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The Socio-Cultural Implications of
the Aging Population in Japan

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May 12, 2018

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Introduction:

The population of human societies has benefited from the different factors that have occurred throughout human existence. Through globalization, populations grew from farms to urbanized developments. As longevity of fertility and mortality increased, food and healthcare improved; Technology and sciences advanced among societies, transportation and traveling became easily accessible, and the internet became available to users at a push of a button. Advanced capitalist societies today are the hallmark of the achievements of humans but also played a part in the rising population of the elderly. Advanced capitalist societies (SIACS) include countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, France, Germany, and Japan (Held, 1999). With rapid life expectancies and lower fertility rates, elderly populations are living past the age of sixty-five years old.

Aging societies are the result of a population decline. This occurs when certain components of a population changes such as plummeting fertility, labor shortages, retiring at a later age, quality of life improves, and access to healthcare progresses. In Western Europe, North America, and East Asia, aging elderly populations are facing plunging fertility and soaring life expectancy. The labor force is experiencing an uneven balance between the older and younger workforce as well as the number of workers under the age of forty are shrinking. Individuals are choosing to raise smaller families and this is becoming a norm. Younger generations are forgoing marriage and relationships all together. Immigration could play an important part in offsetting aging populations as they retire, but in certain developed countries, stricter immigration laws have been enforced which make it difficult to enter the country and seek work opportunities. The Japanese caregiving industry has incorporated robot technologies to help with the elderly. An aging society may struggle to remain culturally attractive and politically relevant to younger societies.

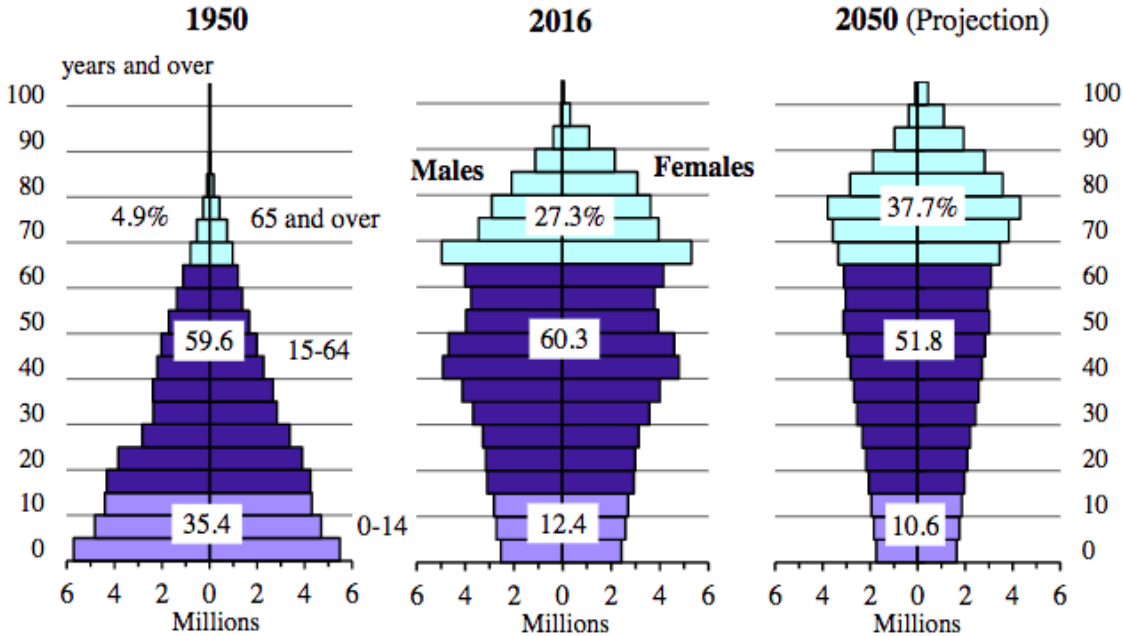
My capstone research focuses on how Japan, as a nation, is dealing with aging populations as a society, what problems and solutions work for the Japanese, and how future studies and research on Japan's elderly population could help lead for possible solutions for the global elderly. I have always been interested and fascinated with Japan and by researching the Japanese elderly, it opened up new conversation and information that has not been discussed before. I was interested in what made Japan a unique case in gerontology work and how its social dynamics affect the elderly in comparison to Western epistemology. Currently, there is a disconnect between family ties and communication in the modern family system and I began to question what would happen with my parents and the older generations. I never really thought about old age so defiantly until now. What are the socio-cultural implications of the Japanese aging population with regard to changing global demographics trends?

Literature Review:

Japan's total population in 2016 was 126.93 million. This ranked eleventh in the world and made up 1.7% of the world's total population (Papademetriou, 2000). The child population bracket from zero to fourteen years old in Japan, amounted to 15.78 million, which accounts for 12.4% of the total population. In terms of the elderly proportion, those aged sixty-five years or older have surpassed the child population since 1997. The productive-age bracket from fifteen to sixty-four years of age, totaled to 76.56 million. Life expectancy at birth was 87.1 years for women and 80.8 for men in 2015 (UNFPA, 2017). Japan's life expectancy remains the highest level in the world with infant mortality rate at 2.0 per 1,000 births in 2016. The national institute of Population and Social Security research estimates that the percentage of elderly age sixty-five years and older is trended to increase. The 2005 figure of 21.0% is predicted to climb 7.8% in 2025, reaching 35.7% by 2050 (Robinson, 2007). The decline in the number of children will have a major medium to long-term impact. In 2005, the fertility rate has diminished in recent years with the total fertility rate plummeting to 1.25% (Robinson, 2007).

