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Japan's Declining Population: Clearly a Problem, But What's the Solution?

EDITED BY MARK MOHR

ABSTRACT In this Special Report, **Leonard Schoppa** of the University of Virginia notes the lack of an organized female "voice" to press for better job conditions which would make having both a career and children easier. **Robin LeBlanc** of Washington and Lee University describes the pressures facing Japanese men, which have led to their postponing marriage at a higher rate than women, while **Keiko Yamanaka** of the University of California, Berkeley, reluctantly concludes that Japan is not seriously considering immigration as an option to counteract its declining population. **Jennifer Robertson** of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, focuses on a uniquely Japanese technological solution to possibly resolve the problem of a declining population: robots.

INTRODUCTION


MARK MOHR

Japan's population is shrinking. Its fertility rate is an alarmingly low 1.3; 2.1 is the rate necessary for population replacement. At the current fertility rate, Japan's population, which currently totals 127.7 million, will decrease by over 40 million by 2055. Additionally, Japan has the largest proportion of people over 65 and the smallest proportion of children under 15. By 2040, the old will outnumber the young in Japan by four to one. Demographic estimates from 1995 indicated that over 600,000 immigrants a year for the next 50 years were needed to keep the labor force at its 1995 level of 87.2 million people. One government study, perhaps with tongue in cheek, estimated that at the current fertility rate, Japan's population by the end of this millennium will

total exactly one. Whether this remaining citizen will be male or female, the study did not say.

Japan is thus facing a major demographic crisis: not enough workers to support an increasingly aging population; not enough babies to replace the existing population. In a country where increased immigration is not seen as part of the solution, what is to be done? To examine the causes of the current low fertility rate, and possible paths for resolving the problem, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars convened a symposium on April 24, 2008. The four essays that follow, which arose out of that symposium, probe the reasons why Japanese women are choosing to avoid or postpone marriage and have fewer babies; the pressures faced by Japanese

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men, which result in their postponing or avoiding marriage as well; the government's struggles in formulating an immigration policy; and a somewhat surprising technological solution proposed by the ruling elites, involving robots.

In the first essay, **Leonard Schoppa**, professor of politics in the department of politics at the University of Virginia, notes that Japanese women, because they are statistically having only 1.3 babies instead of 2.1, have been implicated for contributing to the “problem” of Japan's declining fertility. While researching this issue, Schoppa was struck by how marginal the opinion of women was in the conversation.

Japan, explains Schoppa, has been fretting about its “aging population” since the late 1970s. At the time, the fertility rate had stabilized near the replacement rate (2.1), so no one was using the term that has since emerged as a companion term: the declining fertility problem. But once this rate recorded a then-record low of 1.57 in 1989, the same group of mostly male elites quickly latched onto this development as another reason to worry about the ability of the government to live up to its obligations to the elderly. How would the government cover its pension and health expenditures if the population of taxpaying, working citizens was smaller than expected?

In response to these musings, Japanese feminists emerged as the first group of women to speak out about the emerging trend. Their reaction, not surprisingly given the direction the male politicians were going, was to declare that there was no problem: The fact that women were making more diverse choices was actually a sign of *progress*. As long as leading female voices such as these insisted

that the dip in fertility rates was not a problem, they could not contribute much to the conversation about how to fix it, and so the initial policy deliberations in the early 1990s on how to respond to the trend were dominated by bureaucrats. Facing pressure to do *something*, in 1994 government bureaucrats devoted additional funds to increase childcare spaces for young children, and the government also began setting up consultation centers where mothers could drop by for advice, or could leave their children for short periods while they ran errands.

It wasn't enough. The 1997 population projections revealed that the rate was still falling. Further reforms were initiated, such as expanding the childcare leave system and making flextime available for at least one year. Yet, over 10 years later, Japan's fertility rate is still below 1.4. The reason reforms have not gone far enough to address these frustrations, in Schoppa's view, is because these decisions—not to marry and have kids—are still being made privately, one at a time, without generating “voice.” The government cannot make husbands do more housework and spend more time at home with the children. The government can only do so much to improve the way mothers are treated in the workplace. Progress beyond that point depends on mothers fighting for fair treatment one workplace at a time. Absent a women's movement energized by the voices of young women explaining why they find marriage and motherhood so unattractive, predicts Schoppa, this Japanese system is not going to change fast enough for Japan to avoid the population decline that is predicted for it.

In the second essay, **Robin M. LeBlanc**, professor of politics in the department of politics at

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Washington and Lee University, discusses the issue of Japan's declining population from the viewpoint of Japanese men. She notes that at academic conferences, in scholarly writings, and in the popular press, Japan's low fertility is usually assumed to be a "woman" problem, yet observes that it is seldom asked how, beyond the elite level, men's life choices or masculine gender norms might be contributing to low fertility rates.

