

Japan's Demographic Crisis: Aging, Gender, and Immigration
Christopher Chang
Advisor: Professor Heng Pekkoon
Spring 2009
General University Honors

Japan's Demographic Crisis: Aging, Gender, and Immigration

1. Introduction
2. Demographic Anxiety
 - a. Demographic Transition
3. Cultural Roots of Demographic Crisis
4. Manifestation of Cultural Concerns
 - a. The Japanese Family
 - b. Work-Life Balance
 - c. Aging Population
5. Saving Japan
 - a. Immigration
 - b. Gender Issues at Work and Home
6. Conclusion
 - a. Policy Proposal
 - b. Final Analysis

JAPAN'S DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS: AGING, GENDER, AND IMMIGRATION

Introduction

Japan, one of the world's eminent economic powers, enjoys high living standards and a rising rate of life expectancy. With that said, the Japanese are facing a potential demographic catastrophe. Their population is rapidly aging and declining in size, which is greatly changing the dynamics of the island nation. This is affecting the size of the workforce, welfare programs, and the social safety net put in place for the retired and unemployed. Most importantly, such demographic changes will undermine Japan's political and economic strength. The Japanese Statistics Bureau predicts that if there are no changes made to demographic policies, Japan's population will go from 127 million to 64 million by 2100. By 2050, 40 percent of the population will be over 65 whereas those under 15 will represent less than 9 percent. What policy changes are necessary to manage this demographic transition and its attendant political, economic, and social consequences, considering the factors that have impeded an adequate policy response in the past?

There must be a thorough investigation in regards to Japan's demographic anxiety: an aging population, gender inequality in society and in the workplace, along with women avoiding marriage and children. It is important to understand how embedded cultural norms have prevented policy changes from gaining traction. With Japanese men working long hours and women growing unsatisfied with the prospects of being a housewife, the dynamics of the modern Japanese family may be a significant component of the issue, yet additional analysis is necessary. The questions I ask are necessary pieces to the puzzle that must be solved to ensure Japan continues to exist in this century. How can Japan incorporate immigrants successfully into their societies? Which incentives must Japan

provide to accomplish higher fertility rates? What must Japan guarantee for women in order for them to achieve parity in the workforce and at home?

As a whole, there is little doubt that Japan faces a serious demographic predicament. Such concerns become difficult to separate within the network that keep many of these issues interconnected. The “uniqueness” that is Japan cannot be understated; but through comprehending what make the Japanese who they are, I can construct a comprehensive policy proposal adapting to Japan’s needs.

Demographic Anxiety

According to the Central Intelligence Agency’s World Fact Book, in 2009, the Japanese population numbers about 127 million with a growth rate just under zero at -0.19 percent¹. Even with a population that is beginning to decline, Japan is still the twelfth most populated country and make up 1.9 percent of the world's total (as seen in Figure 1). Regarding population density, Japan averages 377 persons/km² though it is arguable that this is not truly reflective for the majority of Japan’s population. Major metropolitan areas such as Tokyo have over 5000 persons/km².

Richard Jackson and Neil Howe of the Center for Strategic and International Studies succinctly summarize the inevitable nature of the demographic transformation and its geopolitical implications. Unfortunately, for Japan, it remains the poster child for the dire consequences that lie ahead:

The world is entering a demographic transformation of unprecedented dimensions [and] the coming transformation is both certain and lasting. There is almost no chance that it will not happen—or that it will be reversed in our lifetime...the transformation will have sweeping economic, social, and political consequences... (Jackson and Howe 1-2)

¹ Growth rate is equal to crude birth rate - crude death rate + net immigration rate

Figure 1: Japan Ranked Against the World

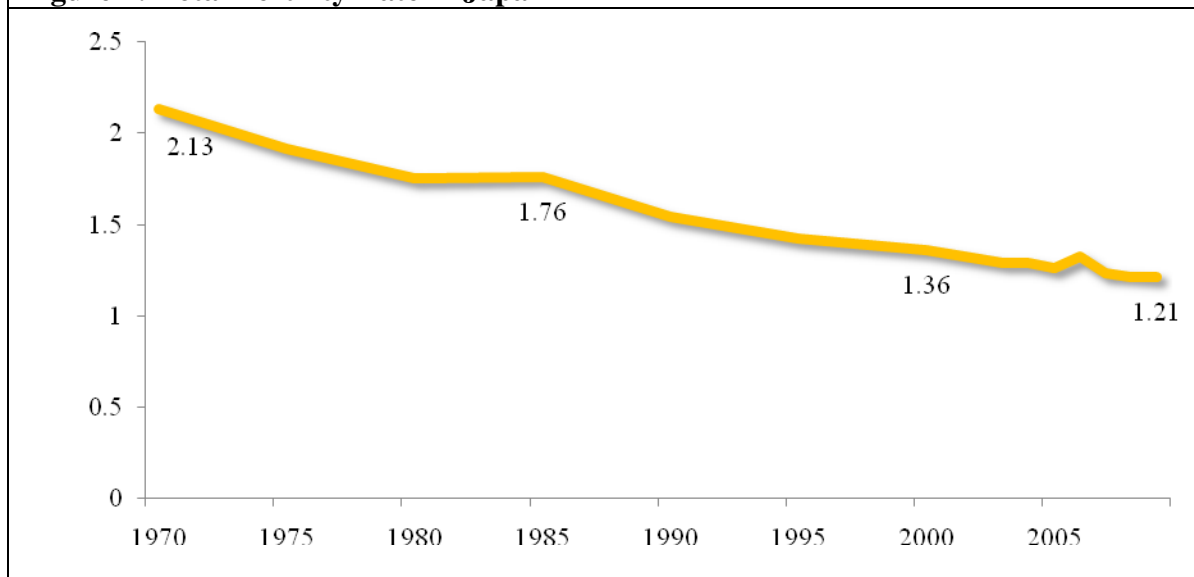
	Japan, 2008	World Rank
GDP	\$4.35 trillion	#5
Population	127,288,419	#12
Population Growth Rate	-0.191%	#220
Population Density	337/km ²	#30
Median Age	44.2 years	#1*
Life Expectancy	82.12 years	#1*
Birth Rates	7.87/1,000	#224
Death Rates	9.26/1,000	#72
Total Fertility Rates	1.21	#219
Source: CIA World Fact Book. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html . Accessed April 14, 2009 World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision Population Database. http://esa.un.org/unpp/ . Accessed April 14 2009		

This is a fundamental shift has neither a historical parallel nor is it a temporary phenomenon. Decades driven by the powerful economic, social and cultural currents of modernity in Japan have resulted in irreversible and well-established demographic trends. The total fertility rate (TFR)² for Japan is 1.22, which is well below replacement level³. Jackson reiterates that even if the total fertility rates reached replacement level overnight, it would have no impact on the old-age dependency ratio⁴ or the size of the working-age population until the mid 2020s and only a marginal impact until the mid 2030s (see Figure 2). Japan will not only see its population decline, its GDP will go south along with innovation, entrepreneurship, and rates of savings and investments and global influence.

² The total fertility rate of a population is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime. It is obtained by summing the single-year age-specific rates at a given time.

³ The replacement level is the level in which a population reproduces just enough to replace itself while accounting for some mortality—a zero population growth rate. In industrialized countries, it is 2.1.

⁴ The dependency ratio consist of those not in the labor force (children and retirees) and those in the labor force

Figure 2: Total Fertility Rate in Japan

Source: CIA World Fact Book - Japan <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>, Accessed April 14, 2009

Currently, the median age of population is 44.2 years old⁵ and the life expectancy at birth is slightly over 82 years old⁶, with women living longer than men do⁷ (Central Intelligence Agency). With no signs of reversal, an older Japan will lean further towards risk-aversion and their government officials will represent a much more conservative outlook.

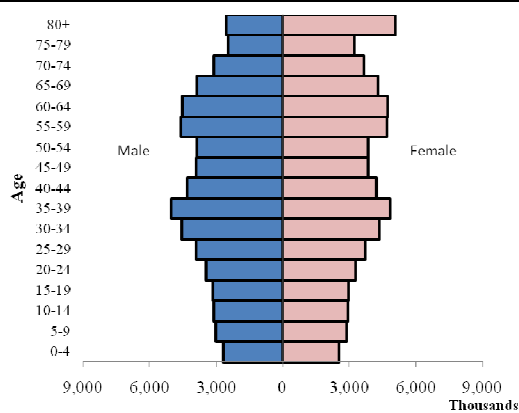
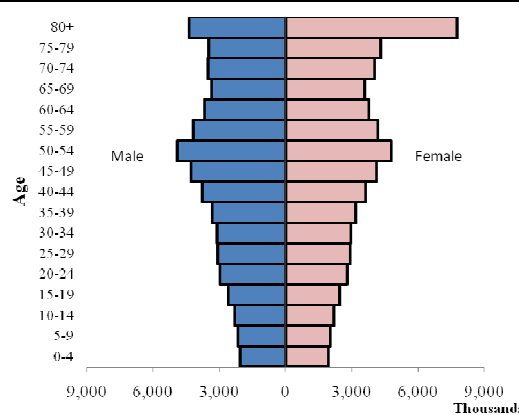
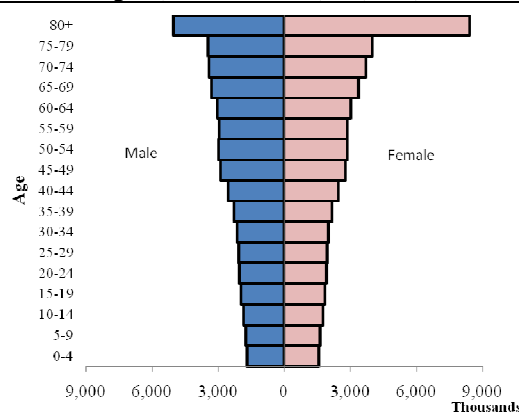
Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt, a political economist American Enterprise Institute and Senior Adviser to the National Bureau of Asian Research, also believes that the study of demography can produce near accurate projections and present an inescapable scenario for the nation. The driving factors in changing a nation's population profile are birthrates and fertility levels. By the United Nations Population Division's estimates, the net reproduction rate⁸ in Japan in the first half of this decade was just 0.64—meaning each new generation