The factors towards the declining aging population: improved birth control technologies, higher female participation in the labor force, the younger generation not wanting to pursue romantic/marriage prospects, difficulties for a woman to fulfill worker and mother roles simultaneously, day care and support services are in short supply, labor worker shortages, and the changing family structures. Japan will face difficulties in maintaining its substantial manufacturing base which undermines export-led growth and status. Due to the slowing economy, social security costs will rise when there are proportionately more old people in retirement and tax revenue will shrink with fewer younger people at work. Japan will also no longer be a great economic and political power due to its aging populations in comparison to China (Lam, 2009).

Changes in the Population Pyramid



Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Source: Statistics Bureau. (2017). *Statistical Handbook of Japan 2017* (pp. 1-213) (Japan, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications). Shinjuku, Japan: Statistics Bureau.

The population pyramid of 1950 shows that Japan had a standard-shaped pyramid with a broad base. The shape of the pyramid, however, had changed dramatically as both the birth and death rate have declined. In 2016, the aged population, sixty-five years and over, was at 34.5 million, which totaled to 27.3% of the population (Statistics Bureau, 2017). That means that one in every four people is an elderly individual. In Japan, the period when the percentage of people aged sixty-five and older exceeded 10% was 1985, but when looking at the U.S. and European countries, this occurred in 1940 in France, 1950 in Sweden, 1965 in Italy, and 1975 in the U.S., which are all earlier than in Japan (Statistics Bureau, 2017). However, in 2015, the percentage of the population sixty-five and older in Japan was 26.6%, exceeding the U.S. (14.8%), France (19.1%), Sweden (19.9%), and Italy (22.4%), indicating that the aging society in Japan is progressing rapidly as compared to the U.S. and European countries (Papademetriou, 2000).

Japan's aging population decline did not immediately show results at first. Historically, Japan has been a relatively closed society (Papademetriou, 2000). From the eighteenth century through the first half of the nineteenth century, Japan's population remained steady at about thirty million. Following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, it began expanding in tandem with the drive to build a modern nation-state. In 1926, it reached sixty million, and in 1967, it surpassed the hundred million mark. However, Japan's population growth has slowed in more recent years, with the rate of population change about 1% from the 1960s through the 1970s. Since the 1980s, it has declined sharply. Japan's total population was 127.09 million according to the Population Census in 2015. This was a decrease by 962,607 people as compared to the previous 2010 Census, indicating the first population decline since the initiation of the Population Census in 1920. In 2016, it was 126.93 million, down by 162,000 from the year before (Statistics Bureau, 2017).

For a growing population, Japan incorporated healthy lifestyles and practices within its traditional culture such as improved hygiene, health consciousness, and balanced nutritional benefits of the Japanese diet. The Japanese government underwent major structural health reforms and provided public health interventions in early economic growth to improve population health during the 1950s. A reduction in mortality rates can be attributed to medical care and societal factors such as education, nutrition, sanitation, and income. There are three important factors that help elongate mortality rates: socioeconomic development, increased access to health care, and the progress of improved health technologies (Ikeda, 2011). Japan now has challenges to population health including risk factors of tobacco smoking, high blood pressure, and metabolic syndrome. Japan is a unique case regarding longevity within a country and that Japan's experience can be an important resource for the global health community to help and understand population health worldwide.

The Japanese elderly are living longer and wielding more disposable income than ever before. The elderly have become acutely aware of the needs that come at the cost of a super-aged society. The growing interests that the elderly are facing are increasing needs, stagnant resources, and changing beliefs that contribute to the growing efforts of the elderly to organize their interests (Takao, 2009). There is expected increasing elderly demand for providing individualized social services, cutbacks in grants-in-aid by the national government have hit social benefits, and the elderly that live in Japan's urban areas are growing vocal in the lack of funds for individualized service. There are growing problems with the elderly where many widowed individuals are dying alone in solitary death (*kodokushi*), rising suicides, and lack of medical care are being reported. The number of elderly people who live alone has reached more than 4.3 million (Fukukawa, 2011). The elderly are experiencing less communication with their neighbors, they are more isolated without immediate family to look after them, they are at risk of dying suddenly in their own homes from an accident, suicide, or a disease. It has been reported that 8.9% of Japanese people are living alone, 30,000 people die every year, 53.9% are victimized, 24.6% are

rescued, 21.5% are misreported, and 57.8% of the elderly that died alone did not have any family members within fifteen minutes walking distance. (Fukukawa, 2011). Men faced a higher risk of solitary death in comparison to women, as men tended to die at a younger age.

