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# Comparing the Reproductive Climates of Japan, Norway and Italy: A New Way of Looking at the Reasons for Low Fertility Rates

Samantha Graham

Seton Hall University, [samantha.graham@student.shu.edu](mailto:samantha.graham@student.shu.edu)

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COMPARING THE REPRODUCTIVE CLIMATES OF JAPAN, NORWAY AND ITALY  
A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT THE REASONS FOR LOW FERTILITY RATES

BY

SAMANTHA GRAHAM  
B.S. SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
SOUTH ORANGE, NEW JERSEY, 2011

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2014

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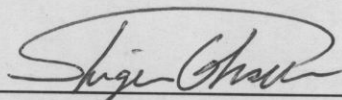
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By

Samantha E Graham

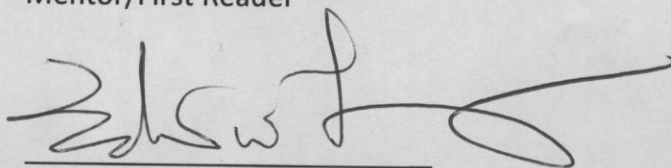
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SHIGERU OSUKA, Ed.D.  
Mentor/First Reader

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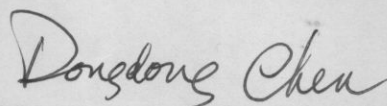
EDWIN PAK-WAH LEUNG, Ph.D.  
Second Reader

May 8, 2014



CHRISTOPHER YOUNG, Ph.D.  
Third Reader

May 8, 2014



DONGDONG CHEN, Ph.D.  
Director of Graduate Program  
in Asian Studies

May 9, 2014

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## **ABSTRACT**

In recent years, much has been made of the looming demographic crisis that is forming in Japan. The declining birthrate and graying of the population has made many government officials, sociologists, and scholars very anxious about what will happen when a nation begins to shrink. These same officials and scholars are also looking for a reason for the decline, and many have placed the blame on Japanese women without examining the reasons these women have for having fewer children or forgoing motherhood altogether. But Japan is not the only nation suffering from population decline. Other smaller, industrialized nations also face the same challenge- some better than others. This paper will examine the reproductive climates of Japan, Norway, and Italy as a way to understand the social, economic, and practical reasons women in Japan decline to have children, and to create a holistic, broad based policy aimed at making the reproductive climate of a nation more appealing to women. By establishing the paradigm of the reproductive climate, this paper hopes to move the discussion of fertility from one that places the primary burden on women to one in which all facets of society are considered when discussing the problem of declining world fertility.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

Across the globe, fertility rates have been falling in both developed and developing nations since the 1950's.<sup>1</sup> This is due to a variety of reasons, ranging from increased prosperity, to increased access to birth control, to environmental concerns and the increased status of women's equality in both the developed and developing world. This trend is seen by many as a net positive- especially in less developed nations where a lower birth rate often translates to less resource demanded from the government. However, this trend can be particularly dangerous for a subset of nations: smaller, industrialized nations with a largely homogenous population and low immigration rates. These nations face the looming possibility of population decline, and with that, the accompanying economic and social problems that come with it. Without substantial effort to increase the fertility rates in these nations, there will be substantial social and economic problems that could lead to both societal and economic issues within just one or two generations.

The most important statistic in this scenario is the fertility rate, the definition of which for the purposes of this thesis is "the number of children an average woman is likely to have during her childbearing years, conventionally taken to be the ages 15-49." <sup>2</sup> The fertility rate is often used as a measure of the social and economic health of a nation. Too high of a number shows unsustainable population growth, and is often quoted as indicative of a lesser developed nation while a more developed nation typically has a smaller number of births per women.

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<sup>1</sup> "Go forth and multiply a lot less." (2009, October 29). *The Economist*, Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/14743589>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

However, there is heightening concern that a growing number of nations are getting too close to, or even too far below, the magical number of 2.1 births per woman known as replacement rate.<sup>3</sup> This is not a hard and fast number, as, “child mortality is higher in poor countries, [so] the replacement fertility rate is higher there, too. In rich countries, it is about 2.1. In poor ones it can go over 3.0.”<sup>4</sup> This number also accounts for the possible death of female children by adding a fractional contingency to the birth rate.<sup>5</sup> And, as fertility rates drop, many people, from economists, to sociologist to politicians, have become concerned about the number of nations who are now below replacement rate, citing the graying of society and the trouble that young people will face as they have to support aging parents with fewer resources.<sup>6</sup> For instance, in Singapore, “in 2011 seven working adults supported one retiree. By 2030, 2.3 working adults will have to support one retiree.”<sup>7</sup> Singapore, like many developed nations, has a robust pension system administered by the government and supported by taxes on the wages of younger and middle aged workers. The shrinking younger generation does not just impact the government; as time goes on, fewer and fewer adult children will be available to care for aging parents, and as the work force shrinks, the real possibility of shortages in nursing staff, care homes for the elderly, and other paraprofessionals presents itself. And, like many other

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<sup>3</sup> “Go forth and multiply a lot less.” (2009, October 29). The Economist, Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/14743589> =.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> “Go forth and multiply a lot less.” (2009, October 29). The Economist, Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/14743589> =.

<sup>6</sup> “Lee, K. Y. (2012, October 16). Warning bell for developed countries: Declining birth rates.” Forbes, Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/currentevents/2012/10/16/warning-bell-for-developed-countries-declining-birth-rates>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



developed nations, like Japan and Italy, their fertility rate is falling. Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America all face dwindling fertility rates, and all face the looming threat of social insolvency and a failed social welfare system.

One nation in particular has become the subject of many papers and articles concerning low fertility rates: Japan. At 1.39 births per woman, Japan has one of the lowest birth rates among all nations, developed or otherwise.<sup>8</sup> The declining birthrate and graying of the population has made many government officials, sociologists, and scholars very anxious about what will happen when the nation's population begins to shrink. These same officials and scholars are also looking for a reason for the decline, and many have placed the blame on Japanese women without examining the reasons these women have for having fewer children or forgoing motherhood altogether. Raising the fertility rate in Japan is of special significance in terms of policy, as the fertility rate has been below rate of replacement for almost four decades, and if the fertility rate does not increase soon, Japan will be in serious danger on multiple fronts.

However, Japan is not the only nation facing low birthrates. Nations like, "Germany: 1.4..., Holland: 1.8 ... [and] Italy: 1.4"<sup>9</sup> also have rates well below the replacement threshold. These nations also have very homogenous populations, and thus cannot, and for cultural reasons, do not want to, rely on recent immigrants for a boost to population and fertility rates. Interestingly, there are some developed nations who are not struggling as badly with low fertility rates. Nations such as Norway (1.95) and Sweden (1.9) have fertility rates that are

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<sup>8</sup> *The World Fact Book, 2013-14*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Lee, K. Y. (2012, October 16). "Warning bell for developed countries: Declining birth rates." *Forbes*, Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/currentevents/2012/10/16/warning-bell-for-developed-countries-declining-birth-rates/>

much closer to the 2.1 births per woman replacement level.<sup>10</sup> These nations, equally homogenous as Japan, have obviously been doing something different. We must examine what differentiates nations like Norway, from nations like Italy and Japan which are two of the nations with the lowest fertility rates in the world. By doing some, hopefully the characteristics of a nation with a healthy fertility rate can be found, and thus, policy prescriptions created in order to counter act low fertility crises worldwide.

This paper will compare and contrast the nations of Norway, Japan, and Italy as a means of exploring what factors encourage women to have children. Japan's sustained low fertility rate and the vast numbers of articles, both scholarly and from the media, makes it an ideal subject of study. This infamy has led to numerous articles, including one in which Japan was also called the "Worst Country for Working Mothers" in 2013 by the British Broadcasting Company(BBC).<sup>11</sup> This was due to a number of factors, including the massive gender gap in pay, low numbers of working mothers, and expensive day care costs. Italy's low fertility problem may not be as famous, but that the rate has declined so low is of particular interest as Italy's is the host of Vatican City, the seat of the Catholic Church. The choice to examine Italy, rather than Japan's neighbor and cultural cousin South Korea with a fertility rate of 1.29 births per woman was a conscious one.<sup>12</sup> Choosing Italy as the comparison country is an effort to show that low fertility is not just a problem that afflicts Asian nations, it is a global problem. The

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<sup>10</sup> *The World Fact Book*, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> Wingfield-Hayes,R. (2013, March 21). "Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?" *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>.

<sup>12</sup> *The World Fact Book*, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

contrast nation, Norway, was chosen because of its relatively high fertility rate, homogenous population, and reputation for generous gender, family and social policies. Another factor in the decision to choose Norway was its ratings in the Global Economic Forum Gender equality index. Norway consistently rates within the top five, and in 2013 was ranked number three in the world for gender equality, behind Iceland and Finland; Italy's rank is 71, and Japan's is 105.<sup>13</sup> The drastic differences between the low fertility rate nations, Japan and Italy, and the high fertility rate nation, Norway, will serve to make the differences between low fertility nations and higher fertility nations clearer.

The metrics that will be examined will be maternal support structures, the economy, and societal expectations of women and mothers. These factors make up the major variables in a nation's reproductive climate. The selection of these factors will be discussed further in Chapter 2. The reproductive climate is a holistic, interdisciplinary view of the economic, social, and governmental state of the nation, with a particular emphasis on the treatment of women and mothers. This broad look at the issues that influence the decision to have children is distinct from previous work on the subject, as previous scholarly works have tended to focus on single issues that are thought to affect fertility rates. The reproductive climate analysis is akin to the Global Economic Forum's gender equality rating index, in that it examines multiple factors to determine the suitability of a nation in which to raise a family. This reproductive climate influences the decision to have a new child, or to start a family at all for women. To determine what makes a poor reproductive climate, the nations of Italy and Japan will be

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<sup>13</sup> Global Economic Forum, (2013). *The global gender gap report 2013*. Retrieved from World Economic Forum website: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf).

compared in order to discover similarities in the metrics. Then, Italy and Japan will be compared to Norway in order to discover what, if anything, Norway is doing differently. The differentiation between poor fertility rate nations and the healthy fertility rate nation will allow for the creation of reproductive profiles, and from that, a series of policy prescriptions.

To facilitate this discussion, this thesis will be structured as such. First, there will be a review of the major theories of the metrics of a reproductive climate. Following that will be case studies for Japan, Norway, and Italy. These case studies include basic demographic information, followed by an examination of the three metrics of the study. The examination will be followed by an evaluation of the reproductive climate of the nation as a whole. The next chapter will be the overall analysis of the similarities and differences of the reproductive climates of the three nations, and how the nations with lower birthrates can modify the reproductive climate to make it a more welcoming place for women to start families. These recommendations, and the study as a whole, will hopefully be used to shift the discussion of low fertility from a series of single issue policies and platitudes, towards a holistic, broad based initiative to make all aspects of society more welcoming to women and the children they bear.

## Chapter 2 The Reproductive Climate and Theory Review

Previous research into the causes of low fertility rates in developed nations has tended to focus on single issues that are considered contributing factors. Economists, sociologists, feminists and political scientists have all studied this issue, and have all come to different conclusions as to what is the cause of low fertility in a developed nation. These studies have influenced the implementation of policies to encourage women to have more children, to varying degrees of success. Japan, which has generous paid family leave, subsidized daycare and a cash payment upon the birth of a child, however, still suffers from low fertility, with a rate of only 1.4 births per woman.<sup>14</sup>

The government efforts to increase fertility focus solely on the care and expense of a child. This narrow focus on a single issue ignores the reality that major decisions are not made in consideration of a single issue. The factors that go into choosing to have a child range from issues of economic stability to issues of equality, to the division of labor within the home. Due to the variety and availability of birth control in the industrialized world, children are usually planned for in good conditions, and avoided when conditions are poor. The reproductive climate analysis considers many of the issues in examining and evaluating a nation's fitness in which to raise a family. By taking a broad, interdisciplinary view of a nation and the factors that contribute to low fertility rates, the characteristics of a nation with a healthy fertility rate can be discovered, and more effective programs discovered and implemented in struggling nations.

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<sup>14</sup> *The World Fact Book, 2013-14*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

After a thorough review of previous literature on the subject, three major categories of studies emerged. The three categories are: the economy, maternal support structures, and social and family expectations. These three subsets are the metrics by which the reproductive climate will be examined and graded, with the overall goal of determining what makes a good reproductive climate and what makes a poor one. It must be noted that these metrics are not isolated factors. One metric may highly influence another. For instance, there may be fewer maternal support structures for women in a culture with the social expectation that women will cease employment after the birth of a child, and thus women will be paid less over all as they are seen as a poor investment by the company that hires them. This leads women to cease family formation activity, as they desire to keep their jobs.

## A. Economy

There are numerous studies on the impact of the economy on fertility rates. Some studies have pin-pointed increased female participation in the work place as a reason for low fertility rates. Many others have studied the impact of issues such as recession, youth unemployment and unequal pay. These issues all play a factor in the economy of a nation, and as a result, the choice of whether or not to have children.