⁵ Median age: Total – 44.2; Male – 42.4; Female – 46.1

⁶ Life Expectancy at birth: Total – 82.12; Male – 78.8; Female – 85.62

⁷ Sex ratio: Total – 0.95 male/female; 0-14 – 1.06; 15-64 – 1.01; 65+ – 0.74

⁸ The expected number of surviving daughters per woman under current childbearing patterns in the absence of immigration

Figure 3.1: Japan, 2008 (Total: 127,288,419)**Figure 3.2: Japan, 2025 (Total: 117,816,135)****Figure 3.3: Japan, 2050 (Total, 93,673,826)**

Source: U.S. Census – International Database
<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/tables.html>,
 Accessed April 14, 2009

would be about 36 percent smaller than the one before it (Eberstadt). Population change comes gradually and as long as government interference is at a minimum, such change is the result of choices made by individuals. In Japan's case, women's choices made an indelible impact on Japan's future. The increase in female educational attainment, the entry of women into the labor force, and the rising average age of marriage and the rising age of first childbirth all played a role in depressing fertility (Jackson and Howe 47).

To understand the demographic reality of the aging crisis in the Japan, it is important to visualize how skewed the population

is and will become. Using gender and age statistics derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's International Data Base, population pyramids present an excellent visual that tell the

comprehensive story of a nation's demographic past, present, and destiny. The Japanese age structure produces an inverted pyramid, in which the smallest proportion of the population are the youngest and the oldest Japanese make up the larger proportion⁹. The population pyramids for the years 2009, 2025, and 2050 can be seen in Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 respectively. Through the next forty years, the population structure not only inverts, it narrows considerably.

Japan's prospects are the result of a perfect demographic storm: declining fertility, escalating life expectancy, and negligible net migration. An aging population puts pressure on a shrinking workforce to keep an economy afloat, which is facing an ever-falling fertility rate, which of course puts pressure on women, who, in higher numbers, are delaying marriage and children in order to contribute to the same declining labor force that is denying them an equal opportunity.

Demographic Transition

Often cited by historians and scholars, the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853, "opened" Japan to the world, as it would fundamentally transform the island nation due to learning and adapting from its new trading partners. During the Meiji Period (1868-1912)¹⁰, a time of significant political and economic change, population growth began to expand rapidly in tandem with growth in modernizing industrial sectors. The population would double within sixty years, from 30 million in the 1860s to 60 million by the 1920s as the governing powers worked to fulfill many domestic and foreign economic and political objectives (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication). Despite Japan's small supporting role in World War I, the war allowed Japan to diversify and increase its exports

⁹ Age structure: 0-14— 13.5%; 15-64 – 64.3%; 65+ – 22.2%

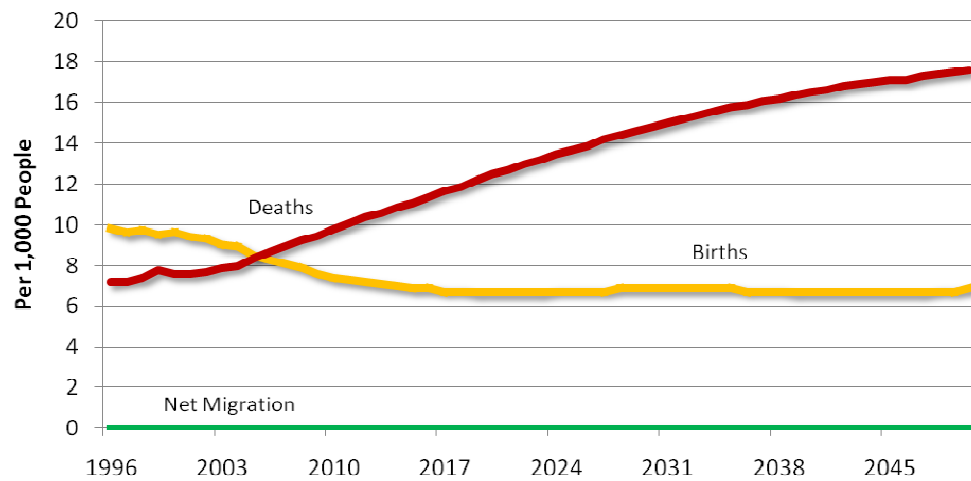
¹⁰ Meiji Period denotes the 45-year reign of the Meiji Emperor. During this time, Japan started its modernization and rose to world power status. This era name means "Enlightened Rule".

due to an influx of capital investment. By the end of war, Japan was well on its way to becoming an important power in international politics and the world economy (Library of Congress).

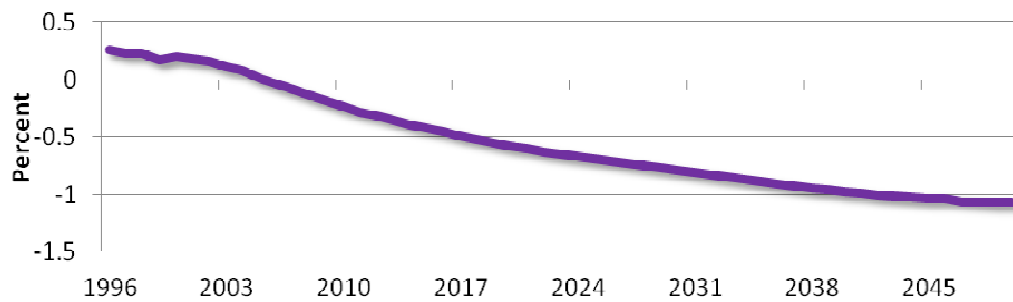
As Japan industrialized, it also centralized its control and defined itself as formidable power on the world scale; successful wars and skirmishes, mostly against China, only furthered such pride for Japan. Japan, in search for raw resources that were in high demand was pushing its expansionist methodology more than ever. Western nations soon grew weary of Japan, so did Japan of the West. Japan's ultra-nationalist movement was not surprising and the xenophobic and Asia-centric tendencies still lurk today. Ultra-nationalism fueled militant Japanese authoritarianism, which would reach its peak during World War II and ended swiftly at the hands of the United States with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Library of Congress).

As Commodore Perry helped Japan open itself to the world, the United States again would forever change Japan through the post WWII occupation and reconstruction. The Japanese saw a chance to start again. A strong work ethos and a large influx of U.S. financial assistance provided the means to rebuild their society. Beginning with a baby boom early on during U.S. occupation, the population would grow parallel to the Japanese economy (McCargo 37). Japan enjoyed a significant demographic dividend¹¹ in the second half of the twentieth century. Real economic growth reached 10 percent in the 1960s when the population hit 100 million. Economic growth was 5 percent and 4 percent in the 1970s and 1980s respectively and as population growth slowed so did the expanding economy

¹¹ Low aged-dependency ratios and large working-age populations boost employment, savings, investment, and economic growth (Jackson and Howe 46)

Figure 4: Population Prospects

Source: U.S. Census – International Database <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/tables.html>, Accessed April 14, 2009

Figure 5: Projected Rate of Population Growth

Source: U.S. Census – International Database <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/tables.html>, Accessed April 14, 2009

(Central Intelligence Agency 2008). Because Japan was still growing at its natural rate, there was little attention to the growing number of single women who would not bear any children. In fact, birthrates were going in the opposite direction – the TFR fell from 4.5 in 1947 to 2.1 in the 1960s, and further to only 1.5 in 1995 (Jones 35). Figure 4 reflects population prospects of Japan while Figure 5 is the projected rate of growth based on those prospects. Japan's precipitous population decline will define Japan and its economy for generations.

Cultural Roots of a Demographic Crisis

It is difficult to analyze Japan and its people, thus scholars have various methods of understanding Japan. Duncan McCargo, a professor of Southeast Asia politics at the University of Leeds introduces his book, *Contemporary Japan*, with three approaches Japanese scholars use to comprehend Japan. The mainstream perspective emphasizes points of comparison between Japan and other countries, finding that Japan has similar political, economic, and social systems as its Western counterparts. Often scholars in the mainstream perspective are overly optimistic on how much other Western nations, such as the United States, can learn from Japan. Revisionist scholars see Japan's dark side and believe Japan is deeply flawed due to its distinct characteristics that are in fact undemocratic. The political system is said to be suffering from a considerable degree of structural corruption and Japan's efforts to blatantly manipulate and restrict trade, makes Japan an unsatisfactory colleague on the world level (McCargo 1-5).