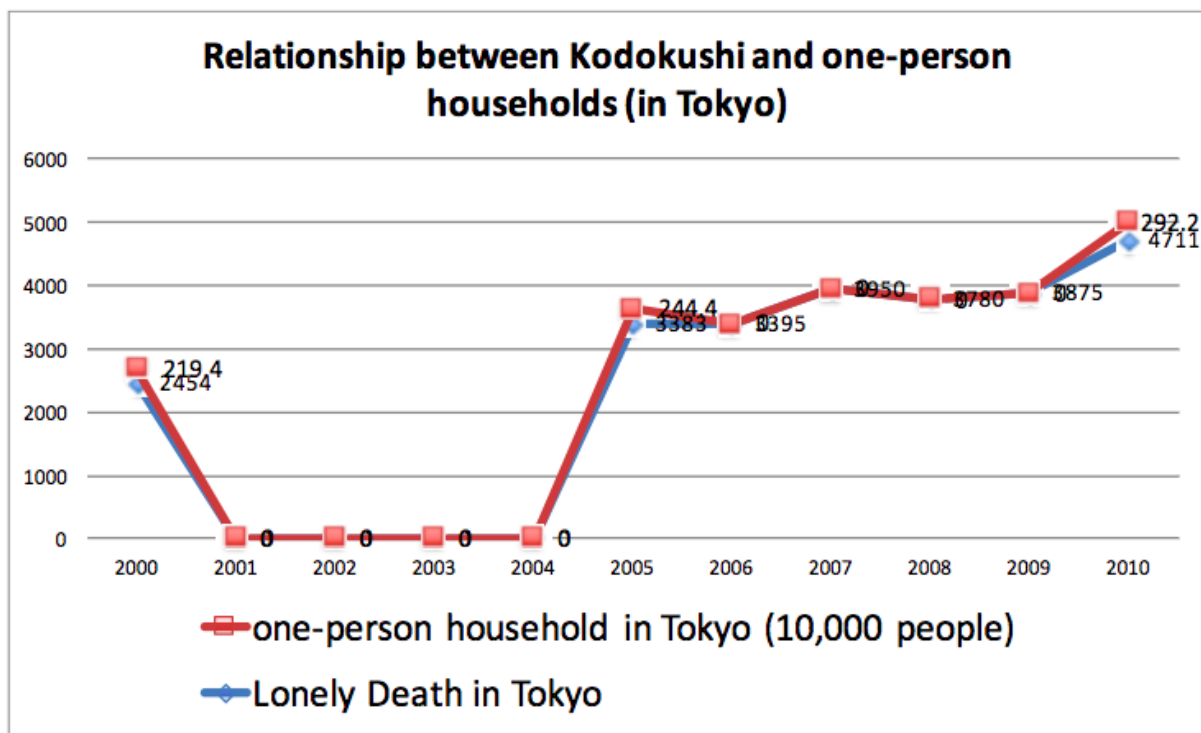
As Japan became modernized, so did the evolving family structures and relationships within the family. As an East Asian country, Japan lives under the filial piety system, which love and respect for one's parents, grandparents, and ancestors is vital. Two types of family systems emerged in Japan: the stem family system and the classical family system. The stem family system lasted up to the 1940s and parents lived with one of their married children, which is usually the eldest son. Japan's stem family system differed from those in other Asian countries such as persistent preservation of the family name and ancestral rites, intensive contact with co-resident offspring (parents living with children), and estranged relations with non-co-resident children (Hareven, 1996). Eventually after World War II, filial piety ceased to be taught or even discussed in homes and school and supporting aged parents became less of a responsibility.

The classical stem family became the new norm for modern families and it represented one single household with a lifelong co-residence of parents and a married child. In urban areas, the tradition of children looking after their aged parents has disappeared and there is a serious problem where the elderly couples only care for each other (Oki, 2011). Terminal care is provided mostly by the co-resident adult, who are mainly female family members, and when care is unable to be provided by the immediate family, care is provided by outside sources such as hospitals and nursing homes. Older parents are seeing a trend where they live separately away from their children and because they do not want to be a burden, they do not ask for help.

Attitudes towards care of the elderly in Japan are depressing and dark. Authorized homes are pricey and are generally paid out of pocket along with a 10% co-payment (Kikuzawa, 2016). There are three types of facilities that have been established for the Japanese elderly in terms of retirement: nursing

homes, health facilities, and designated long-term care beds in hospitals. Despite the emphasis on individualized care, actual care practices were lacking. The number of elderly as well as their families, yearn to enter nursing homes as well as other nursing facilities are increasing all the time. Institutional care comes at a high price with authorized care homes priced between 200,000 JPY (Japanese yen) (\$1,752) and 300,000 JPY (\$2,628) (Kikuzawa, 2016). Unauthorized nursing homes have begun to pop up to accommodate low-income families. In 2015, 15,000 individuals were using unauthorized nursing homes and facilities have a combined capacity of 22,741, where at least 12,209 of elderly persons were living in those facilities (K, 2016). Unauthorized nursing home layouts and floor plans of rooms are not approved by the government and do not fulfill federal government standards.

Lonely deaths/solitary deaths, or *kodokushi*, is a recent growing phenomenon that is affecting the Japanese elderly, where remaining individuals go undiscovered for long periods of time. The Health, Labor, and Welfare Ministry uses the term *koritsushi* (unattended death) because of cases of two or more people dying together. In the past three decades, Japan has seen the share of single-occupant households more than double to 14.5% of the total population and men in particular are driving up the percentage (Wang, 2017). According to the research by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, a finding suggests that the national figure of solitary deaths was greater than 40,000. More than 17,000 people who were living alone, died unattended at home across nineteen prefectures and Tokyo's twenty-three wards in 2016 (The Japan News, 2017). In terms of scale of data obtained from public entities, the research conducted by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* is apparently the first of its kind to be publicized. Along with solitary death, Japan has developed two other social problems that surfaced due to the lack of societal ties: suicides and increasing criminal offenses by older adults (Chen, 2012).



Source: Kobayashi, K, Tamegai, M., Ogawa, K, Onishi, K., Shimizu, S (2016) “モーショントラッキングとフォースプレートによる臥位姿勢の要介護者起き上がり支援動作の計測と解析～筋骨格モデル3次元動画画像の作成～,” 2016 IEE Japan Industry Applications Society Conference HA-1 Industrial measurement control 2-4

In the time graph above, this data shows the number of individuals in the Tokyo metropolitan area. According to the NLI Research Institute, the estimated number of individuals that die of *kodokushi* per year is about 30,000 (Kobayashi, 2016). Many elderly people are left isolated and alone in regional areas. The number of *kodokushi* will continue to increase. Local newspapers in Japan are full of reports of these kinds of solitary deaths. Elderly men are discovered often months after they have died, filled tenant mailboxes, rent is delayed or late, or odors start creeping out from their apartments. Older men are particularly susceptible because of their pride and an unwillingness to ask for help. They retire from

lifetime jobs and lose contact with people. If they are widowed, divorced or unmarried, they are more likely to become isolated.