There are numerous studies on the impact of female workforce participation on fertility rates in the developed world. Previous research has indicated that higher female workforce participation leads to lower fertility rates because of the increased opportunity costs of having children, and the inability to care for children on the work site. According to research by Namkee Ahn and Pedro Mira, “the correlation between TFR [Total Fertility Rate] and FPR

[Female Participation Rate] was negative and significant during the 1970's and up to the early 1980's."<sup>15</sup> Ahn and Mira later go on to state that since the mid 1980's, female workforce participation has become positively correlated with higher fertility rates.<sup>16</sup> Other researchers also concluded that increased workplace participation by women leads to increased fertility rates industrialized nations.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the employment of women is not an obstacle in raising fertility rates: unemployment is. Women are now able to choose to have children when it is most advantageous, as a result, "women would rather postpone childbearing until they accumulate sufficient human capital."<sup>18</sup> This desire for a stable income and desire to work means that high female workforce participation is a sign of a healthy reproductive climate. High female unemployment, as well as underemployment, creates a poor reproductive climate that forces women to wait until older ages to have children, limit the number they have, and to sometimes forgo childbearing entirely.

Another issue that can affect fertility rates is pay. There are two conflicting theories on the impact of pay on fertility rates. One theory, the substitution effect, is that high or equal pay lowers fertility because of the opportunity costs of taking time to care for children.<sup>19</sup> According to Becker, women may forgo child care in order to pursue income producing activity.<sup>20</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> Ahn, N., & Mira, P. (2002). "A note on the changing relationship between fertility and female employment rates in developed countries." *Journal of Population Economics*, 15(4), 667-682.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Adsera, A. (2005). "Vanishing children: From high unemployment to low fertility in developed countries." *American Economic Review*, 189-193.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Becker, G. (1960). "An economic analysis of fertility." In *Demographic and Economic Change in Developed Countries*, pages 209–231. Princeton: National Bureau of Economic Research.

other is the income effect which theorizes that, “an increase in the female wages may increase fertility.”<sup>21</sup> The substitution effect was more of a factor in nations who were just starting to see women enter the workforce, but as women have become more permanent in the workforce, the income effect has largely supplanted the substitution effect.<sup>22</sup> This is supported by the work done by Ahn and Mira, who have shown that after an initial drop in fertility rates upon female entry to the work force, fertility rates correlate positively with female workforce participation, and thus, female pay.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the more money a woman makes, the more likely she is to have children. An obstacle to the income effect is the global persistence of a gender gap in pay. Worldwide, male employees tend to be paid more than female employees for the same or equal work.<sup>24</sup> The gap is smaller between unmarried, non-mothers and their male colleagues, and larger between married mothers and their male colleagues. According to Rainald Borck, “fertility, female labor force participation and childcare provision are positively correlated with each other, while the gender wage gap seems to be negatively correlated with these variables.”<sup>25</sup> Meaning, the closer to wage parity women are, the more women participate in the labor force, and the more children women have. Thus, a nation with a low

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Orsal, D. D., & Goldstein, J. R. (2010, April). “The increasing importance of economic conditions on fertility.” In *annual meetings of the Population Association of America*. Dallas, Texas, April (pp. 15-17).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Ahn, N., & Mira, P. (2002). “A note on the changing relationship between fertility and female employment rates in developed countries.” *Journal of Population Economics*, 15(4), 667-682.

<sup>24</sup> In 2014 President Barack Obama issued an Executive Order preventing retaliation against employees for initiating wage discrimination law suits. This order applies to government contractors, and is aimed at lowering the wage gap in the United States, where on average women earn 77 cents for every 1 dollar a man makes.

<sup>25</sup> Borck, R. (2014). “Adieu Rabenmutter—culture, fertility, female labour supply, the gender wage gap and childcare.” *Journal of Population Economics*, 1-27.



female labor participation rate and a high wage gap will have more women opting not to have children, while a nation with a high labor participation rate and low wage gap will have a higher number of women opting to have children.

Wide spread youth unemployment also has an impact on fertility, as it impacts the acquisition of monetary resources at a young age, and prevents young adults from acquiring the necessary capital required for family formation.<sup>26</sup> This pushes back the age of first child birth, and greatly decreases the number of possible children to be born to a particular couple.<sup>27</sup> According to a recent paper headed by Goldstein, fertility rates amongst the youth are particularly affected by unemployment as, “young people can more easily revise their fertility plans.”<sup>28</sup> This reduces the number of children a couple may have. This is compounded by late entry into the labor force or entry into the labor force during a recession, which correlates to lower wages across the career of the individual.<sup>29</sup> Lower wages and lower income correlates to a lower fertility rate. Another emerging area of research in regards to fertility rates is the role of underemployment. Underemployment is employment at the part time level, despite a desire to work full time and with the qualifications to work a much more skilled job. Those in underemployment, including temporary workers, are engaged in work that is low paying and with low stability. For instance, Japanese temporary workers are paid as little as one third of

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<sup>26</sup> Orsal, D. D., & Goldstein, J. R. (2010, April). “The increasing importance of economic conditions on fertility.” In *annual meetings of the Population Association of America*. Dallas, Texas, April (pp. 15-17).

<sup>27</sup> Goldstein, J. R., Kreyenfeld, M., Jasilioniene, A., & Örsal, D. K. (2013). “Fertility reactions to the “Great Recession” in Europe: Recent evidence from order-specific data.” *Demographic Research*, 29.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Djernaes, L. (2013). “A Nordic perspective on youth unemployment.” *Life Long Learning In Europe*, (1), Retrieved from <http://www.iline.fi/en/article/policy/20134/a-nordic-perspective-on-youth-unemployment>

that of their full time colleagues.<sup>30</sup> As higher wages are correlated with higher fertility, a nation with large numbers of part time and temporary workers will be more likely to have a low fertility rate, as many women and couples will decide that it is not financially wise to bear children.

Another economic issue that has been pin pointed as influencing fertility is recession. Current thought is that fertility rates are higher in good economic conditions than in poor economic times, as children are an economic risk in industrialized nations, not an investment as they are in less developed nations.<sup>31</sup> This was confirmed by recent research by Goldstein et al, which indicates that there is a strong correlation between recession and decreased fertility.<sup>32</sup> They state uncertain economic climate leads individuals to delay fertility activity. As a result, the fertility rate of a nation in which there is a severe recession or with limited economic opportunities will be lower than that of a nation in which there has been no large scale economic issue or extensive economic exclusion.

The Economic metric will be operating under three assumptions. First, that unemployment, particularly female unemployment, leads to low fertility. In addition to this focus on women, youth unemployment is also an indicator of a low fertility rate. Second, the income effect: that women will have more children when their pay is higher. Thusly, a high

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<sup>30</sup> Sanders, S. & Yamamoto, C. (November 15, 2013). "Increasing temporary employment in Japan: polarization in the labor market and the 'working poor'" *Lexology*, Retrieved from <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=41dd48d3-7af8-4cc0-8972-92971050569c>.

<sup>31</sup> Orsal, D. D., & Goldstein, J. R. (2010, April). "The increasing importance of economic conditions on fertility." In *annual meetings of the Population Association of America*. Dallas, Texas, April (pp. 15-17).

<sup>32</sup> Goldstein, J. R., Kreyenfeld, M., Jasilioniene, A., & Örsal, D. K. (2013). "Fertility reactions to the" Great Recession" in Europe: Recent evidence from order-specific data." *Demographic Research*, 29.

wage gap between genders would be indicative of a nation with low fertility. Thirdly, recession, as recession can exacerbate or precipitate high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and economic uncertainty.

## B. Maternal Support Structures

Maternal support structures are programs and entitlements created by the government in order to reduce the burden of bearing and raising children in a modern society, and to induce women to have more children by providing programs that allow them to remain in the workforce. Maternal support structures include issues such as day care, maternal leave, prenatal care, and general social welfare aid. The creation of these policies is often the first step a nation takes in fixing the low fertility rate of a nation. Some of these structures are very common. The structures vary in the amount of funding, the extent of the aid, and the scope of the mission of the program. It is in these differences in which the support structures of a positive or negative reproductive climate will be found.

Maternity and family leave policies are a major part of most industrialized nation's maternal support structure. These policies allow for pregnant and post-partum women to take time off before and after the birth of their child to give birth, recover, and care for their newborns. The time given to mothers ranges from 6 weeks in the United States, to up to a year in Norway, Japan and Italy. In addition to time given, many nations also include some form of pay during the leave period, in an effort to negate the monetary effect of taking leave on the woman or couple. The amount that is paid depends on the nation, as does the source of the funds. Paid maternal leave is provided by all but four countries: Papua New Guinea, Swaziland,

Lesotho, and the United States of America. One factor that is very important in regards to these policies is the protection of women against employment discrimination. In countries with weak anti-discrimination laws, soon to be mothers are often forced out of the workforce. For instance, in Italy it was once routine for women to be forced to resign once they revealed that they were pregnant.<sup>33</sup>

While leave policies are routinely targeted at women, paternity leave policies are also becoming popular. Father's typically get as little as two weeks, but some nations allow for twelve weeks of paternal leave or more.<sup>34</sup> According to Duvander and Andersson there is a, "positive effect of a father's moderately long leave on a couple's second and third-birth propensity."<sup>35</sup> This means that in nations with paternal leave policies there is a higher likelihood of couples having multiple children. However, this is dependent on men actually using the paternal leave they are entitled to. Many men do not take paternity leave, as they fear it will negatively impact their career. For instance, according to a recent study by the Center for Work and Family at Boston college, 16% of new fathers are unable to take any days off upon the birth of a new child.<sup>36</sup> The situation is similar in Japan and Italy, where men are afforded only 2 weeks of paternity leave. According to the Japan Times, "more than 1 in 10

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<sup>33</sup> Cooper, M. (2013, April 4). "Meet the Italian women fighting to be more than mothers and lovers." *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/9968817/Meet-the-Italian-women-fighting-to-be-more-than-mothers-and-lovers.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, (2012). *Equality 2014 – the Norwegian government's gender equality action plan*. Retrieved from Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

<sup>35</sup> Duvander, A. Z., & Andersson, G. (2006). "Gender equality and fertility in Sweden: A study on the impact of the father's uptake of parental leave on continued childbearing." *Marriage & Family Review*, 39(1-2), 121-142.

<sup>36</sup> Harrington, B., Van Deusen, F., & Humberd, B. (2011). "The new dad: Caring, committed and conflicted." *Boston College Center for Work and Family*, Boston, MA.

working men have experienced ‘paternity harassment.’”<sup>37</sup> Paternity harassment includes being denied the option to take leave, being told that taking leave will harm one’s career, and being harassed upon return from leave. As a result, only 2.6 percent of men with new children take paternal leave in Japan.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, Norwegian men are given 12 weeks of paternity leave, with nine out of ten men taking leave.<sup>39</sup> An increase in men taking paternity leave normalizes workers taking time to care for children, regardless of gender. As such, paternity leave helps to increase the fertility rate by reducing the childcare penalty women take in their careers.<sup>40</sup> Paternity leave, thus is an indicator of a positive reproductive climate.<sup>41</sup>

Another form of support is the baby bonus. The baby bonus is a cash payment to the parents of a newborn, meant to cover some of the expense of raising a new child. This cash payment varies in size and distribution method. Some nations even give a monthly stipend to couples with children under a certain age. Japan, Italy and Australia all use the baby bonus system, but it is not without controversy. Australia was able to use the baby bonus to some success, as the nation did get a modest boost in fertility after the initial implementation of the baby bonus, many critics point out that the cost of the bonuses could be better spent in other

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<sup>37</sup> Otake, T. (2014, January 24). “Over 1 in 10 men have experienced ‘paternity harassment’: survey.” *The Japan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/24/national/paternity-leave-harassment-revealed-in-union-survey/>

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Benhold, K. (2011, June 28). “Working Women are the Key to Norway’s Prosperity.” *New York Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>40</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). “Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway. *Population and development review*,” 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>41</sup> Paternity leave remains controversial in many nations. In March 2014 Boomer Esiason criticized Mets player Daniel Murphy for missing two games to be with his wife and new baby. Esiason’s criticism sparked a debate about paternity leave in the United States.

reforms.<sup>42</sup> Italy and Japan have also implemented baby bonuses, and any bump they may have is similarly modest. The baby bonus is often more politically problematic than policy sound. Many women see the bonus as insulting, and feel that it ignores the realities of caring for children in industrialized nations.<sup>43</sup> This is especially true of young women or women who are unemployed. A onetime cash payment may be helpful to a middle or upper class couple, but to a poor couple the cash payment does little to make the cost of caring for a childless expensive. Japan, Italy, Singapore and many other low fertility nations employ the baby bonus. But high fertility nations such as Norway do not.

Thus, the use of the baby bonus system could be seen as a symptom of a nation in which there is a negative reproductive climate as it shows the government is not as in tune with the needs of working mothers and families as it could be.

In addition, it is shown that programs that help women stay in the workforce and help to mitigate the loss of income during leave or early child hood also helps to prop up fertility.<sup>44</sup> This includes maternity leave, especially maternity leave in which couples are entitled to a portion of pay while on leave. While on the surface this may seem cost ineffective, compared to the cost of infant care within the confines of child care institutions this is a net benefit, as children do not enter the system until they have somewhat less of a demanding care giver to child ratio.

Programs that allow for women to remain in the workforce can help women who are undecided on having children to feel more comfortable doing so. One of the programs that is

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<sup>42</sup> Guest, R. (2007). "The baby bonus: A dubious policy initiative." *POLICY-ST LEONARDS-*, 23(1), 11.

