Identity shifts in hegemonic masculinities

The case of Japanese salarymen

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II

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Summary

This thesis aims to contribute to the discourse of masculinity in the context of work, family life and individual life purpose of men, through the case of young Japanese *salarymen*. It postulates that the hegemonic masculinity ideal in Japan is currently undergoing a transformation and attempts to uncover in which direction this transformation is headed.

There is still a gender gap in various instances of patriarchal cultures, and though an abundant catalogue of feminist literature has continued to investigate the reasons for and developments of these gender gaps, I agree with masculinity researcher Harry Brod in that "the key to the gender gap lies in the study of men, not women." (Brod, 1987).

Examining the specific cases of twelve *salarymen*, this thesis illuminates their views with hegemonic masculinity, gender discrepancy, gender constructionist and gender boundary theories. It builds upon already existing empirical research of Tomoko Hidaka (2010), Masako Ishii-Kuntz (1993, 2003), Romit Dasgupta (2000, 2003), Gordon Mathews (2003) and to some degree, Anne Allison (1994).

Acknowledgements

What a long, strange trip it's been! Thinking back on how much work has been put into this thesis, not just by me, but by so many others, it seems unbelievable that it is now over. Throughout this process, I have learned very much, both in academic respects, and in the respects of receiving many life lessons.

I would first and foremost like to thank my husband. Without him, this thesis would not be possible. His help in starting this out, by being my main contact in Japan, his tremendous support when transcribing and translating the interviews, have been simply invaluable.

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I would like to thank Mr. Eskil O. Vestre for being my opponent until the very end, and not to mention, friend during all our years at the University. It seems incredible that we are finally here! Mrs. Rakel I. Diesen has been my guru of academic writing ever since we met in our first year of Japanese studies, and I would like to thank her not only for her commentary on this thesis, but for all the commentaries she has done on my academic papers throughout the years. Much of what I have learned comes from your teaching!

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Ekaterina Pliassova

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1 Introduction

On February 19th 2011, a feature in Japan Today stated that, "as the public perceptions of traditional gender roles shift, more and more Japanese men have become willing to take on homemaking. Some opinion polls show majorities of men in their 20s and 30s have no negative notions of men serving as the househusbands of their families."[1] It concludes that while this change in public attitude is a positive development, it is still hard to make ends meet on a single income. This article is one of the many examples illustrating that this is a time of change, where public opinion and gender ideologies are undergoing a vivid transformation towards a more gender-equal society. But the question remains: in what direction are these changes actually headed?

The main reason why I chose to research the example of Japanese *salarymen* in particular is that I would like to contribute to the discourse on masculinity with regards to the relation between family and work in Japan. There has been a wealth of diverse and extensive research on feminism, and the rights, possibilities and limitations of women in Japanese work life[2], but little research conducted on men's situations in comparison. To be more specific, extensive comparative research has already been carried out in a corporate context on workers in Japanese and American companies, with a focus on business and the financial aspects of labour, as well as organisation of labour unions. Comparatively little study has been carried out on social norms and masculinity in Japan.[3] Up to this point, only a few researchers have specifically focused on *salarymen* in Japan employing gender and masculinity theory, most prominently: Anne Allison, Romit Dasgupta, Masako Ishii-Kuntz, James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki, and most recently, Tomoko Hidaka. My thesis aims to draw upon this catalogue of works, with the hope that the results of my research will become a part of the

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[1] "More Japanese Men Relish Joy of Homemaking," Japan Today,
http://www.japantoday.com/category/lifestyle/view/more-japanese-men-relish-joy-of-homemaking.
[2] See for instance Murase (2006), Ogasawara (1998), Liddle and Nakajima (2000), Brinton (2001) and Lowy (2007) used in this thesis, as well as Vera Mackie, "Feminism in modern Japan : citizenship, embodiment, and sexuality" (2003), Barbara Sato, "The new Japanese woman : modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan" (2003), Laura Dales, "Feminist movements in contemporary Japan" (2009), among others.
[3] Masako Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles," in *Men, Work, and Family*, ed. Jane C. Hood (London and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993), 45.

increasing pool of research about masculinity in Japan. As Harry Brod puts it, "the key to the gender gap lies in the study of men, not women."[4]

Research question

I believe that men's hegemonic gender role in Japan has been regarded as common sense so much so that the sociological and psychological aspects of their reality have been neglected and therefore in need of closer investigation. The question I would first and foremost like to ask is: **Is the ongoing shift in masculine identity of young *salarymen* moving away from the hegemonic ideology which affected older generations?** I will investigate this question in three areas: work, family, and life purpose. To reach a conclusion regarding this matter, I will address several support questions:

- Which masculine ideologies have been central to Japanese culture since the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), and what evidence can be found to demonstrate the changes in those ideologies until the present day?
- Which modern masculine ideologies are emerging within the context of work? Are they similar to or different from the ideologies apparent in the context of family life and the context of individual life purpose, and why?
- In what way are the emerging masculinity ideologies similar to or different from the masculinity ideologies prevalent among men belonging to earlier generations?

Literature and sources

Dasgupta has contributed substantially to the discourse of *salaryman* masculinity. In his article, "Creating Corporate Warriors: The 'salaryman' and masculinity in Japan" from 2003, he examined the representations of *salaryman* masculinity through pop culture and Japanese media. His conclusion was that the image of the *salaryman* has played a significant part in influencing post-war Japanese masculinity in general, essentially meaning that *salaryman* masculinity has become hegemonic through the influence of mass-media and pop culture. He notes, however, that there is still "a general lack of recognition of the salaryman as a *gendered* construct"[5]. Through this thesis, I aim to contribute to the discussion of *salarymen* as

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[4] Harry Brod, "The Case for Men's Studies," in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies*, ed. Harry Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 47.
[5] Romit Dasgupta, "Creating Corporate Warriors: The "Salaryman" and Masculinity in Japan," in *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, ed. Kam Louie and Morris Low (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 131.

gendered constructs by applying gender and masculinity theories to different aspects of *salaryman* life. The concept of hegemonic masculinity will cover large parts of the thesis and will serve as an overarching body of theory.

Ishii-Kuntz' work extends over several decades. I have chosen to focus on two of her works, namely "Japanese fathers: Work demands and family roles" from 1993 and "Balancing fatherhood and work: Emergence of diverse masculinities in contemporary Japan" from 2003. In "Japanese fathers", she discusses the ways in which families in Japan in the post-war period are characterised as "fatherless", establishing that mothers' involvement in children's image of their fathers is instrumental.[6] She argues that fathers are psychologically, but not physically present, and concludes that the act of spending more time with children alone will not be sufficient for producing a more gender-equal environment in Japanese families. In "Balancing fatherhood and work", she approaches "child-caring" fathers by examining how they attempt to construct and maintain their masculinities.[7] She reasons that fathers who participate actively in childcare and housework simultaneously with working full-time have to overcome many obstacles. She calls for a more extensive research on the increasingly diverse spectre of gender and masculinity identities in Japan, including the changes of *salaryman* masculinity.

While I have largely based my research on *salarymen* who are childless and in their mid-twenties, I will discuss in detail their prospects and expectations of fatherhood in their futures. I will also search for any indication of a change in attitude patterns to see if I can establish what kind of diverse elements at play in *salaryman* masculinity than the hegemonic ideal, presented for instance by Dasgupta. In chapter 6, "Masculinity and family", I will rely heavily on Ishii-Kuntz' arguments about fatherhood, and the embodiment and perpetuation of fathers' hegemonic masculinity images through mothers' involvement in child rearing.

In their compilation, "Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the salaryman doxa" from 2003, Roberson and Suzuki contribute to the increasing pool of literature about masculinities in Japan, touching upon a variety of different subjects, such as transgender practices, female masculinity, working-class masculinities and domestic violence,

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[6] Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles," 64-5.
[7] Masako Ishii-Kuntz, "Balancing Fatherhood and Work: Emergence of Diverse Masculinities in Contemporary Japan," in *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, ed. James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

as well as fatherhood and *salaryman* masculinity.[8] Of the articles in this anthology, I have also used Gordon Mathews' article, "Can 'a real man' live for his family? *Ikigai* and masculinity in today's Japan". Here, Mathews approaches the meaning behind Japanese masculinity, using the concept of *ikigai* (that which most makes life worth living)[9] to argue that there are different, diverse ideas of masculinity which become apparent when examining what Japanese men consider worth living for. He finds that although there are emerging ideals of thinking of *ikigai* as family and self-fulfilment in the younger generations currently, he doesn't believe that this would become the norm in the future. He suspects that instead, it will only become harder for men to see any value in having families, and that they will slowly move away from the ideas of *ikigai* as family or self-fulfilment.

Likewise, I have asked my interviewees their opinions about if they believe life alone is worth living for, and agree with Mathews, deducing a variety of different, emerging ideas of masculinity. However, I would consider myself slightly less cynical than Mathews, and will attempt to uncover whether my interviewees are overall more optimistic or pessimistic in regards to these issues.

In 1994, Allison undertook an extensive study of *salarymen*, within the context of hostess clubs in Tokyo, the results of which she published in her book, "Sexuality, Pleasure and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club". She examined how hostess clubs and similar establishments strengthened the social bonds between *salarymen* and how these social gatherings helped them develop unconditional, masculine bonds in a corporate context.[10] Though not directly relevant to my study, her book is one of the foremost important contributions to the discourse of masculinity in Japan. I will use some of her arguments in regards to gender boundaries between men and women in chapter 6, "Masculinity and family".

However, I am most heavily indebted to Hidaka and her book from 2010, "Salaryman Masculinity: Continuity and Change in Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan". She conducted in-

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[8] James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki, "Introduction," in *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, ed. James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

[9] Gordon Mathews, "Can 'a Real Man' Live for His Family? *Ikigai* and Masculinity in Today's Japan," in *Men and Masuclinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, ed. James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 109.

[10] Anne Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

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depth interviews with three groups of men, of ages spanning an entire generation.[11] All of these men have worked through crucial periods in the history of Japan. This body of work encapsulates broadly similar themes as my thesis: masculinity, family ideology and a similar approach to fieldwork. I feel a slight regret that this book did not exist until after I was finished with my fieldwork, as it would have proven to be most instrumental for my own research. Regardless, I will use several of her highly-relevant arguments to support my own in the different parts of the thesis. Hidaka touches upon many of the subjects presented above and adds an important comparative perspective through generations. My conclusions on whether or not there are ongoing shifts in *salaryman* masculinity ideology will build on her results.

Hidaka outlined a variety of social and economic elements which factor into the changes now being experienced by the masculine hegemony in Japan, which I find relevant and will draw upon in this thesis. Specifically, she mentions the bursting of the bubble economy in the 1990s, although I would argue that the financial crisis at the end of last decade and the Tōhoku earthquake of 2011 will be significant factors at play in the future as well. Additionally, she highlights changes in gender relations (in policy, as well as the general public), the rise of a variety of different labour categories divorced from the full-time work ideal, and alienation from wives and children, are all factors which posit challenges to hegemonic masculinity in Japan today. The question that remains is how to positively implement these changes on society and cope with these challenges in the future.[12] I was intentionally future-oriented and interviewed twelve young *salarymen* who have not yet started their own families, but have strong intentions to do so. Through my interviews, I have attempted to discover how they aspire to overcome some of the challenges raised by Hidaka above.

Finally, although my thesis and interviews are focused on Japan, in some aspects of the discussion I will refer to *saellôrimaen* in South Korea to offer a contrast or comparison. I have myself not had the privilege to conduct my own independent research in South Korea and consequently cannot conduct a fair, comparative analysis between the two countries. However, I believe the use of South Korea as a contrasting example offers an important perspective, which imparts a different way of seeing Japan's social system by confirming or

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[11] Tomoko Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 6-7.
[12] Ibid., 178.

refuting the social similarities between the two countries in this context. In regards to theory and empirical evidence, I will rely on the different articles in Laurel Kendall's book, "Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea" from 2002 and the article "The Influence of Work Values on Job and Career Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment Among Korean Professional Level Employees" by Peter Kuchinke, Hye-Seung Kang, and Seok-Young Oh from 2008.

Outline of thesis

Chapter 2, "Methodology", is concerned with methodological consideration. Here, I will present my choice of method and lay out the details of my fieldwork process. I will also address several challenges with qualitative research method and how I have opted to confront them, before briefly describing how I chose to analyse the interviews.

Chapter 3, "Theory", is an overview over the chief theories I plan to apply in order to be able to analyse the content of my interviews and answer my research questions most effectively. To be able to understand whether attitudes to masculinity are moving away from the hegemonic *salaryman* ideal or not, I will first introduce what the concept of hegemonic masculinity entails. In addition, theories on the "breadwinner" ideal will be presented. To achieve an understanding for how shifts in gender identity can arise, I will use gender constructionist theory to argue that gender is something created, not inherent, before investigating the theory of gender role discrepancy. Furthermore, I will further attempt to elucidate how the two theories can explain gender identities evolving in diverse ways difficult to foresee with certainty. Finally, I shall explain the concept of gender boundaries, with which I intend to clarify some of the cases where change of attitudes is not to be found.

Chapter 4, "Masculinity through history", aims to answer my first support question: What masculine ideologies have been central to Japanese culture since the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), and what evidence can be found to show the changes in those ideologies until the present day? I believe that it is important to solidify the historical ground under my thesis in the context of masculine ideologies, before I delve into the analysis of my interviews.

Chapter 5, "Masculinity and work", will mainly be concerned with questions about work. I will start by presenting some of the views of my twelve interviewees which best represent attitudes towards masculinity in a work context, thereby showing what masculine ideologies

are currently evident or emerging within young *salarymen*. Dasgupta's article will no doubt be useful in this chapter. I will conclude the chapter through a comparison to Hidaka's research uncover whether there are any changes in attitudes to be found over time.

Chapter 6, "Masculinity and family", will primarily be concerned with questions about family. Again, I will draw upon the information gleaned from my interviewees which represent a variety of attitudes towards masculinity in a family context. This will outline which masculine ideologies are evident or emerging within young *salarymen* in regards to family life, with focus on their expectations and desires of their futures. The articles of Ishii-Kuntz in particular will help me illustrate my points here. In order to establish a clear and tangible examples of changes to masculine hegemony, I will use Hidaka's invaluable research to see if I can uncover what kind of changes in these attitudes are found over time, then linking them to the attitudes to masculinity hegemony in the context of work, as outlined in chapter 5, "Masculinity and work".

Chapter 7, "Masculinity and life purpose", will mainly be concerned with questions about individual life purpose. As in the previous two chapters, I intend to present some of the views of my interviewees best representing attitudes towards masculinity and identity in the context of their ideas about their own life purpose. Mathews' article will be a central instrument to support my conclusions. Moreover, I will examine the similarities or differences to the respondents in Hidaka's research to establish any potential change over time, linking them to the attitudes to the attitudes of my interviewees, as laid out in the previous chapters.

In my last chapter, "Conclusions", I will summarise all points I have been attempting to make throughout the thesis, before finally concluding upon a response to my main research question.

Key notes

On literature in the Japanese language

I have not been able to rely on any Japanese literature, the reason being that I do not have proficiency in Japanese on an academic level, especially in written form. While I have conducted interviews in Japanese, they were all of a distinctly colloquial nature. Furthermore, I received a significant amount of help transcribing the interviews and translating them, which

I would not have been able to do on my own. My research is therefore limited to chiefly English literature overall, and some Scandinavian literature on methodology.

Romanisation style

I use the Hepburn style of romanisation, where long vowels are indicated by macrons to show the pronunciation of Japanese words and names, for example *sengyō shufu* (full-time housewife). I italicise all concepts in Japanese, providing a translation in brackets the first time they are mentioned.

Kindergartens

When I discuss kindergartens anywhere in the thesis, I specifically refer to *hoikuen* ("child welfare facilities that conform to the Child Welfare Law"[13], designed to be a support institution for parents who are prevented in any way from raising their children full-time).

Definition of salaryman *and selection of participants*

According to Hidaka, male employees – both company workers and civil servants who receive a monthly salary – are typically considered to be *salarymen*.[14] Her selections of research subjects, which she considers to fit the *salaryman* type, were middle-class white-collar workers, employed in a large company. My selection of participants is similar, the only difference being that I extended it to include men identifying with being a *salaryman* even if they are employed in a small-scale company.

Introduction of respondents

<u>All names in this thesis are fictitious. I have chosen to use first names only.</u>

Nobuhiko. Mid-twenties, has worked in a large, prominent electronics company for three years. Not married, has a girlfriend. Interest in music, DJs on his free time.

Hayato. Mid-twenties, has worked in a large insurance company for three years. Not married, has girlfriend. Interest in motorbikes and going to social events.

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[13] Ishikawa City, "The Difference between Nursery (Hoikuen) and Kindergarten (Yochien) " Ishikawa City, http://www.city.ichikawa.lg.jp/english/guide/0134.html.

[14] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 1.

Shinji. Mid-twenties, has worked at a high-fashion department store, doing sales, for three years. Not married, no girlfriend. Interested in reading, fashion.

Yoshio. Mid-twenties, has worked in a large, well reputed advertising company for three years. Engaged at the time of the interview, now married. Wife works full-time.

Keitarō. Late-twenties, has worked in a tax consulting company for about four years. Married to a full-time housewife.

Ryōta. Mid-twenties, has worked in a small, private advertising company for about two years. Not married, no girlfriend. Interested in fashion.

Seiichi. Mid-twenties, has worked at the sales department in an IT-company for about three years. Started working in Tokyo and was transferred to Hiroshima about one year into his employment. Was on a leave of absence due to depression at the time of the interview, currently employed as a trainee in a political party (having quit his first job). Not married, no girlfriend.

Takurō. Mid-twenties, has worked for three years at a floral export/import company. Not married, has girlfriend.

Shigeo. Mid-twenties, has worked in a survey and statistics company for about three years. Not married, has girlfriend.

Yōji. Mid-twenties, has worked in an advertising company for about three years. Recently changed jobs and is now employed at a different advertising company (international, Japanese branch). Not married, no girlfriend. Interested in music.

Shūji. Mid-twenties, has worked at an American insurance company (Japanese branch) for about three years. Started working in Tokyo, was transferred to Hiroshima after about a year. Had girlfriend at the time of the interview, currently engaged.

Tōru. Mid-twenties, worked for about one year in a human resource company before changing direction and starting working as an editor for a large TV-production company. Has worked there for about two years. Not married, no girlfriend.

2   Methodology

2.1 Choice of method

When deciding what I would use as my primary method, I had to take into consideration the time available to me, and how to access potential informants. I was not able to do participant observation, nor an extensive statistical survey, for reasons that I will explain below. I felt I would get more insight into *salarymen*'s thought processes if I conducted my own interviews, rather than using other researchers' empirical evidence. I chose to conduct semi-structured[15] interviews, which gave myself the freedom to speak to my informants without restraint, at the same time as which I had a pre-constructed question guide to serve as my anchor in case I encountered linguistic problems. The question guide can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

2.1.1 Representation and reliability

Doing qualitative in-depth interviews, some might argue that such a limited survey field cannot be representative for the social group in question, no matter how thoroughly one investigates the informants' lives. It is true that interviews are considered to be quite complex and uncertain in terms of data validity, as firstly, all data retained is at best a subjective rendition of the interviewee's experience, and secondly, the result depends on the interviewer's comprehension and analysis;[16] however, the representation of a social group is not a goal of qualitative research method. The goal of the type of research I carried out through interviews is closer to finding representative samples of either someone who acts as an example of the group in question to an extreme, or someone who is more typical to the behaviour of the group.[17]

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[15] An interview method where the questions are constructed beforehand, but the interview itself is less rigid, only following the questions and their structure where necessary, aiming for a smooth conversation about a given topic. See Carla Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2001), 21-2; Kristin G. Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods in Social Research* (McGraw-Hill, 2002), 87.

[16] Eva Fägerborg, "Intervjuer," in *Etnologiskt Fältarbete*, ed. Lars Kaijser and Magnus Öhlander (Malmö: Studentlitteratur, 2009), 55; Katrine Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2004), 31.

[17] Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon*, 51; Willig, *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method*, 17; Tove Thagaard, *Systematikk Og Innlevelse: En Innføring I Kvalitativ Metode*, 2nd ed. (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2002), 55.

I did not have the opportunity to do any participant observation during my field work, first of all because I had a limited amount of time (only three weeks) available to spend on research in Japan, and the preparation and execution of participant observation often requires several months, or even years, to be successful.[18] A second problem which presented itself with my participant observation in a Japanese male-dominated work place was my gender and nationality. The overbearing feeling was that I would probably not be able to actually relate to or take part in the *men*'s business – i.e. as a financial analyst (et cetera), because I would require proper training, native level language skills and knowledge in finance. Instead, I would be better suited to work with *women*, who do work that requires less training and experience (secretary, assistant) and is much more befitting to a temporary guest such as myself. However, this would have defeated the purpose of my research, as I am trying to focus on the lives of men, rather than women.

To add to this, I would argue that I have been doing a form of participant observation by living in or visiting Japan and frequenting predominantly male groups over the course of over four years. Although I have not set a foot in their work environment per se, I have been to countless after-work get-togethers, parties, coffee meetings, and so on, where inevitably, I found, the topic of *salarymen* was addressed. Therefore, I personally believe that the lack of pre-organised research-based participant observation has not significantly impaired my analyses.

Finally, I chose not to do an extensive statistical survey, because although I do have many contacts in Japan who could help me, I do not think that I could get more than at best a couple of hundred replies with the time I had available. Furthermore, this would be counter-productive when I argue representation later on in this thesis. I have rather chosen to use official statistics published by the UN, the OECD, The World Bank, The International Labour Office and The Ministry of Health and Labour in Japan, which are far more reliable. Consequently, I have chosen to do a qualitative, rather than quantitative study.

