dependent of the husband by participating in part-time work instead of opting for a full-time job due to the effect of this tax.

Second, like with the loophole of the EEOL allowing the presence of the two-track career system, laws and policies to prevent gender discrimination in the workplace are difficult to implement in practice and are rarely reinforced. For instance, gender equality can be practiced at the level of recruiting and entry-level jobs, but it is unclear about the treatment of the worker after the worker has been hired. The definition of "indirect discrimination" is not present in the current version of the EEOL, which allows for certain types of discrimination to take place.⁵³ 2006 revision of the EEOL, for example, added that assigning tasks based on gender is also discriminatory, an example of the ambiguity of this law.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the EEOL is not reinforced in that there is no direct punishment for companies that do violate it; confrontation about discrimination would be through a lawsuit.⁵⁵ Because instances of discrimination are difficult to prove due to the ambiguity of workplace gender equality policies, it is very unlikely for individuals to be able to resolve gender discrimination disputes through legal means. In short, there has been little government motivation to clarify and reinforce these anti-discriminatory policies.

Finally, although anti-gender discrimination policies may be in effect, sexist attitudes persist in the workplace. It is still difficult for men to take childcare leave because of pressures from superiors and because leave is typically unpaid.⁵⁶ This is another testament to how men are still expected to be the primary worker of the family, and how the job of childrearing is still expected to be that of the mother's. The lack of female managers overall, then, could be interpreted as the result of a discriminatory workplace. Many superiors in the workplace expect women to quit their regular job upon marriage; women are treated as a short-term worker for the company as opposed to someone to "invest" training resources in.⁵⁷ These expectations affect women's motivation to take on full-time and management jobs; women tend to have lower levels of fulfillment of their jobs where expectations for them to participate in and continue with work are low.⁵⁸ The expectation that women be mothers and quit their regular jobs after marriage persists in the workplace despite policies and increasing awareness of work-life balance in the past decade.

⁵² Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japanese Statistics Bureau and Statistics Centre, "Jyosei no shūshoku iyōshō – Emu kābu no henka."

⁵³ Starich, "The 2006 Revisions to Japan's Equal Opportunity Employment Law," 556.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 562.

⁵⁵ Miuzmachi, "Employment Non-Discrimination Legislation in Japan," 8-9.

⁵⁶ Suzuki, *Gender and Career in Japan*, 18.

⁵⁷ Hiroki Sato, "'30% in 2020'? The Prospects for a Six-fold Increase in Women Managers," *Newsletter of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo* (September 2014): 3-5, <http://newslet.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ssj51/SSJ51.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Emiko Takahashi, "What Companies can Do to Improve the Morale of Women Employees," *Newsletter of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo* (September 2014): 6-9, <http://newslet.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ssj51/SSJ51.pdf>.

2.6 Conclusions

In a way, the current state of gender inequality in employment has not changed substantially in the past three decades since the enactment of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985. The M-Curve persists today in that the labor participation rates of women in their mid-20's to their 30's are still low in comparison to that of men, and the gender gap in terms of labor force participation rate is wide for a highly developed country. The lack of women in management and leadership positions as well as in high-income, regular-track jobs is a testament to the persistence of the two-track employment system, which is an indirect form of discrimination in employment on basis of gender. Although there have been numerous attempts at closing this gap such as revisions to the EEOL and other government policies, they have been relatively unsuccessful, and the current workplace environment is still biased towards employing men as full-time workers, and women as a secondary and temporary source of labor. As I have touched upon in this section, underlying gender stereotypes exist in both government policy and by extension, the workplace environment, and they place women into the role of mother, caretaker of the household, and a worker subordinate to men within a certain type of family structure. I conclude, then, that these gender stereotypes are the root reason for the persistence in the gender gap in employment to this day. The next chapter delves deeper into the origins of these gender roles in Japan today in context of labor, and how these roles have been constructed and disseminated to the public through time and today.

CHAPTER 3: GENDER IDEOLOGIES IN JAPAN ACROSS TIME

A Critique of Present-Day Gender Roles as Traditions and Historical Legacies

An examination of data and literature on the employment gender gap in contemporary years has revealed that the expectation to conform to certain gender roles exists in the workplace. These expectations include that men will be the breadwinner of the family, that women will quit their regular job upon childbirth to get married, and that any work after that will be in the form of supporting the husband's income, as opposed to being an equal worker. This chapter will delve deeper into the presence of these gender roles in an attempt to discern why they manifest in the form of the gender gap in employment. I argue that much of the literature on this topic points to the gendered division of labor during the post-war growth period as the reason the gap exists. That is, popular understanding of the gender gap in employment today frames the current gender gap in employment as legacies of a system that was established and disseminated in the 1950's to 1960's.

I examine how gender ideologies have been developed and disseminated through time, and how role of the woman was re-defined and re-advertised by the State for a purpose, typically to strengthen the State. Although certain gender ideologies are framed to be "traditional" and an "outdated" type of thinking, very similar gender ideologies dictating the role of the woman have been disseminated by the State until the present, typically with a political objective. Ultimately, the reason the gender gap in employment remains is not because Japan is "lagging behind," currently in the process of moving away from certain gender roles, as it is usually framed when compared to other countries of similar development levels. The gender gap in employment exists because gender ideologies have been disseminated as a part of the State's agenda repeatedly through time until the present.

3.1 *Ryōsai Kenbo*: An Example of Dissemination of Gender Ideology by the State

One of the most widely recognized instances of dissemination of gender ideology in modern Japan is the spread of *ryōsai kenbo*, or "Good Wife, Wise Mother" ideology during Meiji period (1868 – 1912).⁵⁹ I begin with this *ryōsai kenbo* example because it is an example of the active and explicit promotion of gender ideologies by the State: the gender ideology behind *ryōsai kenbo*, the purpose of its promotion, and the method of dissemination by the State are easy to discern. Later dissemination of gender ideology by the State tends to be much more subtle without directly referencing the necessity of individuals to fulfill certain roles for the sake of the Japanese nation. I draw largely on Shizuko Koyama's book, *Ryōsai Kenbo*, for the historical background to the term and its development.

It can be said that the gender ideology behind *ryōsai kenbo* was popularized during the Meiji period as a part of the process of competition with the West.⁶⁰ First, there was an emphasis on the ideology of mothers as *kenbo*, or "wise mothers," based on the notion that mothers would be the primary nurturers and teachers of children. Prior to this time period, women were considered to be child bearers, but raising the child after birth had not been considered the woman's responsibility.⁶¹ The education of women during the Meiji period was promoted in context of this *kenbo* ideology so that they would become educated mothers, who would in turn

⁵⁹ Shizuko Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo: The Educational Ideal of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" in Modern Japan*, trans. Stephen Filler, (Boston: Brill Publishers, 2013), 11.

⁶⁰ Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo*, 31-35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16-20.

raise “good-quality” citizens.⁶² The dissemination of this ideology during the Meiji period was consistent with the Japanese state’s national agenda at that time: Japan was in the midst of assimilating Western ideas as a part of what was considered the process of modernization, and the education of mothers to produce more, and stronger citizens was deemed necessary.⁶³ The purpose of *kenbo* ideology, then, was to strengthen the Japanese nation in competition with Western powers; this ideology was promoted through both education and later, government policy.⁶⁴ In addition to the *kenbo* ideology, the ideology of *ryōsai* was promoted after the Sino-Japanese War in tandem with increasing nationalism.⁶⁵ Women were now expected to contribute to the nation not only through childbearing and nurturing, but also by providing support for the husband in the form of productive labor.⁶⁶

As World War I ended, *ryōsai kenbo* ideology changed with the influx of information from the West about how women had played important roles in war as replacement workers and by supporting soldiers.⁶⁷ A new notion that Japan, too, should be in constant preparation for war spread and emphasized the importance of women as primarily responsible for the household sphere in preparation for war.⁶⁸ This ideology was again disseminated through the education system as more time was dedicated to “domestic” subjects such as sewing in women’s secondary education.⁶⁹ During this time, childbearing was emphasized over the higher education of women.⁷⁰ This idea of *ryōsai kenbo*, now with additional prescribed roles for women such as replacement laborers and caregivers to soldiers, was promoted before and through the Second World War.⁷¹ Shizuko Koyama notes how the State was responsible for establishing and promoting this gender ideology as a part of an agenda to develop Japan.⁷² This was done in response to a “crisis,” which was first competition with the West, and second, in Japan’s preparation for, and participation in war.⁷³ Note that, in each case, different gender ideologies were disseminated by the State in accordance with the nature of this “crisis”; the ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* first established during the Meiji period has changed over time, and they are in fact different ideologies with the same name.

3.2 Post-War Dissemination of Gender Ideology by the State

The dissemination of gender ideology through the post-war economic growth period from the 1960’s, although more subtle, also emphasized gendered division of labor. Companies were modeled on a system in which men would work full-time outside of the home, and women would be responsible for childrearing and housework; many of these family structures and policies were state-backed.⁷⁴ With Japan’s economic growth came the decrease in the female labor force

⁶² Ibid., 29-32.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 29-32 & 36-44.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 35-37.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 37-40.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 75-78

⁶⁸ Ibid., 89-92.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 117-120.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 149-151.

⁷¹ Ibid., 89-92 & 153-155.

⁷² Ibid., 101-102.

⁷³ Ibid., 51&143.

⁷⁴ Scott North, “Work-Life in Japan: The Past is Prologue,” *Boston College Center for Work and Family: Executive Briefing Series*, (Date Unknown): 2, accessed March 17, 2015, <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications/pdf/BCCWF%20EBS%20Work%20Life%20in%20Japan.pdf>.

participation rate.⁷⁵ This time, the state's ideology was disseminated through government policies backing businesses; the goal was economic growth; the gender ideology disseminated was that of a woman as mother and full-time housewife. This was the male-breadwinner and housewife model, which will see in the next section is cited often today at the reason for the gender gap in employment. Note that this male-breadwinner and housewife model of gendered division of labor again is not a "continuation" of *ryōsai kenbo* in the previous years. It is, once again, the dissemination gender ideology that places women into the role of mother and housekeeper within a household, but this time with a different motive: economic growth. The ideology was disseminated in a more indirect method, through businesses, than explicit promotion of nationalist gender ideology by the State, possibly due to the fact that the public was still aware of the impacts of ultranationalism during the Second World War.

It becomes increasingly difficult to see the dissemination of gender ideologies after the establishment of the EEOL in 1985. This is likely due to that fact that the explicit promotion of certain gender ideologies shortly after Japan's commitment to CEDAW and implementation of the EEOL would result in negative international attention. However, the dissemination of gender ideology continued through the mid-80s to 90s. This can be seen, for example, through laws governing women's reproductive rights. The mid-80s and early 90s were another time, as in the present, when the declining birth rate was the subject of national and public discussion.⁷⁶ Since the end the 1940s, Japanese abortion laws had allowed abortion for "economic reasons," which had made abortion much more accessible to women.⁷⁷ In the mid-80s, in sync with the sense of crisis about the declining birthrate, there were movements to abolish this part of the law that allowed women to receive abortions for "economic reasons."⁷⁸ In addition to the presence of anti-abortion movements during this time, there was further struggle for reproductive freedom in terms of the use of the contraceptive pill: it was only in 1999 that public use of the pill was approved.⁷⁹ The gender ideology of women as child bearers was being disseminated during this time period from the mid-80s to the 90s, even as the State committed itself to improving workplace equality.

3.3 A Critique of the Gendered Division of Labor as "Traditionally Japanese"

How does the perpetuation of gender ideologies through time, then, relate to the gender gap in employment in the present? We have observed in Chapter 2 that the division of labor is largely gendered in the present day, and we have observed in this chapter so far that similar gender ideology has been disseminated by the State in the past. It is tempting to draw a causal relationship between the gendered division of labor in the past and the gender stereotypes that underlie the employment gap in the present. This intuitive, causal association between gender roles in the past and the present is typically how the gender gap in employment is understood today. An article from the Japan Times on public opinion of gender roles, for example, states, "...71 percent of female respondents said women should concentrate on parenting while their children are young. This traditional view of gender roles is becoming increasingly outdated despite its persistence."⁸⁰ The article implies that these gender roles are strictly those of the past,

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2003, 192-193.

⁷⁷ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 164-166 & 192-193.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 192-193.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Ingrained Ideas on Gender Roles," Editorials, *The Japan Times*, July 19, 2014, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/07/19/editorials/ingrained-ideas-gender-roles/#.VQjGtGTF__V.

and distinguishes them from the “current” gender roles. Another recent article in the *Economist* details the Prime Minister’s efforts to include women in the workforce; it refers to “traditional” gender roles throughout the article as the breadwinning husband and full time housewife.⁸¹ These two articles are representative of the way in which the presence of these gender roles are understood and presented to the public, particularly in Western media articles. They often associate the male-breadwinner and housewife family model and corresponding gender roles during Japan’s postwar era of economic growth as traditionally Japanese.