The third and final viewpoint is the cultural perspective. This idea is to understand that you will not readily understand. Japan is thought of as very different and that the Japanese conduct their lives very in a manner unlike Western societies (McCargo 5-6). The study of being Japanese is known as *nihonjinron*, which literally means theories/discussions about the Japanese. Scholars understand *nihonjinron* as particular uniqueness of the Japanese people that is rooted in distinctive homogenous characteristics, which have remained the same throughout history. Peter Dale, author of the *Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, sees *nihonjinron* as a tool used by those in power for enforcing social and political conformity, which for the most part has worked (Dale).

One cannot be have citizenship and be considered Japanese, in fact, it is much deeper than that. One must have the right attributes and characteristics to be considered Japanese. Yoshio Sugimoto, a sociology professor and author of *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, explains one must consider at least seven aspects of “Japaneseness:” Nationality, ethnic lineage, language, competence, place of birth, current residence, subjective identity, and level of cultural literacy (Sugimoto 186-187). With such high standards, one can imagine due to the various subcultures that exist in any society, that even native-born Japanese could be considered foreign in their own country.

Nevertheless, Japanese leadership have long indoctrinated a mythos of racial purity and superiority, especially towards their Asian neighbors. Much of this stems from Shintoism, the other major religious practice next to Buddhism. Shinto in its original form was a worship of *mana*, the supernatural power that resides in all natural things such as humans, animals, and nature (McCargo 86). During the Meiji Period, the government made Shintoism, the state religion and declared the emperor as a divine force, which then encouraged emperor worship. If one was considered Yamato, the dominant native ethnic group in Japan, then he or she belonged to a divine race. This is what has led to Japan believing they are the superior and dominant culture and explains their desire to control their Asian neighbors. During the U.S. the occupation, the U.S. forced Japan to renounce the emperor’s divinity, though that did not stop anybody from continuing to believe it (Dower).

There are certain core values and beliefs that underscore Japanese society, including collectivism, consensus, hierarchy, and status (McCargo 71-72). An excellent example is Confucianism, a set of teachings to guide morality and peace originating from

the Chinese scholar, Confucius. The principles became a significant force in Japan in influencing government, society, and familial relationships. According to Confucius, social harmony can exist when a series of unequal relationships and bonds are respected: ruler to subject, father to son, husband to wife, elder brother to younger brother, and friend to friend. This most important virtue in Confucianism does much to explain the ingrained societal norms that exist today as women are supposed to be subservient to men and veneration of the aged at work and home is of prime importance regardless of other mitigating factors (Library of Congress).

The Japanese language is a daily reinforcement of what makes those cultural norms. It is complex and filled with honorific expressions that put focus and attention on the social status of those surrounding the speaker. The language differentiates between male and female vocabulary, expressions, and accents with the intention of having women sounding soft and submissive. The written language even differentiates for when you are speaking about a foreigner or a Japanese person who has left Japan. It has unique terms that describe explicit and encouraged double codes in communication. They are often pairs that distinguish between proper appearance and hidden reality. One set distinguishes between out-groups and in-groups. *Soto* (exterior) and *uchi* (interior) underscores the importance of group affiliation and trust (Sugimoto 8, 28). This is implicit of *nihonjinron*.

Another pair is *tatemae*, formal and established principles, and *honne*, true feelings and desires that cannot be openly expressed. Discrimination of women in the workplace is perpetuated and can be understood when businesses advocate the *tatemae* of gender equality, the *honne* of many employers appear to be the bulk of women should remain in subordinate positions in the workforce. To have the right workplace attitude, their *tatemae*

has to be unqualified loyalty to corporate norms but their *honne* lies in the maximization of their interests, such as pay increase (Sugimoto 97). It is the same for immigrants; the *tatemae* of Japan's racial and ethnic homogeneity goes hand in hand with the *honne* of many Japanese, who believe that "Japaneseness" has superior qualities and should not be contaminated (Sugimoto 183). The strength of principles makes it difficult to express one's personal feelings, especially in a collectivist society.

and in turn, minorities and ethnic groups, even those who have lived on the island for centuries, face significant discrimination. The *honne* of ethnocentrism remains strong, Sugimoto points out, due to decades of Japanese leadership indoctrinating the mythos of racial purity and superiority towards their Asian neighbors (Sugimoto 183).

Japan is far from a mono-cultural society, nevertheless, the Japanese believe their collective strength lies in homogeneity and restraint to change. For example the Japanese live in a highly globalized world and yet by virtually any measure--trade, tourism, foreign students, immigration, cultural interchange--Japan is the least globalized of all the rich, industrialized democracies. Though it is nearly impossible for Japan to escape direct or indirect interactions with others throughout the world, Japan has a history of engaging outsiders when opportunity or necessity required.

Manifestations of Cultural Concerns

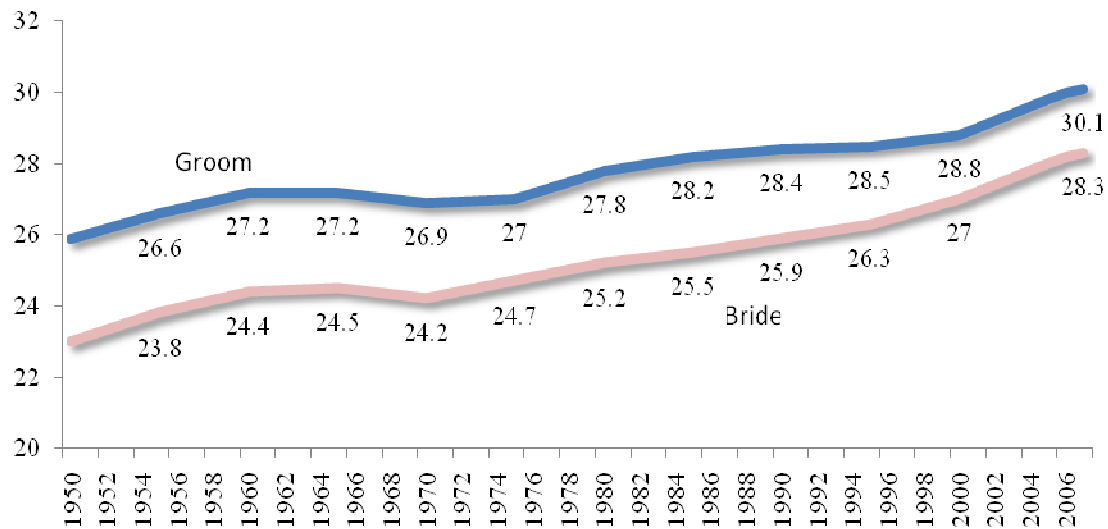
The role of women is pivotal in Japanese society, regardless of what the patriarchal culture would suggest. It is the women's reaction to and rejection of the conservative family and workplace culture over the last few decades that have set up Japan for a demographic collapse and it is women who hold the power to reverse Japan's fortunes (though not anytime soon). Japan may be a conservative country, but one would have a

difficult time to find many women that are forced into marriage or forced to stay home. This is because women have a choice, however, societal norms have made careers and children a zero-sum trade-off. Women are fully capable of taking advantage of their extensive education, entering the workforce, and forgoing family life. They can also give it all up to stay at home as a mother and housewife. In Japan, there is very little middle ground and it is very challenging to accomplish both a successful career and motherhood. To pour salt in the wound, Japan has some of the lowest female labor-force participation rates and the lowest fertility rates in the developed world (Jackson and Howe 48). The problem is evident but not enough has been done.

The Japanese Family

The family unit has long been a pivotal aspect of human culture. How a family is structured on the micro level is reflective of how a nation functions on the macro level. The typical Japanese family reveals a great deal of why Japan has developed in the manner it did. Sugimoto describes two competing yet very telling views of the Japanese family. The first is an image of a family that imparts strength, vitality, and stability. The second view is a group of people often too busy to be anything like a family. Fathers are working late, mothers are attending evening neighborhood meetings, and young students go to supplemental classes after school leaving families coming together only on the weekends (Sugimoto).