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[18] Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon*, 48-9.

2.2 The fieldwork process

2.2.1 Preparations for the fieldwork

In the past four years, I have lived in Japan for extended periods of time (a total of two years), as well as returning on numerous occasions. As a result, I have become quite familiar with many cultural aspects of Japan, and the ways of communication between foreigners and natives. This has worked to my advantage for field work, as although I only had three weeks to conduct research I did not need to waste any time getting used to my surroundings and establishing relationships to informants.

I limited my research informants to be men between 25 and 30 years of age who do not yet have any children, but may or may not be involved with someone or be married. The reason for this was that I wanted to be future-oriented, emphasising young *salarymen*'s views on what they believed their future to become, and the ways in which they aspired to cope with concerns lying in wait for them. Furthermore, it was important to me to interview *salarymen* as young as I could find so that any potential change in attitudes would be as apparent as possible. Usually, *salarymen* are by definition men who work in medium-to-large companies but I extended my choice of participants to men who *identified* as being *salarymen*, not necessarily men who fit into a prescribed definition of the concept. All of these men would have at least a bachelor's degree, as it is usually a prerequisite to get a well-paying full-time job.

Choosing informants was fairly unproblematic. All of the informants in my study are men I have become acquainted with through my husband[19] and he functioned as a gatekeeper – a person central to the group of people to be studied[20] – for me throughout the process. Every informant was someone who my husband had either studied with or worked with, and has always been on good terms with. He contacted every informant for me and made appointments for us, where he would join us and where we after the interview would spend time together at leisure. We started the process of contact about two months prior to arriving

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[19] My husband became a *salaryman* a short time after we met and had worked in an insurance company for about 2 years before he quit and moved to Norway with me. Most of his friends are people he has known since childhood, but practically all of them chose to become *salarymen* when they became adults.

[20] Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon*, 63; Thagaard, *Systematikk Og Innlevelse: En Innføring I Kvalitativ Metode*, 65.

in Japan. Every person we approached was positive and interested in the project, and was quick to agree to participate.

The only significant obstacle we could anticipate was that it would be difficult to make a specific schedule. Even though we had notified every informant well in advance of the interviews, they had no way of booking a specific date and time as far in advance as a few months. We ended up having to make appointments only a few days prior, or sometimes even on the same day, as the actual interview. The reason was ironic considering the topic of this thesis: since my informants are so busy with work they have little time to spare. There was also the practicality of direct contact, which is far easier from a Japanese phone rather than email or any other less efficient medium.

Most of the informants agreed that this research project was well timed, as all of them had been employed for a few years, offering the time to reflect over their situations and their roles as *salarymen*. At the same time, not so much time had elapsed that they had started to become disenchanted or exhausted, which would produce negativity in the interviews. In their opinion, at this point in time, I would get the most objective results possible through these interviews.

From March 18th to April 05th 2010, I conducted nine in-depth interviews with twelve individuals. All interviews were one-on-one, except one interview where I interviewed three interviewees at once, and two interviews where my husband was present. All interviews were conducted in Japanese, except for the interview with my eleventh informant, where he requested to be interviewed in English.

I originally decided to do all the interviews one-on-one without any interference, having agonised over what effect it would have to have my husband present (an obvious choice in interview companionship). However, my seventh subject had only a few weeks prior opted to take a year-long sabbatical from his job due to depression caused by work stress. I felt it was crucial to have my husband present at this particular meeting. I was anxious that I would accidentally say something upsetting to my interviewee at such an early stage of his depression, because of confusing linguistic nuances, the possibility of which made me feel considerably uneasy.

As a result of this issue, I changed my method and strategy very quickly and as it happened, this interview went from being just the three of us, to becoming a group interview. Two of our

friends, whom I hadn't interviewed yet and by sheer luck, had not made an appointment with either, arrived unexpectedly at the scene. My husband upheld a balance between us and served as a controller in case I said something inappropriate or strange. Tove Thaagard, a Norwegian methodologist, mentions that group interviews can be really useful, as she argues that the people in the group can boost each other's confidence, help each other remember things and ask each other things that the interviewer wouldn't have thought about beforehand. On the other hand, she also says that if there is a dominant person present in the group, that person's views can override the other members.[21]

In this instance, both of Thaagard's arguments proved themselves to have basis in reality. Sometimes, the men present would keep asking each other questions in genuine interest, constantly getting into new topics. Other times, however, a single person would dominate the conversation, so that my husband and I had to moderate the discussion and ask everyone's opinion in turn. Because my husband has had personal experience with being a *salaryman,* I could often manage to observe the conversations from a bird's eye view, in essence doing a form of participant observation.

What I took away from this situation was how important it was to take notice and read the atmosphere in the room more keenly than if the interview were only one-on-one. This interview was a great success, which made me consider having my husband present at other interviews as well.

Having my husband present at later interviews proved to be very helpful, linguistically speaking. However, there were moments in the two later interviews where I felt like the interviewees were no longer communicating with me, but instead were naturally opting to speak with my husband, which contributed somewhat to me faltering and losing track noticeably more than before. The participants were constantly turning to him. This was most likely to ensure that they were being understood, but as I was conducting the interviews, the situation came out of balance, with my authority as interviewer being undermined. Regardless, I received very interesting results from both these interviews, in part because my husband was acutely aware of the purpose of the interview and asked all the right questions.

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[21] Thagaard, *Systematikk Og Innlevelse: En Innføring I Kvalitativ Metode*, 85.

2.2.2 Betwixt and between – the issue of objectivity

While preparing the fieldwork for this thesis, I was constantly reminded that one should be wary of studying and interviewing someone one knows personally, and particularly someone one knows well. At the very least, we are asked to seriously consider our emotional attachment to the area of study or the people, as it can have consequences for the research.[22] I definitely had to consider from which stance I had to interview my informants, as I had been introduced to every informant through my husband, and some of them were already my friends on a personal level, so I could never delve into this project from a distance with an entirely objective point of view.

The more I interviewed people, however, the more I found that knowing someone well in Japan in fact worked as an advantage, rather than disadvantage, to conduct a more successful interview. Methodologists stress that if the informants do not have confidence in the researcher, the results of the research might become as superficial as their relationship with each other is, and the answers will not be as honest as they should be.[23] This is one of the reasons why participant observation can provide more insight into the informants lives than what only interviews can do. From this point of view, I had a great advantage during my fieldwork. In Japan, developing a close relationship with someone can often take a considerably long time. I knew roughly half of my interviewees for three to four years prior, but it was not until I'd known them for two years that they started to become comfortable with me.

The rest of the interviewees were comfortable with me because I was already vouched for and because they had met me on several occasions beforehand, even if we had not become personally close yet. An additional possible contributor to their willingness to accept me as part of their friend group was my capacity in the Japanese language and willingness to learn. In this sense, I believe I could produce more or less the same results (in some cases, perhaps better) as I would have, if I were to do participant observation and then interviews in a group of people unknown to me in Japan.

During my time living in Japan, I would constantly fluctuate between belonging to insider- and outsider-groups. I could never be a fully-fledged *salaryman* and of course, I could never be a man. However, I have since the start been treated differently than Japanese women by

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[22] Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon*, 45.
[23] Ibid., 57; Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*, 91.

my husband's friends, who would later become my friends and informants. It was as if it was always okay for me to act like a man, because I was, after all, not Japanese and could not be expected to start acting like Japanese women do just because I was in the country. It was accepted that I acted much more similar to them, because I was from Scandinavia, a strongly liberal place, and so, paradoxically, I became both an insider and an outsider in the group all at once.

In sum, my gender became *less* emphasised, but my nationality grew in importance, thus, I would argue, balancing my relationship to my informants. If I were to consider how it affected their interviews, I would say that my nationality and background were far more essential than my gender was, because even though my topic was gender and masculinity in a Japanese work environment, the idea of the reputed Scandinavian welfare state might have put much more pressure on them as to what I might think about their opinions. All in all, I had to exercise a great deal of personal reflexivity to distinguish between which part of me and my background affected each interview in particular.

There are certain advantages to being a complete outsider, such as being able to ask strange and unusual questions which might come across as naïve or rude if asked by a native. As an outsider, I was not expected to know how everything works[24], and it gave me the chance to hear more of a critique of the environment than an insider would, because as an outsider, I could not relate to the environment in the same way.[25] I was relatively free to challenge accepted truths, or what is otherwise called *atarimae* (something natural, reasonable, or otherwise known as 'common sense') in Japan.

I found myself both having to bear the burden of knowing the inner workings of the social pressure a *salaryman* has to endure, being married to an ex-*salaryman*, as well as receiving forgiveness when I would ask questions to explore further into otherwise common and natural concepts because I was, after all, not a *salaryman* myself, nor would I ever be.

In some cases, I also heard some criticisms on the *salaryman* way of life, which was unsurprising. However, more importantly, all interviewees were keen to talk about how they

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[24] Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon*, 114; John Creighton Campbell, "Research among the Bureaucrats: Substance and Process," in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*, ed. Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2003), 237.
[25] Fangen, *Deltagende Observasjon*, 145-6; Thagaard, *Systematikk Og Innlevelse: En Innføring I Kvalitativ Metode*, 75.

were riddled with dilemmas on what was considered to be a more positive and productive way to live – moreso than being desperate to complain about their way of life to me.

The disadvantages to being an outsider in Japan – and being an outsider basically means being a foreigner – is most of all that foreigners are thought of by the general population as someone who will never understand the true essence of Japan and the way Japanese people live their lives. A common way to describe this notion is by the concept of *nihonjinron*. At the root of *nihonjinron* lies a basis for comparison of the "unique" culture of Japan, as opposed to all other cultures.[26] It builds on the constructed assumption that Japan is homogenous in culture, language and lifestyle. In a conversation with a Japanese counterpart, this common assumption that outsiders cannot ever understand the true essence of Japan has a tendency to make them proudly emphasise the greatness and beauty of their hard-working lifestyle, even though in reality, they might be having a hard time. That is not to say that all Japanese people feel this way, but it is worth to take note that there might be such a possibility.

This points to the very common issue of *honne* and *tatemae,* with *tatemae* being the face and opinions you show on the outside, and *honne* being your true intentions and feelings which usually stay on the inside.[27] In some of my interviews, this became more apparent than in others, which obscured my analysis somewhat and confused my judgement of whether they were truly happy with their life as it was, or if they were just trying to show me that it's not as bad as I thought (assuming, of course, that I thought it was "bad" in the first place).

Kirin Narayan has an interesting discussion on what it means to be a "native" anthropologist and the validity of this concept. Ultimately, I agree with Narayan's point in that we should not view anthropologists (or researchers) as either "native" or "non-native", but instead acknowledge each and every person's sum of significant factors such as education, gender, class, experience, and background in general and what in particular that person might bring to their research.[28] From an alternative perspective, I might have been viewed as a "Scandinavian" in Japanese eyes, but at the same time, anyone I interviewed knew that firstly I do not even come from Scandinavia originally, being a second generation immigrant from Russia. Secondly, I am married to a Japanese man and am integrated into a Japanese family.

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[26] Harumi Befu, "Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*," in *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, ed. Harumi Befu (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 113.

[27] David T. Johnson, "Getting in and Getting Along in the Prosecutors Office," in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*, ed. Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2003), 143.

[28] Kirin Narayan, "How Native Is a "Native" Anthropologist?," *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 3 (1993): 671.

Therefore, I do not think that anyone could ever have considered me as either an outsider or an insider – I was simply a mixture of both. In other words, it is possible to argue that I transcend the native/non-native dichotomy.

2.2.3 Linguistic challenges

Foreign researchers in Japan are adamant about the importance of having a command of the language when conducting research in Japan, as opposed to having an interpreter present[29] and I would add that this counts for research in most countries where the dominant language is a non-European one. I have confidence in my skills in Japanese when it comes to everyday conversations, which has lead me to believe that I could challenge myself to do whole interviews with native speakers, but not so much confidence that I could take notes and remember everything in full. Therefore, I decided to record the interviews so that I could transcribe and double check every word and sentence later. I also had to reflect on the fact that I might have missed out on a great deal of good points coming from the informants because I didn't judge their tone of voice correctly or catch the nuance they were casually directing at me, thus sometimes leading me by chance towards misrepresenting their ideas.

Japanese is a highly contextual language, with a great variety of underlying meanings in even the simplest of sentences. After I had transcribed all the interviews and had them quality checked, I realised that there were many matters I could have delved into deeper and many occasions where there was an invitation for being asked more questions, which I blatantly missed. Then, there is the issue of my Japanese natural response – it is indeed limited. Whereas in Norwegian, English or Russian, I am able to react to people's emotions and respond accordingly, I do not yet have that skill in Japanese, which could have potentially made the informants feel a little left at bay, having given a part of themselves, but not being caught at the right time.

I was probably never truly inappropriate and I have never experienced a Japanese person being unforgiving when I said something grammatically incorrect, but I nevertheless felt uneasy about not using every opportunity for a better interview. But in the end, it is said that

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[29] Helen Hardacre, "Fieldwork with Japanese Religious Groups," in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*, ed. Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2003), 78; Samuel Coleman, "Getting Cooperation in Policy-Oriented Research," in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*, ed. Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2003), 110; Johnson, "Getting in and Getting Along in the Prosecutors Office," 146-7.

linguistic fluency is not what reflects upon the final result of the research[30] and I agree – whatever linguistic limitations I might have had, they play only a minor role in this experience.

2.2.4 The issue of confidentiality and informed consent

I always made sure that every informant knew that I would make them anonymous, not revealing their names, occupations, or company names. Generally, this was never an issue or concern in most cases, with the exception of the last interview, where I managed to talk about company names by mistake at the café we were and the informant felt immediately uneasy because he felt the café was too close to his work place, and was anxious about the chance of a colleague showing up in the same café. We came to the conclusion that it did not matter in the long run as he never said anything negative or strange about his company, but it did contribute to a slight disruption in the interview.

In a different interview, the interviewee told me things he would attempt to do which were, in fact, legally questionable. I was very surprised that he would reveal such information while being recorded, but he seemed entirely unabashed by this matter and frankly informed me of everything with detail. He never asked me to keep this information specifically confidential either, probably assuming that I automatically would anyway. I have not revealed any aspects of this information in the thesis.

In regards to informed consent, I believed it was important to ensure that every participant was told as much as possible about my project. At that time, I still had not developed the form of my thesis – as it happens, it was evolving while I was interviewing people, with new ideas emerging every day. I was, however, always open and clear about my intentions. Some of my informants did not fully understand the concept of an academic thesis of this magnitude, because they were not familiar with such projects themselves, but this did not contribute to any of them stepping down from our agreement. None of the informants ever minded being recorded on tape, but some did make sure that I would not reveal names or more importantly, company names, when I would release my thesis to the public.

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[30] Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor, "Introduction: Doing Fieldwork in Japan," in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*, ed. Theodore C. Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon Bestor (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2003), 9.

2.3 Analysis

My question guide was divided into four categories: 1) Work, 2) Spouse/partnership, 3) Father/family and 4) General. After transcribing and translating the interviews, I found that the category of "Spouse/partnership" blended well together with the "Father/family" category, and that the "General" category, which initially was to serve as a summary, became a new category altogether, where the informants extensively discussed the dilemma of choosing between work and family/private time. The chief category which yielded the most results for this thesis was "Father/family". The "Work" category was useful in terms of orientation around the informants' work lives and their views on company rules and regulations, as well as the state. From each interview, I picked out the most useful quotes and comments and sorted them into smaller categories, to be able to see every conversation from a new point of view. To be able to best answer my research questions, I finally divided the main discussion into three parts, where the first part discusses the informants' masculinity within the context of work, the second part discusses their masculinity within the context of family, and the third part discusses their masculinity within the context of individual life purpose.

3 Theory

In this chapter, I will present the main bodies of theory I will utilise for analysing the interviews I conducted. First of all, I will outline the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which is central to my argument, discussing both its inception into common academic discourse, and the criticisms it has faced as a theory. Then I will briefly touch on some of the theory concerning the ideal of "breadwinning" and what it entails.

In the second part of this chapter, I will present a breakdown of social constructionist gender theories, to lay the foundation for discussing *salarymen* as a gendered construct, which Dasgupta sought. Later, I will outline gender discrepancy theory, so as to later link together the hegemonic masculinity and social constructionist theories, showing that in symbiosis, these two theories can establish reasons for change in gender identity, an argument which Ishii-Kuntz in particular asks for. Finally, I will present gender boundary theory, which will assist me in explaining why in some cases, change in gender identity is not evident or even going in the opposite direction of where I initially hypothesised it to go. In these cases, I believe Mathews' article can be of particular use.

3.1 Masculinity theory

3.1.1 Hegemonic masculinity

To lay grounds for discussing the different forms of masculinity, I would first of all like to borrow Jack S. Kahn's definition: "Masculinity is […] the complex cognitive, behavioral, emotional, expressive, psychosocial, and sociocultural experience of identifying with being male."[31] There are several different types of masculinities and the most prominent ones are 'hegemonic masculinity', 'complicit masculinity' and 'subordinate masculinity'. Before delving into the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', I would like to explain that 'complicit masculinity' is a masculinity that is not dominant in society but supports dominant (hegemonic) masculinity. It hopes to be rewarded for being similar to or supportive of the dominant group, but knows that it will never be dominant itself. 'Subordinate masculinity' is

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[31] Jack S. Kahn, *An Introduction to Masculinities* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 2.

a masculinity that is subjugated (defeated) and will never be considered a legitimate form of masculinity.[32]

R.W. Connell, an Australian sociologist specialising in the area of masculinities, constructed the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', which essentially derived from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations. Drawing upon the Marxist idea that "man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas"[33], Gramsci extended the sentiment to these ideas coming from a whole, dominant class in society, thereby exercising this hegemony on the less powerful classes below. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women."[34] In other words, it means that hegemonic masculinity is a dominant, normative form of masculinity, but that it is in fact rarely representative in the majority of men. It represents common ideals, fantasies and desires, such as heterosexuality, self-control and control of others, producing a contradiction between what men actually are versus what they want to be.[35] Hegemonic masculinity "does *not* reflect the true nature of men" and increases the chance of conflict when men are demanded by society to live up to "an impossible standard".[36] Most centrally to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, perhaps, is that most men – even those not belonging to the category – will benefit from the subordination of women and other masculinities.[37]

Hegemonic masculinity does not imply that men belonging to the dominant group are necessarily economically powerful. There is more to the concept of hegemony than mere economic control. It is true that by gaining economic power, the dominant group is enabled to enforce its own ideologies on others, and hegemony does often originate in this way. However, as it can be argued that ultimately all men in general can benefit from this ideology if they so wish, economic power cannot be seen as a prerequisite for hegemonic masculinity today. Furthermore, in order for hegemonic masculinity to persist and be maintained, it needs

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[32] Ibid., 35-6.
[33] Thomas R. Bates, "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 2 (1975): 351.
[34] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 77.
[35] R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 838-9.
[36] Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," in *The Making of Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 78.
[37] Ibid., 92; Connell, *Masculinities*, 79; Michael Moller, "Exploiting Patterns: A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity," *Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 3 (2007): 266.

consent from men (belonging to the "subordinated" and "complicit" masculinity categories) and women, thus making hegemonic masculinity stable, but contested and subject to change.[38]

Seeing it in a different light, Mimi Schippers writes that in order for hegemonic masculinity to continue being legitimate it needs to remain unavailable to women. This means that "feminine characteristics must be defined as deviant and stigmatized".[39] Masculine work, for instance, is generally unavailable to women, because they will at some point have to "quit" for child-related reasons, and will eventually meet the "glass ceiling". Schipper's point is that hegemonic masculinity cannot exist without hegemonic femininity, meaning that there are forms of femininity which are dominant and overbearing on the same level as masculinity is. Additionally, when masculine traits, such as aggression or promiscuity, are applied to women, they manifest as warped or 'wrong', as they represent a threat to the dominance of hegemonic masculinity.

All of this is not to say that the hegemonic masculinity paradigm is an uncontested, universally accepted theory. Some of the main criticisms towards the concept are based on the fact that masculinity is far too complex to simplify it in this way, and that it is not productive to divide masculinity into such few categories when men's realities and psyche's consist of aspects from every category in the masculinity hierarchy defined by Connell.[40] As Jeff Hearn puts it, every category of masculinity in every social institution "intersects with, complements and contradicts each other".[41] Another argument against this system is that the suggestion that the concept of hegemonic masculinity can only be used as a tool in theory, but cannot be applied to real life situations in practice.[42] According to critics like Margaret Wetherell, if hegemonic masculinity is not meant to be able to describe 'real men', only the ideal of the 'real man' and the social norms surrounding it, it is still not clear exactly what hegemonic masculinity actually is. I agree with the notion that masculinities are far too complex to be generalised, but I nevertheless found it useful in the context of an East Asian phenomenon. I

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[38] Jeff Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," *Feminist Theory* 5, no. 49 (2004): 52.
[39] Mimi Schippers, "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony," *Theor Soc* 36(2007): 94-5.
[40] Moller, "Exploiting Patterns: A Critique of Hegemonic Masculinity," 265; Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," 59; Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley, "Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-Discursive Practices," *Feminism & Psychology* 9, no. 335 (1999): 336.
[41] Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," 60.
[42] Wetherell and Edley, "Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-Discursive Practices," 336.

would argue that the vagueness of the concept is necessary in order to be able to detach it from Western specifics and apply it to discourse of *salarymen*.