<sup>43</sup> Weisman, S. R. (1991). "In crowded japan, a bonus for babies angers women."

highly correlated with higher fertility rates is cheap, plentiful options for childcare. As more women join the workforce, it is increasingly important that there are alternative care options for young children, as their mothers are busy in the work place. One study posits that the availability is very important in increasing fertility rates, citing a tenth of a percent increase in the fertility rate for every ten percent of children in day care.<sup>45</sup> The existence of daycare does not simply increase the fertility rate, however. The cost of daycare is often one factor that forces women out of the workforce, thus decreasing the fertility rate of the nation as women opt to have none or fewer children to lessen the opportunity costs associated with childcare. Many nations thus subsidize the cost of daycare to some extent, and offer early childhood education programs. Not only must the cost be taken into account, but the operating hours as well. A daycare that operates under typical working hours will be significantly less useful than one that is open before and after normal commute times. In the examination of child care, the cost, availability and hours open must be accounted for, as child care that is unaffordable, hard to obtain and has hours that do not work with the needs of working parents is not as effective in raising the fertility rate as ones that are cheap, widely available, and with flexible schedules that allow for early drop off and late pick up.

This metric will operate under the following assumptions: maternity leave with some form of compensation during that time is a global norm. But, that same leave with no legal or social protections can dissuade women from having children. Paternity leave that men actually take is a sign of healthy fertility. Cheap, plentiful, daycare with operating hours that are

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<sup>44</sup> Kalwij, A. (2010). "The impact of family policy expenditure on fertility in Western Europe." *Demography*, 47(2), 503-519.

appropriate to working hours is a fertility positive. There is a strong correlation between the availability of childcare and the fertility rate of a nation, as mothers do not have to make a choice between continuing to work and having a deficit income because of day care, and staying home to care for children to save money despite a desire to work. Baby bonuses and other cash payments do some to ameliorate the cost of caring for a child, but often signify single issue thinking and a low fertility society.

### C. Family and Societal Expectations

The final metric chosen is ‘family and social expectations.’ If ‘maternal support structures’ is *de jure* support for mothers, family and social expectations is the *de facto* support for mothers and women who might become mothers. Traditionally, women were expected to be the caretakers of the home and any children in the family. Men were expected to earn all or most of the money, and did very little childcare or chores. But, as women’s education rates have risen, more and more women wish to enter the workforce. This has created a tension between traditional ideas of womanhood and motherhood that has led many women to question whether or not to have children at all.

According to Adsera, countries with low female workplace participation have fewer children, and this lower participation is often due to societal expectations of motherhood.<sup>46</sup> Women in low workforce participation countries were historically expected to drop out of the workforce after a short term in order to care for children and run the household. But as

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<sup>45</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). “Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway. *Population and development review*,” 36(4), 725-748.



women have gained more education, and have desired to or have been compelled to enter the workforce, many wish to stay. In countries where women are expected to leave the workforce after marriage or having children, women may be routinely discriminated against in employment. This discrimination may manifest itself as a high female unemployment rate, or as intense pressure from managers and colleagues to leave the workforce after a woman has a child. Often corporate and government structures have not adapted to the change, and neither have social mores. Thus, women find themselves making a choice between parenthood and employment, and many times employment wins.

In addition to this fact, family structure and gender roles within the society may also play a role in whether or not women desire to marry and have children. In countries that maintain traditional gender roles, “ marriage typically entails either a reduction in market employment or a burdensome ‘second shift.’”<sup>47</sup> This decreases the appeal of marriage to many women, and in many societies, the appeal of motherhood as well. In highly gender unequal societies, the rate of childbirth outside of marriage is very small. In Japan for instance, only 1.6 percent of children are born out of wedlock.<sup>48</sup> This means that children are highly correlated with marriage. If women do not feel that there will be equality within marriage, it will often be avoided. The second shift, as well as pay that does not make up for the cost of child care, is one of the many reasons women find themselves forced out of the workforce. Housework and

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<sup>46</sup> Adsera, A. (2005). “Vanishing children: From high unemployment to low fertility in developed countries.” *American Economic Review*, 189-193.

<sup>47</sup> Raymo, J. M., & Iwasawa, M. (2005). “ Marriage market mismatches in Japan: An alternative view of the relationship between women's education and marriage.” *American Sociological Review*, 70(5), 801-822.

<sup>48</sup> Shimada, M. (2009). “Fertility rate decline in Japan from the perspective of gender inequality and social problems of modern Japanese family.”

involvement in the home life by the father also plays a significant role in whether or not a woman will have more than one child. Couples in which there is low involvement and little to no help with chores by the father tend to have fewer children than couples in which both parents take an equal role in parenting.<sup>49</sup> This is especially true of nations with highly traditional ideas of marriage and family. According to a study by Cooke, a second child was more likely to be born to an Italian couple if the man was more involved around the house and with childcare.<sup>50</sup> In gender unequal societies, while a couple may decide to choose to have one child, if the primary burden of childcare and housework falls on the woman, the couple will have fewer children. Still more women may simply opt out of marriage and family in order to pursue a career.

The major theory of the Societal and Family expectation metric is that gender equality, both in the home and the workplace, increases the fertility of a nation. This is done by first by making women less fearful of losing employment after pregnancy, which increases primary fertility. This is accomplished secondly by reducing the workload women face in the home by increasing the amount of chores and childcare that men do in the home. This increases the chances of secondary and tertiary fertility, thus increasing the overall fertility rate.

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<sup>49</sup> Mills, M., Mencarini, L., Tanturri, M. T., & Begall, K. (2008). "Gender equity and fertility intentions in Italy and the Netherlands." *Demographic research*, 18.

<sup>50</sup> Cooke, L. P. (2009). "Gender equity and fertility in Italy and Spain." *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(1), 123-140.

## Chapter 3 Case Studies

This chapter will cover the different nations involved in the study. As such, the chapter will be divided into three parts, containing four sections each. The first part of each case will contain a brief overview of the nation and its demographics. This will give a complete picture of the situation of the nation. The next three sections will cover each of the metrics involved in the study: the economy, maternal support structures, and societal and family expectations. At the end of each case study there will be a final analysis of the reproductive climate as a whole, taking into account the theories incorporated into the metrics discussed in the previous section.

### 1. Japan

Japan, with a fertility rate of 1.4 births per woman, is one of the nations most concerned with the issue of demographic change<sup>51</sup>. This is due in great part to its increasingly aging population, and also due to Japan's reluctance to admit foreign workers. Japan is a highly homogenous society, with less than 1.5% of the population being members of minority groups or foreign workers.<sup>52</sup>As a result of these factors, almost half of Japan's population of 127,103,388 is over the age of 55.<sup>53</sup> As shown in the population pyramid below, this

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<sup>51</sup> Rupert Wingfield-Hayes. (2013, March 21). "Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?" *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>

<sup>52</sup> The World Fact Book, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013. *Retrieved from* <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

arrangement is unsustainable. The increasingly smaller generations have to support large

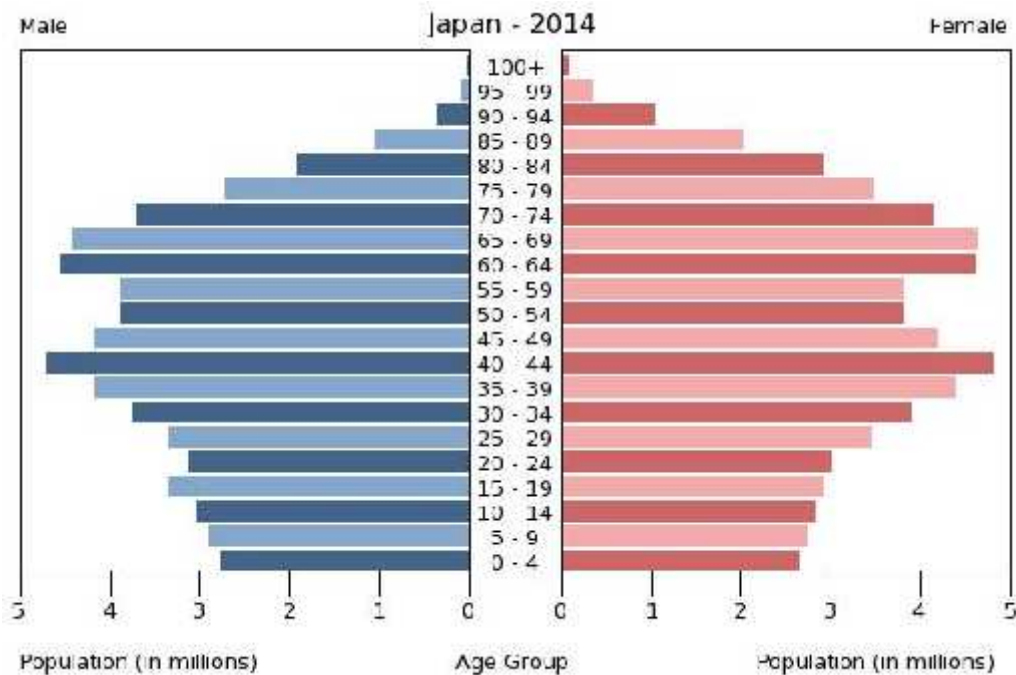


Figure 1 Japan's Population Pyramid<sup>54</sup>

numbers of elderly individuals, with a shrinking tax base.

In addition to the top heavy population, it the low fertility rate and population decline has already been underway for almost forty years. This low, sustained birthrate will make it difficult for Japan to fund pension systems, provide elder care, and eventually balance the government books altogether. The Japanese government is understandably worried, and has pushed women to have more children. These efforts have ranged from offering baby bonuses, which are payments to women upon the birth of each child, to subsidized day care. But,

<sup>54</sup> *The World Fact Book*, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

Japan's birthrate remains low, and Japan maintains the dubious status of worst nation for working mothers.<sup>55</sup> The metrics in the study help to explain why Japan has earned this "honor."

## A. The Economy

The Japanese economy and labor market has been in a state of recession or recovery for the past twenty four years. During that time, the fertility rate has been in a state of constant decline. This state of economic malaise combined with a structurally inflexible labor market and institutionalized ageism and sexism has had a depressive effect on the fertility rate.

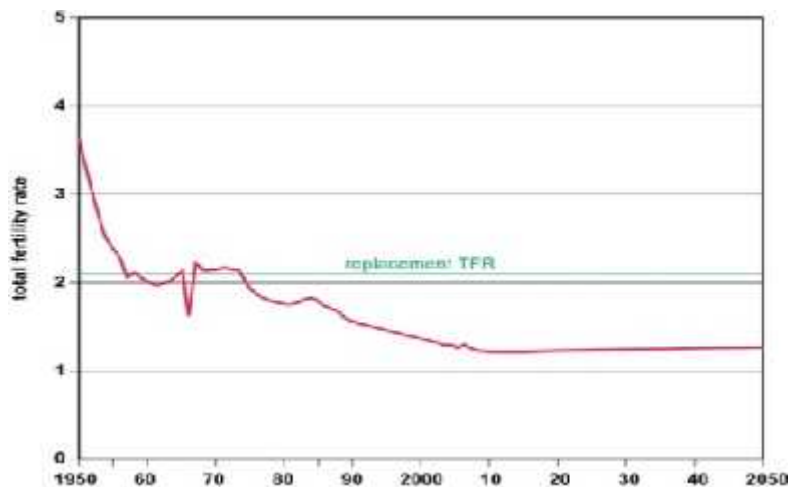


Figure 2 Japanese Fertility Rate Over Time<sup>56</sup>

In the 1990s, the asset bubble burst in Japan, sending Japan into a period, "of deflation and recession [during which] growth slowed down and sometimes became even negative."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Wingfield-Hayes, R. (2013, March 21). "Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?" *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>

<sup>56</sup> Smil, V. (2007). "The Unprecedented Shift in Japan's Population: Numbers, Age, and Prospects." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Vaclav-Smil/2411>.

<sup>57</sup> Ohno, K. (2005). *The economic development of japan*. (pp. 143-217). Tokyo: Uchikawa Publishing Co. Retrieved from <http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/pdf06/EDJ.pdf>

This crash has created an economic malaise that has become known as “The Lost Decade” and is occasionally expanded into “The Lost Decades.” As shown by the figure below, the Japanese fertility rate had already been in decline before the 1990s, but the Lost Decade caused a drastic decline in the number of births per woman from which Japan has not recovered. Also of interest is the early drop of the fertility rate to below replacement levels in the mid 1960’s, and the small boom in the 1980s. The former correlates to a period of economic trouble, and the latter to a period of economic boom.

This is partially due to the general economic climate and the relationship between low fertility rates and a poor economy.<sup>58</sup> But, there is also a compounding factor that has magnified the effect of the Lost Decade. This factor is the inflexible labor market that has evolved into a system that excludes young people from the stable jobs and salaries that allow for the formation of families.

In the Lost Decade, the traditional system of *shūshin koyō*, or lifelong employment, was shown to be unsustainable in poor economic times. Lifetime employment is a system of long term, stable employment characterized by hiring straight out of school, and remaining at the company until marriage(in the case of women) or retirement.<sup>59</sup> Due to the inflexible nature of such labor contracts, during the Lost Decades hiring slowed. And, in a culture that values inexperience and youth in its entry level employees, this meant that many young men and women found themselves permanently excluded from the permanent labor market. Some of

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<sup>58</sup> Orsal, D. D., & Goldstein, J. R. (2010, April). “The increasing importance of economic conditions on fertility.” In *annual meetings of the Population Association of America*. Dallas, Texas, April (pp. 15-17).

<sup>59</sup> Overholt, W. (2002, January). “Japan's economy, at war with itself.” *Foreign Affairs*, Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/57627/william-h-overholt/japans-economy-at-war-with-itself>

these young people became classified as NEETS (not in education, employment or training).<sup>60</sup>

As of 2002, there were about 650,000 to 850,000 NEETS in Japan, and the trend will continue to worsen as “Freeters and NEETs at present are men and unmarried women between the ages of 15 and 34, a group that has been aging with the general population.”<sup>61</sup> This is an ongoing problem that will continue to be compounded with time as, “in 1992, 60% of NEETs fell within the age ranges of 15 to 24, but in 1997 60% fell within the age ranges of 20 to 29, and in 2002 60% fell within the age ranges of 25 to 34.”<sup>62</sup> This shows that the original NEETS were unable to enter the work force, and as an extension, were unable to marry and become parents.