One factor in Japan's low fertility is that women *and men* are marrying later and in smaller percentages than ever before. Strikingly, states LeBlanc, men are putting off marriage even longer than women. In 2005, 30 percent of men 35–39 had never married. By comparison, in 2005, only 18.5 percent of Japanese women in the 35–39-year-old group had never married. Why is this so? The answer, in part, may lie in the fact that the breadwinner expectations placed on Japanese men make it more important for them to establish themselves in their careers. Unsurprisingly, men's probability of marrying is also considerably reduced when their incomes are low. Perhaps, then, one should not be shocked that marriage and fertility have dropped sharply during years of persistent economic uncertainty, relatively high unemployment, and a growth in irregular employment among young Japanese men.

The kind of evidence currently available regarding how Japanese men view the traditional breadwinner gender role is not sufficient to tell us exactly why Japanese men put off marriage for as long as they do. Still, much of what is available in terms of the marriage rate statistics, interview research, and issues that receive attention in the mass media suggest that men do see the breadwinner role as a highly constraining one—and more constraining for men of this generation, who feel a greater pressure to help out at home. We do not have to engage in mental gymnastics to understand why a man might not rush toward marriage and children under those terms.


Of course, the question remaining is why men do not try for other arrangements—employment that is a little less demanding, marriage partners who want to split the financial responsibilities, a life plan with reduced material ambitions. Again, without further investigation, we cannot be sure

of the answer. But we might speculate. As long as young Japanese men face both a work world that is quite rigid in what it typically expects from employees (men and women), and an economy in which growth seems unlikely, men will be forced to choose among options they do not like. They can play out their traditional gender roles with brides who are also willing to play traditional gender roles. Or they can escape the sense that they are chained to boring and exhausting destinies by putting off marriage and the associated responsibilities. If I were a man, reasons LeBlanc, "I know which one I'd choose!"

Keiko Yamanaka, lecturer in the departments of ethnic studies and international and area studies at the University of California, Berkeley, in the third essay examines whether immigration is a possible solution to the declining population problem. Many non-Japanese specialists are perhaps unaware that there are, in fact, immigrants in a nation that has traditionally protected its racial homogeneity and "uni-culturalism." The need for labor to fill low-end jobs that the Japanese themselves will not take has resulted in three major categories of unskilled immigrant workers in Japan: more than 370,000 "*Nikkeijin*" (overseas people of Japanese descent), most of whom are Brazilians; less than 200,000 unauthorized "visa overstayers" of diverse nationalities; and 70,000 "industrial trainees," mostly from China and Indonesia, with smaller numbers from other Asian countries.

These numbers began increasing dramatically in the late 1980s, bringing much cultural misunderstanding and friction between foreigners and local Japanese. By the mid-2000s, states Yamanaka, the national government, its agencies, and private policy research institutions began to respond to the issues and problems of foreign workers by issuing action-oriented reports, proposals, and recommendations.

At the same time, a flurry of study reports and policy proposals by government ministries, their agencies, and policy research organizations addressed the increasing concerns about economic restructuring, a declining population, and immigration issues. According to Yamanaka, official statements in these studies and proposals recognized that, given the globalized economy and labor force, more foreigners are likely to settle down and become members



of Japanese society. These statements also asserted that the state and the nation must therefore make concerted efforts to build a genuinely harmonious multicultural society; and low fertility, combined with an aging population, will continue to demand foreign labor at both skilled and unskilled levels. For Japan to maintain a technological edge, the immigration of skilled foreign workers is desirable, while immigration of unskilled foreigners must be addressed with caution.

Yamanaka then raises two questions: Does Japan seriously consider immigration to be an option to counteract its declining population, and will Japan be successful in integrating immigrant workers into its national community? Her tentative answer to both questions is “No, not at this writing, not while governmental agencies continue to kill time without action as they contemplate what might be the best immigration policies for Japan, and not while 700,000 *de facto* immigrant workers continue to labor in sweatshops with little legal protection.” Heightened political attention notwithstanding, recent policy debates on immigration reform have touched only the surface of this complex issue. Fundamentally, declares Yamanaka, Japan must reach a consensus on what it desires to become as a nation in the next few decades, during which, without encouraging immigration, its population will rapidly decline.


In the final essay, **Jennifer Robertson**, professor of anthropology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, focuses on a possible technological solution to the problem of a declining population: robots. She explains that, faced with a rapidly aging and shrinking population, Japanese politicians are continuing, if by default, the postwar precedents of pursuing automation over replacement migration and disregarding women as a talented and vital labor force. Japan today, she notes, accounts for over half of the world’s share of industrial and operational robots, including humanoid household robots that are being developed to care for children and the elderly, to provide companionship, and to perform domestic tasks. Japanese robots are forecast to be in this century’s global marketplace what Japanese automobiles were in the last century’s.