This popular explanation of the gender gap in employment in present-day Japan extends not just to news media, but also in official governmental and international reports on gender equality in Japan. In a report by the World Economic Forum, one of the barriers to achieving gender equality in Japan is listed as “traditional corporate culture.”⁸² “Traditional corporate culture” is explained as “the anytime/anywhere model” in which long hours in the workplace are required.⁸³ In a 2003 United Nations report examining Japan’s compliance to CEDAW, one Japanese participant describes how the government’s policies are directed towards “the traditional pattern of men as family breadwinners and women as homemakers.”⁸⁴ Later on in the report, another Japanese participant criticizes the passive nature of the government in targeting “traditional stereotyped gender roles.”⁸⁵ Finally, Japan’s Secondary Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child published by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs states in context of explaining attitudes towards childrearing: “...traditional thoughts, such as ‘men at work, women at home’ are beginning to change.”⁸⁶ It can be seen that present-day gender roles are considered a legacy of post-war gender ideology: a shift away from postwar gender roles are considered a shift away from “tradition”.

We have seen in the previous section, however, that the establishment and spread of gender roles by the state is an ongoing process, and gender ideologies have been constructed according to the State’s needs. I argue, then, that it is unrealistic to attribute the present-day gender roles as a legacy of a single period in time, as the post-war economic growth era is popularly attributed to the gender gap in employment today. The idea of *ryōsai kenbo* and the male-breadwinner and housewife model of labor division is not “traditional” in a sense that this ideology has been disseminated fairly recently in Japanese history, and for a relatively short period of time. Before the dissemination of *ryōsai kenbo* ideology and during the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), for example, there was little gendered division of labor that strictly designated women to the role of the child-bearer and men as workers.⁸⁷ Women of different classes engaged in some type of labor, and men often played active roles in childrearing and housework.⁸⁸ Thus, if “traditionally Japanese” describes habits and customs that have been a

⁸¹ “Holding Back Half the Nation,” *The Economist*, March 29, 2014.

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21599763-womens-lowly-status-japanese-workplace-has-barely-improved-decades-and-country>.

⁸² The World Economic Forum, in Collaboration with McKinsey & Company, “*Closing the Gender Gap in Japan*,” June 2014, 7, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_ClosingGenderGap_Japan_Report_2014.pdf.

⁸³ The World Economic Forum, in Collaboration with McKinsey & Company, “*Closing the Gender Gap in Japan*.”

⁸⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, “*Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Twenty-ninth session: Summary record of the 617th meeting*,” 19 August 2003, 6, August 19, 2003. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/29sess.htm>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁶ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Jidō no Kenri Jōyaku – Nihon seifu dai nikai houkoku* November 2001, accessed April 1, 2015, www.mofa.go.jp/mofai/gaiko/jido/0111/index.html.

⁸⁷ Kathleen Uno, “Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labor,” in *Recreating Japanese Women*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 26, Online, ACLS Humanities E-Book.

⁸⁸ Kathleen Uno, “Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labor,” 26-34. Uno’s chapter, “Women and Changes in the Household Division of Labor,” in *Recreating Japanese Women* details the type of labor women of

part of Japanese culture for an extended period of time, it can even be argued that this pre-Meiji gendered division of labor is more “traditional” than the male-breadwinner and housewife model. In *Ryōsai Kenbo*, Koyama also notes how the development of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology is a relatively new one; she is critical of the way in which it is framed as solely pre-war and wartime ideology, when in fact ideologies like *ryōsai kenbo* have been repeatedly disseminated by the State past the Second World War.⁸⁹ She also notes how the dissemination and perpetuation of the ideology of women as mothers for the state is not an exclusively Japanese phenomenon.⁹⁰ This is a further testament to how difficult it is to designate certain gender ideologies as “traditionally” Japanese, and highlights the Eurocentricity and contradictory nature of the framework in which Japan is framed as “outdated” in comparison to other highly developed countries.

The framing of the gender gap in employment as legacies of the past and as the result of “traditional” Japanese division of labor is problematic for a number of reasons. At times, it justifies the gender gap in employment. At other times, it directs attention away from the dissemination of gender ideology by the State by reducing the solution to closing the gender gap to Japan “catching up” to countries of similar development levels and “leaving behind” its “outdated” gendered division of labor. In her book *Engendering Nationalism*, Chizuko Ueno draws on Hobsbawm and Ranger’s article, “The Invention of Tradition,” and explains how “tradition” is often used as reasoning for phenomena that are difficult to explain.⁹¹ Furthermore, Ueno states how Hobsbawm and Ranger’s theory of invented tradition applies often to Japanese history in that much of what is considered “traditional” is ahistorical and misrepresented as inherent to a country.⁹² I argue that this precisely how *ryōsai kenbo* ideology and post-war gendered division of labor has been internalized as inherently Japanese. Within media, there is little understanding of how these gender roles came to be; the explanation, therefore, is reduced to “tradition.” Furthermore, in Chapter 4, we observe how gender ideology is currently being disseminated by the State under the name of protecting “tradition”. The gender gap exists, therefore, not that because these “traditions” remain in the workplace, as it is framed, but because there is a constant push by the State and other actors to maintain them.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter’s analysis has shed light on how explanations of the employment gender gap in Japan today are often framed as a fight against tradition, namely the gender ideologies associated with pre- and post- war period. This use of “tradition” to justify certain ideologies becomes significant in the next chapter as I observe how gender roles are disseminated in the present day. The dissemination of gender ideology is complex in that there are multiple actors involved, such as corporation, the media, and the public, but the State has always played an active role in the process. I conclude, then, that reason we observe the gender gap in employment

various classes engaged in, and the extent to which men participated in both childrearing and household chores during the Tokugawa period. Childrearing was not “designated” a woman’s job during the Tokugawa period; for instance, Uno notes how wealthier families often left childrearing to servants they hired. This is interesting and relevant to later analysis in this paper, as we notice how, in present-day Japan, child-rearing is considered primarily the mother’s responsibility, and leaving childrearing to an individual unrelated to family, such as hiring babysitters, is highly stigmatized. This is further evidence of how successful the State has been in more recent times at disseminating ideology of women as child-bearers and mothers.

⁸⁹ Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo*, 3-9.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Chizuko Ueno, *Nashonarizumu to jendā*, (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1998), 16-17.

⁹² Chizuko Ueno, *Nashonarizumu to jendā*, (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1998), 16-27.

in the present is not necessarily because they are “legacies” of pre- and post-war gender ideologies, as typically thought, but because the role of the woman as child bearer and caregiver has been re-introduced over time as ideal. However, this has been done much more subtly in the past three decades after the introduction of the EEOL, with care to distance the ideology from the ultranationalism that came with the original dissemination of *ryōsai kenbo* thought. The popular view that Japan is “lagging behind” implies that the State and the public are actively moving away from “outdated” ideologies, which is far from the truth and is Eurocentric. As we will see in the next chapter, this dissemination of gender ideology by the State that we have observed in the past is in fact an ongoing process, and I draw parallels to how this is occurring in the present.

CHAPTER 4: POST-FINANCIAL CRISIS GENDER IDEOLOGY

The Ongoing Dissemination of Gender Ideologies by the Japanese State and Implications for the Gender Gap in Employment

The previous section has shed light on how explanations of the employment gender gap in Japan today are often framed as a legacy of gender roles from many decades ago. I have shown that gender ideologies have instead been disseminated by the state through history, typically during times of crises and for the purpose to increase the power of the State, which has led to the perpetuation of certain ideologies through time. In this chapter, I argue that we witness this phenomenon now, from the end of the financial crisis in 2008, to the present. First, we witness the dissemination of the ideology of women as mothers again under the guise of “tradition” by the State. Secondly, I argue that the current dissemination of gender roles is different from those of the past in that women are designated another role: that of workers. However, this role is defined strictly in context of a mother and wife supporting a family. A close reading of the political agendas of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) reveals that much of their ideology emphasizes the importance of a “traditional” family structure. I examine how the LDP’s definition of family implicitly prescribes roles to women that impede their ability to join the workforce. The second half of this chapter evaluates how successful the State has been in terms of perpetuating these gender roles through the use of case studies and opinion survey data. While public perceptions of gender roles correspond largely to what the LDP disseminates as ideal, we observe a divergence from this tendency for the younger population demographic.

4.1 A Close Reading of LDP Documents: Family as Building Blocks of Society

This section is focused primarily on analysis of the political stances and manifestos of the LDP because of its long tenure as ruling party of Japan and its strong hold of seats in parliament. The LDP is a conservative party that has been in power for the majority of the time since 1955 until the present.⁹³ There have been brief periods in which the LDP was not the ruling party of Japan; the first was in 1993, when the LDP lost its majority in diet against a coalition of other parties.⁹⁴ This coalition, however, disbanded in less than a year, allowing the LDP to come back into power again as a part of the ruling coalition with the Japan Socialist Party (JSP).⁹⁵ From the period between 1994-1996, the prime minister, Tomiichi Murayama, was from the JSP.⁹⁶ In 2009, the LDP lost its majority in parliament to the main opposition party at the time, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), but regained those seats following the 2012 election and has been the ruling party since.⁹⁷ In a recent 2014 election, the LDP secured more than two-thirds of the seats in the Lower House, the number of seats needed under Japan’s parliamentary system for the Lower House to pass and veto bills over the decisions of the Upper House.⁹⁸ In effect, it is possible for the Liberal Democratic Party to pass any law in the present, provided the party maintains the coalition, and by extension, the decision-making power of the seats they hold. It

⁹³ Krauss, Ellis S. and Pekkanen Robert J, “The Rise and Fall of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no.1 (February 2010): 5, doi:10.1017/S0021911809992555.

⁹⁴ Krauss & Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party*,” 5.

⁹⁵ Louis D. Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics*, 5th edition, (New York: M.E. Sharp, Inc. (An East Gate Book), 2009), 2009, 118.

⁹⁶ Hayes, *Introduction to Japanese Politics*, 82, 92, &99.

⁹⁷ Krauss & Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party*,” 5.

⁹⁸ “Abe tightens grip on power as ruling coalition wins 325 seats in Lower House election,” *Kyodo Staff Report, The Japan Times*, December 15, 2014, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/15/national/politics-diplomacy/abes-snap-election-pays-big-win/#.VQjNe2TF__V.

can be said that the LDP has had a considerable amount of political influence in the past, and also in the present day. For this reason, I consider the agenda of the State to be a manifestation of the agenda of the LDP in the following analysis.

The Liberal Democratic Party has actively promoted the idea of family as social units. Its 2012 proposal to revise the constitution that I first examine has been a subject of national discussion and criticism until the present. The LDP has proposed the first revision of the constitution since its establishment in 1947.⁹⁹ The party's rationale for the revision of the constitution is the lack of revisions to the constitution since its establishment; they propose that the constitution should change in accordance with changes to the country.¹⁰⁰ One of the articles of the constitution that have been discussed extensively is Article 9. The proposed change would re-name the Japan Self Defense Force as Armed Forces, which could allow Japan more flexibility to participate in military operations abroad.¹⁰¹ Another proposed change to the constitution is the placement of an additional article mandating that citizens respect the flag and the national anthem.¹⁰² Much of the criticism to these proposed changes is centered on the concern that they are nationalistic and reminiscent of pre-war and wartime ideologies. The proposed changes that I will examine are articles that specify the role of family in nation-building, which I argue also harbors nationalistic sentiments. These proposed changes to do with family and the nation have not become the subject of national discussion as Article 9 has, perhaps because they are much more subtle about the devotion of the individual to the state.

Chapter 3 of the Japanese Constitution, "The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens," currently includes Article 24, which details how marriages are valid between two consenting individuals of the opposite sex. In the LDP's 2012 proposal, this article has been amended to detail what the function of the family and marriage will be. The amended first half of Article 24 in the proposal states: "Family will be respected as society's fundamental and natural units. Family must support each other." The preamble of the constitution has also been revised extensively in the proposal, and similarly redefines the role of familial units in nation building. The current constitution does not touch upon the significance of the family unit, and is instead focused on how the constitution seeks to keep Japan's long-lasting peace. The revised preamble emphasizes the relevance of the emperor and protecting the nation, and is an example of proposed changes that reflect more overtly nationalistic sentiments. The proposal also adds the following sentence: "Japanese citizens will protect the country themselves and its territories with pride and respect, respect fundamental human rights and peace, and build the nation through cooperation, such as cooperation between families and society."¹⁰³

Notice that, depending on how "family" is defined, certain roles can be prescribed to individuals within it. The LDP's definition of family does prescribe roles to individuals based on their gender (or arguably, sex – as discussed later in this chapter and Chapter 5, there seems to be little awareness of the difference between these two). Furthermore, the current definition of "family" disseminated by the LDP tends to place women in roles that prevent them from participating in the workforce. The implications of defining the function of family in context of nation-building did not go unnoticed; one point of criticism directed at this proposal was that the

⁹⁹ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP of Japan), *Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan Q&A: Zouhoban*, October 2013, online, 1-4, https://www.jimin.jp/policy/pamphlet/pdf/kenpou_qa.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ LDP of Japan, *Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan Q&A: Zouhoban*, 1-4.