Despite the problems that are occurring to the male Japanese elderly, the traditional gender roles of women in society contribute to the social factors in aging Japan. The incentive for women to enter the Japanese labor force is limited. Most women are kept on a separate, lower career track from men. The average first monthly salary for a female university graduate was 186,300 JPY (\$1,779.17) in comparison with 195,500 JPY (\$1,867.03) for their male counterparts (Papademetriou, 2000). The traditional gender roles placed on women, not only limit opportunities in the workforce, but also at home. Furthermore, women who continue to work after they are married face the double burden of work and housekeeping. Within the society standards, the Japanese notion that when a woman transitions into motherhood, devoting one's self wholeheartedly and applying one's self fully to tasks, would lead to a sense of contentment (i.e. the sacrifices that have been achieved) that enable meaning in a Japanese woman's life. There are instances where the mother, who spent less than ten years working for a company, had to discontinue work due to pregnancy. There is a notion that a female between the ages of twenty-seven to twenty-eight years old, equates to the right age to raise children and should not work (Jolivet, 1997). Returning to work is difficult, and in Japanese society, a woman cannot be a full-time working mother. Society imposes on women that they are indispensable and that motherhood is where her career starts.

Maternity harassment or *matahara* refers to the unfair treatment of women, both physical and mental. It is instilled upon working Japanese women when they become pregnant or give birth, involving termination of their employment, or forced coercion to “voluntarily” leave their employment (Osaka, 2014). It was coined by Sayaka Osaka, who founded Matahara Net, which is a support group for pregnant women who experience bullying in their workplaces. In Japan, around 60% of women still leave their job when they get pregnant with their first child. As little as 43.1% of regular employees and 4% of non-

regular employees return to their workplace after maternity leave (Osaka, 2014). Up until recently, many women quit their job upon marriage and pregnancy and it was considered a virtue to do so. This old traditional value system is one reason why *matahara* emerged. Along with power harassment and sexual harassment, *matahara* is one of the three major forms of harassment that burden Japanese women in the workforce.

The younger generation in Japan has developed apathy to relationships and marriages; the gender roles between males and females have reversed, with women becoming financially independent, pushing towards their chosen career path, while men are becoming shy and fearful of relationships. About a third of Japanese individuals surveyed have not been in a relationship and do not want one (Al Jazeera, 2016). Celibacy syndrome is a term that has emerged from the apathy towards relationships. Men are losing trust in relationships with women and fear rejection in concerns to dating and have created virtual relationships such as choosing companion dolls over women (Al Jazeera, 2016). On national level, love and marriage are falling out of fashion and most are concerning themselves with only choosing a partner rather than pursuing a romantic relationship.

Immigration in Japan is a touchy subject and continues to be problematic. While the government debates about allowing more foreign workers in Japan, the public attitudes of the younger generations are becoming more open to the idea of immigration. On the contrary, opinion surveys have shown that most Japanese continue to oppose the admission of foreign workers (Papademetriou, 2000). There is a stigma regarding immigration such as fears that immigration will lead to racial ghettos, rabid discrimination, and an increase in hate crimes. Racism is also an important element of anti-immigrant arguments. The immigration issue is multidimensional, intertwined with cultural, social, and economic factors. Recent changes in laws governing the admission and treatment of foreigners suggest that Japan may be preparing to accept a certain amount of immigration-led diversification in its society. Unemployment rates among Japan's youngest and oldest workers are typically much higher than average

unemployment rates and have been on the rise. For immigration to be fully assimilated into the system, the Japanese population must be prepared to shed the ideas of insularity and xenophobia that have defined its relationships with foreigners. It is unlikely that Japan will grant non-Japanese broad naturalization and citizenship rights. Several recent government reports have emphasized the need to open up to foreigners as a way of dealing with the aging population. The Ministry of Justice recently recommended that thought be given to admitting foreign health care workers (Papademetriou, 2000). However, several government ministries including the Health and Welfare Ministry, strongly objected to this suggestion, arguing that Japan's policy of not admitting unskilled foreign workers would be contradicted.

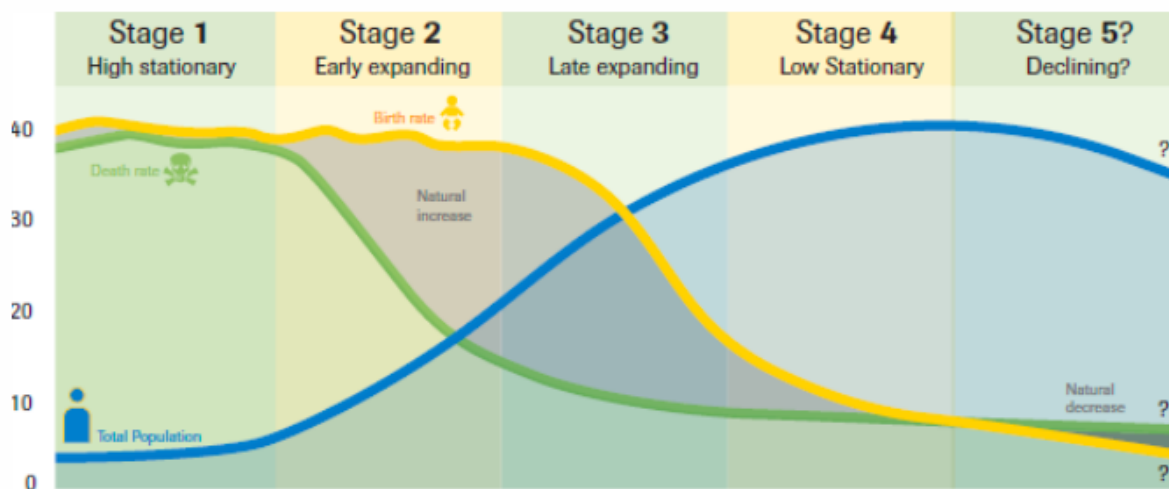
The social security system in Japan includes the systems of pension security, health care and long-term care, and public aid. These systems, universally cover the population in Japan. One issue of the elderly is social hospitalization, which is when elderly people undergo extended hospitalization. Reduction of social hospitalization will require assessment of the different roles of health care and long-term care (Robinson, 2007). In Japan, the pension system was to be a gift from the younger generation to their parents and grandparents (Ono, 2007). Due to the rapidly aging society with fewer children, the system is becoming a heavier burden for the younger generation. Without more babies now to feed the 21st century workforce, the government will have to slash pensions and hike taxes. Local governments are resorting to desperate measures; More than 3,000 local governments offer money for newborns and the promise of free medical care. For example in Takano, a small town near Hiroshima, the local government gives parents cash incentives of 100,000 JPY (\$953) for their first child and even bigger rewards are advertised to entice larger families. Once a couple has their fourth child, the Takano couple are rewarded up to 900,000 JPY (\$8,577) (Amaha, 1998). The government views babies as public goods that can be managed through policy. In Japan's low birth-rate aging society, if the current system of social security remains intact, the work-capable generation will continue to bear heavier and heavier