In most capitalist cultures, what has been considered a hegemonic form of masculinity, has been the "breadwinner". This also applies to Japan and South Korea, and I will now briefly outline what constitutes the "breadwinner" role, as it is essential to my discussion.

3.1.2 The "breadwinner" role

According to Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, a role is defined as:

> "…a set of prescriptions and proscriptions for behavior – expectations about what behaviors are appropriate for a person holding a particular position within a particular social context. A gender role, then, is a set of expectations about what behaviors are appropriate for people of one gender."[43]

The "breadwinner role", then, describes what kind of behaviour and demeanour has been, and often still is, expected of men in the social context of family life, defining their life worth in terms of occupational and economic success. The concept of men as breadwinners in its modern form arose from the industrial revolution in Britain, when the notions of establishing households, protecting the home and providing for the family became commonplace, dividing the female and the male realms into the private and the public respectively. Before the revolution, any business the household might have endeavoured to do, such as farm work, would often have included the labour of the whole extended family.[44]

The idea of being a good father has become directly linked to being a reliable economic provider, relieving their family, particularly their wives, of economic stress.[45] Lynne Segal reminds us of the fifties, where even psychoanalytic literature would express the need of separate male and female spheres "for the sake of the child's mental health".[46] The father was there solely for financial support, and was not a social member of the family the vast majority

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[43] Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (New York, Chichester, Brisbane, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 11.
[44] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Bury St Edmunds: St Edmundsbury Press Ltd., 1999), 2-3.
[45] Michael E. Lamb, Joseph H. Pleck, and James A. Levine, "Effects of Paternal Involvement on Fathers and Mothers," in *Men's Changing Roles in the Family*, ed. Robert A. Lewis and Marvin B. Sussman (New York and London: The Haworth Press, 1986), 73.
[46] Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 11.

of the time. By the time of the seventies, most women were starting to be expected to (continue to) work, even if they had children.[47] Nowadays, it almost seems as if it is in the minority to want to be a full-time housewife, at least in most Western countries, however the breadwinner ideal still stands strong. Victor J. Seidler mentions that traditionally, men or fathers thought that their authority would be undermined if they became emotionally close to their children. The ideal father would be distant – providing, but controlling. Seidler also says that men had a tendency to underappreciate the amount of "emotional work"[48] that is required to raise children and to have a family, their identities being organised around and tied to their jobs.[49]

Jean L. Potuchek, an American gender theorist, emphasises that breadwinning means more than simply having paid employment and thus being an economic provider to the family – it is also about the sense of obligation to one's family. Because of this sense of obligation, it becomes problematic to leave the work place for extended periods (for example paternal leave).[50] Simply being paid for a service does not necessarily constitute a breadwinning role – a woman may, for instance, work part-time and get paid, but she will not be considered as a breadwinner for the family. One needs to identify with being the adult who directly supports and contributes to the family in a financial context, not one who contributes temporarily or partly, or who just earns extra pocket money for themselves.

3.2 Gender theory

3.2.1 "Doing gender" – social constructionism

Candace West and Don H. Zimmermann wrote in 1987[51] about gender being something we are "doing", contrary to what we "are", a theory which was in part made famous by Judith Butler in her book, "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity" from 1990,

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[47] Ibid., 33.

[48] According to Seidler, this entails listening to the children and include them in your thought processes, give them affection and attention beyond 'quality time' on the weekends and be emotionally involved in general.

[49] Victor J. Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities: Men, Cultures, Bodies, Power, Sex and Love* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), xv.

[50] Jean L. Potuchek, *Who Supports the Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 4.

[51] Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society* 1, no. 2 (1987).

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where she established the idea of gender performativity on the same principles.[52] According to these theories, gender is something produced by society and its various social institutions, rather than by the individuals themselves. It is not a role in itself, but a product of social interaction – something that is seen as "natural" while being continually reproduced. Individuals, in a sense, act out the institutional expectations of masculine and feminine traits through interaction with each other. Gender becomes a form of rationalisation of these social expectations and thereby, legitimises, as West and Zimmermann put it, "one of the most fundamental divisions of society".[53] This social constructionist view suggests that individuals, in their reproduction of the "essentialness" of gender, are acutely aware of their social positioning. In Cynthia Epstein's words, some individuals and institutions receive more power than others and all social ordering of gender is "maintained through the interplay between social constraints and individuals choices".[54]

Potuchek also says that it is when we study or observe the actual everyday life, that we find the ubiquity of gender construction or reproduction in society.[55] Potuchek argues that certain individuals' choices are not entirely responsible for the reproduction and construction of gender ideas, because institutions will constrain and limit their choices.[56] According to her some individuals or groups are better equipped to negotiate than others, with more bargaining power and resources. Individuals cannot be wholly blamed for inequality. She does add, however, that the construction of gender is not necessarily inevitably reproduced. Rather, because it ultimately depends on individuals for its reproduction and maintenance, it is not unthinkable that the same individuals might shape the gender system into something entirely different, given due time. I think her arguments here are important in order to be able to illustrate any potential change and the reasons why it may occur. I agree with her in how even though institutions may construct and provide gender ideologies into the public, and individuals may reproduce and perpetuate these ideologies, it is still up to the individuals to initiate a change.

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[52] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

[53] West and Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," 126.

[54] Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Disctinctions: Sex, Gender, and the Social Order* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 99.

[55] Potuchek, *Who Supports the Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages*, 22.

[56] Ibid., 23-4.

3.2.2 Gender role discrepancy

Clearly defined by Kahn, gender role discrepancy is "a discrepancy (or difference) between your ideal self, what is idealised (desired), and your real self, or what is actually attained."[57] Originally a concept coined by Joseph H. Pleck, who in turn drew inspiration from Erving Goffman and Margaret Mead, gender role discrepancy or gender role strain implies that masculinity constructed by society is an ideal often strived for, yet seldom reached by most men.[58] What arises from a gender role discrepancy is an inner conflict felt by the men in question who find themselves unable to reach their desired potential.[59]

Many men evaluate this discrepancy as a fault of their own, as they may have problems adjusting to the rapid changes of society and societal ideology (for instance equal working rights for women). When they find themselves unable to meet the unrealistic or inconsistent demands imposed on them (mostly by other men), they will be socially reprimanded and will instead exaggerate their own personal ideal of masculinity, trying as hard as possible to conform to it.[60] Some men may feel a need to be "in control" of their own lives and reality, which makes admitting to any insecurities a potential threat to their masculinity. Instead, to keep up their appearance, such men may internalise their anxieties in fear that they will otherwise be rejected by their peers.[61] When the men in question fail to meet expectations of them, for instance as the good provider, they often experience a 'discrepancy strain', which in turn can drive them to reinforcing the stereotype they cannot attain.[62]

3.2.3 Gender boundaries

Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss are essentially of the same view as the social constructionists, but they also discuss the concept of gender boundaries. They argue that there are distinct boundaries between women and men, and that women and men are constantly undergoing negotiation between one another, or participating in some form of domination or

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[57] Kahn, *An Introduction to Masculinities*, 213.

[58] Judy Y. Chu, Michelle V. Porche, and Deborah L. Tolman, "The Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale: Development and Validation of a New Measure for Boys," *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 93 (2005): 96.

[59] James M. O'Neil, Barbara J. Helms, and Robert K. Gable, "Gender-Role Conflict Scale: College Men's Fear of Femininity," *Sex Roles* 14, no. 5/6 (1986): 336.

[60] Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, 68-9.

[61] Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities: Men, Cultures, Bodies, Power, Sex and Love*, xvi; James R. Mahalik, "Incorporating a Gender Role Straing Perspective in Assessing and Treating Men's Cognitive Distortions," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 30, no. 4 (1999): 333.

[62] Ronald F. Levant, "The Masculinity Crisis," *Journal of Men's Studies* 5, no. 3 (1997).

power play across these boundaries.[63] This theory also ascribes to there being a high gender consciousness within the actors, but as I interpret it there is also an emphasis on the fact that men are not always necessarily in power or control. Both women and men have their own domains, separated by borders which power is negotiated across. Gerson and Peiss say that this is a "multidimensional process", meaning it is not as simple as only society constructing gender relations, which are later reproduced in a continuing spiral; there are many more elements at work.

Traditionally and very simply put, women have been assigned to the domestic realm and men have been assigned to the public one. However, in the last few decades, the separation between domains have become blurred because of each gender entering a sphere previously dominated by the other – women have been "invited" to work alongside men and men have been "invited" to take more part in child upbringing. The respective domains are still, perhaps, dominated by the gender initially assigned to it, but far less distinctly than before. Nevertheless, there is still social and cultural prestige in question – even though men and women *physically* cross the boundaries of traditional gender roles into the sphere of work or home, they are not inherently confident that it is "right". Gerson and Peiss argue that the invitation and participation across borders will not "necessarily lead to lasting structural change".[64] People can cross each other's borders physically, but that does not inevitably mean that they have taken each other's roles and expectations upon themselves. People are still expected to carry out their socially inherent role, while they "try on" each other's "lives".

If women are to take upon themselves a "man's" job, there is still a level of expectation of them taking care of children and the household as before, and furthermore, if a man decided to take care of the household and children more than earlier, they is still some expectation to continue to work as hard as they always have done. In other words, there is no room for the gender roles to shift from one to another; there is too much social consciousness and too many connotations ascribed to one's birth sex. By reducing the issue in this way, it is helpful in finding the root of it.

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[63] Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness: Reconceptualizing Gender Relations," *Social Problems* 32, no. 4 (1985): 318.
[64] Ibid., 323.

Potuchek draws on Gerson and Peiss' theory on gender boundaries, defining it further by saying that gender boundaries are "anything that marks, and thereby constructs, the difference between 'real men' and 'real women'."[65] She argues that these boundaries are actively engaged in defining and creating a system of inequality. The primary difference between the two definitions is that Gerson and Peiss are not as focused on inequality, but more focused on the fact that there are boundaries to be crossed which create a potential for change. Potuchek is more pessimistic, highlighting how such boundaries reproduce inequality, and agrees that gender boundaries are dynamic, but that moving between the spheres across boundaries will not necessarily be a catalyst of fundamental change to the structure as a whole.

Potuchek calls breadwinning a "contested gender boundary." [66] Mothering, to her, is the opposing force to breadwinning. It too is a gender role, but in this instance it is one which is inherently feminine, and is uncontested from the breadwinner's side. As part-time work for women is not considered to be authentic "breadwinning", the act of fathers taking care of their children too is not always considered to be "proper" child rearing. Potuchek uses the example of a mother bathing a child being seen as an appropriate parenting routine, whilst a father doing the exact same act, is thought to be "babysitting".[67] In other words, as I see it, there is more to be done than the simple act of physically crossing over each boundary – there needs to be an ideological change on both sides.

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[65] Potuchek, *Who Supports the Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages*, 27-8.
[66] Ibid., 96.
[67] Ibid., 157.

4 Masculinity through history

In this chapter, I will account for relevant, important moments in Japanese history ranging from the beginning of last century until the present day, in the context of gender, or more specifically, masculinity ideologies. I will first write a brief summary of Japanese history, before I explain some of the main aspects of contemporary *salaryman* reality.

4.1 Historical overview

4.1.1 Meiji and governmental gender construction

The Meiji Restoration started in 1868, when Japan completely opened up to trade and welcomed new, European and American customs and policies after limiting access from other countries for several centuries. The Japanese government became increasingly persistent in using the imported Western ideologies and values in almost every aspect of society. These were thought to be the pinnacle of civilisation and a symbol of modernism, and were used as models to prove the government's ability to be progressive, as opposed to the other East Asian countries.[68] Traditionally, the Japanese family or household had been three-generational, patrilineal and patrilocal, otherwise known as *ie*.[69] The *ie* system was constructed in the Tokugawa period (1503-1868)[70] and was based on the Confucian hierarchy philosophy, where the aged preceded over the youth and men preceded over women. In 1896, a civil code was put into effect, legalising the patriarchal family structure which would serve as the new ideology of the nuclear family.[71] Gender roles were now being constructed specifically and purposefully to build a strong, national identity.[72]

Women's moral education came to be regarded as essential to the growth and development of the country. Prior to the Restoration, women were seldom given any specific legal or political rights, even though they had always participated in the labour force, working side by side

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[68] For further reading on Western influences in the Meiji period, see Karlin (2002), Low (2003).
[69] Tessa Carroll, "Changing Language, Gender and Family Relations in Japan," in *The Changing Japanese Family*, ed. Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takenaka (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 111.
[70] Conrad Totman, *A History of Japan* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 206.
[71] Kurt Steiner, "The Revision of the Civil Code of Japan: Provisions Affecting the Family," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1950): 171-2.
[72] Dina Lowy, *The Japanese "New Woman": Images of Gender and Modernity* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 1-2; Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 30.

with men. It was only when the Meiji state was established that there appeared a clear division between female and male labour.[73] Women were taught that they were now a necessary component to the sustenance of the family. A new ideology of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) was constructed by the state where women's roles as wife and their ability to upkeep a household were central to their existence.[74] To the government, this was equality at its best, where both men and women were seen as independent and important, but as we know, this would lead to women becoming confined in the home and depending on men for financial support. Consequently, women were seen as independent or literate enough to maintain their household on their own, but were still judged to be legally and politically incompetent.[75]

Morris Low tells us about the direct transformations in representative images of Japanese men as Japan became increasingly modernised. The state initiated a form of Westernisation, or "caucasianisation" of the Japanese in order to differentiate between Japan and the rest of East Asia so that the world would see that Japan was becoming a "world power worthy of respect."[76] Low describes intentional depictions of "Japanese versus Chinese" on woodblock prints about the Sino-Japanese (1894-5) and Russo-Japanese wars (1904-5), where Japanese became increasingly indistinguishable from their Caucasian partners, while Chinese, for instance, were depicted as "Oriental barbarians". Men were told to rely on their physical skill in pursuit of true masculinity, rather than brute force. In their home, men exercised a legal authority over their families according to the *ie* system, and had a lot of time in which to do so.[77]

In other words, the Japanese have built their society and gender ideologies, in part, on Western blueprints. Although the Japanese have outwardly embraced this change from the start, I think that there have always been many underlying mixed emotions towards this imposition, becoming the cause of potential unease and disharmony.

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[73] Romit Dasgupta, "Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and Play," *Japanese Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 192.
[74] Joanna Liddle and Sachiko Nakajima, *Rising Suns, Rising Daughters: Gender, Class and Power in Japan* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2000), 49.
[75] Ibid., 49.
[76] Morris Low, "The Emperor's Sons Go to War: Competing Masculinities in Modern Japan," in *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, ed. Kam Louie and Morris Low (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 82.
[77] Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles," 47.

4.1.2 Militarism and masculinity

As Japan entered its Taishō period (1912-1926), the military grew and the empire expanded, making new ways of promoting gender necessary. Through the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology, women's roles as mothers became more prominent than their previously dominant role as wife. While all able-bodied men went out to war, there emerged a need for women to produce more children for the good of the Empire[78], not entirely unlike what happened in fascist regimes of Germany and Italy. Lise Skov and Brian Moeran point out that Japanese women have been important both to the building of Japan's nation state and of its economic development, but simultaneously had been overlooked or marginalised.[79] When women's reproductive roles during the militarism period in the 30s and 40s were promoted, it was the first time the Japanese state "promoted a positive image of women."[80] The women were used to build families, and stabilise and sustain the population growth in times of great need of men or soldiers. This was women's ticket into proper adulthood or real "womanliness".

Men's ideology, on the other hand, was focused, among other ideals, on the *tairiku rōnin* (continental adventurer) image, which many men began to worship after the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, when Japan was consumed with the desire to expand Japan onto the Asian continent.[81] Masculinity came to be defined by military victory, and the ability to physically conquer others – an extension of the Western imperialist ideology implemented in the Meiji period. A man would only truly become a man if he would serve the state.[82]

Today, masculine military ideology in Japan is no longer as prevalent, as can be seen in the next section, but traces of evidence of it can still be found in the *salaryman* discourse. Some elements in *salaryman* life strikingly resemble military structure, but it is no longer physical ability that commands power and neither is serving the state central to attaining proper manhood.

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[78] Anne E. Imamura, "The Japanese Family Faces Twenty-First Century Challenges," *Education About Asia* 8, no. 2 (2003): 30; Keiko Hirao, "Mothers as the Best Teachers: Japanese Motherhood and Early Childhood Education," in *Women's Working Lives in East Asia*, ed. Mary C. Brinton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 192-3; Liddle and Nakajima, *Rising Suns, Rising Daughters: Gender, Class and Power in Japan*, 55; Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 31.

[79] Lise Skov and Brian Moeran, "Introduction, Hiding in the Light: From Oshin to Yoshimoto Banana," in *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*, ed. Lise Skov and Brian Moeran (Honolulu: Curzon Press, 1995), 13.

[80] Ibid., 22.

[81] Jason G. Karlin, "The Gender of Nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 70-1.

[82] Ibid., 74.

4.1.3 After WWII to the present

After Japan's defeat in the Second World War, the United States occupied the country, helping revise Japan's constitution in 1946, along with many other laws and policies, most notably the Civil Code in 1947.[83] This brought with it a new marriage law and ideology, abolishing the old *ie* system, and legalising freedom of marriage, where mutual consent was a prerequisite. The Labour Standards Law was enacted in 1947, enforcing among other things that there would be no discriminatory treatment in regards to wages, working hours or conditions on the basis of nationality, creed or social status (although not mentioning gender specifically).[84] People began migrating into the cities in great numbers, resulting in the rise of the nuclear family. Tessa Carroll believes that the number of nuclear families grew not because of newly inspired ideology, but because so many children had been born between 1925 and 1950 (the period when the state required women to give birth to as many children as possible).[85] While the three-generational households did not by any means disappear on a general level, the number of smaller scale families grew.

The military masculinity ideology as public discourse disintegrated when Japan's old military force disbanded in 1947 according to the New Constitution written together with the Allied Occupation.[86] Instead of having to carry the burden of military victory, men now had to carry the burden of national economic recovery as *salarymen.* At the very least, this became dominant concept and way of thinking, even if at the time it was not representative of how most men lived. In essence, one can say that society's demands to men were not abolished, but merely changed form. The requirements for becoming a "real man" now entailed finding a job, getting married and functioning as the main breadwinner for the family.[87] At the same time, fathers' authority in the family declined after the New Constitution was written, deeming every member of the family as equal, rather than having a patriarchal family head.[88] Men have consequently contributed to the rebuilding of the nation and to the nation becoming

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[83] Kenji Otani, "Time Distributions in the Process to Marriage and Pregnancy in Japan," *Population Studies* 45, no. 3 (1991): 475-6.
[84] Kazuyo Yamada, "Past and Present Constraints on Labor Movements for Gender Equality in Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 12, no. 2 (2009): 197.
[85] Carroll, "Changing Language, Gender and Family Relations in Japan," 111-2.
[86] Totman, *A History of Japan*.
[87] Futoshi Taga, "Rethinking Male Socialisation: Life Histories of Japanese Male Youth," in *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, ed. Kam Louie and Morris Low (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 138.
[88] Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles," 46.

the world's second greatest economy[89] but have resulted in very limited interaction between fathers and their families. The father figure, being frequently absent at work, came to be an idea, rather than physical reality.[90] While fathers had had far more opportunity to exercise their authority in the household before WWII, now all their time and effort was being put into their corporate jobs to support their families financially.

The metaphor of *kigyō senshi* (corporate warrior) became central, symbolising the men of Japan once again "going to war" to counter the economic devastation the Second World War had brought upon them.[91] *Salaryman* masculinity started to evolve and become mainstream "as alternative/competing masculinities such as the soldier and farmer were neutralised as a consequence of Japan's defeat and subsequent social and economic transformations."[92] The term *kigyō senshi* correlated to the concept of *ryōsai kenbo* and the two eventually would morph into the modern day concepts of the *salaryman* and the *sengyō shufu* (full-time housewife), bonding in marriage to serve as the bricks in the nation's economic strength.

The ideology of women's roles in the family, on the other hand, remained the same, even through the men had shifted from the military to *salaryman* masculinities. Despite the reality of the modern world, and the radical change people underwent after the inception of the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology, women were still expected to maintain the same attitudes and perform the same gendered assignments as before, such as housework and child rearing.[93] New roles emerged and continued to diversify, such as the working woman, but rather than merging the roles together, strengthening the concept, they became enmeshed, often contradicting each other and making each role more difficult to perform. Because Japanese company ideology is centralised around the system of lifetime employment, and because women cannot practically stay in a company all their life because of child rearing, women would hence always be partly excluded from the company and the labour market.[94] Furthermore, as the economy flourished and the *salaryman* lifestyle became more affluent, the view of women as a sexual commodity, either at nightclubs, hostess bars or even as a secretary ("office lady"), was becoming

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[89] As of 2011, Japan is no longer the world's 2nd greatest economy, with China taking its place, but men's contribution to becoming the 2nd greatest economy is still valid.

[90] Merry Isaacs White, *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), 108.

[91] Dasgupta, "Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and Play," 192.

[92] Dasgupta, "Creating Corporate Warriors: The "Salaryman" and Masculinity in Japan," 122.

[93] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 31.