In Robertson’s opinion, humanoid robots are also regarded in Japan as preferable to foreign labor-

ers, and especially to foreign caretakers. Unlike migrant and minority workers, robots have neither cultural differences nor, in the case of East Asians, unresolved historical (or wartime) memories to contend with. Basically, *Innovation 25*, a proposal introduced in February 2007 by then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, posits a “typical” Japanese family of the future, consisting of the husband’s parents, husband and wife, son and daughter, and the robot. Implicit in *Innovation 25* is the notion that a married woman who, thanks to advances in internet technology and robot labor, is relieved of house-keeping, caretaking, and child raising chores, will be free not only to maintain a career, but also to have more children.

Innovation 25, observes Robertson, has provoked a number of criticisms on Japanese blogs. For example, a housewife and mother of two who manages a website on social issues, fumed: “There’s absolutely no reality to the image of everyday life in the proposal. It reads like a 20-year old science fiction novel! Am I the only person who doesn’t share the government’s view of an ideal future? If the Japanese have become spiritually and intellectually impoverished, it’s because they leave things up to machines in the name of convenience; they’ve lost the ability to gain knowledge from the natural environment.” Nevertheless, however much its vision of the future reads like blog-worthy if dated science fiction, states Robertson, *Innovation 25* is the platform on which the state has based the new national budget: \$26 billion has been earmarked over the next 10 years to promote robot technology, which is widely thought to be the industry that will “rescue” Japan.

In Robertson’s view, the Japanese state is the first to attempt to organize and orchestrate society around robotic technology and the advent of humanoid robots who will both compensate for the declining and aging population and make replacement migration less necessary (or even unnecessary). It seems clear to Robertson that the Japanese state has already embarked on the construction of a gated and robotized society spurred on by the specter of a rapidly declining, graying population. It remains to be seen how Japanese women will—or should—respond individually and as a constituency to a utopian—or robotopian—proposal that resurrects the



same old patriarchal extended family and simply enhances it with the addition of a household (or, more accurately, a housewife) robot.

In conclusion, the four essays that follow paint a relatively grim picture regarding Japan's political will to deal with the declining population problem. Men and women seem to feel locked into traditional roles as breadwinner and housewife, respectively, and thus rather than entering into such roles, are increasingly choosing to postpone or avoid marriage. With little job flexibility

or career prospects, women who do marry are choosing to have fewer children or not to have any. Thus, the problem of a declining and graying population in Japan appears likely only to get worse. Moreover, immigration has basically been ruled out by the elites as an option for population replacement, and offering robots to ease household chores and therefore induce women to have more babies seems unlikely to produce the desired results. As one author observes ominously, "The clock is ticking."



JAPAN'S DECLINING POPULATION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF JAPANESE WOMEN ON THE "PROBLEM" AND "SOLUTIONS"

LEONARD SCHOPPA

Japan's working age population, already shrinking, is on its way to losing over 40 million people by 2055. According to government demographers, the nation's population between the ages of 15 and 64 is on its way down from a peak of 87 million in the late 1990s to 46 million by 2055.¹

Japanese women have been implicated for contributing to this "problem." They are having only 1.3 babies instead of the 2.1 needed to replace the current population. And they are the object of many of the policies that are being adopted to address the looming shortage of workers—policies that are designed to draw more women into the workforce and encourage families to have more children. What do these women themselves think of all of this?

What struck me when I began interviewing officials, talking to friends and colleagues, and reading about Japan's response to its declining fertility problem (*shōshika mondai*) as part of my *Race for the Exits* book project was how marginal the opinion of women were in the conversation.² The "problem" was defined and diagnosed largely by elite men. Even the decline in fertility, which might have been a statement of protest—a birth strike if you will—instead lacked any coordination or "voice" because it was the product of many individual decisions, without coordination or "voice." It was left to survey researchers to figure out what was driving the trend.

Below I analyze in more detail the roles women have played in defining the "problem" and devising solutions. Women are certainly an important part of the story, whether they are feminists refusing to admit there is a problem in the early 1990s or individuals opting not to have children. But they have mostly been reactive, defensive, and marginal. It remains to be seen if any female leader can give voice to the frustrations that are at the root of Japan's slumping fertility rate and muster the politi-

cal power to push through the kind of far-reaching changes that the society will have to accept if it is to reverse this trend.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