burdens; Inequality of net benefits (or net burdens) among generations will increase (Takao, 2009).

This capstone report explores different questions concerning age in the Japanese context. How is Japan dealing with its aging population? What factors are causing Japan's shift towards a much older age structure? Can aging communities such as Japan keep up with the technical progress and innovation? How do regional actors adopt their policies to the changing circumstances caused by the depopulation of Japan? In the Japanese society, what problems are affecting the Japanese aging population?

Theoretical Perspective:

The theoretical framework for this project is the Demographic Transition Model. The Demographic Transition Model (DTM), theorized by American demographer Warren Thompson in 1929. This framework theory shows the relationship between birth and death rates and growth rates of a population. According to this theory, economic development has the effect of bringing about a reduction in death rates. This model helps bring understanding to the changes in a country's demographics and what those changes mean, socially and economically.



Source: Grover, D.: What is the Demographic Transition Model?,
<https://populationeducation.org/what-demographic-transition-model/>.

There are four recognized stages of growth, but some demographers are starting to identify a fifth stage; All countries are experiencing changes in population at different rates. In the first stage, individuals live in agrarian societies, child reproduction is high, which has the advantage of increasing the labor force, but due to low levels of medical technology, the mortality rate is high. In the second stage, discoveries of public health, hygiene, vaccination, and clean water are established. Because of this, things that would have increased mortality in human populations are controlled and treated with medication. This means that fewer people die, levels of procreation are maintained or are increased. In the third stage, there are contraception, education for women, and urbanization development. Due to social pressures, there is not a need to produce children at the scale of stage 1 or stage 2. In the fourth stage, reasons to have children are little to null and are mainly for personal desire. Economically, having children is expensive. In the fifth stage, people rarely have children and an increasing percentage are senior citizens. Japan is classified as a fifth stage country. The population has already dropped by one million people and the expected trajectory by 2100 is that the population will drop by forty million. Once the fertility rate has dropped below a certain point, it is difficult for countries to reverse the trend.

Methodology:

For my methodology, I will be focusing on mixed methods in obtaining my research. I will be using primary resources such as Japanese government documents and reports to gather statistics on projected population results and trends of deaths. Additional primary sources include online databases such as the United Nation's data sets, the Pew Research Center's timelines and surveys, and YouTube documentaries. The secondary sources consists of scholarly journals, books, magazines articles, and the World Health Organization population distributions. I relied on Japanese news and media to get up to date findings and data and also listened to interview panels to gain insight on the Japanese perspectives. The goal of my research is to bring light to socio-cultural implications in Japanese society regarding the

problem of depopulation, specific factors that contribute to Japan's society, and solutions that can benefit Japan as a whole.

Findings:

Japan has begun implementing a variety of solutions to combat depopulation and declining birth rates. The Japanese government has launched several major initiatives such as providing matchmaking programs that help people who want children. To encourage more births, the Japanese government has introduced a series of measures over the years, which include the Angel Plan, a five-year plan in 1994 to assist couples in raising children, the New Angel Plan in 1999, followed by the Plus One Policy in 2009 (Irigoyen, 2017). The Angel Plan and the New Angel Plan were both designed to make having children an easier and more attractive option. It aims to achieve its goal by addressing a few related challenges: improve the employment environment to reconcile work and family responsibilities, enhance childcare services, strengthen maternal and child health facilities, enhance housing and public facilities for families with children, promote child development, refine the educational environment for children, and ease the economic cost associated with child rearing. The most recent idea, the Plus One Proposal, is intended to encourage families to grow by "plus one". It aims to create parent-friendly working conditions, with funds allocated to the construction of 50,000 new daycare facilities (Amaha, 1998).

There is evidence of support from the private sector, specifically from major Japanese companies. Matsushita Electric Industrial Company extended the period during which both male and female employees can take childcare leave. The Toshiba Corporation allows workers to take paid leave for childcare by the hour. Mitsubishi Electric and Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries extended their childcare policy to include parents with children up to third grade. The policy formerly only covered parents of preschoolers. This policy allows parents to reduce their working hours in order to spend more time with their children. Nissan Motor Company has set up maternity protection leave, which allows female workers in factories or other manufacturing facilities to begin maternity leaves as soon as they

find out they are pregnant (Irigoyen, 2017). In rural areas like Fukui, creating more jobs for young people in areas outside of major cities would attract young people to come back home. Implemented policy measures intended to boost birthrates include extending the period of child-rearing leave, prompting shorter working hours, securing various types of employment, fulfilling child allowances, and increasing the number of nursery schools.