¹⁰¹ LDP of Japan, *Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan*, April 27, 2012, online, 4, https://www.jimin.jp/policy/policy_topics/pdf/seisaku-109.pdf.

¹⁰² LDP of Japan, *Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan*, 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1 & 8.

state should not be able to dictate what a family is. A question in the LDP's question and answer document about their proposal asks: "In the proposed amendment to Article 24, it states, 'Family must support each other,' but is it not dangerous for the state to have a say in what a family structure might be?"¹⁰⁴ In response, the party states that it has "no intention to change what the structure of a family is," and that one of the reasons the amendments were proposed was that "familial bonds are getting weaker".¹⁰⁵ The party is insistent on the idea of family units as "natural," stating that "families are important, and this view is widely internationally accepted."¹⁰⁶ It is true that family is widely recognized as "building blocks" of society – Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, for example, states: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."¹⁰⁷

It is necessary, then, to delve deeper into what constitutes "family" as defined by the Liberal Democratic Party in order to discern what implications this proposal has for women and employment. Take, for example, the party's publicly available manifesto published in 2013; it covers the LDP's recent stance on most national issues, such as recovery from the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake.¹⁰⁸ Again, family is explicitly assumed to be the building blocks of society: "We believe we should value family, which are fundamental units of society, and will attempt to secure family foundations."¹⁰⁹ Listed under the section "Supporting Family Flawlessly from Pregnancy to Childrearing" are a number of proposed methods to achieve this goal; one is "the promotion of a multi-generational family."¹¹⁰ Again, the LDP had denied attempting to change what family structure is in their constitution amendment from the previous year; however, in this 2013 policy document, they explicitly state that one of their goals is to promote a family structure in which grandparents also contribute to childrearing, who are in turn supported by their sons and daughters. The polies also explicitly state that the party will "favor 3-generation households" as a way to achieve the goal of "securing family foundations".¹¹¹

Furthermore, many of the policies in this pamphlet are defined in context of two-parent households. In the same section, some of the proposed methods of supporting family are "educating mothers and fathers about the importance of life and child development," and "developing an environment where mothers and fathers can both receive parental leave."¹¹² Of the policies mentioned in the manifesto, one general policy singles out single-parent households: "Creating and promoting an environment where single parents can independently work and participate in childrearing."¹¹³ This bias for two-parent households is more obvious in their promotion of work-life balance, which, as reviewed in Chapter 2, has been an increasingly popularized proposed solution to the gender gap in employment and the declining population. The policy states: "We take into account new family structures and visions and will attempt to promote awareness in the workplace of work-life balance, where husband and wife can share

¹⁰⁴ LDP of Japan, *Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan Q&A: Zouhoban*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, online, last accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a16>.

¹⁰⁸ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, *J-fairu 2013: Sōgōseisakushū*, online, http://jimin.ncss.nifty.com/pdf/sen_san23/j-file-2013-06-27-1.pdf, 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ LDP of Japan, *J-fairu 2013: Sōgōseisakushū*, 62-63.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

household work.”¹¹⁴ In this statement, their vision of “new family structures” is one in which the husband participates in childcare in a two-parent household, and does not include other family structures such as single-, same-sex, or adoptive parents.

The ruling party has emphasized the idea of preserving these “family bonds” not only in their written manifestos, but also in their actions. In 2013, the Liberal Democratic Party established the *Kazoku no Kizuna Tokumei In Kai* (The Special Committee for Preserving Family Bonds).¹¹⁵ The committee seems to have been established as a response to a court decision in favor of children born outside of marriage being able to receive the same amount of inheritance as children born within marriage.¹¹⁶ An opinion from the Japan Policy Institute, a think tank which works closely with and advises the Liberal Democratic Party, cites that the committee is necessary because the court ruling “relativizes the idea of marriage and family based on one husband and one wife, promotes adultery, and will result in the destruction of a family unit.”¹¹⁷ This committee, therefore, is clear that the presence of a married husband and wife is central to their idea of a family unit. Furthermore, the committee considers families that do not conform to this family structure as immoral and a danger to the Japanese nation. The LDP has rejected another law that would allow separate last names within family upon marriage; under present law, both spouses must have the same last name.¹¹⁸ The rejection of this law also clarifies the value the party places on an ideal family as a cohesive, inseparable unit. I conclude, therefore, that “family” is defined clearly by the party as a two-parent household composed of a mother, father, children, and the elderly.

4.2 A Close Reading of LDP Documents: Dissemination of Gender Ideology through Family Structures

Now that I have established that the Japanese state does, in fact, define what an “ideal” family structure is, I answer the following question: What is the role of the woman in this ideal family structure, and how does this family structure designate roles to women that make it difficult for them to participate in the workforce? There is a section dedicated to women’s issues in the 2013 pamphlet and under the famous slogan, “A Japan where women shine brightly.”¹¹⁹ The party’s concrete goals under this heading include the nomination of more female politicians in their diet, the reduction in the number of women who leave their job after giving birth, and the goal of filling 30% of management positions with women in the next three years.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the party states that they will aim for “a change in thought [about gender] among men,” and that they “will create a society in which women can be confident about their ability, display their full potential and shine brightly.”¹²¹ At first glance, these goals seem to promote gender equality, not just in the workplace, but in other societal dimensions well; this goal seems to apply broadly to all women regardless of what type of family they hold.

The language used to describe how these goals will be achieved, however, show that equality in the workplace is promoted only in conjunction with the State’s goals of economic

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 22-23.

¹¹⁵ Japan Policy Institute, “Ima, kazoku kihonhō ga motomerareteiru,” May 1, 2014, <http://www.seisaku-center.net/node/754>.

¹¹⁶ “Ima, kazoku kihonhō ga motomerareteiru.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, *J-fairu 2010: Sōgōseisakushū*, Article 270, online, accessed March 30, 2015, https://www.jimin.jp/election/results/sen_san22/kouyaku/22_sensan/contents/10.html.

¹¹⁹ LDP of Japan, *J-fairu 2013: Sōgōseisakushū*, 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

growth and combating the declining population. Firstly, in the goals listed under the “Women Shining Brightly” heading, there is awareness that women have not received recognition for their potential to work at a level equal to men – but the reason for this is simplified to “the awareness of men.”¹²² While there is little doubt that individual opinions influence what socially accepted gender roles are, there is a sense of avoidance about the role of the State in perpetuating this ideology in the past, and the lack of policy to push for gender equality in the workplace in over the years. In the March 2011 volume of the Social Science Japan newsletter, Mari Osawa makes a similar analysis about the gender equality policies of the main opposition party, the DPJ. She notes how the solution to the gender gap in employment is often simplified and pointed towards the public’s awareness of gender issues.¹²³ Furthermore, the manifesto states in a note about the promotion of workplace equality: “It is important to utilize women, a hidden source of strength, in order to develop the nation.”¹²⁴ Notice how women are viewed as a resource to be used for the sake of economic growth. In short, the policies to promote workplace equality by measures such as increasing the number of female managers are a means, but not an end.

Immediately after this statement about using women as a resource comes another note: “We will create a flexible society in which women with different lifestyles and life stages can participate in society and feel self-fulfilled... while maintaining family and community bonds.”¹²⁵ Taking into account how family and family bonds have been defined earlier, this implies that a society in which women work and participate in the labor force are desirable, but only under the condition that a certain family structure is maintained. In other words, women may work, but they must also fulfill the role of wife, mother, and caretaker of the elderly in order to maintain this idealized family structure. Finally, one of the policies in the 2013 manifesto states: “We will push for policies that expand the use of maiden names so that women can participate in society more smoothly while maintaining family bonds.”¹²⁶ The party recognizes that giving up a last name restricts the freedom of married women, but their solution is not to allow women the liberty of keeping their maiden name. There is rejection of independence in spousal relationships, and the party is insistent on maintaining the husband-wife structure of a family.

Other pamphlets directed towards women that address the LDP’s stance on including women in the workforce similarly place women into dual roles of mother and worker. I examine three points of interest within one of these pamphlets aimed at women published between 2013-2015, titled *Anata to anata no taisetsu na hito no tameni watashitachiga, dekiruoto* (What We Can Do for You and Your Loved Ones). One section of this pamphlet is dedicated to education, and proposes policies like new standards for teaching qualifications and the re-introduction of Saturday classes in public school.¹²⁷ Another section of the same pamphlet promotes *papaiku* (“papa-childrearing” a combination of the informal term for “father”, *papa*, and the term “nurture”, *iku*) as a part of a policy to help women re-join the workforce.¹²⁸ Finally, the pamphlet contains an image of a family, shown in Figure 6 below, along with the slogan, “We do not throw money at problems, and instead promote employment.”¹²⁹ One general point of interest is that the pamphlet, like the manifestos, are focused largely on promoting an environment where

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Mari Osawa, “It is the Government That Has Bigger Problems - Gender Issues in Japanese Society,” 3-7.

¹²⁴ LDP of Japan, *J-fairu 2013: Sōgōseisakushū*, 22-23.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, *Anata to anata no taisetsu na hito no tameni watashitachiga, dekiruoto*, date unknown (2013-2015), online, 3, https://www.jimin.jp/policy/pamphlet/pdf/woman_01.pdf.

¹²⁸ LDP of Japan, *Anata to anata no taisetsu na hito no tameni watashitachiga, dekiruoto*, 1.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 3.

women can both work and raise children: they propose solutions such as the increase in publicly funded childcare facilities and the re-employment of women after childbirth.

The underlying assumptions behind these three points of interest in the pamphlet reveal more specifically how the role of a mother and wife is presented. First, education of children is framed as a woman's issue. By placing policies directed at childhood education in a woman's pamphlet, the party assumes that the education of the child is primarily the mother's responsibility. Second, from the term *papaiku*, it can be seen that the expectation is that the father participates in childrearing as well, but never as a primary "occupation" and instead as a way to "support" the mother so that she can both work and raise children. That is, the assumption is that *ikusei*, or childrearing, is the mother's responsibility, and the father's primary responsibility is still work. Finally, the simple image of the family sitting at the dinner table is telling of the underlying role of the woman in the "ideal" family of husband, wife and children: she is serving the rest of the family. Like this, household activities such as taking care of children including their education and household work is still assumed to be a woman's job. Similarly to the manifestos, there is no mention of promoting participation in the workforce for women that do not have or desire children, nor is there mention of an alternative family structure in which men are responsible for childrearing and women are the breadwinners of the family. These policies present division of housework always *between* husband and wife, in which the role of the woman is still assumed to be a mother *and* a wife: there is little that challenges the fundamental notion that housework and childrearing are women's "occupations".

Figure 6: Depiction of Family in Liberal Democratic Party Pamphlet



Note the family structure and the woman's role in this image. The smaller text reads, "We promote the re-employment of women [after childbirth]; Realize with state-sponsored subsidies 100% employment of young people and new graduates; A work style in which the entire family can enjoy dinner together."

Image from the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, *Anata to anata no taisetsu na hito no tameni watashitachiga, dekiruoto*, date unknown (2013-2015), online, 3, https://www.jimin.jp/policy/pamphlet/pdf/woman_01.pdf.

I therefore conclude that the Liberal Democratic Party currently promotes a certain gender ideology for the purpose of the State's economic development: A woman's job is to bear and raise children, and also to work and be economically productive. How this dissemination of gender ideology affects the gender gap in employment is more difficult to evaluate. It is true,

after all, that the LDP addresses issues such as the lack of childcare services, which I established in Chapter 2 as one of the reasons thought behind the gender gap in employment. However, I argue that the promotion of this gender ideology of women as mothers and workers does in fact contribute to the gender gap in employment. One of the conclusions of Chapter 2 was that gender stereotypes are ultimately what keep women from participating in workforce, and that these stereotypes are based on the idea that women are mothers and caregivers. The visibility of the effect of this gender ideology on the ability of women to participate in the workforce is examined more in the next section.