Japan utilizes the *koseki*, a family registration system. The *koseki* embodies Japanese state structure: the basic unit of the *koseki* is not an individual, but a household and everyone must fall underneath it. Each member's gender, birthplace, date of birth, parents' names, position among siblings, marriage, and divorce are recorded in detail. The

Figure 6: Mean Age of First Marriage

Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Accessed April 14, 2009

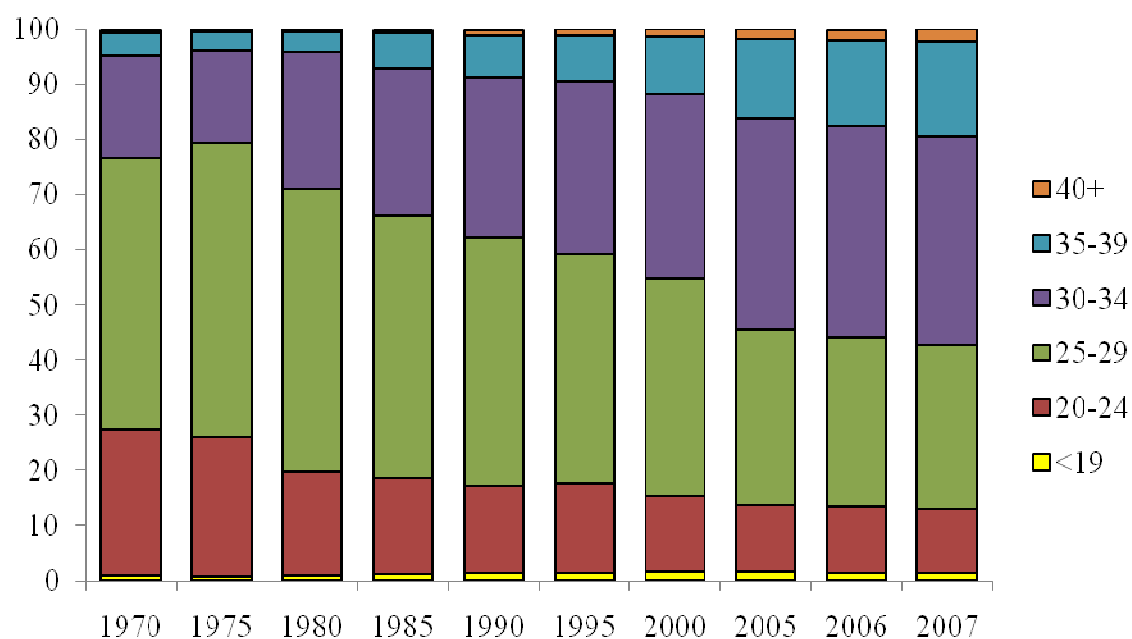
documents are publicly available and are often used, though not always legally, in organizations and businesses as a form of discriminatory selection. Unsurprisingly, the system is also highly patriarchal. Because the head of household is almost always the husband, women in the past have found difficulty in getting a divorce due to new registrations having to be established for each partner. If children are involved, they can only be assigned to one divorced parent, which can lead to the future stigmatization of children, since it is clearly stated on their koseki. This deterrence to divorce along with the fact there are many women with no other means of income, means they have to stay with their husbands, underscoring the patriarchal marriage structure (Sugimoto).

As in most wealthy industrialized countries, the age of first marriage is being pushed back in Japan as can be seen in Figure 6. In the last sixty years, the average age at which a

woman married for the first time slid near six years to 28.3. In 1980, about three-quarters of Japan's college-educated women were married by age 29. Now, seven out of 10 are single at that age. In the past 20 years, the percentage of women in this elite demographic category who do not want to marry at all has almost doubled -- to about 29 percent (Harden, "Pensions at Stake")

As if it were redemption, a new law went into effect in April 2007, which allowed wives who file for divorce to claim as much as half her husband's pension. Divorces spiked and husbands are learning quickly they cannot take care of themselves and must be better husbands and fathers. In fact, the Washington Post article concerning this new divorce legislation spoke of the National Chauvinistic Husbands Association. The association aims to teach husbands to be actual participants in their marriages, lest they be handed divorce papers (Harden, "Pensions at Stake")

Within the four walls a typical Japanese family resides in, it is often nuclear—just two parents and their children. Nevertheless, Japanese customs dictate the eldest son should have his parents move into his household in order to provide care. Though this practice is fading, there is a significant proportion of households that have at least two adult generations. While these familial arrangements may be less than ideal for some families, many extended households exist for pragmatic reasons, especially the prohibitive cost of property in urban centers in Japan. The in-laws are often highly integrated with family budgets coordinated amongst all relatives. For those adults whose parents are no longer working, they will often provide their elders with an allowance, provided they will be repaid through inheritance. In theory, an extended family should allow women to go to work while the grandparents take care of the children, but as the reader will discover later

Figure 7: Changes of Mothers' Age at Childbirth

Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Accessed April 14, 2009

on, once women have children, their ability to meaningfully participate in the workforce is restricted. If the parents are aged and in need of assistance, the wife will often become the sole provider due to the husband's non-existence in family life. With such high life expectancy and so few offspring, it is quite feasible that children will have to take care of their grandparents along with their parents. To make matters even worse, according to custom, if the wife does not have any male siblings, the responsibility would fall on her to provide care to her elder relatives (Kristoff). If presented with these prospects along with taking care of her children, it is not difficult to understand why Japanese women are growing less willing at settling down.

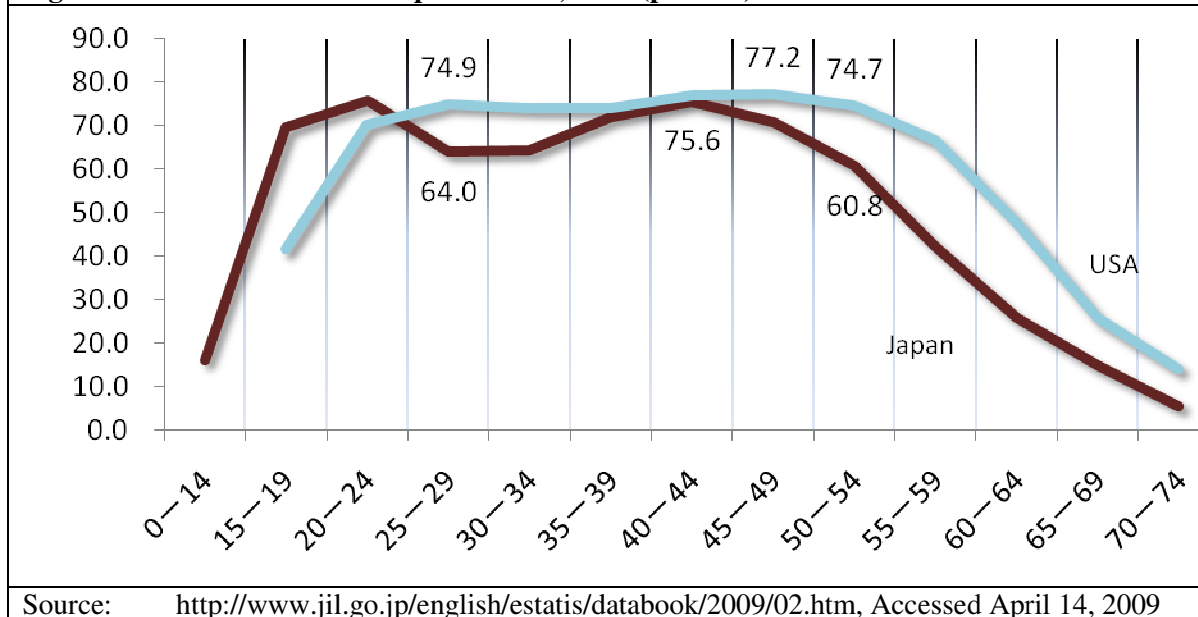
As Figure 7 shows, the statistics are clear – the Japanese, in growing numbers, are avoiding their innate responsibilities to reproduce and children who are born are now much more likely to be the only child and grow up with little to no siblings or cousins. Japanese

families may actually want more kids, but they may not be able to afford it writes Julian Chapple, a lecturer at Kyoto Sangyo University. The process of just being pregnant tends to be very expensive from the uninsured examinations to up-front costs of delivery. Though health care is free until the child is three to five years old (depending on the prefecture), parents still have to cover at least another fifteen years. Chapple cites state the cost of rearing a child until he is six is an average 4.4 million yen¹², which provides an obvious deterrent (Chapple). It comes as no surprise the extended family will soon be a thing of the past, with a declining population, the role of the family will change. Social and economic life in Japan will require reliable and sturdy institutional alternatives or complements to perform functions, which were previously assumed by family networks, to be developed very quickly (Eberstadt).

Work-Life Balance

With all these concerns regarding a decreasing labor force, one would think Japanese women would be utilized to their full capability. Nevertheless, there are explicit and implicit inequalities that exist for them in the workforce in the form of a two-tier structure. Women who belong to the elite tier are treated nearly the same as men, in which they are expected to work among the notoriously demanding Japanese corporate culture, particularly its expectation of morning-to-midnight work hours the long and late hours, the possibility of being sent to an office far from home, and continuation of work without interruption. It comes as little surprise that 70 percent of women who have reached managerial positions have not had children. Women at this professional or executive tier, *sōgō shoku*, tend to be from a higher social class. With economic support from their parents, they have an opportunity to earn a degree from a reputable four-year university.

¹² About \$45,000 USD

Figure 8: Female Labor Participation Rate, 2007 (percent)

They often marry within their tier and enjoy a double income when usually a wife's income is only supplementary (Sugimoto 156-158).

The second tier, *ippan shoku*, is much larger and composed of women who often choose to have a family and work at the same time. They will often remain in subordinate positions and not follow any career paths like their male counterparts or women at the higher tier. Women in this lower tier, often in their twenties, will be given time to rear children, however, when they return, advancement opportunities are virtually non-existent when compared to men in the same age bracket (Sugimoto 156-158). As their family responsibilities grow, they work at much lower rates. At the ages of forties and fifties, work rates are higher, but job placement remains stagnant. Compared to the workforce participation patterns in other advanced industrialized nations, Japan stands in stark contrast (Schoppa 92-93). Figure 8 represents this situation contrasted with the United States. This is also known as the M-Curve for the shape of Japanese female labor participation data.