[94] Kazuo Sugeno and Yasuo Suwa, "Labour Law Issues in a Changing Labour Market: In Search of a New Support System," in *Japanese Labour and Management in Transition: Diversity, Flexibility and Participation*, ed. Mari Sako and Hiroki Sato (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 131.

increasingly more widespread, hindering women's progress not by a little, obstructing them from getting the respect they deserve. This particular argument is very well described by Allison, who conducted research in Tokyo hostess clubs in the late 1980s.[95]

In 1985, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) was written, "partly in response to pressure from the United Nation during its International Decade for Women (1976-1985)".[96] The law enabled a two-track system for employment, calling the first track *ippan shoku* (general employment) and the second track *sōgō shoku* (career employment).[97] This system was devised specifically to give women the chance to work on the same equal terms as men. Initially, it was intended to put a system into place to hire less qualified women and men in the *ippan shoku* track, and women and men with a higher level of education in the *sōgō shoku* track. However, it backfired, with most women ending up in the *ippan shoku* track, regardless of their education at the convenience of their employers. Meanwhile, number of women who continued to work full-time after getting married rose, as a result of the EEOL establishment. In 1975, the employment rate of women was 29.5%[98], growing to become 37.9% in 1995.[99] However, there were still inconsistencies in the law, as while there were clauses against discrimination in training, welfare, and retirement, there were no restrictions on discrimination in recruitment, placement and promotion. This resulted in a revision in 1997, including the gender discrimination prohibition clauses mentioned above.[100] The two-track system, however, still prevailed and continued to solidify discrimination between genders, as well as between regular and non-regular employees.

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[95] Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*.
[96] Marcus Rebick, "Changes in the Workplace and Their Impact on the Family," in *The Changing Japanese Family*, ed. Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takenaka (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 83. See also Imamura (2003).
[97] Karen A. Shire, "Gendered Organization and Workplace Culture in Japanese Customer Services," *Social Science Japan Journal* 3, no. 1 (2000): 38-9. See also Imamura (2003).
[98] Japan's Institute of Workers' Evolution, "Working Women/the Situation of Women in Japan," Japan's Institute of Workers' Evolution, http://www.jiwe.or.jp/english/situation/working.html.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Yamada, "Past and Present Constraints on Labor Movements for Gender Equality in Japan," 202; Miriam Murase, *Cooperation over Conflict: The Women's Movement and the State in Postwar Japan* (New York & London: Routledge, 2006), 29-30.

4.2 Decline and insecurities – the reality of work

> "Only ten years ago, the Japanese family system, along with many others of its management structures, was regarded as the reason for Japan's economic success. Ten years of recession and exactly the same systems are being used to explain Japan's economic failure."[101]

If there ever was a "golden age" for the *salaryman*, it would have been a couple of decades after the Second World War, until the bursting of the "bubble economy" in the early1990s. While the first generation to be born after the war was still burdened with the task of getting the nation back on its feet, their children were increasingly able to experience the security of lifetime employment, and the automatic salary and status increases according to their length of service to the company (*nenkō jōretsu*).[102] Specifically, this was more available to men working in large companies with more secure economies[103], but nevertheless it served as a general sense of security. Through Japan's steady economic growth, companies developed into closed communities offering comprehensive welfare systems in exchange for the workers' loyalty and hard work, becoming mutually dependent in pursuit of maximum efficiency. Instead of hiring workers for specific positions, companies started to employ men and women in yearly batches as members of the company (or indeed, community), focusing on their general skills and abilities, rather than their individual specialties to ensure mobility and adjustment at the companies' convenience.

Here, it is important to highlight that even before becoming employed, Japanese people still suffer from fierce competition to be admitted to the most attractive high schools and universities, finding themselves under pressure to prepare for entrance exams from a young childhood age.[104] Entering the right schools crucial to the future accessibility of schools and jobs in the future. Students are recruited even before they graduate university and receive on-the-job training by the company, in whatever skills are needed for the role[105], rendering the content of their education obsolete, giving school credentials a mere symbolic status.[106]

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[101] Roger Goodman, "Anthropology, Policy and the Study of Japan," in *Family and Social Policy: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Roger Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.
[102] For further reading on the Japanese company structure, see Dasgupta (2000), Tabata (1998), Matsumoto (1994), Sugimoto (1997), Weathers (2001).
[103] Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*, 92.
[104] Yo Takeuchi, "The Self-Activating Entrance Examination System: Its Hidden Agenda and Its Correspondence with the Japanese 'Salary Man'," *Higher Education* 34(1997): 183.
[105] Yoshio Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 87-8; Charles Weathers, "Changing White-Collar Workplaces and Female Temporary Workers in Japan," *Social*

Sābisu zangyō (a term difficult to translate directly, meaning in essence 'overtime work without payment', where the word *sābisu* indicates offering a service without expecting payment) soon became a common practice in most businesses, with as much as 10% of work falling into this category.[107] In the 1980s, a public concern for worker's health arose when the phenomenon of *karoshi* (death from overwork) became a central debate in the discourse of *salarymen*. More specifically, it is "a socio-medical term used particularly in applications for workers' compensation, especially in cases of cardio-vascular disease brought on by excessive workloads and occupational stress."[108] This was a phenomenon embodying all problems associated with *salaryman* lifestyle and was first blamed on the individuals' poor life choices. However, as more and more attention was drawn to it in the 1990s, both through lawsuits and through research, the blame shifted to that of the system.[109] According to Tetsuro Kato, it became transparent that "the Japanese management system [was] protected by government policies which [allowed] employers to arbitrarily determine their employee's overtime hours".[110] Rational company strategy developed into spending a little more money to offer better salaries and less *sābisu zangyō*, in order to decrease the lawsuits and improve health among workers. However, reduction in recruitment after the prolonged recession in the 1990s meant a smaller workforce, which led to more tasks and longer working hours for the employees. As a result, abolishing *sābisu zangyō* entirely was never possible, especially in the case of younger recruits.

At the beginning of the 1990s, it became clear that the aging population was becoming a problem for the country. Japan's fertility rate had gone from 2.1 children per female in 1970 to 1.8 in 1980 and by the 1990s, it had fallen to 1.5.[111] From the 1970s to the 1990s, the ratio of people of a working age (20-64) to people of pension age had decreased from 8.1 to 4.3.[112] The government created the "Gold Plan of 1990" to provide services like home help, day-

Science Japan Journal 4, no. 2 (2001): 201; Dasgupta, "Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and Play," 195.

[106] Takeuchi, "The Self-Activating Entrance Examination System: Its Hidden Agenda and Its Correspondence with the Japanese 'Salary Man'," 187.

[107] Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, 93.

[108] Tetsuro Kato, "The Political Economy of Japanese Karoshi," http://members.jcom.home.ne.jp/katori/Karoshi.html.

[109] For further reading on public concerns in the *salaryman* discourse, see White (2002), Tabata (1998), Taga (2003), Hidaka (2010).

[110] Kato, "The Political Economy of Japanese Karoshi."

[111] The World Bank, "Japan's Fertility Rate," The World Bank, http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators?cid=GPD_WDI.

[112] OECD, "Number of People of Working Age (20-64) Per Person of Pension Age (65+) in Selected Countries, 1950-2050," OECD, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2011-en.

care, short-stay community centres and nursing homes to support the rapidly aging population.[113] The "New Gold Plan" was introduced in 1994, which was then followed by "Gold Plan 21" in 2000 as a result of overwhelming demand. In 1994, the government initiated the 10-year programme "Angel Plan" to make it easier for women to both have a family and work, as well as to hopefully remove the stigma from working mothers. Some of the services to be offered included "day nurseries, drop-in care for non-working mothers, centres to care for sick children, after-school care centres and counselling centres for parents with childcare problems"[114]. However, the "Angel Plan" failed and did not reach the public as intended, again because of the economic downfall in the same period. Companies were already worried about their financial prospects and therefore were reluctant to invest more money in new governmental plans, when they already had invested so much in the previous "Gold Plans". The "New Angel Plan" was released in 2000 to help develop a more "family-friendly" society.[115]

The bursting of the bubble economy in 1990 seriously "shook" the lifetime employment system, as well as the notion that the company is a person's primary community. Since then, there is a constant ongoing increase in part-time workers and temporary workers, short-term contract workers and as a result, the wage structure has started to move towards being based on ability and performance, rather than on years of loyal service.[116] The reputed lifetime employment system with its seniority driven wages (*nenkō jōretsu*) is becoming less and less available than it had been before the 1990s. The EEOL has been revised several times, but has never included substantial punishment for corporations that do not carry out the laws.[117] The growing ageing population and the drop in population growth is a serious, economic threat to Japan but because having so many elderly living in one state is so costly, there is a constant need to raise more money. This makes it even more difficult to implement efficient gender equality legislations at the present, because there is no economic room or finances available to give women better salaries and create better conditions for families.[118]

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[113] Goodman, "Anthropology, Policy and the Study of Japan," 14-5.
[114] Ibid., 15.
[115] Hirao, "Mothers as the Best Teachers: Japanese Motherhood and Early Childhood Education," 181.
[116] For further reading on the bursting of the bubble economy, see Tabata (1998), Sugeno and Suwa (1997).
[117] Glenda S. Roberts, "Pinning Hopes on Angels: Reflections from an Aging Japan's Urban Landscape," in *Family and Social Policy: Anthropological Approaches*, ed. Roger Goodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 74.
[118] Ibid., 56.

So far, the legislations and support systems offered to families have not successfully been able to support families as intended. *Sābisu zangyō* is not being questioned, which is a phenomenon that makes it particularly difficult to read statistics correctly. Kato established in 1993 that statistics offered by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare (MoLW) showed that an average Japanese worker logged 1,920 hours that year, roughly equal to that of the USA. But looking at the statistics provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO), he concluded that the statistics from the MoLW did not include *sābisu zangyō* and that real working hours in fact were about 350 hours more than reported.[119]

I calculated an updated estimate based on the most recent data released by both the ILO and the MoLW to see if I could find any such discrepancy myself, though being aware that neither release statistics about *sābisu zangyō* explicitly due to its elusive nature. I added statistics about South Korea for comparison. Based on the number of working days in 2009 (248 in Japan; 254 in Korea)[120], minus an estimate of actual vacation days spent in 2009 (8.5 days in Japan[121]; 8.5 days in Korea[122]), not divided by gender, in 2009 all employees worked on average 7.1 hours/day (1713.5 hours/year) in Japan and 9.1 hours/day (2255.8 hours/year[123]) in Korea.[124]

However, looking at specific data released by ILO relevant to areas of employment of my interviewees (wholesale and retail trade, financial intermediation and public administration), divided by gender (which is a division not provided by the MoLW), one can see that there is a significant difference to be found. The most recent data from ILO is regrettably from as far back as 2008, but I believe it still illustrates the point I aim to make. On average, both genders worked 8.28 hours a day (41.4 hours/week) in Japan and 7.78 hours a day (38.9 hours/week) in Korea.[125] The discrepancy became even more evident when dividing the statistic between genders (though unfortunately, the ILO does not provide this for South Korea). On average,

[119] Tetsuro Kato, "Workaholism: It's Not in the Blood," http://members.jcom.home.ne.jp/katori/WORKAHOLISM.html.
[120] Timeanddate.com, "Calendar for Year 2009," Time and Date AS, http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/.
[121] Labour and Welfare Ministry of Health, "Average Number of Days of Annual Paid Leave Per Employee," Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, http://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-l/dl/general-03.pdf.
[122] As I could not find any concrete statistics similar to that of Japan, I assume for the purpose of this equation that the number is the same as in Japan.
[123] Data from 2008; data from 2009 not available.
[124] OECD, "Average Annual Working Time," OECD, http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/average-annual-working-time_20752342-table8.
[125] The International Labour Office, "The Ilo Department of Statistics," The International Labour Office, http://laborsta.ilo.org/default.html.

men worked 9.16 hours a day (45.8 hours/week) and women worked 7.16 hours a day (35.8 hours/week).[126]

Finally, I would like to add that although *salaryman* masculinity is considered to be hegemonic by most theorists, it is important to keep in mind that there are many different masculinity models, both present and emerging in Japan today. As mentioned in the introduction, Roberson and Suzuki's anthology maps out many different masculinities, which all potentially contend the hegemony of the *salaryman* ideal.

The purpose of this chapter has been to construct a historical framework for my analysis, explaining some of the main events and changes that Japan has gone through in the context of gender and masculinity ideology. I will refer to many of these aspects in various parts of my thesis.

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[126] Ibid.

5   Masculinity and work

This chapter will mainly address the questions and issues related to masculinity ideologies in a work context. First, I will present some of my interviewees' views that indicate which masculine ideologies are currently present or emerging in relation to their role as workers, often in opposition to their views on women's roles in the same instances. This does not exclude the possibility that the same men may feel differently about other aspects of masculinity, which I will discuss later in chapters 6, "Masculinity and family", and "Masculinity and life purpose". I will then discuss these views in light of arguments in the works of Dasgupta and Futoshi Taga. The main theories I will apply as a method of argument are the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the breadwinner ideal, as well as some gender constructionist theories to establish that *salaryman* masculinity is indeed a gendered construct. To further contextualise it, I will also apply gender discrepancy theory. Finally, I will compare my findings to that of Hidaka's in the same instances to unveil whether any changes in attitudes can be found over time.

5.1   Personal narratives

Hayato

Hayato argued that it is not justifiable economically to have a female breadwinner; that he felt that without a male breadwinner, the chances of the family going bankrupt are much higher. He did, however, think that it is rationally better for women to be working alongside men, as it brings better economical conditions to the household, because it is difficult to depend solely on the husband's salary to support a whole family. It seems that ideally, he highly respects women – especially those who went to highly regarded universities with good results and have bright futures. He thinks it absurd that women would go to a highly ranked university, get good grades, then work for a few years, get married and end up never using their potential. For women to quit their jobs is a waste. But he blames it not only on the companies, but Japan in general for the lack of good systems, kindergartens, and support establishments for women to enable them to work on equal terms with men.

When talking about gender equality at work, Hayato was annoyed that there was practically no such thing in his work place. Priding himself on his rationality, he deduced the reason to

mainly be the large gender wage-gap between women and men, which in 2008 was measured to women's earnings in full-time employment on average as 69.3% of men's earnings.[127] In comparison, the gender wage gap is measured to be 61.2% in Korea and 91.4% in Norway. When it comes to paternity leave, his opinion is that more men should really take the chance of taking paternity leave, but it becomes a problem when the company won't let you because they don't have the support system available. He is unhappy with the social stigma surrounding it, preferring that it should become a societal norm instead.

Hayato does not, however, believe that a better salary for women will automatically result in more working women. In his experience, he believes that the fact is many women see true merit in the decision to be a housewife, and that they may not have to work as hard as they would in an office environment. Hayato showed himself to be inclined towards thinking that it is a woman's choice to stay at home, rather than being forced by circumstance. He excused himself for his view, saying this might be an old-fashioned Japanese way of being and thinking. Furthermore, it is not only women's choice which frustrates him. He showed resentment for the way his company treats women in his eyes, such as letting them leave whenever they want every day, allowing a short vacation every month while the men are denied any form of freedom. This all seems greatly unfair in his eyes. To him, it is inexplicable why women are not treated the same as the men in his company – he would prefer total equality over anything else.

Shinji

Shinji told me he feels that the husband or father does not necessarily have to be the main or only provider from a gendered perspective. He felt that he and his future wife should be equal members of the family (equal partners, rather than "husband" and "wife") and he was conflicted in that seeing that the system today cannot afford to provide enough support for dual-earner households. As long as the system in place remains, he thinks that it would place too much of a strain on the household if his wife and him were both to come home late every night, and be unable to take off time freely and unrestricted. Shinji's concern did not so much revolve around the opportunities for women, but around the children's feelings and wellbeing. He implied that if the mother of the household was to enter employment, she should work on the same terms as men in dual-earner households, not work part-time or only for a contract

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[127] OECD, "Gender Gap in Median Earnings of Full-Time Employees," OECD, http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en_2649_201185_46462759_1_1_1_1,00.html.

period which makes *salaryman* masculinity normative, applying it to women as well as men if women were to choose such a career path.

Keitarō

Keitarō said he thought his married life could be much smoother, if only he could spend only a little bit more time at home. However, Keitarō still feels he is in an unchangeable situation, in which the priority is to work as hard as he can while he's still young, and has the energy. In practical terms, he believes that there is more merit for him to invest in work life rather than home life, probably because at some point, his physical power and brain power will diminish as he gets older, meaning he will not be able to work as effectively later. Most likely, I believe he's investing in the future this way, so that later, he and his wife will be able to have the security of having saved as much money and resources as they can, and at that point, be able to turn to working on their relationship.

Keitarō was conflicted in accepting and understanding female employment on equal terms with men, at the same time as not being able to see a real solution to an effective upkeep of a household without a housewife at the house. At his job, there are many tenacious, strong-willed career women and his mother has always worked full-time, just like his father, which he says has made him accustomed to women pursuing professional careers but he also says that he cannot see the same happening in his own future family.

Seiichi

Seiichi was perhaps one of my most complex interviewees, in that he was in a very special position at the time of the interview and has today changed his professions completely. When I interviewed him, he had just started his leave of absence due to depression caused by the environment at his work and was simply racked with conflict and self-doubt about everything related to being a *salaryman*. At the beginning of the interview, he was careful and adhered to the norms expected of *salarymen* when describing his situation, but as our interview went on, he became more and more unrestrained and revealed a more liberal, radical side. Seiichi became very direct about expressing his dislike for the symbols of the *salaryman*: the suit and tie, the greeting ceremony on the 1st of April when men typically begin their career, and the phrase, *shakaijin ni naru* (becoming a member of society)[128]. He was not the only one to have

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[128] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 104.

expressed a discomfort around these symbols – all respondents present at this group interview confessed to feeling a certain heaviness merely thinking about these concepts. The suit and the tie as symbols are almost completely dominated by the connotation to going to work as a *salaryman.*

5.2 Discussion

Breadwinning as the hegemonic masculinity ideal

Dasgupta argues that in addition to all the expectations and benefits of being a *salaryman*, an additional expectation arises from being the main provider or breadwinner for their families. He calls it "heterosexual patriarchal family ideology".[129] *Salarymen* are what drives the nation of Japan today. They are the main taxpayers and supporters of the state and in order for the state and economy to continue to flourish and be maintained, the hegemony of *salaryman* masculinity needs to prevail.[130] This is not unlike the situation in South Korea, where men's roles as breadwinners are perhaps even stronger and more prominent than they are in Japan.[131] Both the construction of *saellôrimaen* and the construction of women as dependent housewives encourage men to view their role as financial providers as the most crucial family responsibility. This makes the men believe that should they fail to provide for their families, they will lose their masculinity.[132]

The way I see it, it is not a masculine patriarchy mainly created and reproduced by men to subdue women, but a masculinity constantly reproduced and reconstructed by the state out of necessity, which as a result, means that the nation is capable of surviving through crucial points in history and national crises (such as the Meiji restoration, WWII, numerous natural disasters and financial crises, as referred to earlier in chapter 4, "Masculinity through history"). It is not as simple to just look upon the roles of women in Japan and deem their reality suppressed as is, because their roles have until now been clearly defined, which has enabled society to function well in a multitude of aspects – until a certain point. Now, new, more difficult times and difficult economic situations have arisen over the last few decades,

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[129] Dasgupta, "Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and Play," 194.
[130] Hiroko Takeda, "Talking About Japanese Families: Discursive Politics of the Familial," *Japan Forum* 15, no. 3 (2003): 457-8.
[131] Seungsook Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Hegemonic Masculinity: Reconfiguring Gender Hierarchy in Contemporary South Korea," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 84.
[132] Ibid., 86.

and the state is in a dire need of a new strategy. Women must be included into formal employment and work life on equal terms with men in order to rebuild and raise the nation again, so that the birth rate doesn't fall even lower.

Hayato's justification his ideal breadwinner being male, not female, was chiefly economic. It was clear that he thinks highly of women, and he also said that he blames society for not providing better support systems to enable a gender diversity at work. He also pointed to the gender wage gap as one reason why women do not work similarly long hours in the office as men most of the time. This attitude could indicate that if women accept this gender pay gap and lack of support as a reality, she helps perpetuate the gendered construct of women as created by the state and its institutions. In Hayato's opinion, however, simply offering a higher salary to women will not truly change anything in practical terms. He considers it preferable to have complete gender equality at work, but in his experience, women often choose to stay at home or work part-time instead of arguing their cause. Shinji was roughly of the same opinion as Hayato and similarly believed that there was no need for this gender inequality at work. Shinji also acknowledged the problem of the lack of state support for working women.

Awareness of gender inequality is a crucial factor in encouraging change and both Hayato and Shinji demonstrated themselves to be acutely aware. For them, it would seem that they feel society around them is slow to develop by itself, but they personally do not conform completely to the gender ideologies constructed by it. If given the chance by the institutions or the state, they said they would support the cause immediately. If this sort of thinking was, in theory, to become widespread, the potential for change would certainly be significant.

Keitarō, on the other hand, is clearly in favour of the male breadwinner ideal. Even if it would result in the improvement of his married life, giving him more time at home, it would still be a priority for him to focus on work while he has the energy. It could be argued that he feels trapped inside by what society has to offer to him and perhaps feels that the only way to deal with this is to deny the problem at hand, and meanwhile do the best he can – to work as hard as possible, while his wife supports him at home. From our conversation, I gathered that Keitarō generally approves of the reality of working life in Japanese society, which demands full commitment and excessive overtime work from working males. This in turn pressures wives to stay at home and do household chores, forcing them to submit to the ideology of the

male breadwinner, and therefore justifying the Japanese way of organising working life, which is ridden with gender discrimination.