The modern day Japanese male struggles with low self-esteem and harbors unrealistic expectations for women. Due to the media's exaggerated portrayal of romance and relationships, Japanese men are becoming disenchanted with the idea of being in a relationship. Japanese men overall are having a difficult time adjusting to the growing trend of financially and socially independent women. Men are now relying on companion dolls and virtual games such as dating sims to fulfill their romantic desires. Japan is creating governmental projects in rural and city areas to facilitate match making and arranged marriages. The government supports arranged marriages because it alleviates stress and effort into building a relationship and satisfies the young generations desire for instant gratification (Al Jazeera, 2007).

In elderly couples, an occurrence "retired husband syndrome" has become problematic for older women. "Retired husband syndrome" occurs when married men, who have worked the majority of their life, are spending too much time at home and do not have the skills to take care of themselves properly (Al Jazeera, 2007). This causes problems and places a heavy burden on married women, as their husbands follow them everywhere and rely on them for basic necessities. Programs have been developed to alleviate the burden on elderly women by teaching retired men to learn basic living essentials and skills.

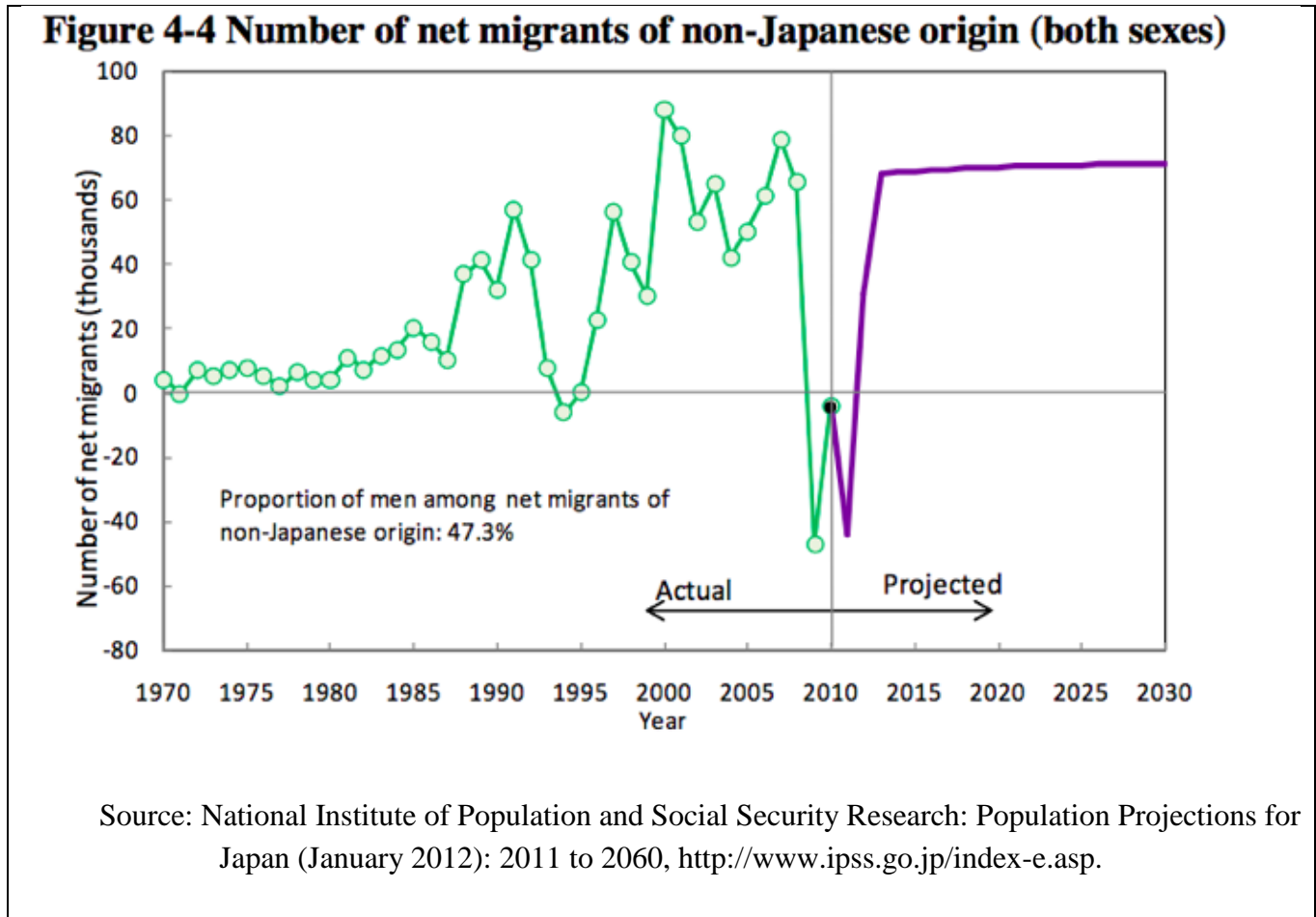
The Japanese elderly are working past the retirement age of sixty-five years old, keeping individuals active and increasing longevity. Approximately one-half of all Japanese men aged sixty to seventy and one-quarter of those aged seventy to seventy-five, remain in the work force (Takao, 2009).

The elderly of Japan also engage in volunteering. Many elderly have the skills, experience, and desire to continue playing an active and useful role in society. There are many types of volunteerism which include peer support, campaigns, advocacy and self-help (Chen, 2012). In Japan, there is an expectation by the Japanese government for older adults to volunteer. Japan appears to have embraced “moral citizenship” as a reason for volunteering. The government oversees volunteer activities and has deemed volunteerism as a socially acceptable way for the elderly to contribute to society

Volunteerism has fostered a culture of responsibility to solve social problems at national and local levels efficiently and effectively, by utilizing individuals as social resources. By 2007, 21.5% of the Japanese population was over sixty-five years old and by 2020, projected to be at 40.5%. (Lam, 2009). According to the Cabinet Office’s 2003 survey on attitude participation toward local communities by the elderly, the number of people saying that they had participated in some form of volunteer activity over the past year rose (Robinson, 2007). Elderly people participate in a varied range of activities such as child care, community safety programs, and social education. This shows that elderly people are becoming more self-reliant. Most elderly people living in rural areas belong to senior clubs for recreation and leisure. Although there is a growing number of dementia patients in Japan, a crowd-funded project was developed allowing dementia patients to work at a pop up restaurant. This provided dementia patients with a meaningful way to stay active and negate the stereotypes against dementia (Al Jazeera, 2018).