Through implicit and explicit discriminatory practices, Japan is not using its human capital efficiently. Martin Fackler, a journalist on Japanese topics for the *New York Times*, interviews a woman who struggled with inequities of the Japanese workforce in “Career Women Find a Blocked Path:”

Yukako Kurose joined the work force in 1986, a year after Japan passed its first equal opportunity law. Like other career-minded young women, she hoped the law would open doors. But her promising career at a department-store corporate office ended 15 years ago when she had a baby...She was passed over for promotions after she started leaving work before 6:30 each evening to pick up her daughter from day care. Then, she was pushed into a dead-end clerical job. Finally, she quit. (Fackler, “Career Women”)

Ms. Kurose would find another job, but the problem is not finding a job, but equity in the workplace. In 1985, the International Labor Organization reported that women held just 6.6 percent of all management jobs in Japanese companies and government. By 2005, that number had risen to only 10.1 percent, though women made up nearly half of Japan’s workforce. By contrast, women held 42.5 percent of managerial jobs in the United States in 2005 (Fackler, “Career Women”).

Through the latter half of the twentieth century, laws and regulations were put in place to ensure Japanese citizens could work to build the Japanese economy while helping it grow in size. Before 1992, women had leave benefits but were insufficient for the average Japanese woman who preferred to spend longer time with newborns and often could not find childcare for such young children. Those who took advantage of maternity leave found it virtually impossible to re-enter their career track. When the Child Care Leave Law went into effect, it did not provide enough incentives. Firms with less than thirty employees were exempt until 1995. Larger employers were required to offer leave to new parents and were barred from dismissing them, however, there were no penalties for

non-compliance. For those taking leave, there was little income support and they had to continue paying into health insurance and pension programs while they were not working. It was actually more beneficial for women to quit as they were able to claim 100 days of pay at 70 percent of their salary. The leave law has been updated often with increased benefits, but there are very few who still take advantage of it due to lack of enforcement and discrimination against those who use it. The rules make the majority of fathers ineligible since it does not require employers to provide leave when there is a spouse at home. Even when eligible, fathers are discouraged because benefit levels are so low, only the wife can afford to take time off- relying on her better-paid husband to keep the family financially afloat (Schoppa 163-167).

It becomes easy to vilify Japanese men as careless and chauvinistic, but they are quite aware of the society they live in. Even with nothing to do, salary-men cannot readily go home early in the evening. Due to the work-culture that exists in Japan, to not stay with your fellow co-workers until late in the evening, in the office or at a bar, or to go home before your boss does, is a serious social transgression. Because of the long hours they must keep, husbands are often not participatory actors at home. If they have a young family, they have no choice but to be the sole breadwinner, as their wives can no longer work. Working overtime is not only expected, it is quite necessary. This also makes the prospect of having more than one child, or any children, all too difficult.

The connection between the avoidance of marriage and children and societal and career inequality for women is apparent. The employment system is not friendly towards maternity leave and in reaction to the punishing structure, more Japanese women are delaying and rejecting marriage. Fackler writes that studies show that nations with greater

workplace participation, like the United States, actually have higher fertility rates due to working women having children earlier in life, unlike Japan. (“Career Women”). It comes as little surprise why women and men are choosing the single life over the burden of raising a family, though for different reasons. Women are remaining single because the support system does not exist. Men, most likely want to marry, but cannot find women willing to do so, and often they do not have the financial security to care for a wife or family.

Most singles will fall under a category often called “parasitic singles,” young Japanese adults are supported by accommodating parents as they earn a full income and celebrate a life of leisure (McCargo 74). They are unfamiliar with postwar hardships many of their parents and grandparents knew, do not see the value in slaving over plans and numbers when they could make money, meet new people, and have more fun¹³. There is a theory, created by sociologist Yamada Masahiro, which states that young Japanese were putting off marriage and parenthood not because they lacked economic security but because they enjoyed too much of it through the generosity of their parents (Schoppa 155). Whatever the reasoning may be, the scarcity of children will have long reaching affects throughout the Japanese economy.

Aging Population

Japan is rapidly aging at a pace unseen by the developed world. The increasing burden on families is clear, but one cannot discount the innumerable issues the government must deal with concerning the elderly nor the lack of viable solutions for a shrinking

¹³ For those who remain at home and are unemployed or earn low wages, are known as *freeters*. Though many choose to live as a freeter due to their dissatisfaction of Japanese corporate culture, many are in fact without a choice and cannot find employment. This makes it difficult to marry and start a family, which brings us back to square one – battling the falling fertility rate. (United Press International)

workforce who must take on more responsibility. The revenue base for the government is shrinking causing welfare and medical payments for an increasing number of elderly to be in jeopardy. Japan's health insurance system provides nearly free medical services to people over 70. As Japan ages, the cost of providing such care will increase sharply (Jones 34). The working age population will contract by 39 percent between 2005 and 2050 leading to a decline in domestic production and a significant shift in aged-dependency ratio. In 1950, one elderly person was supported by 12 members of the working population, by 2020 it is estimated to be 2.3 (Chapple). With fewer young people in the workforce, the employees of a typical firm will be older, which increases the years required for promotion, especially in a society that favors seniority over talent. This of course shifts decision making to those looking forward to retirement, therefore avoiding risk in the name of innovation, in order not to endanger their job security (Jackson and Howe 109).

With Japan's expeditious demographic changes, it is slowly adapting to the many challenges it faces, most without the help of the government. Norimitsu Onishi, another journalist for the *New York Times*, has a thorough understanding of what is happening and what is going to happen to an aging Japan. He sees small villages that have reached their limits due to depopulation, such as Ogama, Japan. With only eight residents, many over 70 years of age, they has to sell their village to an industrial waste company ("Village Writes Its Epitaph..."). Onishi remarks on businesses that are scrambling to adapt themselves to changing demographics, which often means wider aisles, lower shelves, bigger price tags, tables for lingering, and cane holders at the registers ("In a Graying Japan..."). There has even been a sizeable increase in elderly crime, spurring prison reforms to adapt to an older prison population. From 2000 to 2006, the number of older criminals soared by 160

percent, to 46,637, from 17,942, according to Japan's National Police Agency. Shoplifting accounted for 54 percent of the total in 2006 and petty theft for 23 percent. "There are some elderly who are afraid of going back into society," said Takashi Hayashi, vice director of Onomichi Prison. "If they stay in prison, everything's taken care of" ("Prisons Adapt..."). Many of these elderly are men who are unemployed with little to no family ties and Airin, Japan is exemplary of such a case. Airin, a construction boom city where day laborers concentrated, reached its peak two decades ago. Onishi writes that it is no more than a dumping ground for old men with conditions rapidly worsening: an aging population, rising homelessness, deepening poverty and increasing cases of tuberculosis and alcoholism. The number of welfare recipients has grown fivefold in the past decade (Onishi, "Disposable Workers").

Saving Japan

In an interview with Benjamin Goldberg¹⁴, a Japanese foreign affairs analyst at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the U.S. Department of State, he spoke with a dispirited stance on Japan's ability to rescue themselves from their inevitable decline. The problems facing the Japanese for the immediate future are acute and Goldberg spoke of the limited options available to deal with an aging population, shrinking workforce, and declining fertility—all seemingly insurmountable in today's political and economic climate (Goldberg).

The simplest answer to deal with a shrinking workforce is to bring in cheap foreign labor. The reality is that Japan is quite xenophobic and it would be nearly impossible to convince a majority of the population to find foreigners socially acceptable in the short time that would be necessary to save their economy from decline regardless of the various

¹⁴ Interview was held at the Harry S. Truman Building on April 9, 2009.