Symbolism and discrepancy

Seiichi talked of the symbolism connected to *salaryman* masculinity, and the expectations entrenched within it. When the idea of putting on a suit was brought up, the interviewees around the table reacted strongly, saying it gave them an automatic association with stress and heavy shoulders. The 1st of April and the phrase *shakaijin ni naru* are linked together in a complicated net of "becoming an adult" for young men and women. Although, for women, it is worth noting that the concept of entering adulthood is somewhat delayed, because there is still a widespread belief that women only become "real women" after they get married. Men do not really become a part of adult society until you have started your job on the 1st of April, but starting a job in this way also is inextricably linked up with the concept of abandoning your childhood and starting your new path. This path is already laid out for you, and is the one you follow until retirement (ideally).

The transition between child, adolescent and adult is not smooth and gradual, at least not as is typical in a Western context. It is abrupt, sudden and unstoppable. Emotions are running high around graduation from university because everyone knows they are leaving behind something they can never retain. Putting such strong emotions into a symbol, such as a suit and a tie, can give it deeply entrenched meaning. All expectations as both members of society and as men become concentrated in this outfit they are required to wear as proper conduct. This, I would suggest, is another indication of *salaryman* masculinity being a clear gendered construct, complete with normative symbols of what a *salaryman* should be like and how he should behave.

Taga argues that there has been a crisis of gender identity for men, because the traditional hegemonic *salaryman* masculinity ideal is starting to decline in legitimacy.[133] He further argues that although *salaryman* ideology has been a very powerful symbol to the masculinities of Japan, the recent economic difficulties and demographic challenges have "called into question the necessity of male breadwinning and domination over women."[134] Dasgupta says that Japanese men cannot or do not measure up to the hegemonic masculinity

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[133] Taga, "Rethinking Male Socialisation: Life Histories of Japanese Male Youth," 142.
[134] Ibid., 139.

ideal.[135] Masculinity becomes a performance – a role to be played. The role of *salarymen* is highly intricate and what fulfilling that role entails has been worked out to the smallest detail. It is not only about what a *salaryman* must bring to the table or what it truly means to be a breadwinner, but also entails how to dress, how to talk, how to behave, what to eat, drink and even whether to smoke or not. Seiichi became an excellent example of the impact this role can have and importantly, how it is counterintuitive to how men genuinely feel. The immense symbolism in the suit and the tie represents everything about the role of *salarymen*. In order to become an adult – *shakaijin ni naru* – and be deemed as a worthy citizen, a *salaryman* needs to conform to every ideal hiding behind the suit symbol. The suit becomes a costume of the role and by putting it on, a man becomes one with the hegemonic ideal of *salaryman* masculinity. But if what being a *salaryman* represents does not match what the man inside the suit personally stands for, he will be reprimanded by society and his social circle (often work, family and neighbourhood). This is in accordance with gender discrepancy theory, which postulates that when men are reprimanded for not fitting into the generally accepted ideal, they will exaggerate their masculinity to conform to said ideal. Consequently, this may play a part in why the hegemonic ideals of masculinity are often being perpetuated. However, as illustrated by Seiichi's case, some men break out of the stereotypes by severing the ties with what sparked their insecurities and as Seiichi did, quit their jobs and move on to a wholly different profession. It is a form of resistance, albeit a passive one.

Rapid movement towards the acceptance of gender equality at work

In Hidaka's results, there were some differences between the working ideals of men who were aged between 60 and 80, men aged between 40 to 59, and the men who were aged 20 to 39. The common opinion of the older group was that men as the sole breadwinner was an incontestable social rule.[136] In the third, youngest group, the majority supported the idea of women working professionally, but many of them were still married to full-time housewives. Hidaka also found that across all of her groups, there was little difference when it came to attitudes to what kind of work women were suited for.[137] Whereas the older participants had had little to no interaction with female workers overall, and therefore expressed discomfort in even imagining women working alongside them, participants in the group aged 40 to 59 generally acknowledged the official state promotion of gender equality, but did not genuinely

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[135] Dasgupta, "Performing Masculinities? The 'Salaryman' at Work and Play," 191.
[136] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 89.
[137] Ibid., 118-9.

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approve of women working in their areas of business. The men in the youngest group revealed that they were fine with women working full-time, but still expected women to assist them, rather work equally with them. All of the participants were under the assumption that women would always prioritise family over work, leaving work for a period of time or even permanently, causing trouble for the company as a result.

In this regard, many of my interviewees were far more accepting of the idea that women should work in the same manner as themselves. Hayato explicitly told me that he yearned for a gender-equal workplace, it being preferable to the current situation. Shinji also said that if a woman decides to work full-time, she should work the same amount, under the same pressure that men do. Out of my other interviewees not quoted above, or quoted on different subjects, Yoshio, Ryōta, Seiichi, Shigeo, Yōji, Shūji and Tōru all felt more or less the same way, making it a majority in my selection of participants. Those more inclined towards the male breadwinner ideal were Nobuhiko, Keitarō and Takurō. All of my participants understood the importance of women working, but the latter three felt that women should eventually quit their jobs to help raise the family as a housewife, reminiscent of Hidaka's second age group (40 to 59).

It is possible to deduce from these results that there is a clear indication of a shift in opinion, or a change in viewpoint on gender equality, and therefore, a change on the attitude held by men towards the hegemonic *salaryman* masculinity ideal in the context of work. My participants were all under the age of 30, which might indicate that change is occurring rather rapidly in the younger age groups.

6   Masculinity and family

In this chapter, I will place emphasis on questions concerning masculinity ideologies in relation to family life. As in chapter 5, "Masculinity and work", I will first present a range of my interviewees' views on masculinity, which I feel best represent current and emerging attitudes towards it within a family context. I will then analyse the results, using the articles of Ishii-Kuntz, as well as the works of Annalisa Murgia and Barbara Poggio, and Allison. As before, social constructionist theories will be invaluable here. To best illustrate any reason for why there is a discrepancy in desire for gender equality in the home and in the family by using gender boundary theory, as well as Ishii-Kuntz' theory of mothers' involvement in the reinforcement of the breadwinner ideal. Finally, I will once more employ Hidaka's research to compare against and see if there are any changes in attitudes to be found across generations.

6.1   Personal narratives

Nobuhiko

In literature focusing on Japanese masculinity, the word *daikokubashira* (the pillar of the household) is often repeated. Some call it "the depiction of Japanese masculinity"[138], and some call it an "unshakable ideological status in Japan"[139]. Like a pillar supports the roof of a house, a true man supports his family unyieldingly, but if his support was to be taken away from them, the family would be crushed. Nobuhiko told me that to him, the meaning of the word "husband" was someone central and strong. In his words, he said that a husband is "like the centre pillar of the family". When asked how he grew up, he told me that his father has always been self-employed and never worked like other *salarymen*. His mother also continues to be a full-time housewife. In other words, while his father is not a regular *salaryman*, he still is the main provider of the family.

Nobuhiko is an only child who got a lot of attention from his parents growing up, and I believe that he received a thorough social education which made a strong impact on him. He does not, however, think that women should work after they have given birth. He told me that he thinks mothers are instrumental in raising a child. From this, I can only deduce that he

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[138] James Robertson, "Fight!! Ippatsu!!: "Genki" Energy Drinks and the Marketing of Masculine Ideology in Japan," *Men and Masculinities* 7, no. 365 (2005): 375.
[139] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 89.

must believe that fathers are not as important for the same task, or perhaps, that fathers' role in the family may even have nothing to do with the act of raising a child. Nobuhiko implies that it would be a positive development if both women and men can work on equal terms, but that in the end, when it comes to raising children, the mother is more important.

I wondered why he felt this way, and everything pointed to his upbringing. When we discussed the idea of children going to kindergarten, socialising with other children of a similar age, Nobuhiko seemed to have a very negative image of it. He said it must be lonely and sad for the children; because his mother took very good care of him, he now cannot imagine anything else. He added that if possible, all children should spend most of their time with their mothers. Assuming that both parents are working and the child is going to kindergarten, both parents will come home late, making the children wait a long time for parental interaction, instead of only a single parent being away for most of the week. The only good point about the existence of kindergartens, to him, is that parents might feel more free to do as they wish (though not taking into account that working late hours every night might also be considered less free by some). Ultimately though, Nobuhiko implies that sending children off to kindergarten simply for the wish of feeling free is a lazy and selfish thing to do.

Hayato

Hayato said that in his opinions, husbands and fathers are supposed to be "the spine of the family". However, his views were much more firmly rooted in fathers' roles as economic necessity to the family; a much less ideological view than Nobuhiko. He felt that inside the family, all organisational aspects can be handled with from a nearly gender equal perspective, but ultimately that economic reasoning will always stop this from becoming a reality. As a result, because of the necessity of the father being the breadwinner, rather than the mother, the father consequently can and will direct and judge all family development.

Hayato told me that his father was strict and scared him a lot when he was a child; more so, in fact, than the police. His father would work very hard every weekday, sometimes as late as 3 am. They would never spend time together, except on the weekends, and his father had a lot of strict and strange rules in the house. Hayato's father would sometimes hit him or scream at him loudly, and always punish him for being rebellious. But when Hayato started going to high school and developed his own independent opinions, his father became lenient and let him choose things more freely. Hayato's father did not object to girlfriends, or even of him

dying his hair (although he drew the line at piercings, Hayato said). I wondered whether this was a contradictory upbringing, where he first was taught that fathers are supposed to be firm and strict, then later, witnessing a complete change in behaviour. But the more we discussed his upbringing, the more sure he became that he wanted to raise his children the same way. He jokingly called himself an "old Japanese guy", implying that he had old fashioned ways of thinking. He did not want me to think that he approved of domestic violence because we had just discussed his father exercising just that in his childhood, but he still thinks that upbringing should be quite strict for a child to be able to develop their own opinions in later years.

Shinji

Shinji told me that he was very happy about his upbringing. His mother is a full-time housewife and his father is a regular *salaryman.* He thinks that his upbringing was excellent compared to some people around him and that he would like to provide the same security and happiness to his own future children. He admires his parents, and hopes in the future that his children will admire him in the same way. In Shinji's view, it would be better to be raised by your own parents than by someone unrelated. However, he added that it was not truly essential to have a parent at home at all times, as long as there is at least one parent who can be relied on to be there at some point during the day. In the end, though, he said that having one stay-at-home parent would be a great deal more preferable to both parents working full-time, spending little time with their children as a result.

Shinji explained that there is a paternity leave system in place in his company, but that to even think such a thing brings forth social stigmatisation. He says that if he were to take paternity leave, he would probably be "frozen out" (of what I assume is the social group at work). To him, this is Japanese thinking as a whole, not just this company's and not just his own. He nearly apologised for the "strange ways of Japan", trying to legitimise that it is not his own personal emotions which lead to him feeling this way, but that he is trapped in a societal cage where paternity leave is not yet commonplace. To him, if there is a choice between women and men having to take parental leave, it will in the end be the woman. He thinks that the paternity leave system exists only to show people that parental leave is not limited to women, even if everyone thinks so.

Yoshio

Yoshio has a very distant relationship with his father. His father was rarely around and Yoshio feels nothing for him. One can reasonably assume that his father's absence may well be a factor into his wish to raise his own children as much as he can on his own. He does not seem particularly emotionally pained by his upbringing, just explaining the logical result of it in a straightforward way. Nevertheless, his way of looking at raising children and family life differs radically from his own upbringing.

When Yoshio gets married, he says that both him and his partner will continue working full-time. If there aren't any children involved, it doesn't matter to him what couples do and how they do it. If they do have children, however, they will both have to seriously consider how they feel about who should stay home or if they should at all. He does not intend to instruct his wife to stay home if she doesn't want to. If she wishes to take maternity leave, that's fine too, he says. However, if she were to ask Yoshio to take paternity leave so she could continue at work, he says that he will accept this as a possibility. He has no definite plan to follow, or idea of how things have to be in the future. He is open either way (or even any way) and acknowledges that there can be many ways to solve such an issue. Most intriguingly, he thinks that the man staying at home with children as a man is a valid option. Still, it seems that there must still be someone at home, in order to provide childcare, be it one of the parents, grandparents, or themselves.

Yoshio said that there have been several instances of men taking paternity leave in his company, taking off six whole months before, which is yet another indicator that his company is more liberal than others'. However, he mentioned the negative impact that this can have on the atmosphere in the company, and how taking paternity leave can create some distance or uneasiness from both the side of the father and his co-workers. In Yoshio's opinion, this is more based on the practical fact that it may be difficult to pick up the workload exactly the way it was left, moreso than because taking paternity leave is fairly unacceptable, socially. He made an interesting point, saying that in his view, it would be better to just come home earlier each day by working harder and more efficiently, instead of stopping work for a period altogether. Yoshio thinks that this would be a far more balanced method for both keeping the progress at work and spending sufficient time with his family. This set him apart from other interviewees, as he said that he sees an alternative to both working as always and taking long-term paternity leave. Using this method of working harder, he thinks it is a realistic

expectation to reduce working hours. He assured me that he will be able to do this when he has children because his company is so flexible.

Keitarō

Keitarō was persistent in that a husband stands central in a family and that the man is the main breadwinner, working for the whole family, for both husband and wife. What is perhaps most interesting about Keitarō, is that both his parents work very much on equal terms and have done so all his life. Even though his own mother works just as hard as his father, he seems considerably uninfluenced by this. No matter what, he considered his father to be more central, both economically and socially, than his mother. When we delved a little deeper into his upbringing, it turned out that he had a free and unrestrained childhood, with little influence from his parents either way.

When asked why there is a welfare system in the first place if no one is actually utilising it, Keitarō said that its purpose was not so that everyone will use it mechanically to its full extent, but more functioning as a safety net – so that if ever something serious happens to anyone, there will be a way out. If the issue is only something comparatively small, such as having a cold, his opinion is that it is completely fine for people to take it out of their paid vacation. However, if something serious happens, such as a family emergency, it is acceptable to take a form of welfare leave. He explained that there is a maternity leave scheme in his company, but that it seriously restricts women's ability to return to their previous position in the company. On paper, or "on the surface", as he puts it, working mothers are essentially doing the same thing as before, but realistically, they have to go home earlier every day and just aren't as restricted by management as they used to be, because taking care of children takes time and energy and will end up being the main priority.

Paternity leave is such an alien concept to Keitarō that he hasn't even considered whether they have a system for it at his job. He explains that in his company, it goes for both men and women that they all put their job ahead of their private life and family-life must bear the brunt. Keitarō did not mention if these women have families and if their husbands are working as well. He maintained that he would not take paternity leave at all, perhaps only the same day children are born. He summed it up by saying that asking for a whole period of time off from work "just" to raise a child is a difficult thing.

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Seiichi

Seiichi said that for him, being a boyfriend and being a husband are basically the same, adding however that perhaps something changes when you become a father. He believes that it's positive for both women and men to work on equal footing, and that when he has children, he says he will without a doubt take paternity leave. He thinks that both women and men should take parental leave, because there should be no difference between men and women in this regard. Seiichi wants his future wife to work full-time if it's possible (depending on her world views or opportunities to work and so on). He continued, adding that he felt overprotected growing up and that he wants to raise his children in an environment radically different from his own.

Takurō

Takurō's father has always worked in a company and his mother is a full-time housewife. His father was a *tanshin fūnin* (business bachelor)[140] in Takurō's childhood, being home for six months, then away for six months. He loved to work and was a domineering character in the family. He would be very cold to his son, but Takurō explains this as being "Japanese culture" for fathers to act in such a way. His father would never say much around the house, leaving everything to mother, only to intervene when something important was happening.

Takurō believes that the roles of mothers and fathers are very different. He stressed that he does not yet know how his own future will become and that it is only an assumption, but it is clear that he already sits with defined opinions on family and parenthood. He is not flexible on the tradition of the man being the main breadwinner of the family, feeling that his future wife should only work if they do not have enough income for survival.[141] Takurō was unsure if this inflexibility was developed during his upbringing. While he didn't deny the possibility, he concluded that in the end, regardless of the idea's origin, this was his genuine attitude. He has already decided that he would like the mother to raise his child, not a third party.

It was noteworthy that even though he told me that his father would rarely spend time in the house and leave everything to his mother, his father was still a dominant figure in the

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[140] Going to a distant post unaccompanied by families, regarded by companies as unavoidable to maximize organizational mobility and by law is not illegal even if it destabilizes the family as long as it is caused by corporate requirements. See Sugimoto (1997, p. 95), Hidaka (2010, p. 131).
[141] Actually, he uses concepts such as "average salary" here and it can have some social connotations as well as survivalist.

household. His mother being physically present has not shaken the belief or conviction that a father is the centre of the family. In other words, physical presence was not in Takurō's case, a determining factor to the presence of the idea about a father. The question then remains of how these ideas manage to be so paramount in the minds of people like Takurō.

Shigeo

For Shigeo, a father is someone who has great influence over a child, which he views as a large responsibility to have. He said he did not yet know if he will spend more time with his future children than his father did with him, but it seems he was at least determined to spend more quality time at home whenever possible. Because of this great influence a father holds over a child, in Shigeo's mind, they should spend as much time as they can with their children. In other words, existing mainly as a psychological presence would not be suffice for Shigeo's children – he would now require a father to be present on all accounts.

Yet when discussing the practical act of raising a child, he became momentarily conflicted. At first, Shigeo automatically assumed that his girlfriend would continue to work as she was doing at the time of the interview, even after potentially getting married. But when he was asked what would happen if a child was born, he said he didn't know. Shigeo was certain he wouldn't quit his job or take a break "just" because of a child, but expressed uncertainty towards whether his girlfriend (or wife) would do the same. In the end, he said it would be a decision to be made when the situation arose, as it was too difficult to make definitive decisions on something so important in such intangible, abstract terms.

Yōji

Yōji has a firm belief that women, and especially his future wife, should work full-time, like him. Therefore, his future family will be different than the one he grew up on, and as a consequence, not comparable. He was conflicted, because he felt that women should have the freedom to do whatever they want, but also felt there was an element of selfishness involved in wanting to continue working full-time, instead of raising children (for the women, not the men). He remained convinced that there are no difficulties for women in regaining their footing on the employment ladder, after returning from maternity leave, but he also ignored the fact that having children irrevocably changes your life, which to me points to a certain naivety he has towards child-rearing.

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There is no paternity leave at Yōji's company. He said that there was someone who asked for it, and took it, but he received a pay cut and went down the employment ladder again when he returned. Yōji legitimised this by saying that every year, each worker must sign a new contract based on last year's results, and they can judge that the employee who took paternity leave had poor results due to his absence. Yōji thinks that if only people put more effort in after returning from parental leave, they wouldn't have such a problem regaining their footing on the employment ladder, but he failed to acknowledge that having children requires more time and effort than just being single or childless. When we reminded Yōji that parents have to pick up children at kindergarten and generally spend time with them, he became unsure, saying that he doesn't yet know how that will work out. In other words, he hasn't honestly thought about people as different when they have children before.

Shūji

Shūji's parents both have full-time professional jobs and have worked hard all his life. He spent most of his childhood time in kindergarten and was raised by his grandparents. Today, he supports the idea of women and men both working on equal ground and sees no problem in sending children off to kindergarten in the daytime, but because he was raised by his grandparents, he now cannot imagine a life without someone always being there to help. In other words, even if he supports the idea of women working, it does not change the system per se – someone still needs to be at home to help them out. He told me that both his own and his girlfriend's parents are all willing to help them out in the future, since his girlfriend is planning on working professionally all her life. He cannot imagine how the future will be if they didn't have their parents' support.

Shūji's company doesn't offer paternity leave. He would otherwise have planned to take it himself. However, because he is the union leader in the Hiroshima branch, he has recently proposed to have paternity leave to management and thinks that this might be implemented in the near future. He supposed that leave will be about two weeks long, adding that it may be too short in the early stages, but he doubts the company will allow it to run longer than that. Company policy, he thinks, is if someone takes leave for two or three months, it is unlikely that they will be able to perform as well at their job as before. Shūji says that if given the chance, he would take three, four or even five months off. He considers habit as the primary cause of the lack of paternity leave available in Japanese companies generally. He said that

because companies are worried about their workers' performance, they don't want to grant a long-term leave for anything. Shūji was sure that he would be able to prove that he can perform just as well as before after long-term leave, but he is certain that management wouldn't meet him half-way.

Tōru

Of all my interviewees, the most ambivalent was perhaps Tōru. It was clear that he had not thought deeply about having children or family before. This was such a foreign concept to him that he had to concentrate hard to truly figure out what his opinion was, half-way through our conversation. He eventually said he couldn't see anything particularly negative in women working just as long and demanding hours as men, but since he had not considered what it would mean to have children, he did not know much about maternity or paternity leave, for instance. He felt that there did exist a problem in society that prevented women from pursuing professional careers while having a family at the same time, but conversely, he did not think it would be necessary for him to take paternity leave if he could only reduce overtime work and stop working in the weekends.

Tōru mentioned that economic incentives were important reasons why many couples choose to live in a dual-earning household, but he said that there was an unfair discrepancy in the workplace between men and women. Specifically, he referred to maternity leave, and how after returning to work after having a child, a woman may lose her previous position in a company. He was quite used to the idea of the "career woman", as there were many of them both at his first and at his current job, and he did not think they had a difficult time, until they had children.

6.2 Discussion

Reinforcing and perpetuating gender stereotypes

Murgia and Poggio conducted a study of attitudes towards paternity leave in Italy and many of the elements were similar to some of what I found in my own results. Their research had more ground in the opinions of organisation management, as well as the workers themselves. They argue that stories of men who successfully managed to take paternity leave and return to

work could serve as a spark to "induce change in people and workplace cultures"[142], but that these voices will be seen as threats and thus silenced. When management does not wish to change the organisation, it won't. In order to do that, it needs to see that there is something in it to benefit the company. In this study, management often saw requests for paternity leave as signs of disloyalty to the organisation, because the workers are supposed to be completely available to the employer at all times. In other words, here the managers actively impose the norms of hegemonic masculinity on the workers to dominate them.