In this section so far, the LDP's manifestos and documents seem to have been more subtle than not about promoting gender ideology, disseminating it indirectly through family ideology and in the framework of promoting gender equality in employment. There is one section in the 2013 policy pamphlet that explicitly mentions the word "gender," however, that is in a way the most telling of the party's stance on the gender roles they have implicitly defined. The section in question is called "The Promotion of Education and Experience to Foster a Sense of Love for the Nation" and states, "We will not allow inappropriate sex education, gender-free education, and self-damaging education of history."¹³⁰ A side note defines gender-free education: "Gender Free Education: A form of education that denies Japanese tradition by denying sexual differences such as masculinity and femininity."¹³¹ First and foremost, there is the obvious convolution between gender roles and sex, attributing physical differences directly to masculinity and femininity. The word "tradition" is used in order to justify the presence of certain gender roles, and the implication of this presentation has been examined in Chapter 3. This note about gender-free education is another quintessential present-day example of how a certain gender ideology is promoted as "traditionally Japanese" by the State in order to justify them. This is also a present-day example of nationalism in gender ideology: it implies that there is something fundamentally Japanese about specific family and gender ideologies (without defining what is "traditional"), and that it is immoral and anti-Japanese to be nonconforming to these ideologies. I believe that this seemingly insignificant side note is much more overt about the party's agenda, which is to maintain the gender roles of women as caretakers and mothers, but still promote women joining the workforce.

Finally, Section 11, Article 24 of the proposed change in the constitution shows that this family, and by extension, gender ideology, is at the core of the LDP's policies. Currently, Article 11 states: "Members of the diet, the emperor, the prime minister, judges, and other public workers must respect the constitution."¹³² The LDP's proposed revision, however, amends this to: "All citizens must respect the constitution."¹³³ In other words, the LDP is not only pushing for changes to be made to the constitution that would reestablish the function and ideas of family. This revision in the constitution also attempts to make "respecting" these new changes mandatory for Japanese citizens, and "respecting the constitution" can be interpreted in numerous ways. In other words, under these amendments, although highly unlikely, it is possible that not conforming to the LDP's ideal family structure be interpreted as disrespecting the constitution. For women, this could mean that choosing to be a single mother, or choosing not to have a family could be considered "disrespecting" the constitution. This amendment is but a proposal, and it is unlikely that there will be punishment for those who do not follow a certain family structure. The party's push to make a certain family structure, and by extension,

¹³⁰ LDP of Japan, *J-fairu 2013: Sōgōseisakushū*, 65.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² LDP of Japan, *Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan*, 26.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

conformity to gender roles mandatory, and the attachment of moral judgement to this proposal, is telling of how strongly the LDP promotes this family and gender ideology in the present.

As observed in Chapter 3, the construction and dissemination of ideology happens during times of crises and as a part of an agenda that has an objective of developing the Japanese state. The financial crisis of 2008 is an example of this “crisis,” that drew attention to first Japan’s famously long deflationary period, and second to the declining population rate, which had also been a growing concern over the years. Interestingly, this notion of family as fundamental units of society has not been mentioned actively in manifestos in years preceding the Lehman shock. The LDP’s 2005 political manifesto (three years before the shock in 2008), for example, does not mention the word “family” or “women” at all: One of their more detailed documents titled “Jimintō no Yakusoku (The LDP’s Promises),” notes it will address gender equality in the workplace, but there is little emphasis preserving a certain family structure, nor is there active promotion of women in the workforce like in the current “Women Shining Brightly” campaign.¹³⁴ The dissemination of family and gender ideology is happening in the present in tandem with the resurgence in nationalist sentiment, and the push for economic growth and preservation of “traditional” Japanese values are both examples of the State’s response to the financial crisis and its repercussions.

Another point of interest is that gender ideologies are perpetuated today in a much more subtle manner, under the guise of promoting gender equality. One explanation for the subtle dissemination of gender ideology is that it is a way for the state to simultaneously push for gender ideologies that happen to have similar elements to those of pre-war, wartime, and post-war ideologies, but also distance itself from the negative stigma associated with ultranationalism during that time period. Taking into account the fact that international pressure to close the gender gap in employment has been present since the CEDAW in 1979, the crisis is a rare opportunity for the State to appear progressive in promoting gender equality in the work place to the international community, while using women as a resource to complete the national agenda of economic and population growth, and additionally, attempt to perpetuate certain gender roles.

4.3 Changing Gender Ideologies in the Present: The Acceptance of Dual-Income Households

This conclusion of the previous section begs the questions: To what extent has the dissemination of the ideology of women as mothers and wives been successful in the present? Does the dissemination of this ideology, in fact, influence the gender gap in employment? I argue that the existing gender gap in employment today as introduced in Chapter 2 is itself evidence of how successful the assimilation of the ideology has been in recent years. It is important, however, to consider the possibility that, although this gender ideology is present in political manifestos, the public has not assimilated this idea. In this section, I first use surveys from the Japanese Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office on notions of family, gender, and division of labor to show how the idea of a dual-income is becoming increasingly popular in tandem with promotion of work-life balance by the State. I then use case studies and additional survey responses to reveal that although the public has been increasingly accepting of women participating in work, the notion of women being mothers and caretakers are also deeply entrenched, again corresponding with the State’s promotion of gender ideology.

¹³⁴ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan. *Jiminto no Yakusoku*. 2005. Online. Accessed from The Manifesto Project Database, the Manifesto Document Collection. Volkens, Andrea, Pola Lehmann, Nicolas Merz, Sven Regel, and Annika Werner. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) 2014.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that the number of dual-income households has been increasing, and that this is due to the fact that more women are joining the workforce as part-time workers typically as a means to supplement their husband's income. Figure 7 below illustrates that the notion of women as workers is relatively new. A public survey opinion by the Japan Cabinet Office taken between the years 1987 and 2014 asks respondents to what degree they agree with the statement: "Men should work outside the household, and women should protect the household."¹³⁵ It can be seen that approximately 60% of respondents in 1992 answered "agree" or "somewhat agree" and about 34% answered "disagree" or "somewhat disagree".¹³⁶ Since 1992, there has been a decline in those that "agree" or "somewhat agree" with this statement, at approximately 20% fewer respondents selecting these responses in 2009.¹³⁷ In 2012, the percentage of respondents that "agree" or "somewhat agree" increases by more than 10% in the three years since 2009.¹³⁸ In the most recent survey conducted in 2014, the proportion of those who "agree" or "somewhat agree" increases again to approximately 50%.¹³⁹ It is difficult to attribute from this survey whether these trends, particularly in the last five years, are due to the dissemination of ideology by the State during the four years after the financial crisis and increasing public awareness of gender roles in the most recent years. Generally, it seems that "protecting the household," or bearing responsibility for household matters such as housework and childrearing has become, albeit gradually, less perceived as a woman's job in the past two decades.

¹³⁵ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, *Yoronchosa – Indekkusu*, 2012, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>.

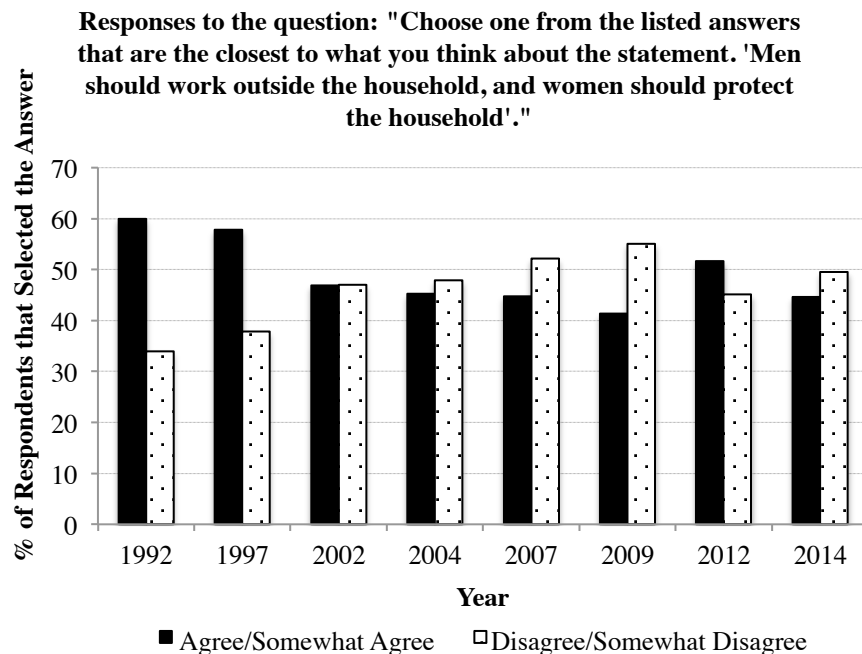
¹³⁶ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, *Danjo kintou ni kansuru yoronchosa*, 1992, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h04/H04-11-04-11.html>.

¹³⁷ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, 3, *Chosahyo: Danjo kyōdō sankaku shakai ni kansuru*, 2009, http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h21/h21-danjo/3_chosahyo.html.

¹³⁸ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, 3, *Chosahyo: Danjo kyōdō sankaku shakai ni kansuru yoronchosa*, 2012, http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h24/h24-danjo/3_chosahyo.html.

¹³⁹ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, 3, *Chosahyo: Jyosei no katsuyaku ni kansuru yoronchosa*, 2014, http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h26/h26-joseikatsuyaku/3_chosahyo.html.

Figure 7: Japan Cabinet Office Survey on the Gendered Division of Labor



The spacing between on the years does not correspond to the number of years passed (not to scale between years). The other choice in of answer in the survey that accounts for the rest of the proportion of answers is "Do not know." These percentages depicted in this figure were calculated by adding the proportion of respondents that replied "agree" and "somewhat agree" for the Agree/Somewhat Agree series, and "disagree" and "somewhat disagree" for the Disagree/Somewhat Disagree series.

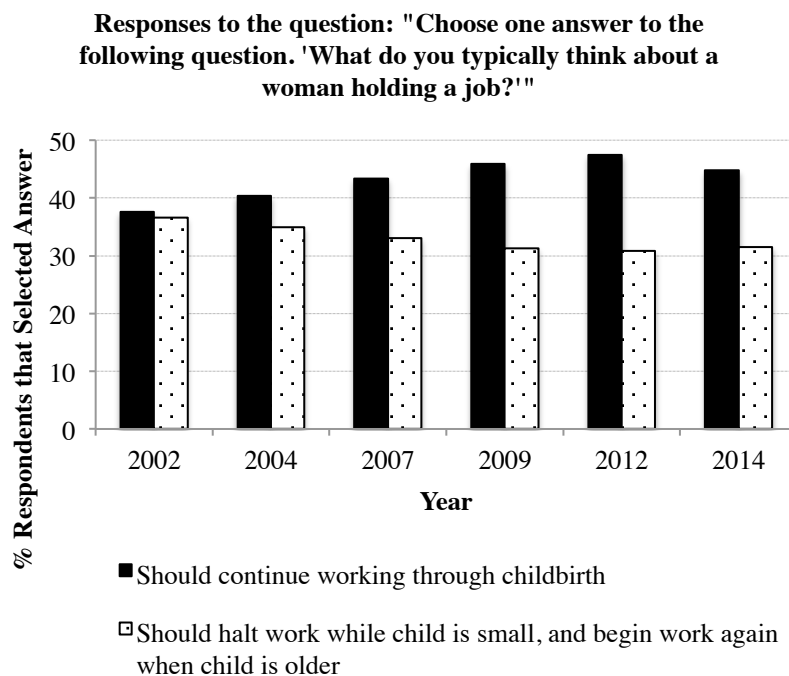
Data from the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations *Yoronchosa – Indekkusu (Public Opinion Surveys – Index)*, 2012, links to surveys at <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>. References to individual yearly surveys are listed in the bibliography.

Attitudes towards women, their children, marriage and employment is another topic that has been explored in the Japan Cabinet Office surveys. As Figure 8 shows, in the decade between 2002 to 2012, there seems to be more societal acceptance of a mother working through childbirth.¹⁴⁰ The notion of the mother giving up her employment at childbirth and being re-employed after the child is older is becoming less popular in favor of the mother continuing her employment through all stages of childrearing. Public opinion has moved away from the strict gendered division of labor in which the mother focuses on childrearing and household activities, and the father focuses on work outside the household. In the last decade, the notion of a woman working and childrearing concurrently has become more accepted, a change from the idea that, at any one time, the mother should only focus on one of these activities. This is consistent with the State's continued promotion of work-life balance and the increase in the number of dual-income households. It is important to note, however, that in 2014, more than half those in the opinion survey still believed that women should leave employment temporarily or permanently in their life course, due to reasons such as marriage and childbirth. I move onto case studies, which

¹⁴⁰ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, *Yoronchosa – Indekkusu*, 2012, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>.

further demonstrate how childrearing and housework are still considered by the public to be a woman's responsibility.¹⁴¹

Figure 8: Japan Cabinet Office Survey on Women, Childbirth, Marriage and Work



The spacing between the years does not correspond to the number of years passed (not to scale between years). The other choices in the list of possible answers that accounts for the rest of the proportion of answers is "Women should not hold jobs," "Should hold jobs until marriage," "Should hold jobs until childbirth," "other," and "Do not know".