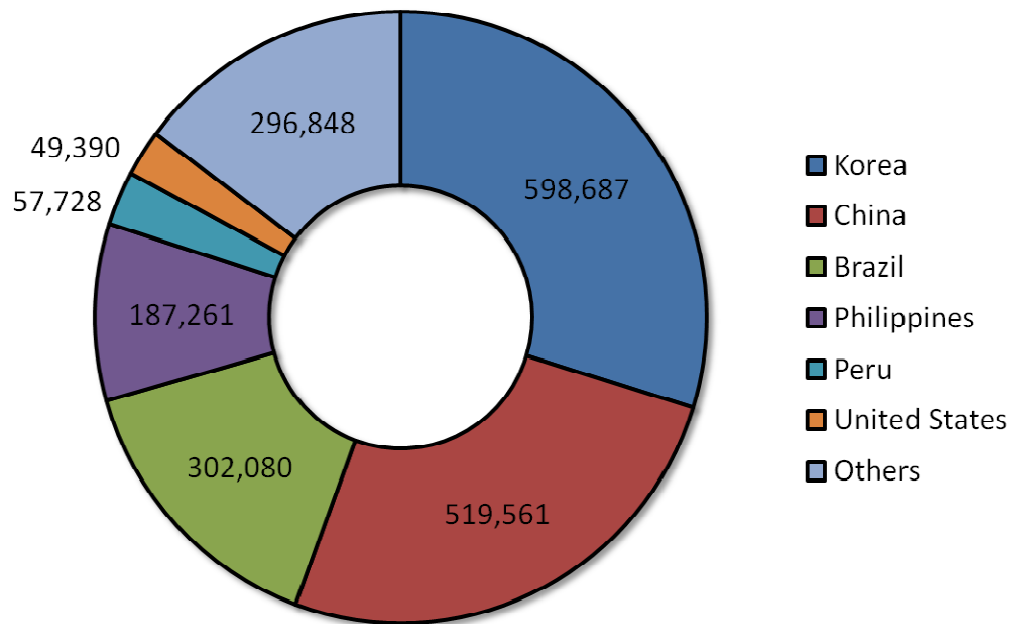
entry barriers that exist. Japan could increase the productivity and ingenuity of the labor force through the enforcement of equitable roles for women, but the ever-paternal Japanese society would make any legislation that empowers women difficult to enforce. Japan could raise the age of retirement but Japanese already work late into old age and would have little effect. This goes the same for working longer hours as Japan is already notorious for long workweeks and short vacations. In addition, longer hours will not translate into proportionally higher GDP due to decreases in productivity of the average hour worked. Japan could implement pronatalist¹⁵ policies, but even if every able-bodied woman bore a child in nine months, Japan would not see results until the 2020s. Social conservatives have few answers. They call for incentives to keep women at home to have more children, though research has shows such policies tend to discourage increased fertility. There is always the option of increased automation as Japan is the world leader in such robotics. Yet, nothing exists today that can replace all aspects of a human worker.

The facts may be dismal, yet Japan must do something to manage their demographic decline. In formulating a comprehensive policy prescription, it is important to look at the challenges, not only on an individual basis but also on how each challenge is generated to start.

Immigration

Japan, like most highly developed countries, has long gone through the rural-urban migration of development and cannot readily tap the rural population as an excess source of labor. With female and elder labor already quite high and automation and out-sourcing

¹⁵ Pronatalism is broadly defined to include policies that help women balance jobs and children (Jackson and Howe 51)

Figure 9: Immigrants in Japan, 2005 (Total: 2,011,555)

Source: Ministry of Justice, <http://www.moj.go.jp/PRESS/065030-1/065030-1.html>, Accessed April 14, 2009

production having limits, increased immigration is the only viable source of labor, whether Japan likes it or not.

In the last two decades, Japan has been in demand for unskilled and flexible labor, which their domestic labor supply has not been able to provide as is evident in Figure 8. The work ethic of more affluent and highly educated Japanese youth stigmatizes work that is dirty, difficult, or dangerous¹⁶ (Sugimoto 204). Consequently, Japanese firms have been unable to sufficiently cut costs in order to successfully compete with emerging economies with cheaper labor, such as their neighbor, China. Foreign workers are ready, willing, and able to save Japan's welfare and health care programs through increased tax revenue, strengthen the economy, have children, and make some money in the process. Japan's government does not see it that way. Compared to most industrialized nations, Japan has

¹⁶ In Japan, this is known as the three undesirable Ks: *kitanai* (dirty), *kitsui* (difficult), and *kiiken* (dangerous)

the most highly restrictive immigration policies and they are based on three principles: no unskilled foreign workers will be admitted, the government should facilitate the admission of only highly skilled and professional foreign workers, and all foreigners should be admitted on a temporary basis (Tsuda and Cornelius 449-450).

With that said, migration to Japan does not come easy for professionals. According to government statistics, Japan had 157,719 foreigners working in highly skilled professions in 2006, twice as many as a decade ago, but still a large disparity compared to the 7.8 million in the United States. Japan is clearly losing out in the global marketplace for highly skilled labor as prospective employees feared they would not be able to adapt to Japan's language or corporate culture. Many local managers would agree. The Japanese government began the Asian Talent Fund to offer Asian students Japanese language training and internships. Nonetheless, labor experts warn Japan may be doing too little, too late. They say the country has already gained a negative reputation as discriminating against foreign employees, with weak job guarantees and glass ceilings. Experts say engineers, especially highly trained Indian engineers will often opt for more open markets like the United States, especially since English has a shared language (Fackler, High-Tech Japan Running out of Engineers)

Engineers, however, is not what Japan needs to stabilize their economy, but rather unskilled labor. Currently, immigrants make up a little over 1 percent of Japan's population. Being virtually closed to immigration, Japanese firms and farms have found the means to bring foreign workers in through various loopholes—side doors as “students,” “trainees,” or “entertainers” or back doors with forged visas or other clandestine means. But such an unofficial supply route has left some businesses continually scrambling for a

dependable work force and the foreigners become vulnerable to abuse. The foreign trainee system was established in the mid-1990s, in theory to transfer technical expertise to young foreigners who would then apply the knowledge at home. After one year of training, the foreigners are allowed to work for two more years in their area of expertise. Foreign trainees — now numbering about 100,000 — have become a source of cheap labor. Mr. Nakamura, the Liberal Democratic politician, said the foreign trainee system was “shameful,” but added that if it were dismantled, businesses would not be able to find Japanese replacements. (Onishi, “Needs and Fears Chinese Labor”)

The government tends to have looser restrictions on immigrants that are descendents of Japanese expatriates, many of those from Latin America, specifically Brazil and Peru. Because of their Japanese heritage, the government’s initial assumption was that these immigrants can be assimilated smoothly with little complaint; however, many of them are culturally Latin American and become immediately segregated into a new class of foreigners. There is a growing enclave of Japanese-Brazilians often clustered in industrial regions, many Japanese nationals live within close proximity, a rarity in Japan. However, just last year, in the country’s more than 300,000 Japanese-Brazilians — whose children are growing up in Japan, live in isolated worlds of their own. Street signs and shopping areas are bilingual. They send their children to private Portuguese-language schools or keep them out of school altogether due to uncertainty of attaining permanent residency. Many never learn to effectively communicate in Japanese yet employers favor them. Seen as having a strong work ethic when compared to younger Japanese, those who have incorporated such immigrants, find them indispensable (Onishi, “Enclave of Brazilians”).

Immigrants from Asian countries (Korea, China, and Philippines) do not fare as well. Though they have more in common with Japan than either Brazil or Peru do, the Japanese will always have a sense of superiority over them.

There is little doubt that the few immigrants that exist in Japan are important to the vitality of the local and national economies, yet Japan wholeheartedly rejects their presence. Ironically, low fertility may itself help trigger public opposition as the scarcer native-born youth are, the more visible and politically contentious any given level of immigration becomes (Jackson and Howe 61). Nishi Koizumi, a journalist for the *Economist*, notes that immigrants along with other minority groups are often treated like as an underclass; politicians and the media present immigration as an undue to burden to Japanese society. More recently as Japan falls in and out of a recession, citizens look for someone to blame and immigrants are getting the brunt, though they an insignificant part of the total population. Even the justice ministry attributes high rates of serious crime to foreigners—though, when pressed, admits these are committed by illegal immigrants rather than legal ones (Koizumi). Its deeply conservative notions about ethnic purity make it hard for even the experts here to envision large-scale immigration.

An eighty-strong group of economically liberal politicians in the long-governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) recently released a report in the face of a serious labor shortage. The report calls for the admission of ten million immigrants in the next fifty years, and for many of these immigrants to become naturalized Japanese. The report recommends the admittance of whole families, not just foreign workers. It also wants the number of foreign students in Japan, currently 132,000, to rise to one million (Koizumi). Other experts say Japan would need seventeen million new immigrants by 2050 or at least

400,000 new immigrants each year (French). This would represent 18 percent of the population and would be a drastic change to the demographics of Japan. The point is to have stable and growing inflow of labor, because more workers translate directly and proportionally into more GDP. Nevertheless, something so drastic could never be implemented in today's current political climate. Such passionate ideas do not last long without significant backlash.

In the beginning of 2009, Japan was concerned immigrant families were abandoning Japan due to job loss and it has pushed to create programs that would make it easier for jobless immigrants to remain here in a country that has traditionally been wary of foreigners, especially those without work. The controversial Prime Minister Tara Aso established an interdepartmental office that was to deal with providing Japanese-language courses, vocational training programs and job counseling to immigrants so they can continue to look for work. Seen as revolutionary, many saw this as turning point in Japan's restrictive immigration policy (Harden, Japan Works Hard to Help Immigrants Find Jobs). Just four months later, due to global economic crisis Japan, has now instituted a policy in which they pay for immigrants who volunteer to return home, never to return (Tabuchi). Such policy reversal is backwards and can only do more damage to Japan's future.

Gender Issues at Work and Home

More recently the Angel Plans, in order to improve day care services, counseling, dual role parenting, and infrastructure and the Plus One Proposal, a not so subtle government request for the Japanese to increase the population while the government improve facilities, conduct research, and attempt to make careers more compatible with

rearing children. Of course, with little to no legal recourse for firms and corporations not conducting themselves in a pronatal fashion, social norms persist.

