



The
University
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Sheffield.

Changing Families,
Changing Food.

Japanese families

Principal Investigator
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Summary

The Japanese family is in a period of transition, and this is reflected in the organization of meals at home. This project aims to elucidate the ongoing changes in Japanese families through tracing and analyzing how meals at home have been organized in Japan since 1945. In particular, it sheds light on the commercialization of housework, or more specifically, the outsourcing

of meal cooking, resulting from the recent transformation of the demographic and economic structure. Also, it will examine how the normative discourse of food consumption produced by educators, social critics and food experts is functioning in a society with families that are rapidly changing.

Royal Holloway
University of London

The Leverhulme Trust

www.sheffield.ac.uk/familiesandfood

Research questions

- In what way have the organization of family meals at home changed since 1945 in Japan?
- To what extent has the outsourcing of family meals permeated the everyday life of Japanese people? How has outsourcing changed the popular pattern of meal organization at home?
- How did the expansion of women's participation in paid work impact this process?
- What kind of discourse has been produced by educators, social critics and food experts on the changes of the organization of family meals? How and in what ways do Japanese people perceive, interpret and react to such discourse? How is the normative discourse of food consumption functioning in a society with families that are rapidly changing?



Research design

The project is divided into three stages:

- In the first stage, the focus is laid on the initial literature, document research and collection of statistical data in order to build a foundation of discursive samples. At the end of this stage, a two/three-week research trip to Japan will be taken to collect discursive samples.
- The second stage involves the collected data from the first field trip being examined and organized for each journal article. In so doing, missing data will be identified, and a supplementary research trip at the end of this stage will be conducted to fill these gaps in data.
- The third stage will be the writing of articles.

The 'Changing Families, Changing Food' Programme

'*Changing Families, Changing Food*' is a major inter-disciplinary research programme, funded by The Leverhulme Trust. The Programme began in October 2005 and will run for just over three years.

It is organised into three research strands on: pregnancy and motherhood; childhood and family life; and family and community. Focusing on contemporary Britain, the Programme also includes some international comparisons and a 'time-line' to establish the quantitative and qualitative nature of social changes affecting families and food over the last century.

The Programme is coordinated by Peter Jackson (Director of Research for the Social Sciences at Sheffield University) and is based in ICoSS (the University's new social science facility). The Programme involves colleagues from Clinical Sciences, East Asian Studies, Geography, Nursing and Midwifery, the School for Health and Related Research and Sociological Studies at Sheffield in collaboration with colleagues in Health and Social Care at Royal Holloway, University of London.

The research takes food as the lens through which to observe recent changes in family life and examines how changes in family form have affected patterns of food consumption. The Programme's findings are expected to contribute to current debates about obesity and nutrition, media and consumption, food choice and deprivation.

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