Data from the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations *Yoronchosa – Indekkusu (Public Opinion Surveys – Index)*, 2012, links to surveys at <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>. References to individual yearly surveys are listed in the bibliography.

4.4 Evaluating the Success of the Dissemination of Gender Ideologies in the Present: Women as Mothers and Family Structure

In the March of 2014, one incident brought to attention the many problems that plague single mothers living within Japanese society. A 22-year old single mother of two had, over the Internet, asked for a babysitter to take care of her two young sons, aged 8 months old and 2 years old, for a period of three days while she worked. The mother became suspicious and called police after she was unable to contact the babysitter on the day she was supposed to pick her children up. The older boy was found dead in the babysitter's home; police identified the cause of death his as suffocation. The younger brother was treated for hypothermia, and the babysitter responsible for his death was arrested for abandoning the older brother's body after death. He explained that the boy had died while he, the babysitter, had slept, and denied any connection to

¹⁴¹ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, *Yoronchosa – Indekkusu*, 2014, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>. References to individual yearly surveys are listed in the bibliography.

his death. The younger mother cited financial reasons for using a website to look for a babysitter, which offered services for low prices.¹⁴²

This murder case was called “The Babysitter Incident” by the media, and became a popular subject of discussion. In general, there were two types of reactions to this incident. One reaction was criticisms directed at the single mother for leaving her child with the babysitter. Lines of criticism from citizens against mother were similar on popular websites like *Yahoo*, claiming the mother’s irresponsibility: one of the more critical comments state: “It is like she indirectly killed her child.”¹⁴³ The other type of reaction was the voice of single mothers sympathizing with this young mother of two, noting how difficult it is for low-income families to receive childrearing support. One reaction that is representative of this group states: “Whenever a child is left alone in an apartment and something happens to the child, everyone asks, ‘Why don’t you use a babysitter?’ But when the mother uses a babysitter and something happens to the child, she gets the blame. Isn’t the babysitter the one to blame the most?”¹⁴⁴

Like this, there is recognition that it is difficult for single mothers to make a living in Japan. The public reactions critical of the young mother are an insight into what socially accepted gender roles are in present-day Japan and how, despite public approval of sharing housework and women participating in the workforce, the primary role of a woman as mothers exists. In particular, much of the backlash targets the mother, but does not comment on the absence of the father in childrearing. The negative backlash is targeted disproportionately at women who “fail” in their role as caretaker of the child in comparison to the backlash, if any, directed at men who fail to participate in the parenting. Although the participation of men in childrearing has, as we have seen, been promoted by the State and approved by the public in these past five years, the mother’s role in childrearing is still a given, while the father’s is not. Notice how public sentiment about the role of the woman corresponds to the gender ideology the State has promoted: sharing of housework and childrearing activities is desirable, but childrearing is still considered largely the woman’s job.

There have been other recent instances of public backlash against women who are non-conforming towards this role of the women as mothers. In the August of 2013, an episode of *Nonstop: Saseragi Voice*, a show geared towards women, was broadcast on Fuji Television, one of the major public channels in Japan. The “voices” are from viewers who mail in their opinions on the topic, which is discussed among the television staff. This particular episode featured discussions between women in their thirties about that they could relate to; some topics involved included marriage and childrearing. In one segment, the discussions turn to the increasing number of single mothers. One of the statements viewers and the cast could relate to was: “I want children, but I don’t want to get married,” which was suggested in the discussion between the cast as one of the possible reasons why the number of single mothers is increasing. Other opinions discussed how social support for families were getting better, so it would be possible for women to raise children alone. Another observation pointed out in the discussion was that there are single mothers that are not married. Like this, the opinions and discussions in this show

¹⁴² “Shibōno nisaiji to otōto, chakui nashi bebīshittā jiken,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, March 20, 2014, <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASG3M7FMXG3MULOB02C.html>.

¹⁴³ Yahoo Chiebukuro, username “hananokobeam,” “Bebīshittā jiken dou omoi masuka?” March 19, 2014, http://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q11125080501.

¹⁴⁴ “Nandemo hahaoya no sei nanoka?” *Bebīshittā taku shibō jiken no hahaoya hihan ni, nettojō de mama tachi ga geido*,” Editorial Department, Wootopi Online, Zappallas, Inc., March 18, 2014, <http://wotopi.jp/archives/2826>.

were that of the 30-year-old female demographic, and we observe that there some degree of acceptance of an uncommon family structure in this demographic.¹⁴⁵

Again, social media websites such as Twitter give insight into public opinion about this type of family structure; while the show featured the opinions of women who had accepted different family structures, much of the public reaction to this show was negative. Criticism was mostly directed at the moral character of the mother and the perceived “selfishness” at wanting a child who would be raised in a non-traditional family setting, and came from both genders and many age ranges. A common opinion was similar to as follows: “I don’t understand this at all. To say that you don’t want a husband but you want a child means you’re only thinking about yourself, right? Normally, you have a husband, and decide whether you want a child with him right? To be unmarried and to have a child...I don’t understand it.” Much of the more abusive feedback was from men: “The single mothers on *Seseragi Voice* probably slept with lots of men, and didn’t have enough of them pull out. They’re bitches,” and “The single mothers on *Seseragi Voice* say they’ve lost hope for marriage? They don’t want to get married but they just want the sperm? They should go open their legs up for a homeless guy.” Another was: “They [single mothers by choice] should be considered shit, trash. Do they think being a single mother is cool? If they do, they don’t deserve to live anymore. Idiot dreamers.” Finally, other opinions were expressive of the idea of a “natural” family: “I was watching *Nonstop* and there seems to be more people wanting to be single mothers, but that’s just wrong! There are roles only a father can play, and roles only a mother can play, and a child should have the love of both parents! I think that if we don’t do that, society will break down, and that’s why we have a difference in sex between men and women!” Rare comments agreed that it was the mother’s choice, but acknowledged that the mother would require a lot of support from those around them and should consider financial stability.¹⁴⁶

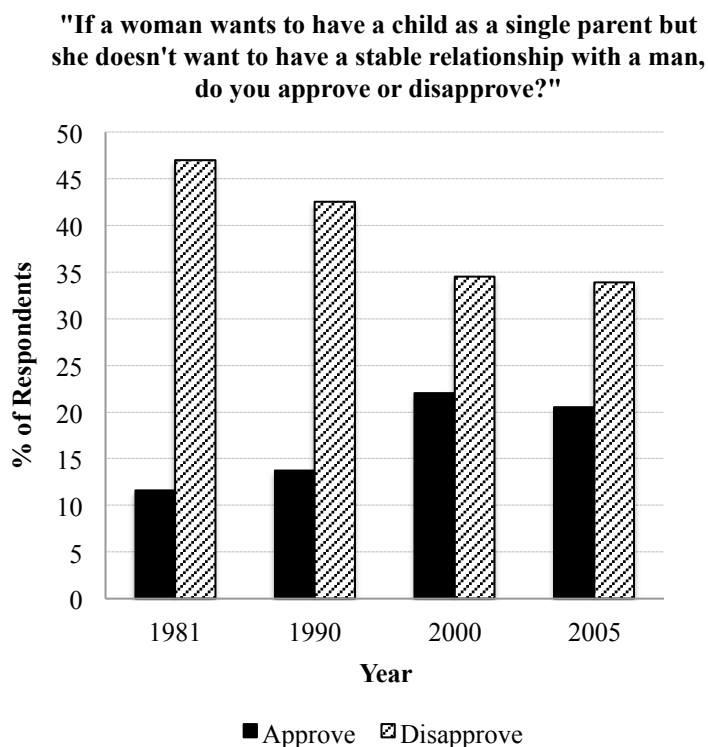
As these opinions show, there is animosity and at times, hostility towards the idea of mothers that are not married to women. There is more sympathy for single mothers who have been married or have been widowed such as in the Babysitter Incident, but a “non-traditional” family is still perceived by the public as largely unideal. Responses to the World Values Survey show that the sentiment against single mothers has been common in the past, and is still common today. One question in the survey asks: “If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn’t want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?” This question has been asked in four of the five waves of the World Values Survey Japan has participated in: the 1985, 1990, 2000, and 2005 surveys. The results of this survey, by age and gender, are shown below.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Fuji TV, “Nonsutoppu (Nonstop)!” Fuji Television Network, Inc., accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.fujitv.co.jp/nonstop/index.html#nonstop>, and Naver Matome, username “poooooom.” “Enjō! ‘Kodomo hoshī kedo kekkon shitaku nai toiu josei fueteiru’ => ‘Fuzakenna’ ‘Kodomono kimochi kangaeo’” August 23, 2013, <http://matome.naver.jp/odai/2137722207883416201?&page=3>.

¹⁴⁶ Naver Matome, “Enjō! ‘Kodomo hoshī kedo kekkon shitaku nai toiu josei fueteiru’.”

¹⁴⁷ World Values Survey Association., *Waves 1-6 ,1981-2012*, Country: Japan. Detailed citations for the six survey waves can be found in the bibliography.

Figure 9: World Values Survey Results on Opinions of Single Mothers by Choice in Japan



Data from the World Values Survey Association, *Waves 1-6, 1981-2005*, Country: Japan. More detailed citations for the 6 individual survey waves can be found in the bibliography.

Data from the World Values Survey indicates the overall increase in approval of unmarried single mothers between 1981 and 2005. In 2005, about one-third of the population still explicitly disapproved of unmarried single mothers, and one-fifth explicitly approved (the rest noted that it depended on the situation; a small portion of respondents did not answer the survey). There is a noticeable change from 1981, when a little less than half of the population explicitly disapproved of the idea of single mothers by choice, and slightly more than one-tenth of the population approved. However, the changes in explicit approval of single mothers of choice is less clear in more recent years. Although it is important to take into account that there is only a five-year span between the years 2000 and 2005 unlike the two decades between 1981, 1990, and 2000, there is less approval of single mothers in 2005 than there were in 2000 (unfortunately, the same question was not asked in the most recent 2010 wave).¹⁴⁸ The same question asked post-2010 would be an insight into whether the LDP's most recent push for "traditional" families has had an effect on the approval of unmarried single mothers.

As reflected in the public reactions to *Seseragi Voice*, disapproval of single mothers by choice come from both genders alike. There has been an approximately 18% decrease in the proportion of women that explicitly disapprove of unmarried single mothers in the 24 years between 2005 and 1981. The proportion of women that explicitly approve of has increased by about 11% in the same timespan. The changes in men's opinions are smaller between the two years. The proportion of men who disapprove of unmarried single mothers has decreased about

¹⁴⁸ World Values Survey Association., *Waves 1-6, 1981-2012*, Country: Japan.