The Japanese government can enact as many laws as they see fit, but without a public campaign and debate concerning social attitudes that persist at home and the workplace. For example, both men and women are allowed equal time off for child-care leave, however, in 1999, 56.4 percent of working women took advantage of it, whereas only 0.42 percent of men did. Though legally firms cannot discriminate, when it comes to promotions or bonuses, taking time off to care of a child may look frivolous in the eyes of the boss, thus turning the idea of children into something negative (Chapple).

The Equal Opportunity Law, enacted in 1985 and amended again in 1995, was very much like the Child Care Leave Law, as in they both lack reinforcement mechanisms to make employers comply. The law itself was also flawed. It would prohibit employers from discriminating based on gender but also reduced job protections for women in managerial professions as it allowed limiting the hours and shifts women could work (Schoppa 175-176). Even with cases of blatant discrimination, lawsuits remain rare because of a cultural aversion to litigation and the male dominated judicial system. Unsurprisingly, Japan ranks as the most unequal of the world's rich countries, according to the United Nations Development Program's "gender empowerment measure," an index of female participation in a nation's economy and politics. The country placed 42nd among 75 nations surveyed in 2006. Women are earning 10 percent to 20 percent less than men their age and it is still common for younger male colleagues to continue to ask women to push elevator buttons for them and serve tea in office (Fackler, "Career Women").

Falling fertility rates in theory should encourage a variety of policy changes. With women opting out of the labor market, it would be expected that social movements in the political arena to bring about policy changes that respond to their needs. When women withhold their labor to devote their time to care for children, the market should respond by putting pressure to offer higher wages, improved work conditions and enhanced benefits to entice women to return. However, it would be foolhardy to assume that that low fertility rates automatically produce policy change, as is evident by the last three decades. It all returns to the fact women have the ability to choose, albeit, in a society which propagates paternal norms. Women choose to further their careers or choose to raise a family. In making a choice, many will lose their interest in changing society. Those who give up careers are unlikely to be interested in expanding late-night daycare centers they will never need and those who chose to give up families are unlikely to be interested in daycare for kids they do not have (Schoppa 17, 30-34). This makes mobilization to change societal norms increasingly difficult, especially when faced with a predominantly male government and bureaucracy, that has had very little experience trying to balance family and a career, when the career has been all their life.

Concerning increasing fertility, France is an excellent example. France is helping to reverse a similar aging trend in the European Union as France now has the highest fertility rate. France has also seen the largest increase in their total fertility from 1.7 children born per woman in 1995 to nearly 2 in 2009 (Central Intelligence Agency). Much of this increase can attributed to a sizable population of immigrant mothers (Jackson and Howe 50). Claude Martin, the Research Director of the Institute of Political Studies at Université de Rennes, explains that France has a permanent investment in family issues and it is a

pillar of their social welfare system. This stems from a low level of fertility during the nineteenth century and the trauma of the First World War. Such history helps explain the strong views for pronatalism in France as children are considered a common good and valuable human capital (Martin 203).

But not only is France enjoying a deluge of children, they also have a very high participation rate of women in the labor market. Eight in ten women between 25 and 50 years of age are active and seventy percent are employed full time. Sixty percent of couples with children, are both working. While France provides public services devoted to young children, mothers reap the benefit by being able to remain working with extensive child-care services. Children have access to pre-elementary school almost free of charge and in 1998, almost 100 percent of children less than five years of age were in a pre-elementary school (Martin 206-207).

With good news comes bad news—an effective pronatal agenda is expensive. According to Jackson and Howe, France spends between three to four percent of GDP annually on direct government benefits to families with children, which amounts to about nine billion dollars. Since Japan only spends just one percent, finding the fiscal resources to expand pronatal programs will be major challenge for a country whose government budget will be under relentless pressure from rising old-age benefit costs (Jackson and Howe 52).

Conclusion

On the surface, the statistics explain it all. The population, the gross domestic product, the birth rate, the total fertility rate, the youth population are all in decline. The death rate, the age of life expectancy at birth, the median age, and the elderly population

are on the rise. Save for some global catastrophe or miracles of science, all of these statistics have steady trajectories and will not be changing anytime soon. Beyond the surface, there are cultural and social norms that have existed in Japan for centuries and fuel a male-dominated Japanese superiority complex. Today its these cultural norms that keep the workplace gender-biased, let inefficient workers retain their life-long jobs, and prevent labor-seeking immigrants from feeding a labor-starved market. There is little doubt that Japan is responding and changing accordingly, but they are not changing fast enough. Any suggestions toward a policy prescription to deal with Japan's demographic crisis must be comprehensive and tackle all the issues present.

Policy Proposal

1. *Japan must start a social campaign to highlight cultural, societal, and political norms and their impediments to policy change*

The Japanese must learn to accept who they are and understand their attitudes are the impediments to change and lack of change threatens their way of life. A most difficult prospect, the government must take on these issues and begin a social campaign to make the Japanese feel bad about themselves. No government in power would last very long attacking itself, especially if the government is just as much of the problem as anyone else is. An intelligent campaign must be handled delicately and with serious forethought. The youth who belong to a globalized world may be easier to influence as opposed to the conservative elderly, many who came of age during or after World War II.

2. *Japan must enforce gender neutrality laws in the workforce*

Fertility levels and female labor participation are intricately linked and to have success in either area, both reforms must be done in tandem. The government must

introduce an equal opportunity law that promotes gender neutrality, rather than what the government thinks is equal. Real equal opportunity legislation must allow for the punishment of firms for non-compliance and discrimination. Child care leave programs must incorporate setting quotas for the number of male and female employees required to take parental leave without fear of losing their jobs when they return.

The private industry should take a significant role as well. Early in 2009, Canon, the Japanese electronics maker, encouraged its workers to go home and procreate by ending the workday at 5:30 twice a week. Not only does it help Japan, it also helps the company slash overtime benefits (Lah).

3. Japan must implement permanent incentives to increase total fertility

Well-designed systems of pronatal policies can make a difference but they need to remain permanent to be effective as one-time financial incentives will likely cause families to move up planned births and not increase long-term family size. The government can passively build new pronatal incentives into social insurance systems—either by linking payroll taxes (on the contributor side) or benefit payouts (on the beneficiary side) to the number of children people have. They can also take an active approach and provide free healthcare to women from the beginning of their pregnancy to at least a few years of life of the child. This would be a rather large incentive for the newly married to start families.

Ben Goldberg at State Department highlighted a significant reform that would have a substantial effect—improving daycare. Daycares in Japan have long waitlists and there are not enough to satisfy the needs of parents, especially mothers of young children who need care to allow their mothers to work. They must also be stay open much later into the evening that what would be considered standard to deal with parents who must work long

hours. Problems with implementation of such reform do exist and there must be a proactive condemnation on the stigma that comes to mother mothers who leave their children in the care of others. There is also the core problem of long working hours. Why start a family at all if a mother cannot take care of, raise, or nurture the child?

4. Japan must lower hurdles to foreigners, encourage family migration, and institute language and culture programs to further assimilation

Japan, for the sake of its own future, must learn to integrate foreigners into society. At this point, where the need is urgent, the government should loosen restrictions just to let the labor flow in, before they concern themselves with who gets to be Japanese. The Japanese government, however, should not isolate foreigners and encourage their integration into society. By continuing to provide language and assimilation programs for adults and children, they can within a few years have people well accustomed to Japan and at the very least communicate effectively. The immigration report released by the LDP members should be implemented immediately. Increasing net migration to 50,000 new immigrants a year is very much on the right track.

5. Japan must increase tax incentives to industries and firms to encourage them to leave the hyper-urbanized metropolitan areas

This is a multi-tier solution that takes into account the demographic layout of Japan and its capability of given its citizens what they need. Tokyo along with the surrounding prefectures consists of over 30 million people, one of the largest metropolitan regions in the world is suffering from hyper-urbanization. Affordable and spacious housing is a rarity and with extended families living under the same roof quite common, there is little room to have more children, if any. The converse of hyper-urbanization is the depopulation that is

occurring in villages throughout Japan, yet people still live in highly concentrated areas. Fathers and husbands are already blamed for having to work late, but to make such transgressions even more unpalatable are the long commutes into the heart of the cities just to get to work.

It would be in Japan's best interest to encourage domestic and international firms to invest in lower density areas through tax incentives and other means. This would take the pressure off major metropolitan areas in finding housing and office space for their citizens. It would allow men and women to work closer to home, a home with substantial more space along with alleviating pressure on packed train systems. Due to Japan's massive infrastructure investments over the last two decades, there is little excuse for firms not to expand. This would also allow representatives from rural districts actually have weight to their significance in the Diet. However, there is a significant social and political importance in operating a firm in areas like Tokyo; firms want to be as close to the seats of powers as possible. Location and proximity to power imbues the firm with much more significance in the government bureaucracy.

6. Japan must integrate demographic stabilizers that directly adjust benefit levels to offset rising old-age dependency ratio

Any overall strategy to minimize the adverse economic impact of demographic aging must begin by reducing the rising cost of pay-as-you-go old-age benefit programs. By introducing demographic stabilizers that take effect automatically as the population grows older, the government can delay pension payments to coincide with the rising life expectancy. The government should be able to define what "elderly" is and not by a static age. For example, by setting a bar at average life expectancy and provide benefits to the first

15% that fall under that bar. As the nation's life expectancy grows, the bar will slowly rise, allowing the government to limit political turmoil by not having representatives go against their aging constituency as well encourage more preventative health care from an earlier age to reduce medical costs in the future.