Nobuhiko stood by the ideal of *daikokubashira*, clearly influenced by his own upbringing. Mothers, to him, are the ones who are supposed to raise the children – not fathers. Similarly, Nobuhiko did not believe in kindergartens as an institution. He said that they were only there to provide a safety net for people who are unable to lead a "normal" life, rather than to provide parents with a diverse range of options. Hayato also believed in the ideal of *daikokubashira,* albeit more focused on the economic, rather than ideological, aspects of it.

Shinji and Keitarō were both more or less of the same opinion: where Shinji believes that welfare systems in companies are only there for "show", Keitarō thinks that welfare systems are only there to offer help in the most severe cases, rather than for exploitation by opportunists. Shinji however expressed a wish to have a more solid family environment where he could spend time with both his wife and future children, yet felt obstructed by his work to achieve this. Shigeo, on the other hand, has found himself in a position where he dearly wishes to be able to create a warm father-child relationship to his future children, but at the same time saw no merit in actually taking time off from work to raise them, implying just like Keitarō, that taking leave "just" to raise children was not realistic.

In Japan, according to the Childcare Leave Law, which was put into effect in April 1992, workers are allowed to take parental leave until the child turns one. It can be either father or mother, or a division, and employers cannot legally refuse. Employers are not obliged to pay wages, but there are some clauses involving insurance.[143] Both men and women who are raising a child have the right for reduced overtime up to three years.[144] Moreover, there are public day-care centres and kindergartens, both governmental and affiliated with the

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[142] Annalisa Murgia and Barbara Poggio, "Challenging Hegemonic Masculinities: Men's Stories on Gender Culture in Organizations," *Organization* 16, no. 407 (2009): 414.

[143] Roberts, "Pinning Hopes on Angels: Reflections from an Aging Japan's Urban Landscape," 70.

[144] Imamura, "The Japanese Family Faces Twenty-First Century Challenges," 32.

company, to assist workers with children in their everyday life, but Glenda Roberts believes that the problems lies in the fact that there are simply too few of these child care institutions to meet the demands of a changing lifestyle of women[145] (and, arguably, men). Kazuo Sugeno and Yasuo Suwa say that because the Japanese company ideology is centralised around the idea of life-long employment (even though it is not, and has ever been, in fact statistically common as pointed out in chapter 4, "Masculinity through history"), and assuming that women cannot stay at work all their life because of child rearing, women will thus be excluded from the company or the labour market community and become marginalised.[146] Even though there is strong evidence towards women's dedication to work, employers still view the need for maternity leave (to give birth and raise children) as a conscious choice to be less dedicated than men. This is largely the companies' justification for employing women in the *ippan*, rather than *sōgō* category.[147] Men, on the other hand have to bear the burden of work that is not handed out to women, instead of being offered to opportunity to share it. Murgia and Poggio point out that though the men who need paternity leave are victims of the system, they maintain and reproduce the system and the hegemonic masculinity by not challenging it.[148]

Neither of the interviewees mentioned above truly believed in the system of their companies. Some of them did not believe in the necessity of paternity leave even though they believed in gender equality, in the context of work and labour. Others felt the need to spend more time with their children, but did not see how it could be a realistic choice to take paternity leave to achieve this goal. Therefore, it can be argued that in a sense, all of my interviewees are maintaining the hegemonic masculinity ideal in its current state by complying with company policy.

"Internally modern, externally traditional"

When Japan entered its modern era, the previous patriarchal tradition was reformulated, both on the basis of the Confucian legacy and under the influence of the contemporary European capitalist ideologies of gender. Ishii-Kuntz describes the contemporary Japanese family as

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[145] Roberts, "Pinning Hopes on Angels: Reflections from an Aging Japan's Urban Landscape," 58.
[146] Sugeno and Suwa, "Labour Law Issues in a Changing Labour Market: In Search of a New Support System," 131.
[147] Shire, "Gendered Organization and Workplace Culture in Japanese Customer Services," 39.
[148] Murgia and Poggio, "Challenging Hegemonic Masculinities: Men's Stories on Gender Culture in Organizations," 418-9.

"externally modern but internally traditional".[149] On the outside, everyone is supposed to follow the adopted strategies and traditions from the West, but is "lagging behind" in cultural, internal foundation. In that regard, Japan is not unique, and closely resembles the situation in South Korea. However, the Confucian legacy is far more prominent in South Korea than it is in Japan and the patriarchy there is in consequence even stronger.[150] At the same, confusion of how to adhere to the gendered constructs imposed by the state arises out of having to contribute to the countries' rapid economic development. The idea of the "corporate warrior" (*kigyō senshi*) remains, but state-imposed desire for technological advancement and economic growth is said to have contributed to the lack of substance in contemporary society itself.[151] Not genuinely relating to it, conduct, behaviour and ways of thought are often imitated, rather than integrated. Such a situation is naturally a breeding ground for cultural and personal discrepancies in though, and as a result, for inner turmoil.

Workers have legal rights, but most likely in most cases they remain unaware of how many rights they have, and when they apply. Instead, they continue working, coping with their own struggles and realities quietly, when away from the company. The companies, on the other hand, work to ensure an acceptable form of overexploitation of their workers, investing in strategic socialisation, veiling it with the pretence of a fully-functioning welfare system. Wrongly believing that the mere gesture of offering support is all the workers need to feel satisfied, the companies ignore the deeper psychological aspects of social stigmatisation at the work place and practical aspects such as ensuring professional stability. If social, as well as financial, stability is not fully offered, such oversimplified tools of welfare will remain unused, or used only in part of their intent.

This view in particular puts the responsibility to construct and reproduce the ideas of gender and their roles in diminishing the importance of men's participation in the home first and foremost on the institutions themselves. But individuals too must play a part in the reproduction of gender. Once the differences between men and women have been established, these constructed ideals are used to reinforce the "essentialness" of gender and its roles in society. This is what is *offered* to men and women from society and the state, but also comes

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[149] Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles," 64.
[150] Moon, "The Production and Subversion of Hegemonic Masculinity: Reconfiguring Gender Hierarchy in Contemporary South Korea," 84-5.
[151] Kam Louie, "Chinese, Japanese and Global Masculine Identities," in *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, ed. Kam Louie and Morris Low (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 11-2.

with the responsibility of having to choose how to cope such an offer. By using what is offered to them as intended, the actors reinforce the gender stereotypes integrated in the opportunities presented. Men are doing what they are supposed to do, getting the type of job they think they ought to have, never being offered a true alternative unless they themselves struggle and find one on their own, thereby losing security in most aspects.

One issue which has been discussed endlessly in media, academia and by the population at large[152] is the need for an incentive for women to marry and give birth to children. What is less discussed, however, is that men too need an incentive to be more included in the household, both as members of it and in taking part in child rearing, and the system needs to function in order for this to happen. My conclusion based on these conversations is that so far, there is a great deal of change in views on gender at the work place, with positive attitudes towards gender equality becoming the norm, rather than the exception. That is, women's situations at work do change and evolve, as well as the views on their situations. Men's situations, on the other hand, remain the same as they have for many decades.

Conversely, in the home, there is little change to be found in the views on women and their roles as mothers, while for men and fathers, there is evidence of an emergence of change in the views. What eventually revealed itself from my interviews was that *salaryman* masculinity is still the normative, hegemonic ideal, which may indicate why there is less demand for equality in the home as there is in the workplace. In the office, most companies are now accustomed to women working and building careers, but instead of providing for a more diverse range of employment practices suited for both women and men equally, women are expected to conform to the working styles of *salarymen*, thereby perpetuating the hegemonic *salaryman* masculinity ideal.

This in turn actively obstructs not just women's, but men's opportunities to balance their family life with their work. Another way of describing this would be to say that my interviewees arguably felt that labour and family were two concepts which were inherently disconnected from one another, giving me the impression that they felt that the gender ideologies associated with the two concepts were largely incompatible with each other.

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[152] See references made in the "Introduction" to the many works written about women in Japan.

Explaining the dichotomy of work and home: The power of mothers

An interesting and relevant point brought up by Ishii-Kuntz in her research about Japanese fathers in 1993 is that mothers will often actively participate in the promotion of the masculine image of their husbands to their children.[153] Though absent from home large parts of the week or even longer, the fathers are psychologically present in the family. Her informants reported that the mothers spent a lot of time with their children, both of the disciplinary and recreational nature, but they would still portray their husbands as "decision makers" and "bosses of the house". Ishii-Kuntz also notes that mothers have also been known to use their husbands as disciplinary tools when the children misbehave. She adds that many mothers were keen to make sure that their sons in particular would understand the "power" and "authority" of their fathers, because the sons need a strong and responsible male role model. Therefore, she writes, "the traditional gender roles, that is, man as breadwinner and a woman as homemaker, seem to be perpetuated both through direct mother-child interaction and through indirect father-child interaction mediated by mothers."[154] In the discourse of mother involvement in child rearing in South Korea, this is to a certain degree even more evident. While South Korea is a predominantly patriarchal society, mothers are more often than not recognised having "mother power" or "wifely power", due to the fathers' continuous absence from the home.[155] In essence, Korean households are "patriarchies without patriarchs"[156]. These mothers are in charge of all social and intellectual education of their children, and thereby perpetuate the idea of the authoritarian patriarch even though he is not in fact present.

Looking back over the experiences of my interviewees, there are strong indications that their views on gender and parenthood have been significantly affected by their own upbringing. For Shinji, it is important that a parent raises their child, as opposed to a third party, and he prefers knowing that there is one parent at home at all times, even if this was not really necessary. He was keen to get across that it was not his personal opinion that women should stay at home, but rather society's fault for not easily allowing them to do otherwise.

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[153] Ishii-Kuntz, "Japanese Fathers: Work Demands and Family Roles," 58-62.

[154] Ibid., 61.

[155] Jong Bum Kwon, "The Frailty of Men: The Redemption of Masculinity in the Korean Labour Movement," in *Gender and Labour in Korea and Japan: Sexing Class*, ed. Ruth Barraclough and Elyssa Faison (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 109.

[156] Laurel Kendall, "Introduction," in *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in the Republic of Korea*, ed. Laurel Kendall (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 8.

Takurō also felt that the mother alone should raise children – not even the father. In his view, there is a great deal of difference between men and women when it comes to parenthood. His own father was very much a dominant figure in their household, even though he was typically away for large portions of Takurō's life.

The case of Keitarō was curious because though he was raised in a dual-earning household and to this day is surrounded by career women, none of these factors have contributed to him feeling differently about women in the home. Considering this, I think that influence coming from the people Keitarō grew up around, and society in general, was far stronger than any influence from his parents. He was raised largely in a kindergarten and it is likely that much of his basic world views would have originated there. Keitarō trivialised his own future role as father, by saying that taking leave "just" to raise a child would not be a valid option for him. He acknowledged that career women may meet restrictions and problems when they have children, but looks at this as more of a fact of life, rather than a problem to be solved.

Yōji told me he believed that since he supports women working and developing careers, he will raise his future children in a radically different way from the way he was raised. However, he became conflicted when addressing his concerns that it would be selfish of a career woman to focus on her work, rather than raising children. He said that he had not considered how much work, and what kind of effort, has to be put into child rearing, revealing that he knew very little about the subject.

Likewise, when Shūji was asked what being a *good* father means to him, he said that it is to spend fun time with children in the weekends, going to ball-games and theme parks, but said nothing about actually raising a child. Possibly, he believes that the act of raising children is someone else's job (either his wife's or grandparents, or even someone entirely different). In conclusion, all five of the interviewees mentioned here, all expressed in some form that childhood was tremendously formative on their views on gender equality due to the roles of the mother and father in their lives.

Pleck is of the opinion that since mothers are central figures in children's lives from the start, it will result in both boys and girls initially identifying with a female role model. As a result, in the future, the children will have more difficulty in reaching a properly defined concept of a

masculine identity.[157] Importantly, this argument can be applied heavily to Japan, a modern society dominated by family structures which positions the mothers as the one to raise the children, with fathers being mostly absent throughout their children's lives. Potuchek also discusses gender role models, saying that they are deeply rooted in childhood by learning. Consequently any change in gender roles is very slow to come about, as children must be taught by their parents, something which essentially means that any slight change or shift will only come once a generation, if at all.[158]

Explaining the dichotomy of work and home: Gender boundaries

West and Zimmerman say that because differentiation between genders is unavoidable, it therefore requires legitimisation – the difference between men and women must be perceived as normal and natural, or in other words, legitimate. Gender to them is an "ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category"[159]. Here, the concept of gender boundaries comes in useful: negotiating across gender boundaries can function as a reinforcement and legitimisation of the pre-set gender categories. Both women and men have their own domains in which they have their own form of control. Potuchek argues that the concept of "breadwinning" is a crucial gender boundary, as men realistically have a very limited choice of what they can do outside this boundary. This is in contrast to women, who are starting to expand and stretch their own boundaries.[160] In this sense, women become more independent, because they are not in the end restrained by their jobs and can either turn to their families or their husbands for support, whereas men will often find themselves in a helpless situation if they are not providing for their families.[161]

If men and women both have to be invited to cross boundaries in order to be able to participate, then it is possible in the case of Japan to argue that women do not invite men sufficiently into their realms. If a man were to step down from his otherwise pre-defined role as breadwinner and becomes for instance a house husband, he will lose too much (credibility, economical security, social status) and gain too little (emotional closeness to family). The

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[157] Joseph H. Pleck, "The Theory of Male Sex-Role Identity: Its Rise and Fall, 1936 to the Present," in *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies*, ed. Harry Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 29.
[158] Potuchek, *Who Supports the Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages*, 24-5.
[159] West and Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," 147.
[160] Potuchek, *Who Supports the Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages*, 66.
[161] Yuko Ogasawara, *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender, and Work in Japanese Companies* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1998), 11-2.

choice to cross over to the other boundary completely simply becomes irrational. Men's motivation to choose differently from the safe ground they are otherwise used to cannot come out of nowhere. Some motivation can arise from necessity (wives working by choice; unfavourable family economy) or a rebellion (reaction to own upbringing).[162] But in order to fulfil that motivation, another factor is necessary: social support, from any instance (family, work environment, state, neighbourhood, friends). If women only reluctantly invite men into the realm of child rearing, allowing men to do the less important tasks, there will not be enough motivation generated for a long-term change.

Lynne Segal points out a different aspect of the same phenomenon, where it seems that women's labour capacity is being exploited by men, in how they do not take seriously the hard work women do at home.[163] They fail to appreciate the levels of work which cannot be measured in wages, and end up having a simplistic view of child rearing and other household tasks due to lack of experience, as demonstrated by some of my interviewees. Allison's research about *salarymen* visiting hostess clubs to relieve their stress both from work and at home brings another dimension to this discussion.[164] Her study is arguably cynical, as she suggests men cannot find true relaxation and comfort at home, and that there isn't enough incentive for them to keep returning. I cannot base my own research on her observations, because first of all, none of my interviewees had families and children yet and secondly because none of them went to hostess clubs regularly. But her results support the argument about gender boundaries. There is something contrary to normal societal norms that the men in Allison's study feel that they must escape to a third party in order to shed the stress from both work and family life, as one's home normally is seen as a place where one can feel comfortable – indeed, "at home". This suggests that women perhaps fail to fully let men into their space, and not allowing them share as much in the house as they should learn to be able to do. If this is indeed the case, then the result is that instead of attempting to cross and enter each other's boundaries, men avoid them altogether because women keep their boundary sealed shut. These two actions would perpetuate and strengthen the seal further, instead of communicating across it, coming to some form of compromise. I do not believe that Allison's research is representative of a large part of *salarymen*, and especially not men in general, but

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[162] Joseph H. Pleck, Michael E. Lamb, and James A. Levine, "Epilog: Facilitating Future Change in Men's Family Roles," in *Men's Changing Roles in the Family*, ed. Robert A. Lewis and Marvin B. Sussman (New York and London: The Haworth Press, 1986), 13.
[163] Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, 41.
[164] Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*.

the concept that home in the end becomes unfamiliar and distant for the men is contiguous to what is often described elsewhere.

Inclinations towards a positive view of involvement in family and child care

For Shigeo, when it came to the notion of spending time with the family, he emphasised the importance of quality versus quantity, assuring me that he would communicate better with his children than his father did with him, even though he did not express any particular desire to take paternity leave as a means to do this. Similarly, both Yoshio and Tōru told me that taking long-term paternity leave would not necessarily serve the best purpose. They believed that balancing work and family by reducing overtime and eliminating weekend work would be ideal, offering a much better influence on children's lives during the most crucial years of their childhood.

Though Yoshio had the view described above, he was also one of two participants who told me that he would definitely consider taking paternity leave in the future. The other participant was Seiichi, who was even more decisive in the matter, having no doubt that he would take paternity leave at once when he has children. He believes it is only positive if men and women are both considered equal in all aspects and that the state and its institutions must realise this. Both Yoshio and Seiichi admitted to wanting to change their family life by taking a radically different path from their own experiences of childhood.

Yoshio experienced his father's distance as something distinctly negative and told me that he wanted to provide a warmer environment for his future children. On the other end of the spectrum, Seiichi felt overprotected growing up, and wants to provide leeway for his own children so that they can do whatever they feel inspired to grow up as a well-adjusted, happy individual. Neither of them expressed any anxiety about the societal repercussions that are associated with paternity leave and male child-rearing, being convinced that what thought was the correct stance.

However, Shūji surprised me greatly in that he was the only participant who had actually taken matters into his own hands, by becoming the labour union leader in his company branch and actively proposing workers' paternity leave, in addition to the maternity leave already in place. Though he does not believe it is possible that the company will agree to implement a

long-term paternity leave so early in the bargaining process, he still sees this as a start of a movement in his company. His proposal to have paternity leave is indisputably an active step in the direction of equality at work.

The results of Hidaka's research in relation to childcare were homogenous, overall. Men in all three of her study groups were to some degree or another convinced of the gender divide in child-rearing. Both the groups aged 60 to 80, and 40 to 59, were extremely busy with work because of the economic growth which happened post-WWII and just before the bursting of the economic bubble in the early 1990s.[165] None of these men had been present much during their children's childhoods and were largely guiltless in leaving all childcare in the hands of their wives. On the other hand, the third and youngest group, aged 20 to 39, were said to be less busy than their predecessors due to the economic recession, but regardless still not inclined to take part in jointly raising their children with their wives. While they understood that fathers' participation can be instrumental in improving the condition of the family, they did not get actively involved in it.[166] Moreover, Hidaka also found that her participants often implied that being an economic provider for the family was what they called "proper child rearing", associating holiday activities and infrequent, but fun, interactions with their children as sufficient childcare.

I have found little evidence in my interviews that men are feeling a direct threat towards their masculinity as such, but scepticism and uncertainty is apparent in some cases. What society has expected of men is continues to undergo change, making it difficult to fit into the new expectations as the demands faced are increasingly inconsistent. One can no longer count on the fact that there will be no need to take part in home life, but there remains expectation to work with the same tenacity as they always have. Some may still deny that change is necessary, but regardless, more and more men in Japan seem to be attempting to adjust to their surroundings, albeit with an ambivalent approach. Mathews draws on this notion, saying that men in Japan today are much more required to be at home and actually participate there physically and psychologically than before.[167] While a new cultural ideology is slowly emerging, there still remain considerable structural problems, simply because the work of a

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[165] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 156-7.
[166] Ibid., 157.
[167] Mathews, "Can 'a Real Man' Live for His Family? *Ikigai* and Masculinity in Today's Japan," 117.

salaryman is too demanding and requires too much time and energy. One emerging ideal is, in other words, not as much a comforting or supportive notion as it is a new source of anxiety, adding more demands to lives of both men and women, rather than relieving them. Hence, a new dilemma arises, where new, competing ideologies of "father involvement" come against the traditional ideals of fathers' absent authoritarianism and *salaryman* masculinity.[168]

To contrast with the previous chapter, I have found more similarities between Hidaka's results and my own in the context of family, than in the context of work. Some of the participants, like Nobuhiko, Hayato, Keitarō and Takurō, were strongly convinced that there was a clear difference between mothers and fathers, and that mothers should raise children and no one else. The reasons behind this I have attempted to uncover earlier, in the sub-chapter "Reinforcing and perpetuating gender stereotypes". However, I would argue that there is another emerging ideal of active father involvement, and that this ideal is more likely to continue to spread as dominant if one assumes that younger generations will adopt similar attitudes, based on the results presented in this thesis.

The majority of my interviewees were more similar to Hidaka's youngest group and in some cases, even more positive towards gender equality. Shinji was conflicted because he wanted to take part in the child rearing process, but did not know how to do it, due to societal and institutional constraints. Ryōta, Shigeo and Yōji felt more or less the same way as Shinji. By contrast, Shūji declared that he had taken active steps at his job in order to achieve more gender equality at the office in form of proposing to make paternity leave available to men in his company. Finally, Yoshio and Seiichi both showed desire to be actively involved in their future children's lives, both in terms of taking paternity leave, and wanting to be present in a physical and emotional way as much as possible for their family.

All of Hidaka's research participants had not expressed any particular desire or interest to actively take part in their children's upbringing other than providing for them economically, and I would argue that in comparison, I have found distinct changes happening over time, considering that my participants are overall much younger than most of her own. Seeing it from a social constructionist viewpoint, ultimately the individual is responsible for the

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[168] Scott North, "Negotiating What's 'Natural': Persistent Domestic Gender Role Inequality in Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 12, no. 1 (2009): 32.

perpetuation of the status quo and subsequently, change. Following this, it would be reasonable to assume that there might be an indication of a rapid movement towards gender equality in the context of family life, as well as work.