NEETs are not the only individuals who are precluded from parenthood by employment issues. As a response to the problems of rigid employment practices, the Japanese government loosened restrictions on temporary workers. Initially temp jobs were limited via, “the method ...of the ‘open list,’ whereby covered jobs were listed.”<sup>63</sup> However, due to increasing economic pressure, the law was eventually changed in 1999, to list the jobs temporary workers could not do. As such, “Temporary work also nearly doubled, rising from 20% in 1990 to 34% in 2008”.<sup>64</sup> Compounding this issue, is that manufacturing workers could only be hired on 3 year temp contracts and, “professional workers sent by manpower agencies, including secretaries and interpreters, working on a temporary basis [were] authorized without

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<sup>60</sup> Kremer, W., & Hammond, C. (2013, July 04). “Hikikomori: Why are so many Japanese men refusing to leave their rooms?” *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23182523>.

<sup>61</sup> Kosugi, R. (2006). “Youth employment in Japan’s economic recovery: ‘Freeters’ and ‘NEETs’.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-kosugi-reiko/2022>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Guyonnet, E. (2011). “Young Japanese temporary workers create their own unions.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 9(16), Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Emilie-Guyonnet/3518>.

specifying the length of service.”<sup>65</sup> This means that office workers could theoretically work for the same company for many years as a temporary worker, while working the same hours and with the same responsibilities as a full time worker, but without the protection, pension, pay or benefits as a full time employee. Indeed, “the average salary of regular workers is 3,170,000 yen and the average salary of temporary workers is 1,964,000 yen.”<sup>66</sup> Essentially, a temporary worker is paid only a fraction of what a full time worker is paid.<sup>67</sup> Not only that, but, “[in 2004] the Unemployment Insurance Law was modified and unemployment benefits were made more difficult to obtain for dispatched workers.”<sup>68</sup> Temporary workers are also in a state of uncertain employment as, “The employment of permanent workers [is] more protected than that of temporary workers...permanent workers can be more easily motivated to accumulate firm-specific skill than workers, resulting in relative efficiency superiority in permanent workers.”<sup>69</sup> This instability is not just limited to young graduates. Japanese companies prefer to hire new workers straight out of high school or college, and there are very few open positions in middle management. As a result, once an individual becomes a temporary worker, it is unlikely that he or she will ever obtain a full time position. As this population grows, a larger percentage of the

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<sup>64</sup> Guyonnet, E. (2011). “Young Japanese temporary workers create their own unions.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 9(16), Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Emilie-Guyonnet/3518>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Sanders, S. & Yamamoto, C. (November 15, 2013). “Increasing temporary employment in japan: polarization in the labor market and the ‘working poor’” *Lexology*, Retrieved from <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=41dd48d3-7af8-4cc0-8972-92971050569c>

<sup>68</sup> Guyonnet, E. (2011). “Young Japanese temporary workers create their own unions.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 9(16), Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Emilie-Guyonnet/3518>

<sup>69</sup> Machikita, T., & Sato, H. (2011). *Temporary jobs and globalization: Evidence from japan*. Informally published manuscript, RIETI Discussion Paper Series.



population will suffer from low wage, low stability jobs that are not conducive to marriage and children.

## B. Maternal Support Structures

If a woman can obtain a job and find someone to marry, things do not get much better. Japan has been called one of the worst developed nations for working mothers.<sup>70</sup> Part of this is workplace discrimination, which will be explored in more depth in the next section; another part of this is inadequate day care and support for working mothers. Japan, like most other industrialized nations, has created a host of programs to help ameliorate the time and money demands of having children. Like most developed countries, Japan has paid maternity leave, with the first 8 weeks paid at 67% of pay, and after that they get 50% of pay for up to a year.<sup>71</sup> Men receive parental leave as well, but only 2.63% of men take it.<sup>72</sup> Many women do not take the leave, and instead choose to leave the workforce entirely. Or, if they do return to work, they find themselves pushed out of the workforce. As a result, “70% of Japanese women leave the workforce after having their first child.”<sup>73</sup>

There are several reasons for this. One is the daycare shortage in Japan. Known as *hokatsu*, the search for day care in Japan is now considered a task as difficult as getting into a

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<sup>70</sup> Wingfield-Hayes, R. (2013, March 21). “Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?” *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>.

<sup>71</sup> Atoh, M., & Akachi, M. (2003). “Low fertility and family policy in Japan.” *Journal of Population and Social Security*, 1-30.

<sup>72</sup> Rupert Wingfield-Hayes. (2013, March 21). “Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?” *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

top university.<sup>74</sup> This is due to a severe day care shortage at both the public, subsidized level, and also the private. Tokyo alone is 25,000 public daycare slots short of demand.<sup>75</sup> This leaves women to search for slots in the private day care system, which can be prohibitively expensive.<sup>76</sup> Not that the public system is any cheaper, with care for a first child costing 70,000 Yen (\$737, £484) per month.<sup>77</sup> And private options are even more expensive.

The often discussed 'baby bonus' Japan offers its mothers does little to mitigate the cost of raising and bearing children in Japan. Japan pays women 500,000 yen, about \$5,000, upon the birth of a child.<sup>78</sup> As of 2009, Japan also offered cash payments to parents, which amount to about \$3,400 USD per year.<sup>79</sup> Often the lump sum simply covers the hospital visit and birth.<sup>80</sup> The bonus seems to have little effect on a woman's choice to have a child, and serves more to insult women than to encourage women to marry and become mothers.<sup>81</sup> The baby bonus seems to many a poor solution to the reasons women choose not to have children such as, "the high cost of education, the lack of day care, the scarcity of decent or affordable housing

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<sup>74</sup> Tobuchi, H. (2013, February 26). "Desperate hunt for day care in Japan." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/world/asia/japans-mothers-in-hokatsu-hunt-for-day-care.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/world/asia/japans-mothers-in-hokatsu-hunt-for-day-care.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Wingfield-Hayes, R. (2013, March 21). Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers? *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Weisman, S. R. (1991). "In crowded japan, a bonus for babies angers women."

<sup>79</sup> Lah, K. (2009, February 4). "Plan would pay Japanese families to have kids". CNN.com. . Retrieved May 1, 2014, from <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/09/04/japan.children/index.html>.

<sup>80</sup> Suzuki, T. (2009). "Fertility decline and governmental interventions in Eastern Asian advanced countries." *The Japanese Journal of Population*, 7(1), 47-56.

and the physical and emotional burdens of raising children when their husbands work from early morning until they stagger home on the last subway train toward midnight.”<sup>82</sup>

### C. Societal and Family Expectations

The arguments against the baby bonus hint at one of the major reasons Japanese women are forgoing marriage and motherhood entirely. The lack of equality in both the workplace and the home has many women feeling forced to choose between starting a family and continuing their careers- and many women are choosing the workplace. Japan’s highly traditional society has a major impact on this choice. Despite some gains by the Japanese feminist movement in the 1980s, women still routinely find themselves engaged in lower paying part time work or in career paths at work that are largely support and secretarial. In the home, the traditional roles of male bread winner and female home maker remain strong. One woman stated that her reason for not marrying her long term boyfriend is that, “He was a typical Japanese man. He didn't want a partner, he wanted me to be his mother.”<sup>83</sup> As marriage and childbearing are strongly correlated in Japan, this disconnect between what the two sexes want means a lower fertility rate for an already struggling Japan.

Women who have children and choose to remain at work not only face the daunting task of finding day care, but also face the disapproval and resentment of colleagues and employers. In fact, “49% of Japanese mothers left (their jobs) because they felt stymied and

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Weisman, S. R. (1991). “In crowded japan, a bonus for babies angers women.”

<sup>83</sup> Weisman, S. R. (1991). “In crowded japan, a bonus for babies angers women.”

stalled” in their current positions.<sup>84</sup> Others say that, “they’re pushed off the career track by unsupportive work environments and managers who do not value them.”<sup>85</sup> Managers aren’t the only source of pressure. Colleagues also provide a push out of the door, and are often hostile to women who have to leave early to pick up children from childcare.<sup>86</sup> In addition to pressure from colleagues, many women simply do not see the point of staying in a position where they are not paid what their work is worth as “the wages of women in Japan, as in other advanced economies, are considerably less than those received by male workers, and in fact the wages of women in Japan are notoriously low.”<sup>87</sup> According to the Japan Times, Japanese working mothers only make 61% of what their male colleagues make.<sup>88</sup> The overall gap between men and women is 29%.<sup>89</sup> As a result, Japan has the second highest gender gap in pay in the world.<sup>90</sup> This is also partially due to the large number of women who are engaged in temporary work.<sup>91</sup> Women who are pushed out of the work force often return after a few years

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<sup>84</sup> Hewlett, S. A. (2011, December 11). “Japan’s working-woman problem.” *Time*. Retrieved from <http://ideas.time.com/2011/12/11/japans-working-woman-problem>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Hewlett, S. A. (2011, December 11). “Japan’s working-woman problem.” *Time*. Retrieved from <http://ideas.time.com/2011/12/11/japans-working-woman-problem/>

<sup>87</sup> Ogawa, N., & Hodge, R. W. (1994). “Patrilocal childbearing and the labor supply and earning power of married Japanese women.”

<sup>88</sup> Kyodo, AP. “Pay Gap Worst for Japan’s Mothers.” *Japan Times*. Japan Times, 12 Dec. 2012.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> According to OECD data, South Korea has the largest wage gap, at 39%.

<sup>91</sup> Po, H. W. (2008). “The Changing Role of Women and Its Effect on the Gender-Biased Social Policy in Japan.”

spent raising children, and these women are relegated to low paying, unstable temporary work that leads to little advancement.<sup>92</sup>

The problems do not only come from the workplace. In Japan, motherhood is highly correlated with marriage, with the number of non-marital births in Japan at only 1.6 percent.<sup>93</sup> This low number of out of wedlock births means that the choice of partner heavily influences the decision to have children. Many Japanese however, do not intend to ever marry, and those that do are marrying at later and later ages, reducing the number of fertile years within marriage.<sup>94</sup> The young woman mentioned earlier is not alone in finding the role of Japanese wife and mother undesirable, and as a result the marriage rates are falling. According to Japan, “33.5% of Japanese think marriage is pointless.”<sup>95</sup> Those under the age of thirty were most likely to view marriage as a pointless exercise, and this distaste for marriage impacts the fertility rate.<sup>96</sup>

For women, this is largely due to the great rift of inequality and responsibility within the home. For many women, marriage, and later children, means working a second shift of housework, childcare and eldercare once the official work day is done.<sup>97</sup> Though many men say that working mothers are fine, these same men do not follow through with the home support

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Shimada, M. (2009). “Fertility rate decline in Japan from the perspective of gender inequality and social problems of modern Japanese family.”

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Phro, P. (2013, July 6). “33% of Japanese think marriage is pointless: survey.” *Japan Today*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Shimada, M. (2009). “Fertility rate decline in Japan from the perspective of gender inequality and social problems of modern Japanese family.”

to make it happen.<sup>98</sup> Japanese men spend only one hour a day helping with chores, and only fifteen minutes a day caring for their own children.<sup>99</sup> This places the primary burden of housework and childcare on Japanese women, who often find themselves functioning in the role of a single parent, but with the luxury of a spouse who brings home a paycheck. Many young Japanese do not find this system to be appealing, and so avoid the institution of marriage entirely. This opting out of marriage and children has led to Japan's singles society, and depressed the fertility rate even further. The lack of gender equality in the home is thus a major factor in the low fertility rate of the nation.

#### D. Reproductive Climate

The overall reproductive climate of Japan is very poor. The poor economy, ridged labor structure, and the exclusion of young people and women from the fulltime, stable workforce leads many to forgo marriage and children because of the cost. This matches the previously discussed theories that a strong economy, equal pay, and economic opportunity lead to fertility. Those that do desire to have children are discouraged by the lack of childcare. This lack of child care matches the previously stated theory that the more childcare that is available, the higher the fertility rate will be, there is a one tenth of a percent jump in fertility rate for each ten percent of children in childcare under the age of 5.<sup>100</sup> Men do not do their share of work in the home, decreasing the desirability to have a partner, and among those who are partnered lessens the likelihood of a second or third child being born. These factors combine to create an

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<sup>98</sup> Po, H. W. (2008). "The Changing Role of Women and Its Effect on the Gender-Biased Social Policy in Japan."

<sup>99</sup> Wingfield-Hayes, R. (2013, March 21). "Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?" *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>

environment in which the highly educated women of Japan choose to forgo marriage and children in favor of a career.<sup>101</sup> The forced differentiation and the heavy reliance on the unpaid labor of women in Japan is thus a major factor in the continued low birth rate of Japan, and will remain so unless the structural issues and gender bias within the society are resolved. The resolution of some of these issues may lead to an increase in the fertility rate and the economy, due to the intertwining nature of the reproductive climate. By simply increasing the availability of stable, semi-permanent jobs in Japan and correcting the massive abuse of temporary workers within Japan, many young people may see the climate as safe to bear children in. Without major change, Japan will have yet another generation that does not reach replacement rate.