7. Japan must work to dismantle the inefficiencies of the lifetime employment system

“Lifetime employment” is a great example of what needs to change but will not change in Japan as it is plagued with inefficiencies. The seniority system of promotion fails to reward and promote innovation and overpays older workers who contribute very little to productivity while underpaying younger workers, which leaves them little to start a family causing to have to wait longer.

The lack of “new blood” in society will lead to protectionism and excessive caution, just at the point when Japan needs ideas and innovation to remain competitive. Old Japan, with its old thinking and old way of doing things, is the crux of Japan's political crisis.

8. Japan must begin an international campaign to “re-open” Japan to the world

After their economic bust, Japan has suffered through two decades of stagnation. With this demographic crisis beginning to take its toll, Japan must be proactive in making sure it remains one of the world's most important and influential powers. Increasing international education and exchange programs, hosting world-class events, and improving diplomatic and economic relations with its neighbors are paramount to remaining relevant. Immigration policies will have little effect if no one wants to come to or invest in Japan in the first place.

When Japan “internationalizes,” citizens will strive to have statistics that match other advanced industrial nations. According to the United Nation Human Development Index, Japan is ranked among developing nations in terms of gender empowerment (55 out of 93 countries ranked). Improvement in such factors of Japanese life will encourage professional immigrants to come to Japan as well as build a positive global reputation. This is the soft power of liberal democracy and Japan should use it to its advantage.

Final Analysis

Japan’s prospects are dire. It is difficult to change a society in which social norms are systematically against change. Japan needed to pass new powerful legislation concerning immigration and gender equality in the workforce long ago. Japan must now act expeditiously and learn how to manage both a demographic and economic decline.

Of course, there are slivers of hope that remain for Japan. Japan might have an aging population, but they are quite healthy and often are quite capable of contributing to the economy well past retirement. While there are no self-aware robots working for low wages and without complaint in Japanese factories yet, technology is moving quickly and many new advancements are incorporating humans and machines in order to provide the user with increased strength or stamina. The Hybrid Assistive Limb, a full body suit that imbues the wearer with the ability to live five times the weight, is such an example (Chow).

Though the statistics present inevitability, it is important not to count Japan out so soon. If there is one thing the country has demonstrated throughout its history, is its ability to drastically reform in a short period of time. In the nineteenth century, Japan went from a feudal kingdom to a global power within a generation. Post World War II, Japan ended its hyper-nationalist militarism and become a pacifist nation that created a globally

competitive economy. It is clear that Japan and its citizens have gotten out of pretty awful predicaments, so if the government place demographic reform on the top of its agenda, they may find a way out yet. As is often said, “You have to change in order to remain the same.”

Work Cited

- Aldossary, A., A While and L Barriball. "Health Care and Nursing in Saudi Arabia." International Nursing Review 55 (2008): 125-128.
- Campbell, John Creighton. Population Aging: Hardly Japan's Biggest Problem. Asia Program Special Report. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003.
- Capretta, James C. Global Aging and the Sustainability of Public Pension Systems: An Assesment of Reform Efforts in Twelve Developed Countries. Aging Vulnerability Index Project. Washington: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2007.
- Caryl, Christian. "Think Again: Japan's Lost Decade." April 2009. Foreign Policy. 3 April 2009 <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4792&page=0>.
- Central Intelligence Agency. CIA - The World Factbook -- France. April 2009. April 2009 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html>>.
- . CIA - The World Factbook -- Japan. 06 November 2008. 15 November 2008 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>>.
- Chapple, Julian. "The Dilemma Posed by Japan's Population Decline." 18 October 2004. Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies. 15 October 2008 <<http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/Chapple.html#Author>>.
- Chow, Elaine. "HAL Robot Exoskeletons Available for Rent." 7 October 2008. Gizmodo. 12 April 2009 <<http://gizmodo.com/5060379/hal-robot-exoskeletons-available-for-rent>>.
- Dale, Peter N. The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness. London: Taylor & Francis, 1986.
- Dower, John W. Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II. New York: W.W . Norton & Company, 2000.
- Eberstadt, Nicholas. "Demographic Trends in Northeast Asia: Changing the Realm of the Possible." 8 May 2007. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. 8 April 2009 <http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.26136/pub_detail.asp>.
- Fackler, Martin. "Career Women in Japan Find a Blocked Path." The New York Times 27 August 2007.
- . "High-Tech Japan Running out of Engineers." The New York Times 17 May 2008.
- . "New Japanese Immigraion Controls Worry Foreigners." The New York Times 18 November 2007.
- French, Howard W. "Insular Japan Needs, but Resists, Immigration." The New York Times 24 July 2003.
- Goldberg, Benjamin. Foreign Affairs Analyst Christopher Chang. Washington, 7 April 2009.
- Harden, Blaine. "Japan Works Hard to Help Immigrants Find Jobs." The Washington Post 23 January 2009.
- . "Learn to Be Nice to Your Wife, or Pay the Price: Japan's Salarymen, With Pensions At Stake, Work on Their Marriages." The Washington Post 26 November 2007.
- Hewitt, Paul S. The Gray Roots of Japan's Crisis. The Demographic Dilemma: Japan's Aging Society. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003.

- Jackson, Richard and Neil Howe. The Graying of the Great Powers: Demography and Geopolitics in the 21st Century. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008.
- Jones, Randall S. "Japan: Population Aging." The OECD Observer (1997/1998): 34-25.
- Kohut, Andrew, Richard Wike and Juliana Menasce Horowitz. World Publics Welcome Global Trade - But Not Immigration. 47-Nation Global Attitudes Survey. Pew Research Center. Washington: Pew Research Center, 2007.
- Koizumi, Nishi. "A Multicultural Japan? Don't Bring Me Your Huddled Masses." 30 December 2008. Economist. 30 March 2009
<http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12867328&fsrc=rss>.
- Kristoff, Nicholas D. "Once Prized, Japan's Elderly Feel Abandoned and Fearful." The New York Times 4 August 1997.
- Lah, Kyung. "Workers Urged: Go Home and Multiply." 29 January 2009. CNN. 1 February 2009
<<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/01/26/canon.babies/index.html>>.
- Library of Congress. "A Country Study: Japan." 8 November 2005. Library of Congress - Federal Research Division: Country Studies. 14 April 2009
<<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/jptoc.html>>.
- Martin, Claude. "A baby friendly state: Lessons from the French Case." Pharmaceuticals Policy and Law (2007): 203-210.
- McCargo, Duncan. Contemporary Japan. 2nd Edition. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.
- Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. White Paper on the Labour Economy 2005 Summary - Part II: Labor Policies in a Society with a Declining Population. Japan: Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2005.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication. "Statistical Handbook of Japan: Chapter 2 - Population." 07 September 2008. Statistics Bureau, Director General for Policy Planning & Statistical Research and Training Institute. 13 November 2008
<<http://www.stat.go.jp/English/data/handbook/c02cont.htm>>.
- Onishi, Norimitsu. "An Enclave of Brazilians is Testing Insular Japan." The New York Times 1 November 2008.
- . "As Its Work Force Ages, Japan Needs and Fears Chinese Labor ." The New York Times 14 August 2008.
- . "As Japan Ages, Prisons Adapt to Going Gray." The New York Times 3 November 2007.
- . "In a Graying Japan, Lower Shelves and Wider Aisles ." The New York times 8 September 2006.
- . "In Japan, Hope Fades for Disposable Workers." The New York Times 11 October 2008.
- . "Village Writes Its Epitaph: Victim of a Graying Japan ." The New York Times 30 April 2006.
- Prioux, France. "Recent Demographic Developments in France: Life Expectancy Still Rising." Population 63.3 (2008): 375-414.
- Raymo, James M. "Educational Attainment and the Transition to First Marriage among Japanese Women." Demography 40.1 (2003): 83-103.

- Schoppa, Leonard J. Race for the Exits: The Unraveling of Japan's System of Social Protection. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- Silvey, Rachel. "Consuming the Transitional Family: Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers to Saudi Arabia." Global Networks 6.1 (2006): 23-40.
- State, U.S. Department of. Saudi Arabia: International Religious Freedom Report 2008. 2008. 30 March 2009 <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108492.htm>>.
- Sugimoto, Yoshio. An Introduction to Japanese Society. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Tabuchi, Hiroko. "Japan Pays Foreign Workers to go Home, Forever." The New York Times 22 April 2009.
- Tsuda, Takeyuki and Wayne A Cornelius. "Japan: Government Policy, Immigrant Reality." Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective. Ed. Wayne A Cornelius, et al. 2nd Edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004. 437-478.
- United Press International. Japan's birthrate rests with 'freeters'. 9 April 2009. 10 April 2009 <http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2009/04/08/Japans-birthrate-rests-with-freeters/UPI-61391239243964/>.
- Usui, Chikako. Japan's Aging Dilemma. Asia Program Special Report. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003.
- Wattenberg, Ben J. Fewer: How the New Demography of Depopulation Will Shape Our Future. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004.
- Winckler, Onn. "The Immigration Policy of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States." Middle Eastern Studies 33.3 (1997): 480-493.