7 Masculinity and life purpose

"If you work for a living, why do you kill yourself working?"[169]

In this chapter, I will summarise the viewpoints all of my interviewees concerning individual life purpose, before I discuss them together with the articles of Mathews' and Hidaka in the context of whether or not their life's purpose is interlinked with the meaning of their masculinity. Finally, as before, I will compare the views of my interviewees to the results of Hidaka to confirm whether or not there has been a change over time.

7.1 Personal narratives

Nobuhiko

In general, Nobuhiko was very positive about his experiences at work, and had a hard time finding anything negative to say when asked to elaborate on the downsides of his work environment. I believe that there are two main ways this can be interpreted: either he truly feels better than others about his job or he wants me to see his situation in a flattering light. I have decided to believe what he said as fact, mostly because in person he behaved in a relaxed, unstressed way and genuinely seemed like a very positive individual. Finally, he showed a good attitude towards the work-life balance, showing no hesitation to say that free time and fun were more important than the company, and that he lives for the fun he can have in his free time. It just seems a fortunate outcome for him that he is one of the lucky few who really enjoys what they do at work – something which is relevant to their personal interests. In his future, he would like to try and work abroad, and he is not worried about the logistics if he at that point is still involved with his girlfriend. Overall, he is focused on his own future, without worry of what might be demanded of him professionally.

Hayato

Hayato was quite conflicted when it came to how he felt about Japan, and his life there. He strongly implied that he thinks "Japanese culture" is strange or awkward, and said he didn't feel comfortable in this culture, where a lot of things to him feel "wrong". With the exception of his rather traditional views on fatherhood as described earlier in chapter 6, "Masculinity

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[169] A quote from the movie *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966).

and family", he is progressive and has a strong sense of his own individual identity. To him, "Japanese culture" is too old fashioned and worn out. He expresses a wish for things to be different – that there would at least be more ways of life to choose from.

The way Hayato described his working style made me realise he is very much an "every man for himself" sort of person, or in other words, a person with a strong consciousness of his rights. As a result, he is able and willing to distinguish between the public and private spheres. Hayato would work as hard as he could within the typical hours during the working week, but he would never work in the weekend, even if he was told to do so. Instead, he would rather work extra hard in the weekdays to free his weekend from work-related stress. He tries his utmost to avoid conforming to the mapped out *salaryman* rules and ideals in his free time, constantly trying to find ways to get around it. He is cynical, but realistic.

When I asked him directly, he was unable to answer my question: does he work for a living or is he living for work? Hayato eventually said if he had to choose, he would say that he works for a living because free time to him has a lot of value. Again, he pointed out that if you are to spend half your life at a work place, you might just as well be motivated to do it and like it, to do a better job and to be happy about it, but that in the end, it is the free time and what you do with it that counts.

Shinji

Shinji disagreed with the common Japanese idea that husbands have to support their wives and families economically. He felt that a wife should be a best friend and partner, not an occupation. Love to him is important when it comes to choice of partner and he says he would respect his partner's wishes no matter what she would choose to do in her life. He did not consider the possibility of her becoming the main provider of the family, but he believed strongly that his future wife should at the very least be equal to him in regards to work.

Shinji said he felt hopeful when he started looking for work. Most of all, he wanted to work in a publishing company, but not matter how hard he tried, he did not get the jobs he applied for. He said this made him feel under tremendous pressure, because his peers were not having the trouble he was with finding a job. Eventually, he compromised by opting to work at a company he didn't care about, but which was at least adjacent to his personal interests. He said that his work environment is generally good with a generally comfortable social atmosphere, but that his role was simply not creative enough to make him happy. He told me

he had decided that he plans to work in a different job in the future, where he can be more creative.

When asked about his opinion on whether he was working for a living or living for work, he said that it was a dilemma to him. If he were to consider what he was in fact living for, or his "big purpose" in life, he felt that working hard just to save money just was not enough. He said that he wants to experience many different things and have a fun life. He does not mean that he has a great purpose thought out already, but to him, putting the emphasis on work over everything else, becoming one with it, is too great a sacrifice. But at the same time, he does not have the time to pursue his personal interests and goals because he is so busy at work. He does not particularly enjoy what he is doing and in his words, "dedicates all his life to the company" losing the ability to focus on what is important to him. He feels that if he were to quit right now, he would need a really good purpose; something specific that he needs to accomplish. Not having that incentive makes it difficult to consider quitting even if he doesn't like his job much and feels uninspired in it.

Yoshio

Prior to starting his job, Yoshio believed he would be extremely busy, and that he would never have any free time, but when I spoke to him, he said it was quite the opposite. He said his social life and home life with his fiancée had never suffered any severe consequences on account of his job situation. Yoshio's company is reputed for its flexibility and well-functioning welfare system, which significantly contributes to him feeling more relaxed, despite occasionally having to work very long hours. Yoshio told me, surprisingly, that he did not feel very restrained in his finances or job at all. He is in charge of his own schedule which was particularly evident when trying to organise the interview. We were able to meet anytime and anywhere I wanted, regardless of it being daytime or weekdays.

Before Yoshio started looking for work, he aspired to be an artist and working in advertising apparently gives him such an input and ability to develop himself in an artistic sort of way. At first, based on the things he was saying it seemed that Yoshio was implying that as a result of this he is unable to separate work and free time completely, when he said that both his work and his free time are really the same thing for him. But as it transpired, he was trying to get across that he enjoys work so much that there is no real difference.

Yoshio comes across as both highly rational and emotional. His rationality comes to the surface when presented with the situation of paternity leave, because he says he will simply work as hard as he can, so he can come home early and avoid working overtime. To him, it is much more important to have the balance of some time with his family and some time away at work, rather than a lot of time with either. However, he was emotional about spending a lot of time with his future children, and even feels sorry if he finds himself unable because of some outside restraint.

Compared to the others I spoke to, Yoshio had a different view on kindergartens. He did not immediately shun it as a negative institution, but that he thinks children get opportunities to grow and develop as individuals by being around other people and other adults than the parents themselves. He never mentioned, like others did, that the children would feel bad going to kindergarten; he simply said that he would personally feel sorry, just because he wants to raise his children himself. In this sense, he rationally believes that going to such an institution is not automatically bad for a child, but that ideally, he wants to have a whole and happy family.

Keitarō

When Keitarō has children, he wants them to pursue whatever talents that they may have, regardless of gender. But no matter how he presented his ideologies in abstract terms, he could not see a realistic equal gender reality in his own case. He does not doubt his own masculinity and never waivers from having to work hard, but the fact that he expressed he wants more time with his wife was very interesting. He is yearning for a better partnership, not only a "spouse-as-profession" relationship. He seems to be a private sphere-conscious person, strongly focused on his intimate inner circle above all.

However, it seems to me that for Keitarō, family life and children did not seem like a priority, even if he generally wanted them both. He is so immersed in his job that to him (and to his co-workers), work is the most important thing. Keitarō did not seem bitter at all that he can't get the rest he needs, this is just the way he lives and he does not need it to be otherwise. He frequently referred back to how him and his co-workers are making a sacrifice.

Ryōta

At present, Ryōta is not doing what he considers involving and interesting tasks. He is only an assistant, mostly performing menial, clerical duties. What he is doing is arguably not a typical *salaryman*'s job, but he is still working very hard, long hours. Ryōta, however, did not seem too worried about this. He has ambitions to learn key skills from this company in order to be able to work at a bigger advertising company later, or even start a company of his own. He is ambitious enough to say that it is his own freedom to do so if he wishes. Even though being a freelancer in Japan is virtually impossible if you want stable income, he still feels like he wants to at least try, and had the confidence to tell me that he has the right to do it. Right now, though, he feels that he doesn't have enough confidence or skill to quit his job and start his own business just yet.

Ryōta then told me that even though he is aware that he needs to focus and go out to meet people to make his network grow, he still values the little time he has to himself left over networking in the end. He does not have the capacity to truly expand his horizons and network effectively right now, understanding that it requires a lot of effort and energy, which he cannot afford to invest in right now. It seems a dilemma to me, as he wants to start his own company or work in a bigger company and has strong ambitions, but at the same time, he cannot find energy to do it. Ryōta blames it mostly on himself, not so much on the lack of time, considering it his own persona laziness which is impeding him.

Seiichi

Seiichi told me that it is in Japan considered to be good common sense to look for a job while a university student, in keeping with the point I mentioned earlier in how in Japan, education is made redundant by recruitment from such an early stage. He expressed some regret in quitting the part-time job he had when he was still studying, and recalled it nostalgically as a time where he enjoyed more freedom and earned good money – more than he was earning when I spoke to him. He mostly left his part-time job as his peers were all looking for full-time work as it seemed sensible to join them. He was emphatic in saying that he made a poor choice, and in his current situation he fells uneasy, and that he needs a different working life. However, he was aware that the part-time role would not have been a perfect long-term job, offering little to no mental stimulation and no possibility for promotion or expansion into other roles.

Seiichi's company required him to move suddenly to Hiroshima against his will, a decision which he expressed a lot of discomfort about, suddenly finding himself with no friends or network to fall back on. To him, it was too much to ask, and he began to feel helpless. He did not hide how unhappy this made him. Having to stay there all his life was the worst scenario that he could imagine. Seiichi always wanted to stay in Tokyo or at least in Kansai, which is the second biggest commercial and residential hub in Japan, but the companies don't usually consider the individual wishes of a worker and send them wherever it is convenient for the corporation. This is probably one of the features of being a *salaryman* that makes the *salaryman* feel the least in control over his situation – the overhanging fear of being transferred abruptly, without much warning. Typically, they get a warning, but the workers are not told *where* they are being sent, a piece of information they wait until the very last minute to give up, according to him and general agreement around the table. I get a feeling that to him, friends and personal life would always be a priority over work for Seiichi.

Before he started his job, Seiichi knew that there was always a chance of him being transferred, but he did not consider it a realistic possibility for him. He had also expected to work much less, but instead, he often worked until 1am, having no spare time at all. He said that he was unable to adjust to the company's demands and felt it was difficult to be in his new office in Hiroshima: Without a doubt, Seiichi's work environment was very stressful and tense. Specifically, he noted some of the behaviour of his colleagues as being particularly reflective of this, explaining to me that people will take out their frustrations on each other. Eventually, he got depressed and went on sick leave:

> "I changed work places in August and my superiors all changed. These new superiors were the kind of superiors who used power harassment a lot. Gradually, though, [if you find yourself in the middle of it], it becomes more and more difficult to define the expression "power harassment". Even if they scream at you like crazy, or if they give you completely impossible problems to solve, your resistance still grows. But if you look at the word in its pure form, that's what 'power harassment' really is. There are shouts and tempers [everywhere], you hear one shitty thing after another. I think it's close to sexual harassment: If the woman thinks it is [sexual harassment], it is, right? But if you ask what they did specifically, they did things like calling me in the middle of the night, screaming at me. If I were to express myself, they would [interpret it as an excuse to get out of hard work]. Little by little, I started hating my job, I went to the hospital and they told me it was depression, so I took some time off. It's not been determined how long it'll be yet, but maybe I won't even go back. And even if I were to go back, I think I'd go back to a completely different department somewhere else, but right now, I don't feel much like returning at all, to be frank. Right now, the company thinks that I'm thinking about going back, but that it's not the right time yet, but no, I'm not going back. I think I might quit."

At the start of the interview, Seiichi insisted that he was only on sick leave and had not quit his job yet, but at the end of this passage, it is almost as if he is deciding right there and then that he will quit his job after sick leave. I later found out that he did quit and started a job which was much closer to his passions, where he was equally busy, but much happier. When he was a child, his dream was to become a politician. He remembered an essay he wrote for a class during the interview, where he said that he wanted to 'run Japan'. Now he works as an assistant or trainee for a politician in a political party. It is impossible to determine whether this interview was the catalyst for this big change, but I do believe I interviewed him at a turning point in his life.

When asked about the dilemma of working for a living versus living for work, his first instinct was to emphasise just how much he would really like to just have fun and relax, but he remembered that there is also a possibility of actually enjoying whatever job you might get. He ended up on the same spot as Shinji and many others: that it's a dilemma and a question of choice. He says that if he got a hundred billion yen right now, he would quit his job and live life having fun. But at the same time, maybe then he would finally be free to find a job he would actually be interested in.

Takurō

During our conversation, Takurō said he constantly comments on and questions everything happening in his company, saying he always demands reason and refuses to go down without a fight. He said he was an individualist, and that he refuses to submit to common consensus without good reason. Because he is currently working in his company to primarily gain experience in running a company so he can be self-employed in the future, as opposed to building a career, it is likely that any work-based conflict that would arise from his attitude would have little repercussion.

Takurō maintained that he will not subdue his own personality to fit in a work environment that usually does not accept individualists, and if asked to do something he does not understand, he would ask why. He added that he would feel anxious and stressed if he found himself in a situation where he would be unable to argue his viewpoint.

With a generally positive outlook on life and work, Takurō came across as a true opportunist. He started working as a *salaryman* not because he felt pressure to do so, but because he was genuinely curious about what all the other *salarymen* were talking about, and wanted to

experience it himself. He told me confidently that in the future, he will definitely quit his job. To him, he said that life is like an adventure, and that he wants to explore as many things as possible, ultimately culmination in the creation of his own business in the customer service industry.

Shigeo

Shigeo also told me that did not foresee himself staying in his current company all his life. He had no reason to quit yet, but he does not see any reason to stay either. He clearly indicated that he had little intention of basing his future career here, but that it is rather only a starting point, but he did very much plan to work. He said that he has too much motivation, drive and purpose to prioritise private time ahead of work. It came across as if he felt he would waste significant resources of energy if he were to focus solely on his personal life. Shigeo told me that he would ideally like to create a "perfect symbiosis" between his life goals and his career goals, aiming for an enjoyable job which was closely linked with his hobbies.

Yōji

Conversely, Yōji said early on in the interview that he never wanted to get a job that he truly enjoyed, for instance something involving music which has always been his hobby. He felt that by doing that he would lose genuine interest in it. However, he no longer has any time for hobbies at all, as a result of his long working hours. Still, he insists that he does not actually consider his job a real "job" because he is free while he is working, as everything he does is based on projects and the emphasis is put on finishing the project before the deadline, not the manner in which it is done.

Yōji showing himself to have a positive outlook on working, seeing his job as a fleeting opportunity to learn and gain something. At that point, when the opportunity has passed, he said he would most likely quit and find a new job. He does not mention anything about being worried or anxious about a future job change and is fully focused on what he himself can get out of it by doing so. It is worth noting that since the interview, he has changed jobs and moved on to a different international advertising company.

Shūji

Shūji told me that he loves (he explicitly used this word in English) his company and wants to work there all his life. However, he is worried about the economic future of his company

because of the worldwide recession. If it were to go bankrupt, he told me that he had no doubt that he will search for a new job in the same industry.

But for Shūji, this was a result of more than just loving his industry. He communicated that his reputation was so important, he would rather continue working there than force his wife to endure the shame of being married to someone who had quit their industry and moved on. It did not seem that he felt particularly negative about this, though.

Outside of the household, Shūji also desired a good reputation in the neighbourhood, saying that it was necessary for him to earn enough money and get a good reputation in just about every instance of his life to feel satisfied. When asked what he would do if he were to win the lottery, he promptly replied that he would still continue to work in the same place just to keep up his reputation as a hard-working man.

Tōru

At first, Tōru wanted to become a journalist, but felt discouraged by the seemingly tough and demanding entry exams to jobs, as well as the reputation of the job itself being very hard in general. He told me that he chose his first job because he felt it was the best way to "enter society" (*shakaijin ni naru*) or in other words, the best way to become an adult and do something worthwhile, but that he never liked the job.

Tōru speculated aloud on the differences between a draining, but interesting job versus a comparatively stress-less job which is unstimulating. He said that he was very stable, and never felt stressed anymore, but that he does not feel stimulated or inspired to do anything and feels like he never creates anything. It seems that he is not yet sure what he really wants and that he is only in the process of finding this out. He wants to do more and receive more responsibilities at work, so that he has the chance to create more from within, giving him the opportunity to draw up plans, gather information, direct and use his own abilities. Tōru said that his free time was more important than work, but that he felt like it is a little sad to admit work was just a means of generating income, and nothing else.

7.2 Discussion

Where do men's loyalties lie?

The traditional Japanese firm was typically a community environment where all the necessary things a man could ever need were gathered in exchanged for the men's loyalty and hard work.[170] In other words, there was supposed to be a singular welfare system in every company, where the workers and the company would become mutually dependent on each other to make everything go round. This mutual dependency works in such a way that if the company were to go bankrupt, this would become a significant threat to the workers' security. If this security is compromised, and workers start to leave their jobs, this in turn becomes a threat to the company's survival, increasing their chances of bankruptcy.

Financial benefits to the workers also greatly depend on the company's performance, so it is in the worker's interest to work as hard as possible.[171] Ultimately though, it was the worker who would suffer the greatest consequences if he were to quit. Hirokuni Tabata is sceptical towards the same school of thought that believes Japanese workers are truly loyal to their companies, the same school of thought which thinks that the workers continue to work as hard as they do because they need to maintain their position in the company to secure their long-term employment. Examining the widespread belief can lead to the argument that perhaps the employees in Japanese company communities are more inclined towards individual, rather than collective interests.[172] Another widely held belief is that it is not in the worker's interest to move from one company to the next because of the social stigma of being unable to keep a job for a long time or not being able to get along with their co-workers.[173] There are such severe punitive consequences from quitting your first company early (never being able to get back on track, having to start again at the lowest position or become self-employed, lose seniority wage rises and retirement allowances, plus suffering a wage cut) that this often works as a disincentive for men to even consider quitting.[174] Instead, they keep working, using cultural legitimacy as an informal disciplining mechanism for themselves.

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[170] Hirokuni Tabata, "Community and Efficiency in the Japanese Firm," *Social Science Japan Journal* 1, no. 2 (1998): 199.
[171] Ibid., 205.
[172] Ibid., 211; Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, 87-8.
[173] Koji Matsumoto, *The Rise of the Japanese Corporate System*, trans. Thomas I. Elliott, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 14.
[174] Tabata, "Community and Efficiency in the Japanese Firm," 209.

Ikigai – finding an individual life purpose

Mathews argues that there has been a clear gender divide of *ikigai* in Japanese society and that although this divide has been challenged by recent factors such as the declining birthrate and increasing female employment, in practical terms the *ikigai* of men has remained the same.[175] According to him, men are still expected to fulfil the *salaryman* masculinity ideal. Being restrained as they are by pressure from their companies, men find themselves unable to pursue the *ikigai* of family or individual desire. His research in the article, "Can a 'real man' live for his family?", is based on his own interviews that were conducted in 1989-90 with 27 participants, as well as interviews and media reports from 1999-2000.

Mathews found that the younger the man, the less commitment showed towards their work, which he concluded to be due to the massive difference between less affluent post-war Japan and more affluent Japan right before the bursting of the bubble.[176] Some of his younger participants expressed with regret that men in Japan don't have individual identities and don't know what freedom means.[177] Surprisingly, this negativity went even further, as an older participant said that if Japanese men had not put as much effort into generating so much money while living solely for work, it would seem, then Japan might not have experienced its economy problems in the 1990s.[178]

Unsurprisingly, Hidaka also found that for most of her participants in her oldest group (aged 60 to 80) that their *ikigai* was work.[179] These participants were proud of their role as *kigyō senshi* who rebuilt the nation of Japan after WWII. Moving on to examine the result of her more middle-aged group (aged 40 to 59), she found much more variation in what the men considered their *ikigai*.[180] Some of them considered work to be their sole *ikigai*, yet some believe their job to be the embodiment of self-realisation, consequently becoming *ikigai* as a personal life goal.

Mathews concluded that while the younger *salarymen* no longer felt themselves that work was their sole purpose in life, they still had to continue working tremendously hard out of

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[175] Mathews, "Can 'a Real Man' Live for His Family? *Ikigai* and Masculinity in Today's Japan," 109-10.
[176] Ibid., 110.
[177] Ibid., 112.
[178] Ibid., 112.
[179] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 139.
[180] Ibid., 141.

sheer practical need, thereby making work their *de facto ikigai*.[181] This concurs with Tabata's argument that the consequences of quitting their jobs to pursue anything else more desirable would be so severe that they work as a disincentive for men to consider quitting, adding that the workers are no longer as unconditionally loyal to their companies as their predecessors. Interestingly, Mathews reports that in the media, *ikigai* as a personal life goal is promoted far more prominently than *ikigai* as work, which leads him to believe that culturally, devoting your life to the company no longer has masculine validity, but institutionally, it remains ambiguous.[182]

Mathews could not find many men who considered *ikigai* to be family. He deemed this to be caused by the previously mentioned *de facto ikigai* as work taking up all of the men's time and energy.[183] In fact, some of his respondents felt that devotion to family was a chore, or service, because while the need for being present in the family both physically and mentally increases, the need to do similarly for the company has by no means diminished, resulting in pressure and stress coming from two sides, instead of one. This argument is similar to what I discussed at the end of chapter 6, "Masculinity and family", and I believe that the two notions are indeed interlinked. However, as I also said during that discussion, I have found some evidence of a new development, whereby men are detaching themselves from this pressure by adopting a more gender-equal approach towards the different parts of their lives. I will continue discussing this point in sub-chapter "The transformation of *salaryman* masculinity through *ikigai*" below. Mathews' final conclusion was that men will probably go from having their *ikigai* as work directly to having their *ikigai* as self, bypassing *ikigai* as family. He believes that having family as *ikigai* will only get harder and less prominent in the future.[184]

Of Hidaka's younger participants (aged 20 to 39), only two cases openly considered their *ikigai* to be work.[185] The rest of them either thought of their *ikigai* being a combination of family and the self, or in some cases, only family. Hidaka agrees with Mathews in that even for younger generations, work has become their *ikigai*, albeit in a *de facto* way, and that work serves as a means to realise personal goals, moreso than serving the company.