## 2. Italy

Italy is a southern European nation with a population of 61,680,122.<sup>102</sup> Italy has one of the lowest total fertility rates in Europe, at 1.42 births per woman.<sup>103</sup> As shown by the figure below, there are an increasingly smaller number of children and young adults available to support a

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<sup>100</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>101</sup> Raymo, J. M., & Iwasawa, M. (2005). "Marriage market mismatches in Japan: An alternative view of the relationship between women's education and marriage." *American Sociological Review*, 70(5), 801-822.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *The World Fact Book* 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

large number of elderly individuals, and this will only worsen as the middle aged reach retirement age.<sup>104</sup>

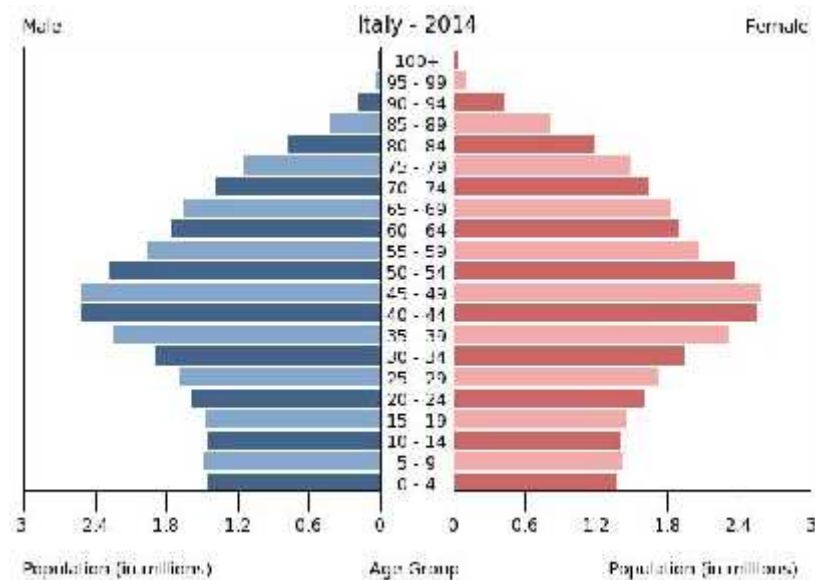


Figure 3 Italy Population Pyramid<sup>105</sup>

What makes this low fertility particularly remarkable is the religiosity of Italy. Italy is primarily a Catholic nation, and one of its neighbors is Vatican City, the home of the Pope and the center of Catholic thought and faith. That the fertility rate has declined to such an extent despite Catholic teachings against birth control is truly remarkable. Italy has been dealing with the possibility of significant population decline for less time than Japan, but the issue is no less dangerous. Without significant effort to increase the fertility rate in the next few decades, Italy will face significant obstacles to increasing fertility. Luckily, Italy has suffered from the problem of low fertility for less time than the nation of Japan, with the fertility decline only occurring in

<sup>105</sup> *The World Fact Book* 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>



the past generation. Improving a one generation fertility shortfall will be significantly easier than repairing a two or even three generation fertility gap.

## A. Economy

The Italian economy has not grown since it entered the Eurozone in 2000.<sup>106</sup> This is especially troubling as Italy is the only European Union nation that has not grown since the switch to the Euro in the year 2000.<sup>107</sup> This dismal growth is just one symptom of a highly dysfunctional economy, in which unemployment is rampant. The unemployment rate is at 12.1 percent across the whole population.<sup>108</sup> However, the youth unemployment rate is a startling 42%.<sup>109</sup>

This massive rate of youth unemployment is, just as in Japan, caused by a system of life time employment that is increasingly becoming inaccessible to young people, who are increasingly being relegated to low paying, low stability temporary contract jobs, or simply not hired at all.<sup>110</sup> The lifetime employment system in Italy was set up after World War II, and was designed so a man could support a wife and children on a single, stable salary.<sup>111</sup> This model

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<sup>106</sup> Walker, A. (2014, February 24). "Italy's economy: The Mountain Matteo Renzi must climb." *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-26266118>.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Davies, L. (2013, June 26). "Italy agrees measures to tackle youth unemployment." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/26/italy-youth-unemployment>.

<sup>110</sup> Povoledo, E. (2012, February 15). "In Italy, facing the end of the lifetime job." *The York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/world/europe/in-italy-facing-the-end-of-the-lifetime-job.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

was accompanied by stringent labor laws that made it very difficult to fire an employee, meaning that in recession a company was forced to hold on to employees the corporation could not afford.<sup>112</sup> Like Japan, Italy responded to unemployment and ridged employment structures by opening up short term temporary work, but just as in the case of Japan, this has just created a stratification of the work force.<sup>113</sup> This has excluded young people from the work place, and pushed the start of an individual's career back into the late twenties, and for those who want children, pushed the age of marriage and birth of the first child back as they cannot afford the cost of having a child.<sup>114</sup> This results in an overall lower fertility for the women who choose to have children, as they will have fewer childbearing years in which they are actively trying to conceive and carry a child to term.

## B. Maternal Support Structures

Italy has fairly generous maternity leave polices. Pregnant women are required to take the last two months of their pregnancy and the three months after birth as maternity leave.<sup>115</sup> This time is paid at 80 percent of normal pay by their employer, and the remaining twenty percent is paid by the state. The mother (or rarely father) can choose to then take another six

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Italian women shun 'mamma' role. (2006, March 27). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4739154.stm>.

<sup>115</sup> Bohlen, C. (1996, May 12). "The state of welfare in Italy; where every day is mother's day." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/12/weekinreview/the-state-of-welfare-in-italy-where-every-day-is-mother-s-day.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1>.

months of leave at thirty percent pay, and then a final three months with no pay.<sup>116</sup> In addition to that, women with risky pregnancies can take the entire pregnancy as leave.<sup>117</sup> Italy has also instituted a baby bonus, a set amount of money paid to a family after each child's birth.<sup>118</sup>

However, Italy's support for mothers ends there. The Italian economic system and welfare system is set up to have men working, with women staying home and caring for the children.<sup>119</sup> This means that there are very few day care centers, or nurseries, available for working mothers, and those that do exist are prohibitively expensive.<sup>120</sup> Some women are lucky enough to have extended family nearby to care for the children, but many women are simply pushed out of the workforce. Italy has the second lowest women's workplace participation in the European Union, with only 46% of women working.<sup>121</sup> This can be partially attributed to the high numbers of youth unemployment. But it is also due to lack of child care and discrimination in the work place. Until 2012, some women were forced to pre-sign letters

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<sup>116</sup> Bohlen, C. (1996, May 12). "The state of welfare in Italy; where every day is mother's day." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/12/weekinreview/the-state-of-welfare-in-italy-where-every-day-is-mother-s-day.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1>.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> "Italian women shun 'mamma' role." (2006, March 27). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4739154.stm>.

<sup>119</sup> Povoledo, E. (2012, February 15). "In Italy, facing the end of the lifetime job." *The York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/world/europe/in-italy-facing-the-end-of-the-lifetime-job.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>120</sup> "Italian women shun 'mamma' role." (2006, March 27). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4739154.stm>.

<sup>121</sup> Totaro, L., & Vasarri, C. (2012, February 16). "Italy needs to boost services for working mothers, Fornero says." *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-16/italy-needs-to-boost-services-for-working-mothers-fornero-says.html>.

of resignation in case they got pregnant.<sup>122</sup> The end result is that one third of new mothers quit their jobs after the birth of their first child.<sup>123</sup>

Efforts to raise the Italian fertility rate tend to emphasize the role of the mother in the home, and remain dependent on the use of unpaid female labor at home. Many municipalities say that new nurseries are, “too expensive and...[The municipality] has to support the growing number of older people in the city.”<sup>124</sup> This statement highlights one of the major conflicts of creating supportive systems conducive to childrearing and bearing in a low fertility rate society. Whether to aid the elderly who currently need help, or to invest in programs designed to increase the fertility rate, and thus the future available tax base that will help to support the elderly.

### C. Family and Social Expectations

According to the Global Economic Forum, Italy ranks 71 out of 136 countries in global gender equality, and ranks at number 97 in economic participation.<sup>125</sup> This disparity shows that there is a great gap between the legal equality of women, and the actual day to day equality. In

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<sup>122</sup> Bohlen, C. (1996, May 12). “The state of welfare in Italy; where every day is mother's day.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/12/weekinreview/the-state-of-welfare-in-italy-where-every-day-is-mother-s-day.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1>.

<sup>123</sup> Totaro, L., & Vasarri, C. (2012, February 16). “Italy needs to boost services for working mothers, Fornero says.” *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-16/italy-needs-to-boost-services-for-working-mothers-fornero-says.html>.

<sup>124</sup> “Italian women shun 'mamma' role.” (2006, March 27). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4739154.stm>.

<sup>125</sup> Global Economic Forum, (2013). *The global gender gap report 2013*. Retrieved from World Economic Forum website: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf).

fact, Italy is 124th in the world for equal pay for equal work.<sup>126</sup> This great disparity is due to intense gender discrimination in the work place that allows for women to be paid less than men for the same work, be less likely to be hired, and to be more likely to engage in part time employment than full time employment.

In the workplace women face routine discrimination. In hiring, discrimination is common place, and often, “the first question they ask women [in a job interview] is if they’re married, have a boyfriend, or what they’re doing in their private life.”<sup>127</sup> These questions are to screen for women who have the possibility of becoming pregnant, and for women who may have interests and family outside the workplace. If a woman is hired, it was a common practice until 2012 to have women pre-sign a resignation letter, so that in the event that the woman becomes pregnant, she can be fired without having to deal with Italy’s strict employment laws.<sup>128</sup> This has resulted in a workplace and society in which are women are forced to choose between a job and a family.<sup>129</sup>

This inequality is compounded in the home. Italian women that do manage to find a job. In Italy, “women work an average of 22 hours in a paid job, in addition to doing 35 hours of housework each week.”<sup>130</sup> Men work eleven hours less, both inside and outside the home.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Cooper, M. (2013, April 4). Meet the Italian women fighting to be more than mothers and lovers. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/9968817/Meet-the-Italian-women-fighting-to-be-more-than-mothers-and-lovers.html>.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Kurtz, A. (2013, November 5). “Men aren’t pulling their weight at home.” *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2013/11/05/news/economy/unpaid-work/>.

As a result, many women are choosing to marry later, or not marry at all. If they do marry and choose to have children, they often choose to only have one, as men do not aid in chores..<sup>132</sup>

#### D. Reproductive Climate

Italy's reproductive climate is very poor. Young people and women are routinely excluded from the workforce, and due to late entry to the work force, shortened fertile years mean that fewer children are able to be born to a married couple. The economic exclusion of young people in the workforce correlates with the previously stated theory that unemployment is correlated with a lower total fertility rate, as individuals will choose to not have children if there are not sufficient resources to care for them. The gap in pay and economic opportunity is also consistent with the theories. Women who are affected by a gender gap in pay will often forgo childbearing as there is an additional 'mother penalty' attached to the wages. The unreliability of contract jobs is also a factor, as stability is desirable in family formation. Temporary jobs, while not the purgatory they are in Japan, do not allow for the social and economic security needed for a couple to feel comfortable marrying or having children. Compounding that is the overall economic climate of Italy, which is one of the worst in the European Union. Prolonged economic recession has a depressive effect on not only the fertility, but also on wages, employment, and pay.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Mills, M., Mencarini, L., Tanturri, M. T., & Begall, K. (2008). "Gender equity and fertility intentions in Italy and the Netherlands." *Demographic research*, 18.

While Italy does have the typical maternal support structures of maternity leave, day care, and healthcare, there are some major lapses in policy. Italy provides little to no legal protection against gender and pregnancy discrimination, which has led to a climate of rampant gender discrimination. This oversight led to practices such as pre-signed resignation letters, invasive personal questions in job interviews, and a high rate of female unemployment. Without legal protection, companies will continue to seek to exclude women from the labor force. For women who are able to get a full time job and return from leave, they face another hurdle upon return. The availability of day care is very low, and the costs are very high. While there are some subsidized spots, these go to the low income and the parents of the developmentally disabled. Women often feel pressured to drop out of the workforce to care for their children, as their wages do not fully cover the cost of day care.<sup>133</sup> This contributes to the feeling that women must make a choice between a career and a family. Women may also face pressure from colleagues and even their own families to drop out of the workforce to care for children. Women who pursue higher education may opt instead to pursue their careers in order to utilize their educations, and thus not enter into the institution of marriage.

Italy's societal and family expectations are very traditional. There is a major gender equality gap in the workforce, and there is yet another larger one in the home. Italian men do very little housework in the home, which correlates with a lower possibility of not just marriage, but also the likelihood of a second or third child in a marriage. Women, who have to not only care for their children but also their spouse, instead of seeking to address this chore inequality often opt out of the system of marriage and children altogether. Compounded with low gender

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<sup>133</sup> This is not only a problem in Italy. In the United States there has been a rise in the number of stay at home

equality over all, and the intense pressure for traditional marriages and gender roles, and women in Italy are increasingly choosing to lean in to careers. This gap in gender equality within the home is obviously a major problem, that not only prevents the birth of subsequent children, but also may impact the number of marriages in Italy as well.

### 3. Norway

Norway is one of the few industrialized nations that has a birth rate close to replacement rate.

