

## COMPLETION REPORT

Family Resources, Job Features and Transitions to Marriage and Parenthood in Japan

Yu Wei-hsin (+1)

Professor

Department of Sociology

University of Maryland, College Park (USA)

With the support from the Sumitomo Foundation, I have completed the research project on the delayed marriage and fertility in Japan and published two articles on prestigious peer-reviewed journals. In the first article, entitled “Explaining the Effect of Parent-Child Coresidence on Marriage Formation: The Case of Japan,” published in *Demography* in 2016, my coauthor and I use multiple waves of the Japan Life Course Panel Survey data to examine why the cultural norm of premarital parent-child coresidence in Japan contributes to delayed marriage timing. Specifically, we investigate whether changes in never-married adults’ residential status lead to alterations in their marital aspirations, courtship behaviors, romantic opportunities, and perceived obstacles to marrying. Our analysis indicates that living with parents is associated with lower probability of forming romantic relationships, thereby decelerating the transition to first marriage. The never-married, however, do not desire marriage less, put less effort into finding romantic partners, or have fewer opportunities to meet potential partners when coresiding with parents. Overall, the findings suggest that living in the parental home increases never-married men’s contentment with their immediate social environment, whereas it decreases women’s psychological readiness to transition into adult roles, making both groups less eager to settle into a romantic relationship. In addition to showing the reasons behind the effect parent-child coresidence on marriage timing, we also demonstrate that relationship formation is the key to understanding the rising age of marriage and fertility in Japan. Thus, social policies aiming to address Japan’s low fertility should focus more on obstacles to young adults’ relationship formation.

In a second paper, entitled “Another Work-Family Interface: Work Characteristics and Family Intentions in Japan,” which appears in *Demographic Research* in January 2017, we use the same data set to examine how singles’ job and workplace characteristics are associated with their intentions to marry and have children. We find that, surprisingly, work characteristics conducive to less work-family conflict are rarely associated with stronger desires to marry and have children. For never-married men in Japan, the most relevant job qualities to family intentions are those implying a bright economic future. Job conditions suggesting work-family conflict could be positively related to marriage and parenthood desires if they might also indicate promising career prospects. Conversely, workplace sociability is highly relevant to women’s marriage and fertility intentions. Never-married women working in more collaborative and interactive environments seek potential marriage partners more actively, want to marry and become parents more, and have higher preferred numbers of children. We suggest that in more sociable environments, childless singles tend to be more exposed to earlier cohorts’ family experiences and beliefs and thus become more interested in marriage and parenthood. In this sense, policies addressing Japan’s low marriage and fertility should focus on how social norms change from one generation to the next, and how social contexts play a role in shaping young people’s exposure to married people’s family experiences.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Yu, Wei-hsin, "Issues on Gender and Fertility in East Asia," presented at the Association for Asian Studies in Asia, Kyoto, Japan, in August 2016.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Yu, Wei-hsin and Janet C. Kuo. 2017. "Another Work-Family Interface: Work Characteristics and Family Intentions in Japan." *Demographic Research* 36:391-429.

Yu, Wei-hsin and Janet C. Kuo. 2016. "Explaining the Effect of Parent-Child Coresidence on Marriage Formation: The Case of Japan," *Demography* 53:1283-1318.

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)