The long-term fear of population decline and its potential impact on society and the economy, coexists with short-term population pressures. Part of Japan’s reluctance to accept immigrants results from the popular perception that Japan is already bursting at the seams with its own people. Despite significant changes in the structure of the population, Japan will remain a densely populated country smaller than the state of California (Papademetriou, 2000). Although most Japanese would welcome less

crowded conditions, many elderly individuals with progressively fewer young workers is simply unviable.



Ultimately, Japan will have to rely more heavily on foreigners for important social and economic purposes. This includes keeping retirement and public health systems stable and production systems working. A recent United Nations study suggests even more strongly that Japan will need 17 million immigrants if it is to prevent its population from declining. Likewise, to prevent a decline in the size of its working-age population (ages fifteen to sixty-four years old) during the same period, Japan will need nearly 33.5 million immigrants (United Nations Population Division, 2000). The same UN study estimates that Japan would have to mandate a retirement age of seventy-seven years in order to avoid decline in the non-working age population (United Nations Population Division, 2000). Solutions to help

with the immigration problem are to develop set immigration rules that are transparent, measured, enforceable, and administered consistently. Rules should lead to fair and predictable outcomes for immigrants and their families as well as their employers. This reduces incentive for employers to violate immigration laws. Japan must come to terms that, as a country, it has a responsibility as a government to develop societal attitudes for its people. There must be allowance to have long-term foreign residents become full members of Japanese society.

The care of the elderly in hospitals and hospice care are difficult due to the lack of caregivers needed. In 2010, Japan already had 30 million elderly and infirm individuals in care facilities, but had substantially fewer than the projected 2 million caregivers needed to look after them (Hay, 2015). In 2013 and 2014, the Japanese government issued funding into incentivizing elder care robotics. Elder care robot research and development has grown more conventional and cheaper, producing products with greater functionality and broader consumer acceptance. It is starting to take hold in companies beyond Japan too, suggesting a growing wave of acceptance and support for the concept. A humanoid robot called PALRO, created by Fujisoft Incorporated and priced at 300,000 JPY (\$2,805), plays trivia games and dances (PALRO, 2010). PALRO has software that enables facial and voice recognition capabilities and is designed to communicate with people smoothly. Over the past few years, new machines have been developed with the potential to alleviate the physical strains of elder care as well. In 2015, the Riken Institute and Sumitomo Riko Company in Nagoya released their latest Robear, which was designed to be a robotic nurse in the shape of a bear. Robear is strong and agile enough to gently lift a patient from a bed to a wheelchair, or help them get from a sitting position to a standing one (Riken.jp, 2015).

Cyberdyne has started to develop Hybrid Assistive Limbs (HAL) which stabilize and magnify the strength of the wearer. HAL is considered to be the system that accelerates the motor learning of cerebral nerves and also assists physically challenged people to move and enable them to exert greater

kinetic energy than usual. These HALs react to electrical impulses in the skin without the need for actual movement, working a powerful exoskeleton with a series of small motors. Not only can these exoskeletons help reduce the back injuries that up to 70% of professional Japanese caregivers encounter on the job, but they can also, potentially, give the elderly their mobility and freedom back (HAL, 2018). Future applications of HAL can be applied to various fields such as motion relief in the welfare field, reinforcement for heavy work in factories, and assistance for rescue activities on disaster sites (HAL, 2018). Robotic solutions may address the need for a less time-consuming treatment by providing remotely located physicians with a means of medical supervision. Assistant robotic platforms like that can be used both in healthcare facilities with the patient being hospitalized or at the patient's home allowing them and their family to keep in touch with doctors and nurses. Since elderly people are now more likely to reside away from their families and live alone due to the shortages within the nursing care system, this supports the argument that such a development will inevitably lead to robots in the role of companions that ease the feeling of loneliness.

The Japanese labor market for women is currently going through major changes in terms of improved gender equality policies, adequate work-life balance, better maternity leave options, and improved childcare facilities. After women have briefly worked, they are expected to drop out of the labor force, and only after their children have finished school do they have the possibility of working again (Aronsson, 2015). One of the reasons why women leave the workforce is because of the workplace itself and not due to the lack of childcare support or lack of senior care and homes. From a feminist perspective, Japan's low fertility is not only an outcome of the women's choice, but an indicator of the difficulty women have in balancing both the demands of work and motherhood. Women tend to abandon their careers and lose their economic independence. This leads to them struggling to make a choice between their career and motherhood. Improved policies for maternity leave and affordable childcare is

essential, but is not quite sufficient to promote a balanced work-family life for Japanese women. The role of women is experiencing a social shift and for the first time in Japanese history (Al Jazeera, 2007).

Adaptation to Japanese society is a challenge to most foreigners, regardless of legal status. Due to the unskilled and semiskilled work in Japan, foreign workers have tended to ignore or at least to endure the often difficult conditions that go along with living as a foreigner. Despite acknowledging their dependence on foreign labor, the strict behavior of many Japanese employers seem to increase the hardships experienced by clandestine immigrants. Foreign workers complain of unscrupulous employers that violate basic labor protections and even their human rights with impunity, because unauthorized migrants do not enjoy the full protection of the law. Many are denied the benefits that are regularly accorded to native and other legal workers, including paid holidays and overtime. In February 2000, Japan enacted even stronger regulations against unauthorized immigrants, raising the one-year ban on reentry to five years plus tougher enforcement efforts. Thus combined with the economic crisis, has led to only modest decreases in unauthorized migration (Papademetriou, 2000). In January 2000, the Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st century released a report on governance in the new millennium. It argues that Japan's focus over the next century should be on issues related to diversity, "global literacy", and individualism. To compete in the future and regain its sagging global stature, Japan should institute broad-ranging social changes such as adopting English as an official second language, reducing the school week, and increasing immigration.