Though Norway is a small nation with a cold, and some times formidable climate, this nation

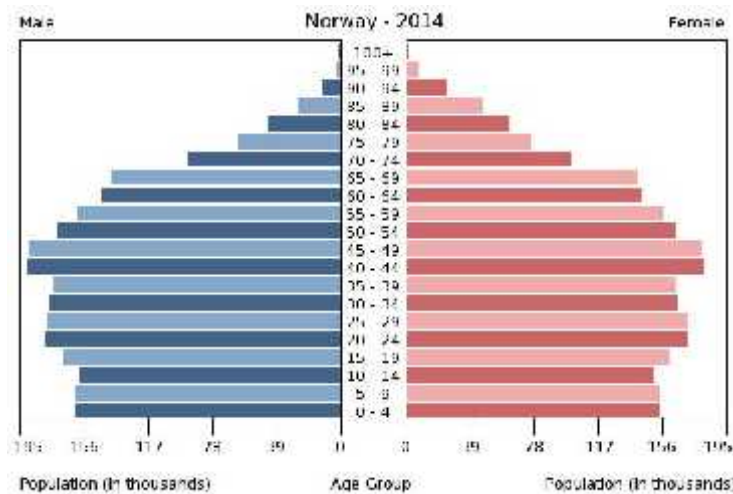


Figure 4 Norway Population Chart<sup>134</sup>

has made the news with its emphasis on family life and a balance between home and work for both men and women. Norway is a medium population country, with 5,147,792 million people.<sup>135</sup> As above, Norway's population chart is far more even and sustainable than the

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moms due to rising costs associated with childcare.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *The World Fact Book*, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.



Japanese chart. The even distribution of the age pyramid shows that the society has the necessary population at each level to sustain growth for a period of time.

With a fertility rate of 1.95 births per woman, this nation has one of the more stable populations in Europe.<sup>136</sup> Norway is ninety four percent native Norwegian, with a small mix of immigrants and native minorities.<sup>137</sup>

## A. Economy

Unlike many of its peers, Norway has a relatively stable economy that has managed to weather the economic crises of the past in few decades. In fact, during the most recent economic crises, Norway's economy grew three percent and the government had an eleven percent budget surplus.<sup>138</sup> In comparison, the United States had a deficit of 12.9 percent.<sup>139</sup> This stability is largely attributed to Norway's unique method of managing the money it receives from selling oil. All money from oil sales goes into "its sovereign wealth fund, state money that is used to make investments around the world."<sup>140</sup> As a result, Norway has built a

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<sup>136</sup> *The World Fact Book*, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Thomas, L. (2009, May 13). "Thriving Norway provides an economics lesson." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?_r=0)

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Hsieh, E. (2013, May 16). "What Norway did with its oil and we didn't." *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/canada-competes/what-norway-did-with-its-oil-and-we-didnt/article11959362/>

sustainable capital and infrastructure reserve that allows it to mitigate the effect of economic crises.<sup>141</sup>

The reason for such a conservative use of the North Sea oil money is the economic structure of Norway. Norway is a social democracy with not only a strong social safety net, but also a strong sense of responsibility, “The U.S. and the U.K. have no sense of guilt.... But in Norway, there is instead a sense of virtue. If you are given a lot, you have a responsibility.”<sup>142</sup> The profits from the investment fund thus go into the robust social programs that help to provide a stable future for Norway, such as education, welfare, health care, and the generous parental leave packages for which Norway is famous.

Norway’s unemployment is also unusually low, ranging from 3.3 to 3.6 percent.<sup>143</sup> This is very low compared to the EU, which hovers around eleven percent.<sup>144</sup> The youth unemployment is 8.6 percent.<sup>145</sup> But the government is aggressively working to lower that number as, “young people who do not get attached to the labor market at an early age risk being permanently excluded.”<sup>146</sup> The efforts to employ young people range from income tax

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Thomas, L. (2009, May 13). “Thriving Norway provides an economics lesson.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?_r=0).

<sup>143</sup> Mohsin, S. (2013, September 25). “Norway unemployment unexpectedly gains as economic growth slows.” *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-25/norway-unemployment-unexpectedly-gains-as-economic-growth-slows.html>

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *The World Fact Book*, 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

<sup>146</sup> Djernaes, L. (2013). “A Nordic perspective on youth unemployment.” *Life Long Learning In Europe*, (1), Retrieved from <http://www.ilene.fi/en/article/policy/20134/a-nordic-perspective-on-youth-unemployment>

reductions, subsidies for companies that hire the unemployed, and efforts to better support the unemployed in job searches.<sup>147</sup> The general approach to labor policy is, “Those with an education should be employed as quickly as possible and those without an education should – if they are able – start an education as soon as possible.”<sup>148</sup> These education efforts and employment efforts also push for some form of employment or job training during lean times. These efforts range from worker education programs to ‘practice periods’ in which individuals work at a company in order to gain experience and connections within a company.<sup>149</sup> The goal is to have youth unemployed ‘activated’ in the labor market within three months- even in times of economic strife.<sup>150</sup> Norway’s primary bridging program is one in which, “unemployed persons with reduced work ability and no or limited working experience are offered a two year full time program aimed at moving them closer to the labor market.”<sup>151</sup> This program helps to ensure entry to the labor market once economic issues have decreased, and to make the individual more desirable to employers at the end of the crises.

## B. Maternal Support Structures

Norway is special in that it does not have maternal support structures in the traditional sense.

Instead, Norway has a broad program of family support structures, with an emphasis on

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Djernaes, L. (2013). “A Nordic perspective on youth unemployment.” *Life Long Learning In Europe*, (1), Retrieved from <http://www.lline.fi/en/article/policy/20134/a-nordic-perspective-on-youth-unemployment>.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Djernaes, L. (2013). “A Nordic perspective on youth unemployment.” *Life Long Learning In Europe*, (1), Retrieved from <http://www.lline.fi/en/article/policy/20134/a-nordic-perspective-on-youth-unemployment>.

increasing the involvement of fathers.<sup>152</sup> These structures include parental leave, subsidized day care, and subsidized after school care for school aged children. These services were previously identified as positive indicators of an ideal reproductive climate.

Parental leave is a major portion of the family and parental support structure of Norway. Norway's leave policies began in 1956, when it offered twelve weeks to women, and slowly expanded the benefit as time went on.<sup>153</sup> In an effort to mitigate the impact that taking maternity leave has on a woman's career, Norway is attempting to normalize men taking leave as well.<sup>154</sup> The couple receives 56 weeks of paid parental leave at eighty six percent of the couple's wages.<sup>155</sup> Women have nine weeks of mandatory leave pre- and post-birth, and men have twelve weeks of leave allotted for their exclusive use.<sup>156</sup> If a man does not take those twelve weeks of leave, the woman is unable to use it.<sup>157</sup> The remaining thirty five weeks may be divided as the family chooses. This push for fathers to take leave is working, "as Nine in 10 fathers share parental leave, up from about 2 percent 20 years ago."<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Benhold, K. (2011, June 28). "Working Women are the Key to Norway's Prosperity." *New York Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>153</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Benhold, K. (2011, June 28). "Working Women are the Key to Norway's Prosperity." *New York Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>156</sup> Kravdal, Y. (2006). "Why is Fertility in Norway so High?" *Interdisciplinary Communications*, 1(1), 66-71. Retrieved April 15, 2013, from <http://www.cas.uio.no/Publications/Seminar/Complexity.pdf#page=68>.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

Parents then have access to high quality, subsidized day care starting at the age of one year.<sup>159</sup> If the parents decline to have the child attend day care and instead opt to have a parent stay home, the family receives a stipend.<sup>160</sup> Day care schedules are designed to accommodate working parents, and thus open early and close late to facilitate commuting parents.<sup>161</sup> The result of this is that seventy five percent of women are in the workforce.<sup>162</sup> There are some private day cares, but they are also subsidized and regulated by the government, and have sprung up to mitigate a perceived shortage.<sup>163</sup> This massive percentage of working women is actually considered the key to Norway's economic success, and the Norwegian government is not afraid to say so, " if you can raise female participation, it helps the economy, birth rates and the budget."<sup>164</sup> It is no accident then, that 90 per cent of children aged 1-5 attends a childcare center.<sup>165</sup> The availability of this childcare has a positive

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<sup>158</sup> Benhold, K. (2011, June 28). "Working Women are the Key to Norway's Prosperity." *New York Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

<sup>159</sup> Cleary, P. (2013, July 15). "Norway is proof that you can have it all." *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/executive-living/norway-is-proof-that-you-can-have-it-all/story-e6frg9zo-1226679266322>.

<sup>160</sup> Kravdal, Y. (2006). "Why is Fertility in Norway so High?" *Interdisciplinary Communications*, 1(1), 66-71. Retrieved April 15, 2013, from <http://www.cas.uio.no/Publications/Seminar/Complexity.pdf>.

<sup>161</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>162</sup> Cleary, P. (2013, July 15). "Norway is proof that you can have it all." *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/executive-living/norway-is-proof-that-you-can-have-it-all/story-e6frg9zo-1226679266322>.

<sup>163</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>164</sup> Benhold, K. (2011, June 28). "Working Women are the Key to Norway's Prosperity." *New York Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

effect on the birth rate as, “For each 10 percent increase in child-care availability there is slightly more than a tenth of a child increase in the average number of children born.”<sup>166</sup>

Norway also has an emphasis on work life balance, and a large tradition of flex work and flex time. The average work week is 35 hours per week, and both men and women opt to engage in part time work if they so choose.<sup>167</sup> Parents also have twenty to thirty days of sick child leave per year.<sup>168</sup> This emphasis on work life balance has created an environment conducive to family creation, and the emphasis on co-parenting has created an environment in which women feel comfortable having children.

### C. Societal and Family Expectations

In 2008, Norway was named the most gender equal society in the world by the World Economic forum.<sup>169</sup> This is because the Norwegian government has been pushing gender equality in the home and workplace for some time. The initiatives to create gender equality

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<sup>165</sup> Cleary, P. (2013, July 15). “Norway is proof that you can have it all.” *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/executive-living/norway-is-proof-that-you-can-have-it-all/story-e6frg9zo-1226679266322>.

<sup>166</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). “Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway.” *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>167</sup> Cleary, P. (2013, July 15). “Norway is proof that you can have it all.” *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/executive-living/norway-is-proof-that-you-can-have-it-all/story-e6frg9zo-1226679266322>.

<sup>168</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). “Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway.” *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>169</sup> “Norway tops gender equality list.” (2008, November 12). *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7722389.stm>.

range from the Parental and Family leave packages, to mandating that forty percent of all board members in a business be female.<sup>170</sup> These efforts have had a positive effect.

Norwegian men spend the most time of any men, and spend 180 minutes a day doing unpaid chores at home, only thirty minutes less than their wives, who do 210 minutes of chores.<sup>171</sup> The amount of housework done by men may in large part be due to the paternity leave that most men take. This is in comparison to Japanese men, who do the least amount of housework.<sup>172</sup> The penetration of gender equality into the home itself shows that government efforts to raise the status of women and to create a healthy environment for families in which both parents contribute is working.

However, Norway has not yet perfect gender equality. But, what makes Norway unique is that the government is actively working towards that goal. The Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion releases periodic reports and action plans that outline the problems related to gender and equality issues and possible methods to correct these issues.<sup>173</sup> The 2014 report outlines ten goals for lessening gender inequality, ranging from combating gender stereotypes, to balancing gender participation in the labor market( most part

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<sup>170</sup> Benhold, K. (2011, June 28). "Working Women are the Key to Norway's Prosperity." *New York Times*. Retrieved April 20, 2013, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

<sup>166</sup> Roddy, M. (2014, March 6). "Norwegian men most helpful with housework, OECD survey finds." *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/06/us-womensday-oecd-survey-idUSBREA251NF20140306>.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, (2012). *Equality 2014 – the Norway government's gender equality action plan*. Retrieved from Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion website: [http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/Action\\_plan\\_2014.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/Action_plan_2014.pdf)

time workers are women), to ending gender based social violence.<sup>174</sup> This Ministry shows that Norway is keenly aware of gender issues, and is actively working to correct them.

#### D. Reproductive Climate

The overall reproductive climate is very good in Norway. The stable economy and generous social programs ensure that no one is excluded from the economy unless an individual chooses not to work. Work hours are flexible, and an emphasis on productivity rather than presence creates an atmosphere that is easily mixed with child care duties. Day care is plentiful and cheap, with long hours to accommodate working parents. Women still engage in part time work, but in far fewer numbers, and the government is actively trying to equalize the numbers of male and female part time workers. Norway is trying to reach true gender equality in both the home and the work place. The Norwegian government offers generous paternity leave, which most fathers take. Thus, more men are involved at home, and engage in more child care and house work than average. This reduces the amount of second shift work women do, and creates an atmosphere in which women and men are equal partners in childcare and rearing.

Norway's attempts at maintaining the fertility rate and promoting gender equality within its borders have been successful because of government funding and a genuine desire on the part of the government to include women and men in both the public and domestic spheres of the world. Unlike Japan and Italy, who both have underfunded day care systems, Norway's day care system is sufficiently funded, large, cheap and open hours that are conducive to working families. Norway's emphasis on equality of society makes women feel as

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<sup>174</sup> *The World Fact Book* 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013.



if they are not being penalized for having children, and men being pushed to be involved in their children's lives leads to the creation of more second and third born children.

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<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

## **Chapter 4 Analysis and Rating of Reproductive Climates**

By looking at the three case studies, we can see that the two nations with low fertility rates have many policies and attributes in common with one another. By examining these similarities alongside the differences between the two low fertility rate nations and the high fertility rate, we can start to determine some attributes of a nation with a good reproductive climate. Each metric will be examined in turn, resulting in two general profiles, one of a nation with a healthy fertility rate, and one with a less stellar fertility rate. These profiles will hopefully lead to a series of policy prescriptions and ideas that may help low fertility rate countries to create policies and foster cultural climates that help to incentivize family formation and encourage couples with existing children to add one or more additional children to their family.