7%, and the proportion of men who approve has increased by about 5% in the same timespan. Though gender differences are less clear, there seems to be a clear generational difference in opinion about single mothers. About 28% of those under 29 years of age approved of unmarried single mothers in the 2005 survey. In the same 2005 survey, approximately 26% of those in the 20-49 year old age range approved, and about 14% of those over 50 approved in the same year. In 2005, about 23% of those in both the under 29 and 30-49 age range explicitly disapproved of single unmarried mothers, and 45% of those in the 50 and up age range explicitly disapproved of single unmarried mothers in 2005. Those in the under-29 age group in general are more accepting of the idea of single mothers by choice. Although there is a 8 year gap between this survey and the reactions to *Seseragi Voice*, it is interesting to note that the highest rate of approval of single mothers by choice is observed in the same age range as those who were the “voices” in the *Seseragi Voice* show.¹⁴⁹

A close reading of public reactions to the *Seseragi Voice* show gives insight into what the underlying sentiments are in the disapproval of unmarried single mothers. Firstly, like in the case of the Babysitter Incident, there is recognition about how difficult it is to raise a child as a single parent in Japan. This concern is valid taking into account the lack of support for childrearing, as discussed in Chapter 2; the poverty of single-mother households is widely recognized and has also been a subject that has garnered national attention with the promotion of work-life balance. A 2014 article by Asahi Shimbun neatly summarizes the extent of poverty of single mothers: “Of the single-mother households, 48.2 percent fall below the 1.25 million yen poverty line. The figure is one of the worst among OECD member countries.”¹⁵⁰ The World Values Survey gives insight into how attitudes towards single-parent households in general have changed over time. One question in the World Values Survey asks the respondent their opinion of the statement: “For a child to be happy, they must have two parents, a mother and a father.”¹⁵¹ The results in the years from 1981 to 2005 are shown in Figure 8 below. The proportion of those who believe that a child needs both a mother and a father to be fulfilled and happy have changed very little in the time between 1981 and 2005, remaining at about 80% and above during these years.¹⁵²

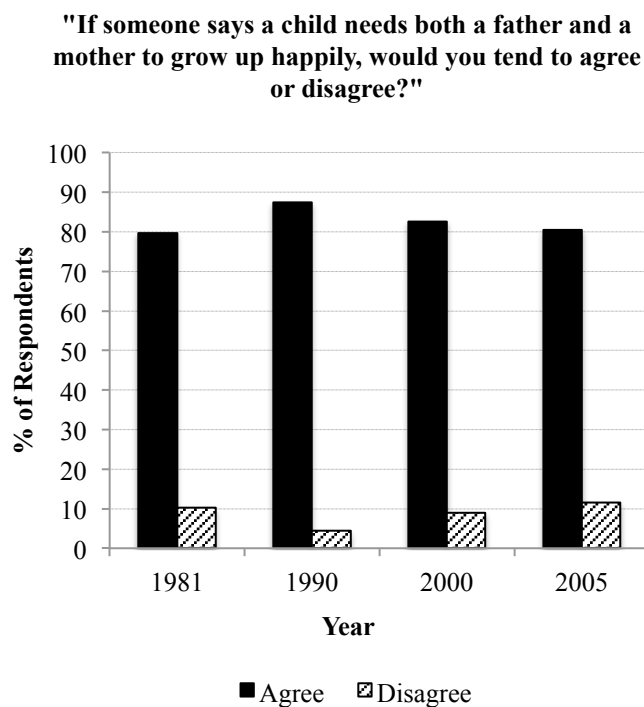
¹⁴⁹ World Values Survey Association., *Waves 1-6 ,1981-2012*, Country: Japan.

¹⁵⁰ “Half of single-mother households in Japan below poverty line, among worst in OECD countries,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, September 9, 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201409090005.

¹⁵¹ World Values Survey Association., *Waves 1-6 ,1981-2012*, Country: Japan.

¹⁵² World Values Survey Association., *Waves 1-6 ,1981-2012*, Country: Japan.

Figure 10: World Values Survey Results on Single Parent Households and Children's Happiness



Data from the World Values Survey Association, *Waves 1-6, 1981-2005*, Country: Japan. More detailed citations for the 6 individual survey waves can be found in the bibliography.

There is a strong notion that children need to be raised in a household with a mother and father in order to be happy and healthy. The criticisms to *Seseragi Voice* stating concern for the child, however, not only cite financial reasons, but the stigma associated with a non-traditional family, and to birth a child in a single-parent household is perceived as giving a child a disadvantage. The reasoning behind the criticism, especially those that attack the character of the mother as selfish, make the assumption that it is not possible for a child raised in Japan to be happy taking into account the possible financial problems and stigma. The proposed solution to the problem of stigma, then, is to conform to what is considered a “traditional” family instead of creating an environment in which single-parent families are supported and accepted. In a sense, a self-fulfilling prophecy is created: conforming to the accepted family structure out of concern for stigma creates an environment in which there is little progress towards accepting and providing social and financial support for single-parent households.

Secondly, among the more abusive comments directed by men at single mothers is the underlying notion that women's bodies are meant to serve a certain purpose, and this purpose is not at the full discretion of women themselves. That is, there is sentiment that women are not free to have sex, or to not have sex, with whom they choose. Instead, they are to have sex with a man for the purpose of making a child; the woman's body is considered a possession of men, and also commodities of the State, women that do not fulfill these roles are criticized, again as immoral. Furthermore, there seems to be a sense of aggression at the idea of a woman having full control over her body, and this aggression originated not out of concern for the child (in contrast to financial concerns about being a single mother by choice), but out of the women's independence of men's desires. Very much like the opinion of the Special Committee to Preserve

Family Bonds, the sentiment behind these comments are that women who choose to be mothers but not conform to a certain family structure are immoral and dangerous, or threatening. The idea of women's bodies as properties of the State, as we have seen in Chapter 3, is again being disseminated, and is popularized in the present.¹⁵³ In short, public opinion echoes the State's push for a woman to be married and tied to a husband, even taking into account the fact that becoming a wife currently comes with other expectations such as earning less, doing more housework, and giving up a job.

Finally, public reactions reflect that a family with a father, mother, and child is still considered "natural," and public understanding is largely that the roles the parents play in a child's life is determined by their sex. There is little rationale behind the sentiment that this family structure is "natural," but it is implicitly presented as such by the State, as seen in the previous section. The State's portrayal of an "ideal" family and the role of each individual within it seems to have disseminated well. The comments to *Seseragi Voice* show how the ideal of a woman mother and caregiver and father as a worker exists today, and is still perceived by many as correct. Public sentiment seems to echo that of what the state perceives as "correct," "natural," and "traditional" gender roles are including the belief that the sex of an individual determines their role in the family.

4.5 Conclusions: The State of Gender Ideologies in Present-Day Japan and the Impact on the Gender Gap in Employment

It can be said that the State has been successful in disseminating certain gender roles; survey data shows that much of the population agrees with the idea of "work-life balance" as promoted by the State from the late 2000's. A strong notion of what a family is and what a woman's role is still exists in the public today, and these sentiments, particularly the responses to the recent case studies, echo that of post-financial crisis State-promoted ideology. These roles prescribe childrearing and parenting to a mother, and there is a sense that only women can fulfill this role. Because, as seen in Chapter 2, this is the type of gender stereotyping that prevents women from joining the workforce, it can be said that as long as these largely state-prescribed roles are unchallenged, a gender gap in employment will remain. However, there is a trend among the younger generation, particularly those in their early to late 20's to early 30's today, to be more accepting of different family structures and have different views on marriage and parenting. I now propose that this shift in attitudes can be attributed to increasing public awareness of gender issues.

¹⁵³ The idea of Japanese women belonging to Japanese men and the State is pervasive. For another very recent example in which Japanese men reacted strongly to the sexual independence of Japanese women, refer to the numerous Internet videos and articles written on an individual named "Julien Blanc" and his recent sexual assaults on Japanese women captured on video and broadcasted on famous sites like Youtube. Although the analysis of this example is beyond the scope of this paper and this footnote draws only on my first impression, I had noticed that many of the reactions from Japanese men to the assault of Japanese women by a white man are considered the Japanese women's fault for having sexual relations with white, non-Japanese men. Again, there is a sense of possession of Japanese women's bodies expressed by a number of Japanese men. This notion of women as properties of men also connects to the famous example of Korean comfort women who were subject to sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II – a popular theory in feminist writing on gender in Japan is that there was a distinction between Japanese women, who were responsible for childbirth for the sake of the Japanese nation, and Korean women, who were considered a source of sexual fulfillment (sex for non-procreational purposes). This topic, too, is complex and beyond the scope of the paper, but it is worth noting that this idea of women as properties of the State is not new, and similar thoughts among Japanese men exist today.

CHAPTER 5: BRINGING GENDER ISSUES INTO PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Reactions to *Kajihara Hakusho*, The Housework Harassment Diaries

Chapter 4 has revealed the ongoing and successful dissemination of the ideology of women as mothers and workers by the Japanese state in the present. However, our analysis of present-day perceptions of gender have revealed that, despite the State's ongoing attempts at establishing gender ideology, those in the age 20-30 demographic seems to have characteristically different opinions about family, gender roles, and women in work. This chapter examines the current public awareness of gender issues, a contrast to opinions of how individuals should conform to certain gender roles. I argue that awareness of gender issues has increased greatly in the past five years in tandem with the promotion of the participation of women in the workforce by the state. Furthermore, I argue that the increasing use and influence of social media platforms in the past half-decade in particular have also helped to give more individuals the opportunity to participate in dialogue about gender. Prior to the financial crisis, there was a lack of public awareness of gender issues, and popular media was, and still is, the primary source of public exposure to gender roles. However, discussion and criticism of gender roles that have remained largely in the academic sphere are now making their way into the public sphere. Later in the chapter, I use a recent case as a starting point to demonstrate how public dialogue about gender has moved onto another level, from identifying gender stereotypes to addressing equally stereotyped assumptions behind gender equality policies promoted by the state.

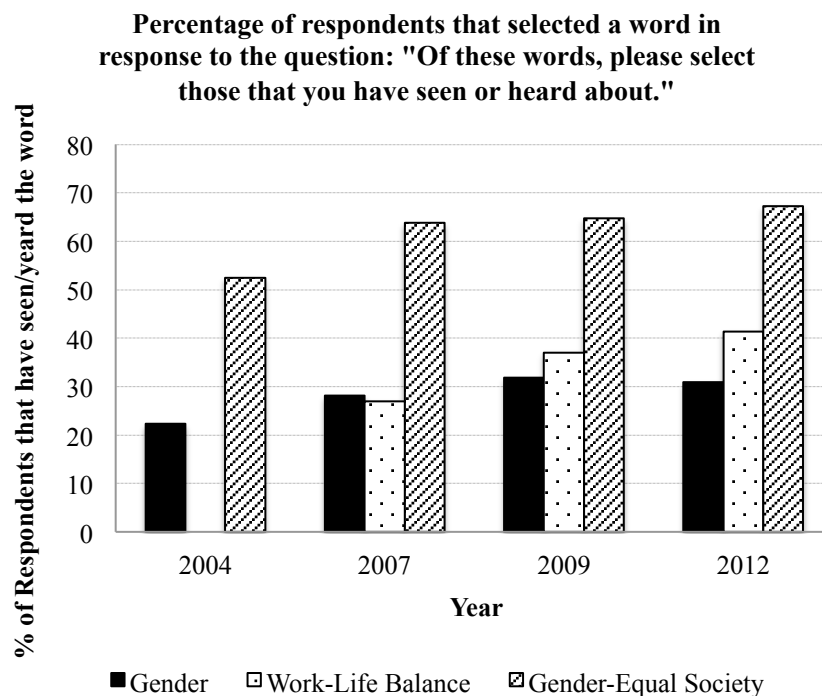
5.1 Keywords and Understanding of Gender Issues in the Academic vs. Public Spheres

From Chapter 2, it can be seen that literature and government policies challenging gendered labor division have existed since the passing of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985. Although the gendered division of labor has long been recognized and criticized in the academic sphere, there is less public awareness about gender issues. The word "gender," for example, has been used since the 1980's, albeit with changing meanings, in the academic sphere.¹⁵⁴ Public awareness of the same word, "gender," however, was, and still is, minimal, again due to State intervention, discussed later in this section. Figure 11 below shows the results to the Japanese Cabinet Office's survey on gender-related terms, in which a question asks respondents to note which gender-related terms they have seen or heard of. The number and specificity of gender-related terms that included in the survey has increased from 2004 to 2007. Notice how the term "work-life balance" did not enter the survey until 2007, and in the five years between 2007 and 2012, post-financial crisis, this word has become increasingly noticed by the public. More than half of the respondents seem to have seen or heard of the term "gender-equal society" in the surveys conducted between 2002 and 2012. However, awareness of the word "gender" itself remains low at approximately 30% in 2012.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, 234.

¹⁵⁵ Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations, *Yoronchosa – Indekkusu*, 2012, <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>.

Figure 11: Gender Equality Bureau Survey on Awareness of Words Related to Gender



Data from the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Government Public Relations *Yoronchosa – Indekksu (Public Opinion Surveys – Index)*, 2012, links to surveys at <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/y-index.html#nendobetsu>. References to individual yearly surveys are listed in the bibliography. A number of other terms such as “domestic violence” and “Equal Employment Opportunity Law” were included in the list of options; refer to the individual surveys for these, as the list of answer options differ by year.

Low recognition of the word “gender” is probably partially due to the fact that the Japanese term for “gender-equal society,” *danjo kyōdo sankaku shakai*, does not include the Romanized term for gender, *jendā*, but instead translates more closely to “a society in which men and women participate together.” The term *danjo kyōdo sankaku shakai* embodies gender equality, but is not associated with *jendā*. “Gender” is still considered a largely academic term and is not directly associated by the public with gender equality. The State, however, also plays a large role in censoring the word “gender.”