Since 2016, the number of foreign workers in Japan surpassed one million and this was a 20% increase in a one year time span (REUTERS, 2017). Japan is facing its worst labor rates since 1991, which has prompted the International Monetary Fund to accept more overseas workers to boost economic growth. In December, the Japanese government bolstered its foreign worker interests by expanding on creating new visa status for nurses and domestic helpers. The trainee system, whose aim is to train foreign workers so they can bring skills back to their home country, is often used by labor-strapped companies

to secure workers. The program has been long dogged by cases of labor abuse including illegal overtime and unpaid wages, prompting criticism from Human Rights Watch and the U.S. State Department. Despite some calls for dramatic increases in the foreign population, immigration remains unpopular in Japan, and the government has been hesitant to make explicit public pronouncements supporting increased immigration or changes to immigration policy. At the same time, the native population will continue to grow older and labor shortages will become more evident. From a long term perspective, as the country seeks to maintain the balance of its labor market, while economic pressures continue, large scale increase in immigration appear inevitable (Green, 2017). It is also reasonable to expect greater promotion of immigration to rural Japan in the longer term, as these areas continue to depopulate. Immigration remains deeply unpopular in Japan according to public opinion polls, however, no explicit, large-scale efforts have been undertaken to increase immigration levels. To serve as a viable solution for Japan's aging, immigrants would need to make up at least 10% of the overall population by some estimates, an unfeasibly large number by most accounts given the strong preference that remains for ethnic and cultural homogeneity and the public backlash that would likely ensue (Green, 2017).

Analysis:

Japan's population seems to have reached a point where it will not decrease or increase dramatically. Japan is in the fifth stage of the Demographic Transition Model and it is hard to predict what will happen to the country in the future. Japan seems to have progressed further than most countries that have four DTM stages and could potentially map the way for more developed countries, who would experience declining populations. The birthrate in Japan has been declining due to women focusing on work life and are less worried about having children. Contraception and abortions are more widely accepted and available which has caused a declining number of children in comparison to the elderly population. Japan's aging population has a higher death rate and ranks the highest when compared to

other advanced countries. Japan's aging population is causing a multitude of problems which can be solved with policy changes.

On a global scale, population aging is a phenomenon. The social, economic, and ethical dilemmas associated with population aging are no longer unique to the industrialized world, but have spread rapidly throughout the developed world. In all societies, the transition from a youthful to an elderly age structure will dominate the demography of the 21st century. The process and problems of aging cannot focus entirely on the elderly. It is the responsibility of adults in the 21st century, to sustain productive economic activity and prepare and nurture the future generations. The declining share of young (childbearing-age) adults in the population will delay the positive impact on age structure and population growth. Due to demographic momentum, population growth takes a long time to slow down. Once it has stopped, it also takes a long time to speed up again. The transformation will affect different groups of countries at different times. The regions of the world will become more unlike before they become more similar.

The aging developed countries will face chronic shortages of young-adult man-power, posing challenges both for their economies and their security forces. Domestic youth shortages will create powerful economic incentives to encourage immigration and trade. An aging developed world may struggle to remain culturally attractive and politically relevant to younger societies. As advanced societies age, they are no longer regarded as progressive advocates for the future, but are now hindered by the generations that came before them. Transitions that progress too fast or too far may also cause countries to grow old while they are still in the midst of development, potentially undermining economic growth and threatening social and political stability.

Conclusion:

The oldest of the old are growing more rapidly than the younger generation, with significant consequences such as ageism, rural poverty, inadequate health insurance, and social security. Japan is a case where the problems of aging does not stem from one single issue, but different factors such as

cultural, economic, and social issues that are interconnected. As Japan is nearing the 2020 Olympics, the country is preparing and promoting culture and traditions in order to attract tourism and foreigners. The Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (GSI), is proposing that symbols need to be changed on shrines and tourist areas such as the controversial Sanskrit Buddhist symbol, *manji* (卍), which has long been associated with Buddhism and Japanese culture (BBC News, 2016).

Global health and aging is an international development issue which demand a critical attention. The global demography of age shows dramatic differences between different regions. Japan is a good case study to look at the current aging population trends because Japan is ahead of the aging curve and is the example of where the world is heading in due time. Europe currently has the highest proportion of population that are age sixty-five years and older and is projected to double by the mid-century because the number of declining birthrates are below the replacement level. The population of Japan and China are both rising considerably, which is reaping the consequences of successful efforts to slow population growth. Population aging can be viewed through different global and individual perspectives and lenses which factors in different cultural presuppositions. In the end, the international community must learn from each other and the global aging problem will take more than the lifetime of an individual to create solutions. Global population aging can be solved but must be confronted as a singular unit to challenge and create opportunities for the aging world.

There were limitations to my capstone research. There was reliance on Japanese government documents that were only translated in English and I wish to have pursued qualitative and quantitative surveys on a set number of Japanese citizens, ranging from different age groups, to acquire more current perspectives. My research focused on city wide elderly populations instead of rural areas, where there are higher rates of depopulation. Future studies should be conducted to further the research of depopulation in Japan. Japanese government strategies and health regulations should be implemented and monitored to assess long-term results. The results should be taken into consideration to improve

future solutions. This project is a contribution towards gerontology work regarding Japan and can be further expanded on in future studies.

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