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[181] Mathews, "Can 'a Real Man' Live for His Family? *Ikigai* and Masculinity in Today's Japan," 113.
[182] Ibid., 113.
[183] Ibid., 114.
[184] Ibid., 123.
[185] Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: The Continuity of and Change in the Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan*, 144.

Similar research has been conducted in the context of Korean corporate organisations, attempting to uncover which elements of their lives Korean *saellôrimaen* most committed to over a length of time. It was discovered that like Japan, the younger the generation, the less loyalty they felt towards their work place.[186] Work values similarly are slowly changing and self-realisation is becoming more important than fulfilling the duty as a member of society or family.[187] However, it seems that no particular evidence was found, at least in this article, of a trend emerging of showing increased dedication one's life to one's family. Family was more seen as an entity constructed by the state, and working to provide for it became a burden, rather than a desired goal.

The transformation of *salaryman* masculinity through *ikigai*

Examining my interviewees' thoughts and opinions from a broad perspective, there were a few who were already employed in a company where they said they found true pleasure in their work, and that it was close to their personal interests. Nobuhiko, Yoshio and Yōji generally felt that they were lucky to have been employed where they have. For these three, it seemed that work was solely for the purpose of self-realisation. Their *ikigai* is in other words focused on the self, as Mathews argued. Yōji did however point out that he didn't want to get a job directly related to his most important personal interests, for fear of losing genuine pleasure in his hobbies, connecting them with stress and pressure. Regardless of this lack of relevance to his interests though, Yōji told me he enjoyed his job immensely, even though it was quite tough.

Others I spoke to similarly had their *ikigai* as the self, or as self-fulfilment, mostly pointing out to me that if one is to work half one's life, one may just as well enjoy it. Shinji, for instance, had more trouble than his peers finding a job he desired and finally, he got a job somewhat relevant to his interests, but not one where he feels he can use all his potential. He told me that he had definite plans in the future to change to a job where he can be more creative. However, he did not feel encouraged enough to change jobs at the time, because he doesn't have a clear agenda. Shinji admitted to feeling pressured to dedicate his life to the company and told me he found it difficult to find time to pursue his interests, of which he has many. Ryōta, on the other hand, said he had no intention of staying at his job longer than he

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[186] K. Peter Kuchinke, Hye-Seung Kang, and Seok-Young Oh, "The Influence of Work Values on Job and Career Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment among Korean Professional Level Employees," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 9, no. 4 (2008): 553.
[187] Ibid., 562.

had to and emphasised that he was only there to learn just so he could start his own business in the future. Takurō, too, was only working at his company to learn, for the same purpose. Seiichi pointed out that if he were to become infinitely rich, he would try to find a job which he truly enjoyed, rather than rushing to get any job only because your peers are all applying at the same time (rather than taking time off to enjoy his wealth). Tōru changed jobs a short while into his first employment and found that though he is now working at a place which is far more flexible and less demanding, he admits that he misses the intellectual stimuli from his previous job. Still, he told me he too plans to get a job in the future where he can both enjoy himself and be stimulated on all levels.

Two of my participants – Keitarō and Shūji – were more inclined towards work in itself being *ikigai*, not self-realisation through work as the others have reported. Shūji also added that the reason he felt this way was because reputation is exceedingly important to him. Even if he were to become infinitely rich, he would still work at the same company to maintain his reputation.

Interestingly, only two other participants – Shinji and Yoshio – had some inclination toward family being *ikigai*. Shinji told me that he placed a lot of value in marrying for love and having an equal relationship with his future wife (though he did not mention much about children being a part of this explicitly). Yoshio was the only one who explicitly told me that he found just as much meaning in having a family as he found in his work, and in the future, he hoped to achieve a perfect balance between the two aspects.

In summary, based on the combination of Mathews' and Hidaka's results, and considering that the former were released some years prior to the latter, it can be safely assumed that there has been a notable development towards *ikigai* becoming focused on the family and/or self-realisation, rather than work. Additionally, though I was prior to doing this study convinced otherwise, I have found a similarity to what Mathews has predicted, *ikigai* seems to be becoming all about self-realisation, therefore neglecting the importance of family.

A majority of my interviewees considered their *ikigai* to be self-realisation, and only two had thought of their family to be an equally important aspect of their lives. At this point I feel it is important to point out that Hidaka found more evidence of men considering family as their *ikigai*, but these men already had children in most cases. This cannot be said for my participants. Only few of them (like Yoshio, Keitarō and Shūji) have realistically considered

having children in the foreseeable future, because they were either engaged or married. Nevertheless, I believe that this is another argument towards the hegemonic *salaryman* masculinity experiencing a transformation and rather rapidly.

8 Conclusions

In this thesis, I have discussed the various aspects of *salaryman* masculinity and outlined how it is currently undergoing a transformation. In my research question, I proposed that there was an ongoing shift in masculine identity of young *salarymen,* moving away from the hegemonic ideals which have affected older generations, and asked how this could be proven, going on to investigate how their identity was changing. I found that it was indeed true that there was a shift in masculine identity. In many instances it concurred with Hidaka, who found that there has been a certain change from generation to generation, and with Mathews', who argued that the focus on men's *ikigai* would become self-fulfilment, rather than work, or even family. I will now summarise the points I have made throughout the thesis that have led me to this conclusion.

In terms of attitude, I found that there was a great deal of development in the attitudes towards gender equality and masculine identity, something that came clear when I compared my results to Hidaka's as a benchmark. While most of the opinions among Hidaka's participants, from the age of 20 to 69, ranged from not accepting that women should work at all, to believing that women should be at work (as an assistant, only), the majority of my participants reported that they both wanted their future wives to work full-time, or indeed do whatever she wanted, and that they respected the career women at their work place. This was an excellent outcome – but if this is what the younger generation wants, why has it not happened?

As we saw, since the Meiji-period, masculinity in Japan has been formed around the ideology specifically constructed by the state in different forms – the patriarchal head of the *ie*, the warrior for the army, and the *salaryman*. Men were supposed to serve the state and were given constructed gender roles to play while the state expanded. During the Meiji-period, there was a particular focus on women and their roles as wives and mothers (*ryōsai kenbo*), while men were recognised as the heads of the family by law. Entering the Taishō-period, the focus turned the role of men to military machines instead. They were instructed to fight wars for the ever-expanding empire, while the women were pigeon-holed into being a reproductive machine to provide the state with more able-bodied men who could go out to war. This gender ideology quickly fell from favour when Japan was defeated in the WWII. As Japan started to rebuild its economy, there arose a need for a new masculinity ideology to best

enable all men to partake in what would become one of the fastest-growing economies in the world at the time. Instead of being soldiers of the army, the men became soldiers of the economy (*kigyō senshi*), bearing this burden as *salarymen*. This shows that the concept of having a state-serving ideology, and therefore an officially recognised sense of self-worth is deeply entrenched in the national psyche, which has today resulted in making the attainment of the ideal of crucial importance to modern Japanese men.

We then saw how this damaged *salarymen*'s personal lives. Continuing to sacrifice all their time and energy to the companies, the men increasingly lost their ability to bond with their families, growing more and more detached from them. Simultaneously, social problems, such as *karoshi*, *sābisu zangyō* and the rapid decline of the birthrate, came into view. The government continuously implemented new plans to address these issues, often to no avail. So far, the initiations have in some instances been helpful, but have not solved any issues still apparent in society today at the root, proving the government to have little use in maintaining the ideal it worked so hard to create. The labour market today is undergoing great changes, and a variety of new masculinity models and sexualities are emerging. *Salaryman* masculinity has evolved to become the established and acknowledged hegemonic masculinity ideal, by representing the ideal of the breadwinner for the family.

In chapter 5, "Masculinity and work", in an attempt to dissect the concept of the hegemonic breadwinner ideal, so it could be used later as a research tool during my interviews, I discussed masculinity identity in regards to work. I then found that while some of my participants were inclined towards supporting the hegemonic breadwinner ideal, often the same men also understood that it is only rational for women to work alongside them, even if there are many institutional constraints coming from their companies and state policies. So why submit to the hegemonic ideal at all, when rationally they knew otherwise? This was discussed as a threat to their identity, where the men felt that they had to justify their choices to maintain their masculinity.

I agreed with Taga's argument about the hegemonic *salaryman* masculinity ideal declining in legitimacy, where he based his argument on the notion that *salaryman* masculinity has been emanating from the breadwinner ideal but is falling apart due to economic challenges, among other things. I have found during writing this thesis, that the breadwinner ideal is indeed crumbling, I think it is possible to argue that the hegemonic ideal is simply changing form.

This was followed by a section on how institutions are considerably responsible for a lack of gender inequality in Japan on a gender level, but an argument that it remains with the individual to institute change from the ground up, something which individuals in Japan are reluctant to do. From a supply and demand perspective, the suppliers (in this case of welfare) will only supply what the "consumers" demand and if the people are "consumers" of social differentiations, the suppliers will only provide what is required. If the people do not actively require social change, institutions with power to change society might not feel the need to provide. I found that the majority of my interviewees agreed with me on this point, feeling that although they didn't personally believe in keeping women at home, they didn't know how to change the system, or felt powerless to even try as it's so universally acknowledged to be the norm in Japan.

This tied into my next point, as in Japan, instituting social change is more complicated than the supply and demand dichotomy model. Historically, it was not the people who initiated a demand for gender equality, but the pressure from outside in shape of the chase for industrialisation and modernity, not to mention the UN during their International Decade for Women. Seeing it from this perspective, it is possible to deduce this as at least one reason for why there is uncertainty and imbalance amongst my interviewees and potentially many others as well. The societal changes imposed on them through recent history have not come gradually as a result of natural development. Even if something is rationally understood, it has been learned that it must come from the government. That is not to say that factors such as the declining birthrate and increasingly instable economy are not highly significant to discouraging change as well. Rather, it is a combination of all of those aspects that create discrepancy in masculinity identities in Japan.

Chapter 6, "Masculinity and family", was concerned with masculinity identities as expressed through attitudes towards family life, to see how the hegemony could be understood from this angle. I discussed the views of the interviewees who were influenced by traditional ideologies of masculinity and who had little faith in the welfare systems in their companies. I viewed it in light of the institutions not providing sufficient welfare, or not providing it convincingly enough so that people will trust to use it, making paternity leave nightmarishly difficult to attain and maternity leave similarly unfair on the recipient. I considered it in the way that individuals perpetuate the constructed gender stereotypes by simply accepting what is offered to them from a higher authority (much like the government's offer) and using it as intended,

instead of critically challenging it when they find themselves feeling unhappy or in unfavourable situations.

To analyse this in a family context, I drew upon the idea that mothers reinforce the hegemonic breadwinner ideal in the fathers' absence, by using them as a disciplinary tool, thereby influencing their children's ideas about the father being a strong, absent, breadwinning figure. I also used the concept of gender boundaries, concluding that arguably men and women both do not sufficiently invite each other into the private sphere of the home, and the public sphere of the workplace. While they do visit each other and "try on" each others' roles, my research showed that the inherent ideal must still be acted out by the original gender. Furthermore, the hegemonic *salaryman* masculinity ideal is still being employed by companies and institutions as normative, where women are still expected to work in the same way as men do despite maternity needs, instead of being offered a greater range of employment practices. This argument demonstrates again why little change is happening, despite the apparent desire for it.

Ultimately, there is not enough motivation for men to take part in child rearing, because women only "let them" do the easier tasks. This also often contributes to the men gaining an uninformed idea about parenting, with some of my interviewees telling me that it would be sufficient fulfilment of the father role to merely take part in the more fun tasks while providing funds to the family to raise a child. This can sometimes have repercussions such as men alienating themselves from their families completely, by taking refuge in hostess clubs and the like, further establishing themselves as truly outside the private sphere.

Interestingly, during my interviews, I found that several of my participants showed attitudes towards gender relations in both work and family that could be said to be contributing to a transformation of masculine identities, when comparing it to even the youngest of Hidaka's participants. The opinions inclined towards gender equality ranged from being accepting, but not actively engaged in the cause (Shinji) to an active attempt to change the established rules (Shūji, who went through his local labour union to argue for fairness at work for both genders). Both Shinji and Seiichi told me that their future wives would be their partners and best friends, rather than wives by occupation. When it came to paternity leave, Yoshio, Seiichi and Shūji all stated that men too should take time off when a child is born into the family, not only the women, a groundbreaking decision given the history of paternity leave in Japan. Shigeo and Tōru, as well as Yoshio who had a range of opinions on the subject,

showed a slightly less radical view, believing it to be unnecessary for a man to take off a long time and that working out a work-life balance would be a more realistic goal. But Yoshio for instance did not shun the possibility that his future wife might want to work full-time and wish him to stay home with the child, concluding that he will consider this as a valid option, should it come up when the time comes. This was an astonishing result, given how time and time again it seemed established that this was an almost unthinkable task for a man, rendering them highly unmasculine – yet Yoshio was open-minded enough to consider it, demonstrating a rather strong current of change in attitude, if not in practice.

In chapter 7, "Masculinity and life purpose", I examined men's individual life purpose, be it work, family or the self, and the ways in which it could be connected to transformations in masculinity identity. First, I presented the more traditional views in academia of *ikigai* being work, mostly built on the mutual economic dependency between companies and their employees, moreso than ideological loyalty.

When initially examining Mathews' results of what his respondents considered their *ikigai*, I was surprised in finding that the development pointed towards men considering their *ikigai* to have progressed to self-fulfilment, skipping over family altogether. In contrast, for example, several of Hidaka's informants considered their *ikigai* to be family and I hypothesised that this would be the case for my informants as well. However, it turned out that practically all of my informants, with the exception of Yoshio, who's *ikigai* was arguably family, and Keitarō and Shūji, who's *ikigai* was arguably work, lived for self-fulfilment in some form or another. This variety in *ikigai* demonstrated that there is an evident transformation in masculine identities, but in a slightly different direction than I initially thought.

Returning finally to the critique of hegemonic masculinity as discussed in chapter 3, "Theory" there are simply too many layers in masculinity that overlap, intersect and play against each other, which makes it difficult to determine what hegemonic masculinity actually is nowadays. In Japan, what makes a man a man? In the end, few of my participants (and possibly few of Mathews' and Hidaka's as well) can be said to represent the "real *salaryman*", neither in opinion nor demeanour, and few of them can in fact be said to maintain the constructed ideology behind it either. Therefore, it must also be safe to say that transformations in masculinity identities are not only possible, but highly realistic – *salarymen* have changed, and so too have the ideals. In time, surely reality will change as well.

So, is the shift in masculine identity of young *salarymen* moving away from the hegemonic ideal which affected older generations? Most definitely yes, in all instances. These forms of changes presented themselves as either quite radical as it was in the context of work, or in unexpected form, as in the context of a willingness to participate as a stay-at-home father, but when considered as *ikigai* as a life purpose, it shows a significant departure. When examining this question in the contexts of work, of family and of life purpose, it was impossible to ignore the undercurrent of change, the desire for development, and a shift in identity.

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Attachments

Question guide:

WORK – 仕事

- Which line of work do you do? (Not which company, but what type of job/trade) How long have you worked there?
- 今、どのような業界で仕事していますか？
  そこで働いてからどのくらい経ちますか？
- Before you started, what did you expect from the job? How did you expect your time management to be?
- 働き始める前に、その会社に入ってからの生活をどのように想像していたか教えてください。
  例えば、自分の時間や、友達、家族、恋人との時間など、どのように想像しましたか？
- What other options do you think you had?
- 就職活動している時に、今の仕事以外に、他にどのような選択肢がありましたか？
- Why did you choose this particular trade?
- 今の仕事を選んだ理由を教えてください。
- Can you describe a normal day at work?
- 会社であなたが日々どのように働いているのか教えてください。
- I know that generalists are more valued than specialists in Japanese companies. Your work assignments change often and you don't always know what to expect from your job. Have you been moved around during your time at this job? How did you experience this particular part of working in that company? Was it difficult, easy to adjust?
- 日本の会社では一般的に、専門職よりも、いろいろな部署を経験する総合職のほうが高く評価されていると聞いた事がありますが、どうですか？
  総合職の場合、異動のたびに職務内容が変わる可能性があるので、先が読めないと思いますが、、、あなたは、今まで職務内容の異なる部署への異動を

経験したことはありますか？　早く新しい職場に慣れる事はできましたか？
その経験を教えてください。

- Can you tell me about the welfare system at your work? How familiar are you with the rules?

- あなたの会社の福利厚生について教えてください。制度や規則についてどのぐらい知っていますか？

    o how many days you can take off legally
    o 有給休暇について
    o how much vacation you are entitled
    o 夏期、年末などの長期休暇の制度について
    o paternity leave
    o 男性の出産、育児休暇について
    o overtime work [how many hours are legal, how much do you get paid, if at all]
    o 残業手当について
    o company housing, pension, promotion, tax system
    o その他、給与や昇格についての制度、年金制度、社員用の福利厚生施設など

- Did you utilize these rules?
- それらの福利厚生を使う事がありますか？　どの制度ですか？

    o If yes, have there ever been any social problems regarding?
    o 使った事がある場合、何か問題はありましたか？
      職場で特に気をつけなければいけないことはありましたか？
    o If not, why not?
    o 使った事がない場合、その理由を教えてください

- In which situation is it befitting to utilize the welfare system in a corporation like yours?

- もしすべての福利制度を使用することに後ろめたさがある場合、あなたの会社ではどこまで許容されると思いますか？

- Some overtime work is not paid. What is the situation at your job? Can you tell me some situations or reasons that paying overtime work is not necessary?

- 日本では、残業や休憩時間に仕事をしても、その分の手当が支払われない状況があると聞いたことがあります。あなたの会社ではどうですか？

  すべての残業を申請しますか、もしくは、できますか？

  サービス残業についてどう思うか教えてください。

- What do you think is the reason why these rules exist even if no one utilizes them to their full extent anyway?

- 多くの人が福利厚生制度をあまり利用しないもしくは、利用できない場合、なぜその規則があると思いますか？

- Can you tell me about the environment at your work? What is good about it? What is bad about it? What do you think is necessary to make it better (if it is overwhelmingly bad)?

- 職場環境について教えてください。どのような良いところがりますか？

  逆に悪いところはありますか？

  改善する為には、誰が何をする必要があると思いますか？

SPOUSE/ PARTNERSHIP

- Before you started working, how did you expect to find a partner, if you don't have one?　If you already had a partner, how did you expect your relationship to become?

- 仕事を始めてからプライベートの時間が少なくなったと感じる方に質問します。就職前からの彼女がいない方は、その後短いプライベートの中でどのようにして彼女を見つけることを想像しあしたか？

  就職前からの彼女がいる方は、その後の関係についてどうなると予想していましたか？

- What is your opinion on 50/50 labour division between spouses?

- 共働きについてどう考えますか？

- Are there career women at your company/division? What is your relationship to them? What about their style of working?

- あなたの職場では男性と同じ職種（いわゆる総合職）で働いている女性はいますか？

  彼女達がその状況でどのよう感じていると、あなたは思いますか？

- How do you experience having a girlfriend/wife while you are working (if he has a girlfriend/wife)?
- 彼女がいる場合、仕事しながらでの彼女との関係はどうですか？
- What does it mean to be a husband for you?
- あなたにとって「夫」とはどのような意味がありますか？

FATHER/FAMILY

- Did your father work hard when you were growing up? What did your mother do? How did you experience this situation?
- あなたが子供の頃、あなたのお父さんも今のあなたと同じように会社員として働いていましたか？　お母さんはなにをしていましたか？
  どのような状況だったか教えてください。
- Is there anything you would like to do differently when you get children? Was there something you were unhappy with that you would like to improve or was there something you like and were proud of that you would like to keep? (Not in a dream world, but realistically what is possible to accomplish.)
- あなたが家庭を持ったときには。自分の子供の頃と同じように子供を育てますか？　それとも何か変えたいと思うことはありますか？
- What pros and cons are there in leaving your children with a kindergarten or in day-care or babysitter/grandmother while both parents are working? What are the pros and cons of one parent staying home?
- 両親が共働きの場合、子供は両親が働いている間、保育園や祖父母と過ごすと思いますが、どう思いますか？
  良い点よくない点などはありますか？また、片方の親が働かず子供と一緒にいる場合の良い点よくない点はどう思いますか？
- How do you expect your role as a father to be?
- あなたは、自身にどのような父親像を想像しますか？

GENERAL

- Choose between two: 1) Work is the important thing – and the purpose of leisure time is to recharge people's batteries so they can do a better job 2) Leisure time is the

important thing – and the purpose of work is to make it possible to have the leisure time to enjoy life and pursue one's interests.

- 仕事についての姿勢について、以下の二つのうち、あなたはどちらかといえば（1）と（2）どちらだと思いますか？1）仕事は重要なことで、余暇の目的は、仕事の合間に頭と体をリフレッシュし、また仕事の質を高めるためです。2）余暇は重要なことで、仕事の目的は余暇のためにお金を稼ぎ、余暇を楽しむためです。

- How do you expect to balance work and family in the future?

- 将来、あなたはどのようにして、仕事、家族、余暇のバランスをとろうと考えていますか？