The backlash to gender-free education¹⁵⁶ from the public and various governmental groups that peaked in the mid-2000s¹⁵⁷ is another testament to how public education about the term “gender” and gender issues has been limited. In 2005, the midst of this period of backlash to gender-free education, the city of Kokubunji rejected the participation of Chizuko Ueno, a feminist scholar and activist, in a lecture about human rights education on the grounds that she may bring up the term “gender-free.”¹⁵⁸ It can be seen, again, that the State plays a significant

¹⁵⁶ In the preface of Chizuko Ueno et al, *Bakkurasshu! Naze jendā furī wa tatakaretanoka?*, Tokyo: Sofusha, 2006, page 4, the Sofusha Editorial Department defines “gender-free education” as “education that is free from pressures to conform to societal divisions based on gender”. They distinguish this from “genderless”, which she defines as “the erasure of societal divisions based on gender. They also note how the convolution of these two terms is in itself a part of backlash to gender-free education.

¹⁵⁷ Chizuko Ueno et al, *Bakkurasshu! Naze jendā furī wa tatakaretanoka?*, Tokyo: Sofusha, 2006, 154-161.

¹⁵⁸ Ueno et al, *Bakkurasshu!*, 154-161 & 435 -436.

role in disseminating gender ideology, this time by essentially censoring the word “gender-free” to prevent public discussions of gender. The 2000’s backlash to gender-free education firstly demonstrates how the concept of “gender” and gender issues in general had been the subject of backlash, censorship, and convoluted *before* discussion of these ideas had become mainstream and was fully disseminated to the public. Secondly, I surmise that the backlash to the promotion of gender-free education is an example of the barriers to bringing discussions about gender explicitly into the public sphere.

There is, however, a pattern of gender issues being popularized by the media, often through the discussion of certain “keywords.” One example of a keyword that was popularized and became a part of public knowledge is the word *sekuhara*, an abbreviated form of the word “sexual harassment”. In 1989, it received the *ryūkōgo taishō*, an annual award ceremony that chooses and celebrates words that have had a social impact during that year.¹⁵⁹ The word was popularized following an incident where a man at a train station fell to his death after harassing a woman who had tried to avoid him.¹⁶⁰ The court case for this garnered public attention; the problem of sexual harassment, which had been addressed by women’s groups around this time period, was finally brought into public light.¹⁶¹ In the following years, a formal definition of sexual harassment was established, as were laws to prevent them in the workplace.¹⁶²

The recent popularity of promoting a dual-income household and work-life balance is similarly reflected in a popularized “keyword”. In 2010, the word *ikumen* was voted into the top ten most influential words as a part of the annual *ryūkōgo taishō*.¹⁶³ The word *ikumen* is a modification of another popular word, *ikemen* (meaning “good-looking face,” and typically used for men). The word *ikumen* replaces the first part of the word *ikemen* with *iku*, the character for “nurture” used in context of childrearing. *Ikumen* therefore means “a man that actively participates in child-rearing,” and is an attempt to portray childrearing as a contribution to the attractiveness of a male.¹⁶⁴ The idea of promoting men participating in household and childrearing activities in the past five years has been a subject of heavy national discussion to the extent that this new word was created and popularized. In short, there is evidence that the rise in popularity of the idea of a dual-income household, particularly of fathers spending more time in the home, is a very recent phenomenon. Advocating for women’s participation in the workforce has been a consistent theme in marketing and popular media in tandem with political manifestos post-financial crisis. In particular, many of these campaigns have framed the sharing of housework and childrearing responsibilities between husband and wife as an integral part of the solution to improving the female labor participation rate. It was not until recently, however, that criticisms of these campaigns themselves have come to light.

5.3 *Kajihara Hakusho* and the Next Level of Public Discussions of Gender

I now examine the broadcast and reactions to a 2014 commercial by a major housing company called *Kajihara Hakusho*, or the “Housework Harassment Diaries” to prove that there has been the addition of a new dimension to public discussions of gender during these past five

¹⁵⁹ Jiyūkoku-minsha, “*Ryūkō go Taishō Dai Rokkai*, 1989,” accessed March 16 2015, <http://singo.jiyu.co.jp/nendo/1989.html>.

¹⁶⁰ “*Ryūkōgo Taishō #6*, 1989.”

¹⁶¹ Jennifer Chan, *Gender and Human Rights Politics in Japan: Global Norms and Domestic Networks*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 55-57, online at Google Books (Preview).

¹⁶² Chan, *Gender and Human Rights Politics in Japan*, 55-57.

¹⁶³ Jiyūkoku-minsha, “*Ryūkōgo Taishō Dai Nijūnanakai*, 2010,” accessed March 16 2015, <http://singo.jiyu.co.jp/nendo/2010.html>.

¹⁶⁴ “*Ryūkōgo Taishō #27*, 2010.”

years. This commercial was produced by a design and home construction company Asahi Kasei Homes Corporation, and it is a common example of a media campaign that attempts to promote the sharing of household chores. This commercial, however, is unique in that there was a rare instance of public backlash and discussion about gender stereotypes underlying a commercial that was meant to promote gender equality. This analysis draws on the conclusion that public media such as newspapers, television, and increasingly, the Internet, is the primary source of exposure to the public about gender issues given the lack of gender education and its restriction as an academic, rather than public discussion.

A series of commercials, *Kajihara Hakusho* was broadcast in July of 2014 on major media outlets and on public train lines as advertisements. The word *kajihara*, like *ikumen*, is a combination of two words: *kaji*, housework, and *harasumento*, harassment. The content of one of these commercials in the *Kajihara Hakusho* series is as follows. First, the commercial depicts a young man in this mid-twenties washing dishes quietly in a dark kitchen. The wife of the man appears, and critically observes the husband doing work, then a caption flashes across a black background: “Thanks for washing the dishes. I’ll wash them one more time, just in case, okay?” The scene shifts back to a shot of the man’s face; his initially slightly proud smile slips right off of his face, and he looks disappointed. Another caption appears against the sad background of black: “That one statement by my wife distanced me from doing the dishes again.” This particular commercial ends with an advertisement to search *Kajihara Hakusho* online, presented as a part of “Hebel House: Working Couple Family Research Lab”. This particular commercial ends here.

Figure 12: Panels from Asahi Kasei Homes Corporation *Kajihara Hausho* Commercials



Images from Asahi Kasei Homes Corporation, “Tsuma no Kajihara Hakusho,” Video, 2:00, June 19, 2014, <http://www.asahi-kasei.co.jp/hebel/kajihara/index.html/>.

Most of the commercials in the series follow a similar track: the wife observes the husband doing housework, makes a comment on the low quality of the work, and the husband feels discouraged from doing the work again. An extended cut of the commercial is even more explicit about the message it is attempting to convey. A caption appears at the end of the series, flashing back to each of the men criticized: “The wife’s casual statement hinders the husband from participating in housework. There are cases of this happening. Why don’t we think about a dual-income family where we can cooperate inside the home, too?”¹⁶⁵

With this, the implications of the commercial are clear. It seems to promote a dual-income family, one in which both the husband and wife work for income and share household chores, like many commercials have tended to do in the past half-decade. In other words, one of the messages of the commercial is that it is necessary to challenge the idea of a society in which a husband works long hours and a wife bears most of the household activities. In this sense, it is like the word *ikumen*, and on a superficial level, seems like a first step towards opening up opportunities for women to participate in the workforce by decreasing the time women allocate to housework. This commercial, however, goes one step further and states that the cause of the still gendered division of labor are women that keep men from participating in housework.

A part of the company’s website is the “Working Couple Family Research Lab,” which compiles the results of their research in an attempt to support their commercial.¹⁶⁶ It presents research to allegedly support the claim that *kajihara* by the wife prevents men from participating in housework, such as statistics on the percentage of interviewed husbands that have experienced “housework harassment.”¹⁶⁷ The nature of the questions asked in this Asahi Kasei Homes Corporation survey reveal the gender stereotypes underlying the production of the commercial. For instance, one of the questions under the category “The Wife’s True Feelings” asks, “Have you ever complained or criticized your husband’s housework?” and the result is listed as follows: “56% of wives bear with their husband’s clumsiness in housework.”¹⁶⁸ Here lies the assumption that men are less competent at housework than women. Furthermore, the questions in these surveys tend to ask whether the husband “helped” with housework. The study by the company also states, “Wives understand well that their husbands are motivated when the wives express their thanks clearly through words, and ask them considerately to do housework,”¹⁶⁹ which encourages women to thank the husband for housework. Finally, the study asks husbands how much they feel they should be paid for their housework, and the study finds that husbands feel they deserve to be paid about 200 yen more per hour than how much the wife believes he should be paid.¹⁷⁰ There is no question directed at how much the wives feel they should be paid for their housework, despite the fact that they dedicate more hours to housework; the commercials instead focus on the victimization of the husbands. Like the political manifestos in Chapter 4, it is clear that this commercial is based on the notion that housework is still primarily the woman’s job. It is, of course, necessary to take into account the fact that this commercial is an advertisement for a product, their houses. At the end of their “research” website are proposed products that would help alleviate this “housework harassment” such as kitchens that “are easy to clean so there is no

¹⁶⁵ Asahi Kasei Homes Corporation, “Tsuma no Kajihara Hakusho,” Video, 2:00, June 19, 2014, <http://www.asahi-kasei.co.jp/hebel/kajihara/index.html/>.

¹⁶⁶ Asahi Kasei Homes Corporation, “Tsuma no Kajihara Hakusho: Tomobataraki Kazoku Kenkyūjo,” accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.asahi-kasei.co.jp/hebel/kajihara/chousa.html/>.

¹⁶⁷ “Tsuma no Kajihara Hakusho: Tomobataraki Kazoku Kenkyūjo.”

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

worry, even with dad's dynamic [messy] cooking."¹⁷¹ Like this, this company's *Housework Harassment* promotion appropriates the gender stereotype of women as primary housekeepers while presenting itself as a progressive in terms of family values.

Negative backlash to this commercial was enormous; the volume of complaints the company received and its discussion on the Internet was so large that the incident became news, the backlash taken up by major news outlets. Much of the criticism was directed at the gender stereotypes underlying the production of the commercial. The response of one woman, which echoes many of the voices on social media like Twitter, was as follows: "*Kajihara* assumes that that housework is generally a woman's job, and men help with it. That [housework harassment] would not occur if it were normal for the husband and wife to split the housework. In other words, men should do housework properly."¹⁷² A young man also echoes this sentiment: "My ex-wife was a housewife, so I can only imagine what a dual-income family looks like. But I didn't imagine the husband 'helping' the wife. I imagined an equal division of the work. Plus, like single men living alone, there are plenty of men who are better at housework than women. I'm surprised at Japan, where people just accept these kinds of commercials and survey results."¹⁷³ Another woman states: "When men are criticized about their housework, it's *kajihara*. Well, what do you call it when men criticize women's housework? Shouldn't this be a topic of discussion as well? In my house where my husband usually does nothing, I am told by him, 'You haven't done XX [a certain chore].'"¹⁷⁴

There are several points to note about the reactions to the commercial that, like in the case studies of Chapter 4, reveal public opinion about gender roles. First, it can be seen that one view behind these reactions to the commercial is that men and women *should* share housework. In other words, a family in which both husband and wife participate in housework is now the ideal and increasingly, the norm, consistent with the promotion and approval of work-life balance as described in Chapters 2 and 4. Secondly, the comments question the more implicit gender stereotyping exhibited in the commercial, namely how the commercial seems to promote gender equality, but is based on the assumption that housework is inherently a woman's job. This understanding of gender issues by the public and its discussion is significant, because the way in which the commercial presents the promotion of work-life balance and implicitly depicts gender roles is very similar to how the State has done so in recent years. Third, the public did not react positively to this commercial as they did when the word *ikumen* was popularized. Again, the word *ikumen* is also similar to this commercial in that the underlying assumption is that women are responsible for household work such as childrearing or chores. There was a 5-year difference between the time *ikumen* was popularized and the *Kajihara Hakusho* commercial was. In this short time period, overall public reaction has shifted from acceptance of work-life balance in the popularity of the term *ikumen* to questioning the gender roles that are the root of the gendered division of labor. Finally, it is also important to note that these reactions, primarily expressed on the Internet, are that of younger users; in terms of age, I predict this is a similar demographic to the generation that had the most flexible attitudes towards gender roles in the quantitative surveys.

The effect of this type of open media and social platforms on bringing discussions of gender issues into public light was also visible in this incident. The commercial *Kajihara*

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Twitter Search, "#家事ハラ(#kajihara)," July 22, 2014, posted by "YUHKI."

¹⁷³ Ibid., July 21, 2014, posted by "塩谷 風月."

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., July 16, 2014, posted by "しー (3キロ痩せます)."