### **1. Metric Analysis**

By examining and comparing the individual metrics, the ideal form of the metric can be revealed, and a general trend of both positive and negative characteristics can be extrapolated. These trends will be utilized in the creation of the profiles of the positive and negative reproductive climates, and will inform policy prescriptions based on the profiles. These metrics take into account the general theories that were arrived at in Chapter Two, as well as the case studies and data that were examined in Chapter Three. This analysis of the three nations as well as the three metrics will help to determine the appropriate characteristics and qualities of the associated reproductive climates, as well as to highlight some major consistencies and inconsistencies between the nations.

## A. Economy

There are some surface level similarities and differences that are very important when discussing the economy. Both Italy and Japan have been in periods of prolonged economic strife. Japan has been weathering economic trouble for close to twenty years<sup>175</sup> and Italy for over a decade.<sup>176</sup> Norway on the other hand has had a relatively stable economy over the past twenty years, due to investment of North Sea oil money. Norway also benefits from having more successfully developed programs that seek to ensure stable living conditions even in hard times, which have not been as effective in Japan and Italy.<sup>177</sup>

Upon closer inspection, however, we can see larger structural issues that not only contribute to the low fertility rate, but also contribute to the overall poor state of the economies in the low fertility rate nations. Both Italy and Japan have unusually high real youth unemployment rates, with Japan ‘boasting’ an official rate of eight percent<sup>178</sup>, and Italy with a youth unemployment rate of 42%.<sup>179</sup> While Japan’s official youth unemployment rate is very low, this supposed strength is in actuality a bookkeeping trick. The massive difference between those two numbers can be explained by Japan’s extensive use of temporary workers, 45 percent of workers ages 15 to 25 engage in temporary work, and temporary workers make up

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<sup>175</sup> Ohno, K. (2005). *The economic development of Japan*. (pp. 143-217). Tokyo: uhikaku Publishing Co. Retrieved from <http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/pdf06/EDJ.pdf>.

<sup>176</sup> Walker, A. (2014, February 24). “Italy’s economy: The Mountain Matteo Renzi must climb.” *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-26266118>.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas, L. (2009, May 13). “Thriving Norway provides an economics lesson.” *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?_r=0).

<sup>178</sup> *The World Fact Book 2013-14*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>.

thirty eight percent of Japan's overall workforce.<sup>180</sup> Italy also has temporary workers, but lacks the discriminatory elements of the Japanese system in which Japanese temporary workers will always remain a temporary worker.

Both Italy and Japan have traditions of 'life time employment,' in which employees once hired tend to stay with the company for life. Japan, because of tradition and a preference for new workers,<sup>181</sup> and Italy due to strong labor laws and unions that make it nearly impossible to fire individuals once hired.<sup>182</sup> Both systems of employment functioned well when women would enter the work force for only a short time before marrying and leaving the workforce. This provided the necessary elasticity the labor force needed to continue functioning for both new and veteran workers. When women began to stay, however, Italy and Japan found themselves with a labor force that would not easily move with economic troubles. Japan responded to this situation by expanding existing laws regarding temporary workers. This expansion, coupled with the Japanese preference for fresh graduates, created a permanent underclass of temporary workers.<sup>183</sup> In Italy companies responded by simply not hiring, and as a result many young people do not start their careers until their late 20s and early 30s.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Walker, A. (2014, February 24). "Italy's economy: The Mountain Matteo Renzi must climb." *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-26266118>.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Overholt, W. (2002, January). "Japan's economy, at war with itself." *Foreign Affairs*, Retrieved from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/57627/william-h-overholt/japans-economy-at-war-with-itself>.

<sup>182</sup> Povoledo, E. (2012, February 15). "In Italy, facing the end of the lifetime job." *The York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/world/europe/in-italy-facing-the-end-of-the-lifetime-job.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>183</sup> Kosugi, R. (2006). "Youth employment in Japan's economic recovery: 'Freeters' and 'NEETs'." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-kosugi-reiko/2022>.

Both of these systems stand in stark contrast to Norway, which has had a fairly stable economy thanks to investment of North Sea oil money. Norway also benefits from having a more flexible attitude towards working, with many Norwegians only working a 35 hour work week.<sup>185</sup> Norway's robust social service system provides targeted aid to young people during recessions in the form of a two year work skills program meant to provide new skills and contacts to young Norwegians attempting to enter the workforce.<sup>186</sup> The Norwegian government aims to have aid to the unemployed within ninety days of job loss or exit from school.<sup>187</sup> The Norwegian government offers these services for a number of reasons, but the primary driving force is a fear that young people who do not join the economy may be permanently excluded.<sup>188</sup> Compare this with Japan, where due to age discrimination there are 600,000 to 850,000 NEETS who are permanently excluded from the labor market.<sup>189</sup> Norway's corporate culture is also more conducive to families. Norwegian companies provide ample flex time opportunities, and prefer employees who work shorter, more productive hours than those who work long hours but with low productivity.<sup>190</sup> In comparison, Japanese companies

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<sup>184</sup> Davies, L. (2013, June 26). "Italy agrees measures to tackle youth unemployment." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/26/italy-youth-unemployment>

<sup>185</sup> Thomas, L. (2009, May 13). "Thriving Norway provides an economics lesson." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/business/global/14frugal.html?_r=0)

<sup>186</sup> Djernaes, L. (2013). "A Nordic perspective on youth unemployment." *Life Long Learning In Europe*, (1), Retrieved from <http://www.liline.fi/en/article/policy/20134/a-nordic-perspective-on-youth-unemployment>.

<sup>187</sup> Djernaes, L. (2013). "A Nordic perspective on youth unemployment." *Life Long Learning In Europe*, (1), Retrieved from <http://www.liline.fi/en/article/policy/20134/a-nordic-perspective-on-youth-unemployment>.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Kosugi, R. (2006). "Youth employment in Japan's economic recovery: 'Freeters' and 'NEETs'." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Retrieved from <http://www.japanfocus.org/-kosugi-reiko/2022>

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

demand that employee's stay very late and going home early is considered disloyalty to the company and can severely impact an employee's chances at advancement in their chosen company.<sup>191</sup> This has a depressive effect on the fertility rate, as employees may not have time to pursue romantic relationships, or later raise their own children.

As evidenced by these case studies, one characteristic of a nation with a healthy fertility rate is a healthy economy. This has an overall effect of making couples less risk averse, as children are a major investment in an industrialized nation, and the cost/benefit of having a child or having an additional child is changed. Another aspect of a nation with a healthy fertility rate is a path way from school to work, and a way for those who may have missed the chance to enter the work force during recession to enter once the economic climate improves. This pathway is incredibly important, as young people with no money to move out, will also have no money to marry or have children. In addition to a pathway to employment, the jobs available must be able to support a family, and have the necessary stability that allows for couples to feel safe making the decision to have children. Long term temp jobs, like those in Japan, offer few benefits and at one third the salary of a full time job do not offer the pay and stability that is required.<sup>192</sup> Corporate culture must also become more flexible, and allow for a greater work life balance for workers of all levels of seniority. The idea that longer hours equal more productivity needs to be changed, and replaced with a culture that values production over face time.

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<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

## B. Maternal Support Structures

There are some similarities between the nations in this study in regards to maternal support structures. All three have some form of paid parental leave, and have provisions for extended time off to allow for the care of newborns. All have some form of government subsidized child care. What differentiate the countries are the degree to which these programs are successful, and the accessibility of said programs by the families that need them. In low fertility nations, these services are often inaccessible to the families that would benefit most from their uses, underfunded, and with too few slots to meet demand. In contrast, similar services in high fertility nations are much more readily available.

In terms of paid parental leave, all three nations offer leave to some degree, and all three offer periods of time in which parents receive full or partial pay while caring for their children. What distinguishes high fertility rate nations from low fertility rate nations is the degree to which taking parental leave affects the career of the mother. In Norway, both mothers and fathers are allotted a portion of the parental leave offered by the government.<sup>193</sup> Due to the 'use it or lose it' structure of Norway's leave policies, nine out of ten men take the twelve weeks of leave they are allotted.<sup>194</sup> By having men also take a portion of time off to care for their children, the Norwegian government reduces the possibility of employment discrimination against women, as both men and women will take time off to care for children.

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<sup>192</sup> Sanders, S. & Yamamoto, C. (November 15, 2013). "Increasing temporary employment in Japan: polarization in the labor market and the 'working poor'." *Lexology*, Retrieved from <http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=41dd48d3-7af8-4cc0-8972-92971050569c>.

<sup>193</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

This is in comparison to low fertility nations like Italy and Japan, where employment discrimination runs rampant. Due to the long periods of maternity leave required by law, Italian companies are reluctant to hire women. During interviews, it is routine for questions to be asked about a candidate's personal life in an attempt to gauge the likelihood of the candidate becoming pregnant.<sup>195</sup> Until 2012, it was a common practice for firms to have women sign blank resignation forms in the event the woman became pregnant.<sup>196</sup> In Japan, it is no better; women are far more likely to be hired as temp workers than hired as permanent workers.<sup>197</sup> Additionally, after taking maternity leave most Japanese women are highly likely to experience resentment push back from their coworkers, who see women who take maternity leave or leave early to pick up children as not pulling their own weight in the office.<sup>198</sup>

All three nations also have some form of government subsidized childcare. However, Italy and Japan have massive deficits in the number of seats available, as well as very low subsidies that do not make a significant impact in the cost of day care. In Italy, for instance, government subsidized day care is typically reserved for the low income or for those whose children have special needs.<sup>199</sup> In Japan, finding a day care slot is so difficult it is compared to getting into an elite college. The government has a wait list for government run day care, and

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<sup>195</sup> Cooper, M. (2013, April 4). "Meet the Italian women fighting to be more than mothers and lovers." *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/9968817/Meet-the-Italian-women-fighting-to-be-more-than-mothers-and-lovers.html>.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Po, H. W. (2008). "The Changing Role of Women and Its Effect on the Gender-Biased Social Policy in Japan."

<sup>198</sup> Hewlett, S. A. (2011, December 11). "Japan's working-woman problem." *Time*. Retrieved from <http://ideas.time.com/2011/12/11/japans-working-woman-problem/>.



having family in the area makes one less likely to receive a slot.<sup>200</sup> Those who do not get a slot have to turn to the private day care market, which are even more expensive than government subsidized day care. This lack of access to day care in Italy and Japan ultimately ends up forcing women out of the workforce to care for their children. In Norway, however, government subsidized day care is plentiful, and in areas where there are shortages, private day cares spring up to absorb the excess children.<sup>201</sup> Costs are very low, and all children are guaranteed a spot if their parents choose to send them to care. As a result, ninety percent of children ages 1-5 are in government sponsored day care in Norway.<sup>202</sup>

Both low fertility countries have 'baby bonuses,' cash payments to parents upon the birth of a child. These payments are promoted by the government as a means of reducing the financial impact of having a child. However, the sums given often do nothing more than pay for the cost of the birth, offering only a short term solution to the long term issue of the cost of raising a child.<sup>203</sup> Women, when polled, also tend to find these sums to be insulting, and feel that the government is ignoring the difficulty of raising a child in modern society.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Totaro, L., & Vasarri, C. (2012, February 16). "Italy needs to boost services for working mothers, Fornero says." *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-16/italy-needs-to-boost-services-for-working-mothers-fornero-says.html>.

<sup>200</sup> Tobuchi, H. (2013, February 26). "Desperate hunt for day care in Japan." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/world/asia/japans-mothers-in-hokatsu-hunt-for-day-care.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/world/asia/japans-mothers-in-hokatsu-hunt-for-day-care.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&).

<sup>201</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Weisman, S. R. (1991). "In crowded Japan, a bonus for babies angers women."

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

As shown by the case studies, the most successful ‘maternal support structures’ are ones that are not simply aimed at women. The Norwegian family leave program pushes for the involvement of both parents, and lessens the discrimination working mothers face by spreading the burden of child care to both parents. The two low birth rate nations still perceive childcare to be primarily the unpaid work of women, and thus the government supports are aimed at women, but are underfunded, as there is still a lingering sense that women should be at home, and not working. However, this attitude is shown to be a cause of low fertility, as women, when given the choice between a family and a career, are opting to have a career instead. In Norway, however, where motherhood and working are compatible, the fertility rate is much higher. There is actually a statistical connection between the availability of daycare and the fertility rate of a nation. For every 10% of children ages 1-5 in daycare, there is a tenth of a point jump in fertility.<sup>205</sup> If low fertility rate nations wish to raise fertility rates, they must increase support for working mothers and fathers.

### C. Social and Family expectations

In this metric there is once again a divide between the two low fertility nations and the high fertility nation. The low fertility nations have very low gender equality for an industrialized nation, while the high fertility nation ranks among the best in the world for gender equality. Italy is number 71 out of 136, and Japan is number 105 out of 136.<sup>206</sup> Norway is number 3 in

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<sup>205</sup> Rindfuss, R. R., Guilkey, D. K., Morgan, S. P., & Kravdal, Ø. (2010). "Child-Care Availability and Fertility in Norway." *Population and development review*, 36(4), 725-748.

<sup>206</sup> Global Economic Forum, (2013). *The global gender gap report 2013*. Retrieved from World Economic Forum website: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf).

the world for gender equality.<sup>207</sup> This gap in gender equality is caused by many things that may affect the choice to have a child, such as ability to work after having children, payment, and the involvement of fathers in the home.

