

育てる男が、家族を変える。社会が動く。

# Fatherhood and Consumption: An Exploratory Study of Soon-to-be Fathers in Japan

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18:00-19:30, Dec. 9th, 2013

Sophia University Building 10, Room 301 (3F)



Japanese society has been undergoing tremendous transformations in recent years, with various new social trends emerging. One of them is the change in family organization and family life and in particular the role and identity of the father. The most well-known example of this is the rise of the so-called *ikumen*, i.e. men who actively engage in child rearing.



While Japanese fathers have been studied in the area of family sociology, research on recent changes in fatherhood in Japan and the *ikumen* in particular is still in its infancy. So far, no study has looked into the issue of consumer behavior of fathers in Japan and how

consumption patterns change with fatherhood. The present research is a collaboration of two German-Japanese *papa tomo* (father friends) using a qualitative approach based on Consumer Culture Theory to study *ikumen* and the rise of fatherly consumption in Japan. This paper reports preliminary findings based on in-depth interviews with 13 *pre-papas* (soon-to-be-fathers)

and their spouses (*pre-mamas*). These findings revolve around six major themes: *ikumen*/ child-rearing issues; fatherhood and paternal identity; parental/ paternity leave; religious/ spiritual celebrations and traditions; family budgeting; consumption of goods and services (both related and unrelated to child-rearing). Our empirical evidence suggests that fatherly consumption goes far beyond the mere purchase of goods and services connected to child rearing and reveals insights into the role of individual, family, and social identities in becoming a father and how they shape the consumer culture of fatherhood in Japan. (*This research is done in collaboration with Kosuke Mizukoshi, Tokyo Metropolitan University.*)

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