Hakusho was based on a 2013 book by a professor and journalist, Mieko Takenobu.¹⁷⁵ Takenobu criticized the commercial strongly, stating that it conveyed the exact opposite message her book is trying to convey.¹⁷⁶ Her original definition of *kajihara* describes the phenomenon in which women are often burdened with both housework and a job, and how the LDP's recent promotion of dual-income families are actually increasing this burden on women.¹⁷⁷ While the company does explicitly not admit misunderstanding of the word, it notes that they have interpreted *kajihara* in their own way and links the Takenobu's original text in their website.¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, Takenobu's academic analysis and original *Kajihara* book became a subject of discussion after it was exposed to this type of media scandal. One Twitter user states: "*Kajihara* as presented in the commercial is completely different from what Professor has presented in her book!"¹⁷⁹ A search on Google trends shows how, at least in the media sphere of the Internet, the word *kajihara* was practically unknown prior to the incident; although awareness of the word is falling, it is still being discussed today.¹⁸⁰ A provocative commercial such as this seems to have promoted awareness of gender issues despite its negative backlash.

This analysis of the *Kajihara Hakusho* series has brought to attention several important points on the perpetuation of gender ideology in present-day Japan. First, media portrayals of supposedly gender-equal environments in the past half-decade often enforce gender stereotypes, in particular the woman's role as mother and caretaker of the household. This speaks to the level of awareness about gender issues that major corporations responsible for much of the media broadcast to the public have, and, as in Chapter 4, the influence of the State on disseminating what "correct" gender roles are. Portrayals of the woman as mother and caretaker have been emphasized in popular media during the years in which gender equality was a part of political campaigns as large companies capitalize on promoting issues of national interest and supposedly progressive ideas of what family is, much like the State does in the eyes of the international community. Most importantly, public discussion has moved from a simple rejection of the so-called "traditional" gender roles to criticizing gender roles that are presented superficially progressive and ideal at first glance.

5.4 Conclusion: The Heightened Awareness of Gender Issues and Implications for the Future

In a sense, the concurrence of increasing public discussions of gender and the State's perpetuation of gender ideology is ironic. The State, as a part of its national agenda, has in the past half-decade continuously and explicitly promoted the need for women to participate in the labor market and bear children, and implicitly promoted their roles as mother and caregivers. This has captured the attention of various media outlets, which are the primary source of information about gender to the general public, and have resulted in further promotion of the work-life balance. Given the emphasis of these issues in popular media, the public has become sensitive and outspoken about gender issues. The State's attempt at perpetuating a set of gender ideologies that would benefit their current agenda, stopping population decline and reviving the

¹⁷⁵ Women's Action Network., "Tsuma no Kajihara' jittai chōsa ni tsuite no kōgi yōseisho," July 30th 2014, <http://wan.or.jp/reading/?p=14151>.

¹⁷⁶ "Tsuma no Kajihara' jittai chōsa ni tsuite no kōgi yōseisho."

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ "Tsuma no Kajihara Hakusho: Tomobataraki Kazoku Kenkyūjo."

¹⁷⁹ Twitter Search, "#家事ハラ (#kajihara)," July 25, 2014, username "虹風 憂璃."

¹⁸⁰ Google Trends Search, "家事ハラ (kajihara)." March 17 2015.

economy, has ultimately led to the public, especially those that are younger, into questioning these very gender ideologies.

What does this imply for the future of the gender gap in employment, and ultimately the social status of women in Japanese society? Hopefully, discussions of gender will progress to the point that it will be impossible not to challenge the stereotypes behind the agendas of the State. It is very possible, however, that awareness of work-life balance, including backlash to the commercial, is another “trend” like other gender-related words and terms were in the past. This time period, particularly the past five years, are interesting in that public awareness of gender issues are very much heightened *and* there is a space for extended, accessible public discussion of them. Optimistically, this time period could be the one of the first stages in closing the gender gap in employment as the public first begins to question in the motives behind the constant campaign to get women into the workforce, then the idealized family structure, and eventually, the gender ideology disseminated by the state.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Crises, Panic, and the Hypocrisy of the Japanese Nation

The current state of the gender gap in Japan is characterized by inequality in the workplace for women, placing them in short-term, low-income jobs. The gender stereotype that women are suited for, and will experience marriage and childrearing, is the root cause of the persistence of this gap. The presence of these gender stereotypes today is often presented as a legacy of past nationalism and what is called “traditional” gender roles, and it is now mainstream to challenge the ideology of breadwinning husband and supportive wife. The state’s encouragement of the participation of women in the workforce, however, is one way to mask the ongoing, subtle, and deliberate dissemination of the ideology that women are properties of the State and that families are building blocks of the nation. The Japanese state does not address gender equality in the workplace outside of the context of childrearing, which shows how current political campaigns perpetuate the very gender stereotypes that prevent women from working, childrearing, and both. Although these ideologies have been somewhat successfully assimilated, more citizens, particularly young adults, are beginning to openly question these notions.

This paper has focused on the dissemination and internalization of family and gender ideology by the State through manifestos and pamphlets, and by the public in popular media such as television and the Internet. It is clear that these are only two of the many ways in which gender ideologies are spread through society. Education, for example, is one major method in which gender ideology has been spread historically by the State, as seen in Chapter 3. It is reasonable, then, to assume that this is happening in the present. One topic of interest now in Japan is the recent introduction of *dōtoku kyōiku* (moral education) as a formal subject. Textbooks for moral education, which start as young as first grade up to middle school, include themes such as the importance of life, family, and tradition.¹⁸¹ I predict that a close reading of these recently published textbooks and teacher manuals would reveal the dissemination of nationalistic gender ideology similar to that discussed in this paper, with an emphasis on reproduction, conformity to specific family structures, and ultimately, what the State mandates as “tradition”. The re-introduction of moral education is just one of the many ways in which the dissemination of gender ideology has occurred, and is occurring in the present.

Furthermore, the conclusions I have drawn in this paper are what I have gathered from the close reading of only a few of many political manifestos, and an analysis of only the most influential incidents that raised public discussions of gender. I stress again that these political documents represent State-sponsored gender ideology well. For instance, I have noticed during my research that official government documents such as those from the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office itself, which is supposedly responsible for promoting gender equality, also disseminate gender ideology similar to that described in this paper. An examination of official government documents is another topic I hope to examine in the future; I believe they would give additional insight into how successfully certain gender ideologies have been disseminated. I also maintain that public reactions to in these case studies are representative of general public attitudes towards gender. Reactions to social media in particular are qualitative and are vulnerable to being judged as casual and unreliable representations of public opinion. I argue, however, that reactions on social media are, in fact, very accurate representations of what citizens believe. The Internet is one place in which individuals have the ability to express their

¹⁸¹ Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, “Dōtoku kyōiku,” accessed April 3, 2015, http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/doutoku/.

opinion without being identified, and is easily accessible. Finally, it is difficult to discern changing public perceptions of gender roles from data presented in this paper, such as those from the World Values Survey, alone. Unfortunately, detailed and quantitative data that would provide more periodic information about public opinions on gender roles seems to be largely limited to that of Japan's Cabinet Office at best. Even these surveys are only beginning to address the many different dimensions to gender issues.

I began this paper with an incident of an older, conservative and by extension, powerful male politician making a statement that revealed his attitudes towards women; I will therefore end with one. The very fact that there are enough of these incidents to choose from is telling, in and of itself, of the social status of women in Japanese society today. This incident came years before the *Kokkai Yaji* scandal, occurring before the financial crisis in the January of 2007¹⁸². Hakuo Yanagisawa, Minister of Health and house representative of the LDP at the time, was at a prefecture assembly, during which he was asked about the problem of the declining population¹⁸³. He replied: "I feel a bit bad calling them machines, but, the number of women aged 15-50, baby-making machines, are limited, so we'll just have each of them do her best."¹⁸⁴ There was backlash and criticism to this statement, and the opposition leader at that time, Yukio Hatoyama, summed up these sentiments well (although I believe his opinion was largely politically motivated): he states that this was "extremely rude to women" and that "it is the freedom of the woman to choose to have, or not have children"¹⁸⁵. If anything, there is hope in that the general public sentiment is that women are not objects to be used for the nation, even with a problem such as the shrinking population that is considered detrimental to Japan's future.

I conclude this study with my own opinions of the current gender gap in employment and the State's dissemination of gender ideology. Firstly, I believe that the State's dogma of keeping "traditional" family values and by extension, gender roles, is a manifestation of the Japanese nation's long-standing inferiority complex as a country that lost its identity with its loss in the Second World War. Japan entered a war with an ultranationalist mindset, and then lost to be occupied; both politicians and the public have distanced themselves from the ideologies of the wartime era that defined the nation. I believe that the leaders of the State are presently disseminating gender and family ideology in an attempt to construct a new identity for the Japanese nation. Any challenge to the gender roles they have disseminated as "traditional," therefore, is a challenge to the identity of the State itself. Those nonconforming to what is described as "traditional" family structure and gender roles are then labeled immoral and a threat to the nation. This sentiment is echoed in public reactions that criticize individuals that dare to challenge socially accepted norms of family and gender, as in the reactions to single mothers. For those that have internalized these ideologies as a part of their identity, a threat to these national and personal ideologies is a threat to their own identity.

Secondly and more importantly, I believe the perpetuation of these gender ideologies in the present is a response to this sense of crisis about the future of the nation. There are impending feelings of panic and fear that were amplified after the financial crisis in 2008. We were once again reminded of how poorly our economy had been doing since the bubble burst some two decades ago, with little prospects of it getting better anytime soon; we were reminded

¹⁸² "'Josei wa kodomo umu kikai' Yanagisawa kōrōshō, shōshika meguri hatsugen," *Asahi Shimbun*, January 28, 2007. <http://www.asahi.com/special/060926/OSK200701270070.html>.

¹⁸³ "'Josei wa kodomo umu kikai' Yanagisawa kōrōshō, shōshika meguri hatsugen."

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ "Hatovama kaniichō. ivosei wo kikai ni tatoeta Yanagisawa kōrōshō hatsugen wo hageshiku hihan." *The Democratic Party of Japan News (Archives)*, January 28, 2007, <http://www1.dpj.or.jp/news/?num=9509>.

again of how the low birth rates would mean a struggle to keep the country populated in the far future. Addressing the issue of the declining population and economic stimulus became a priority, and attention turned to the now useful resource to be exploited, for the sake of the nation, once again: women. In these past six or so years after the financial crisis, the State has promoted gender ideologies that more often than not categorize women, as Mr. Yanagisawa so elegantly puts it, as “baby-making” machines. In the eyes of the State, the purpose of these “machines” is now not just to produce children, but to work as well. The promotion of this ideology has been done under the convenient guise of slogans that imply that these policies are for the good and freedom of women.

This paper has focused on the gender gap in employment, but gender inequality manifests in many other dimensions of Japanese society, such as education, health, politics, and entertainment. It would be interesting to analyze gender inequality in these dimensions in context of post-2008 financial crisis Japan. The scope of gender issues in Japan is vast, multi-dimensional and interconnected, and gender ideology promoted by the State manifests in all of these dimensions. I assert, however, that the underlying problem behind gender inequality in Japanese society goes deeper than simply the actions of what I have called “the State”. Japanese men in their 50’s and 60’s like Yanagisawa hold much of the power in politics, business, education, and many other dimensions of Japanese life. In addition to a sense of crisis about the future of the State, it seems that these individuals are experiencing a sense of crisis about their positions of power. Current gender ideology grants Japanese men the position of leaders, fighters, and protectors, as opposed to women, who are boxed into roles of subservience, passiveness, the protected. Ideology such as new family structures and the true inclusion of women in the workplace challenge both the sense of power that comes with simply being male, and the power that comes with concrete positions of leadership these individuals hold. Those who hold positions of power will disseminate ideologies that keep them in power: this is the true reason behind the dissemination of gender ideology by the State. The reasoning behind the dissemination of gender roles by those in power, “for the Japanese nation,” often ultimately translates to “for myself.”

The largely conservative leaders of Japan will face an ultimatum in the near future: they view women as equal to men, or they fall. If they sincerely desire to fix the problem of declining population and continued deflation for the future of the nation, it should begin with addressing gender equality, not only out of convenience as it is done now, but as something fundamental. With increasing public knowledge and more spaces for the public to discuss gender issues, it will only become more difficult for the State to disseminate their gender ideologies. Eventually, for continued support, these leaders must abandon their ideas of “traditional” family and women they cling onto today, lest they risk losing the power they have held onto for so long as my generation begins to notice the implications of their ideologies. This seems unlikely in Japan, where social change is slow, in which case the consequence would be the continued economic and population decline of the Japanese nation. Economic and social decline along with the decline in political power, however, seems to be a fitting end for a Japan that does not value women as individual human beings, but rather, objects to be maintained and used for the sake of the nation.

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