In low fertility nations, there is considerable inequality in the workplace for women. They are routinely paid less than their male counterparts are, and are more likely to engage in temporary or part time work than their male counter parts. Italy for instance is 124th in the world for equal pay for equal work. Norway, in contrast, is ranked number 9 in the world for equal pay for equal work.<sup>208</sup> This gap is further compounded by the increased likelihood that women will engage in part time, rather than full time work. Low wages may contribute to women leaving the workforce, as families may make the decision that the cost of childcare is more than the pay received by the woman, and decide it is best for the woman to leave the work force.

Another major difference between the low fertility nations and the high fertility nation is the involvement of the father in household chores and the amounts of 'second shift' work that working mothers are expected to do. In Japan, men do very little housework and child care, spending as little as one hour a day on chores and fifteen minutes a day with their own children.<sup>209</sup> When taking into account paid and unpaid labor, Italian men do eleven hours less work total than their female counterparts.<sup>210</sup> Norwegian men on the other hand spend 180

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Global Economic Forum, (2013). *The global gender gap report 2013*. Retrieved from World Economic Forum website: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf).

<sup>209</sup> Rupert Wingfield-Hayes. (2013, March 21). "Japan: The worst developed country for working mothers?" *BBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21880124>.

minutes a day doing housework, only thirty minutes less than their wives.<sup>211</sup> This involvement helps to alleviate the perceived burden of housework and childcare on mothers.

What sets the high fertility nation apart from the low fertility nation is the government emphasis on the equality of women both in the work place and the home, and the government programs meant to ensure a gender equal society. Norway has a ministry dedicated to equality and social inclusion, which releases periodic reports on the state of equality within Norway, and what policies should be pursued to increase equality within the nation.<sup>212</sup> Norwegian family policies work toward the total inclusion of women in the work place, and consider both parents to have an equal role in raising children. Italian and Japanese family programs still operate on the assumption that women will be the primary caregivers at home, and thus ignore the problems that working mothers face.

## 2. Climate Profiles

Below are the profiles of both the negative and positive reproductive climates. By studying the metrics above, some trends regarding the characteristics of both positive and negative reproductive climates can be discovered. By creating these profiles, a general set of policy

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<sup>210</sup> Kurtz, A. (2013, November 5). "Men aren't pulling their weight at home." *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2013/11/05/news/economy/unpaid-work/>.

<sup>211</sup> Roddy, M. (2014, March 6). "Norwegian men most helpful with housework, OECD survey finds." *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/06/us-womensday-oecd-survey-idUSBREA251NF20140306>.

<sup>212</sup> Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, (2012). *Equality 2014 – the Norwegian government's gender equality action plan*. Retrieved from Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion website: [http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/Action\\_plan\\_2014.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/BLD/Action_plan_2014.pdf).

prescriptions and initiatives can be created with the end goal of transforming negative reproductive climates into positive ones.

## A. Positive Reproductive Profile

High fertility rate nations have strong economies and social safety nets. Youth unemployment is low, and there are programs to help young people obtain employment or training during difficult economic times. Temporary work is not an obstacle to employment later in life, and education is cheap and plentiful. Corporate structures are more flexible and adaptable to poor economic conditions. While corporations do employ temporary workers, these workers are not semi-permanent temporary workers with the responsibilities of a full timer but with the pay of a part timer. While women do also participate in temporary and part time work, it is easier for them to move into permanent work when they desire to than it is in low fertility countries. Often, the government will see a gap in the number of part time male and female workers as a problem, and seek to lessen the gap and increase the incentive for women to work full time. Laws regarding discrimination based on gender, marital or family status exists and are enforced. Working hours are reasonable, and corporations understand that workers have outside responsibilities. Often, they will offer sick days that are earmarked for the care of ill children.

Parental leave is given to both parents, so the impact of taking time off to care for children is mitigated. Fathers know about, and routinely take parental leave to care for new children. There is little to no discrimination or harassment of men who take time to care for children. In some cases, it is actively encouraged by the government. This leave is paid at some

percentage of the couple's income, and is protected by law. The length of the leave varies, but it is typically fairly generous. Childcare is plentiful and cheap, and offers drop off and pick up times that are convenient for working parents. This childcare is often subsidized by the government to keep costs down, and costs are further suppressed by having extended parental leave policies, which allow for parents to care for infants (who require a smaller staff to child ratio). Education is cheap, quality, and widely available, and is complemented with after care programs to allow for parents to work.

Women have near pay equity. Men do their share of the household chores, and are equal parents with their wives. Women are not the default caregiver of children, and both men and women are encouraged to take time off to care for children. Sick days for the use of caring for ill children are also given. The government sees women as not just a means of reproduction, but as a means of production in the workforce. Children are seen as a compliment to life, not an obstacle in the career path. Marriage and children are not highly correlated, but women are less likely to see husbands and children as a burden and more likely to see them in a positive light. Governments view the issue of choosing to have a child as a complex, interdisciplinary issue that both women and men make, and attempt to make the process of creating and raising a child compatible with working. Gender equality is high, with women seen in all levels of public life.

## B. Negative Reproductive Profile

Low fertility rate nations share several characteristics that distinguish them from higher fertility rate nations. They have poor economies with high youth unemployment rates; they

have inflexible corporate structures that react poorly to recession. In some cases, this inflexibility causes a hiring freeze, and in extreme cases those unable to find employment early in adulthood are unlikely to ever obtain a full time job. As companies in nations with negative reproductive climates traditionally relied on young women as a source of temporary labor, women still face pressure to leave the workforce after marrying or having a child. Companies are often hostile to women continuing to work after becoming mothers, and government policies and discrimination laws may not be very strong or may not be enforced.

Childcare is expensive and sparse. Often, it does not match up with the traditional workforce hours. If it is subsidized by the government, there are few seats, and the costs remain high. Wait lists are extensive, and many women find themselves leaving the workforce to care for children. Women are routinely paid less than male counterparts are, and are more likely to engage in part time or temporary work. While there are generous maternal leave policies, there are few protections against employment discrimination, and women are seen as poor 'investments'. Fathers have little or no parental leave available to them, and sometimes even face harassment for wishing to exercise their right to leave.

Women who work also still do the lion's share of household chores, with little aid from male partners. Traditional gender roles are heavily pushed by society, and women who work are often faced with a 'second shift' of housework after their work days are done. Marriage is highly correlated with childbearing, and as such, there may be declining marriage rates. Women increasingly choose to be single rather than be forced into traditional gender roles within a marriage. The government still sees woman as the primary caregivers of children, and

often erroneously believes that money is the only reason women are having fewer children, and offer baby bonuses as a solution. Gender inequality as a whole is very high.



## Chapter 5 Conclusion

Fertility rates around the world have fallen in recent years, in both industrialized and developing nations. This is not of particular concern in developing nations, but for industrialized nations, this is a major crisis. Without major changes in societal governmental values, once large prosperous nations now face the possibility of population shrink and the overwhelming costs of eldercare being shouldered by fewer and fewer young workers. For nations with a history of immigrants, this is not as immediate a problem, but for insular nations like Japan, Italy and South Korea, this is a demographic time bomb. Low fertility is a crisis that requires a shift in policy, thought, and behavior in all facets of society. Without those changes, formerly powerful nations could find themselves in a continual state of shrinkage that leaves them vulnerable to invasion, recession and rebellion. This apocalyptic view of the future may seem fatalistic, but for insular nations like Japan who are loathe to admit immigrants to fill in the gaps made by missing laborers, this may become reality. Italy, while not dealing with a population decline as long or steep as Japan, also faces the challenges associated with population shrink.

The similarities between the nations with low fertility rates are startling. The similarities in economic structure, the persistent state of economic strife, high wage gaps and massive youth under and unemployment are astounding. The similarities in maternal support programs are startling as well. Expensive, hard to procure day care, little or no existent paternity leave, few protections from employment discrimination, and a general view of women as needed in the home more than the workforce are all a match. Both Italy and Japan are also highly traditional in terms of gender roles. These similarities show that low fertility nations do make

the same mistakes and face the same problems. Norway is in many ways the complete opposite of the two low fertility nations, as it has created a positive reproductive environment that allows women and men to feel safe in their decision to create or expand their family. Further research will hopefully prove that there are many similarities between nations with positive reproductive climates, such as Iceland and Finland, as well. The findings of this study confirm that there are certain healthy behaviors and characteristics that nations with healthy fertility rate nations have in common, and certain unhealthy habits and characteristics that low fertility rate nations have in common. These two distinct sets of characteristics, thus make up the reproductive climate of a nation, and like the geographical or political climate of a nation, this reproductive climate can and does influence decision making in major way.

The Reproductive Climate theory could possibly help to change the future of nations struggling with low fertility, and help to guide nations into a more stable path. By taking a multidisciplinary approach that accounts for multiple possible reasons for fertility results, the possible policy changes and prescriptions take on a broader based format that allows for policies to hit all segments of society. The current focus on one issue (such as the economy) or even one demographic (women) creates an environment in which the government is essentially playing single issue 'whack-a-mole' instead of trying to truly effect the change necessary to improve fertility rates. By having a series of benchmarks and best practices, countries can begin to repair their relationships with the women that live there, and to create an atmosphere that is conducive to creating a populous society.

The biggest change in policy and social belief that needs to occur involves the raising of children. Children have ceased to be the vital part of life that they were in the past. This is due

to the complex nature of human interaction and decision making, as well as a shift in the way families are formed. With the advent of the era of birth control, parenthood is now a choice rather than a biological fact. Children are no longer a source of labor for the household, but an optional part of the life of the couple. In making that choice, couples must weigh the costs and benefits of having children and in industrialized nations the opportunity costs associated with having children may not be outweighed by the joy and satisfaction that comes with raising a family. The reproductive climate is thus a major factor in the creation of a family, and continuing to view the choice to have children as primarily an economic concern, or an issue of female selfishness, is a policy mistake that will result in lower fertility rates overall.

Women in particular face opportunity costs that make the idea of having children daunting. Lost wages, lost opportunities, lost leisure time and expanded responsibility weigh heavily on the minds of prospective mothers. And in nations with few protections for working mothers, and where women are routinely discriminated against in the workplace in both terms of employment and in terms of pay, many women will choose the independence and increased opportunity that comes with being single and without children. This new found emphasis on economic freedom, equality in both the home and the workplace, and the desire for paid work should not be seen as the destruction of a traditional values system, or a drain on the world economy. The contributions of women are simply now being acknowledged, and in some cases, compensated. Nations that resist equality are in essence resisting a raise in fertility.

If low fertility rate nations, like Italy and Japan, wish to increase the fertility rate of their nations, they must change how the government and society perceives women and the structure of the family. Women in industrialized societies are increasingly better educated,

ambitious, and eager to work. They seek the validation and stimulation of employment, and wish to remain in the workplace while also having a family. In order to make it easier for women to do that, men must become more involved in all aspects of family life, from child care to cooking to laundry. The government must provide paternity leave and encourage men to take it, and must also encourage a work week that allows for ample personal time for all persons, parents or non-parents. Day care must be plentiful, cheap and quality. Above all, the government must treat women as equal members of society, and abandon the antiquated attitudes that allow for government policies that treat women as a source of unpaid domestic labor.

The fertility crisis is, in essence, a culmination of multiple gap crises. The gender pay gap exaggerates economic inequality for men and women. This is compounded by a rise in income inequality, with the wealthy able to afford many children, and the poor and middle class facing the choice of poverty and parenthood or economic stability and no children. The opportunity gap that many young people in nations with rigid labor forces also leads to a gap in wages, and a corresponding gap in fertility. The housework gap leads women to turn away from marriage. The parental leave gap pushes men out of the home and into the workforce, and often leaves men feeling unequipped to deal with their own children, lessening their involvement in the home. The parental leave gap also solidifies the idea that women are not good investments, as women will have to leave the office to care for children, while men do not take extended leave. The day care pickup gap is also an issue- how can mothers be considered valuable employees if their ability to work is constrained by a day care that keeps hours that are not in line with average working hours and commutes? These various gaps reinforce each

other, and create a culture of inequality that leads many women and men to give up on the idea of a family, and to make the choice to pursue short term rational self interest, instead of investing in long term biological self interest.

Nations like Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark have already caught on to the fact that a more gender equal society leads to a more fertile, and rich, society. Other nations are also slowly coming to the realization. Hopefully, low fertility rate nations are able to change in time to prevent major economic and cultural disaster. Without change, the world will soon face an unprecedented situation in which the global population is shrinking, as other nations begin to industrialize and more women choose to prioritize economic viability rather than maternity. Above all, governments, scholars, politicians and pundits must stop seeing the issue of low fertility as an issue of female selfishness and as an issue of cooperation, equality, and choice. Without affording women the respect to not denigrate them for making rational decisions, without discarding outdated views of womanhood that regard women as a means of reproduction instead of as a full person, the fate of fertility poor nations will not change. Women are not the enemy in the quest for higher fertility. Feminism is not the enemy. The enemy is poor reproductive climate, and the policies that create them.

## Glossary

Fertility Rate	The number of births per woman during the fertile years of 15-40.
Freeter	A term for part time and temporary workers in Japan. A combination of the words 'freelance' and ' <i>arubaito</i> ' the Japanese term for a part time job.
Hokatsu	Term for the search for daycare in Japan.
NEET	Acronym standing for Not in Education Employment or Training Coined in the United Kingdom and mean to describe unemployed youth.
Shūshin koyo 終身雇用	The traditional system of lifetime employment in Japan, characterized by a slow, steady rise in pay and position in return for loyalty and hard work.

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