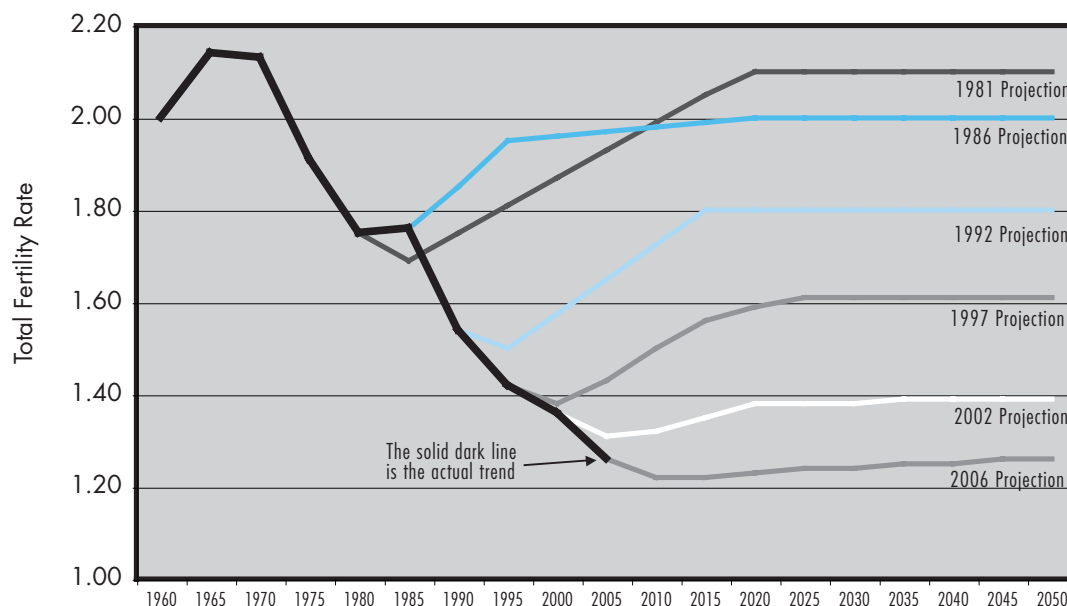
Japan has been fretting about its "aging population" (*kōreika*) problem since the late 1970s. Though the baby boom generation, born in the years immediately after 1947, was still in their 30s at that time, it was already obvious that society was going to be a lot grayer once this *dankai* (lump) generation retired.³ The people most worried by this emerging trend were the bureaucrats working for the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) and the Ministry of Finance, together with the journalists and pundits who covered this beat—the very embodiment of the male, elite establishment. The bulge in the population of the elderly, they projected, would put a strain on the finances of pension and health care programs.

At the time, the fertility rate had stabilized near the replacement rate (2.1), so no one was using the term that has since emerged as a companion term: the declining fertility problem (*shōshika mondai*). But once this rate recorded a record low of 1.57 in 1989, the same group of mostly male elites quickly latched onto this development as another reason to worry about the ability of the government to live up to its obligations to the elderly. How would the government cover its pension and health expenditures if the population of tax-paying, working citizens was smaller than expected?

Up to this point, Japanese women were barely involved in the conversation. The decline in fertility rates was a product of many individual decisions to postpone or opt out of motherhood, but few of these women were speaking out about the reasons they were making these choices.

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FIGURE 1. Sagging Fertility Projections for Japan



Source: Adapted from Yashiro Naohiro, updated with the most recent 2006 National Institute of Population and Social Security Research population projection.


It therefore was left to government demographers to figure out what was happening and why. For most of the 1980s, as fertility rates dropped from 2.0 to 1.6, these demographers kept reassuring the public, in the population projections they were obliged to issue every five years, that the dip in fertility rates was temporary. Women who had no children or just one told the surveyors that they still *planned* on having two. The United States had experienced a similar dip in fertility rates in the 1970s as women newly empowered to control their fertility postponed births, but the rate bounced back to 2.0. The demographers projected that the same thing would happen in Japan (see the projections they issued in 1986 and 1992, shown in Figure 1).

Many of Japan's political elite, however, were not reassured by these projections. Some spoke of the threat to Japanese civilization if fertility rates continued to drop. The Japanese might cease to exist as a race. Hashimoto Ryutaro, later to serve as prime minister, speculated that the problem stemmed from the way larger numbers of young women were choosing to attend four-year colleges. Some

conservatives even proposed restricting access to abortion as a way to boost fertility.

In response to these musings, Japanese feminists emerged as the first group of women to speak out about the emerging trend. Their first reaction, not surprisingly given the direction the male politicians were going, was to declare that there was no problem. As the academic feminist Ueno Chizuko noted, there are other ways to compensate for the decline in births besides pressuring women to have more children. The country could admit more immigrants. The fact that women were making more diverse choices, she argued, was actually a sign of *progress*. It wasn't a problem at all.⁴

Worried that the politicians were starting to say things that were eerily reminiscent of the prewar period when Japan's authoritarian government had implored Japanese women to "give birth and multiply" (*umeyo fuyaseyo*), Ashino Yuriko of the Japan Family Planning Federation countered that "population control deserves praise rather than criticism. You won't find today's women having babies for the sake of the country or because someone told them to."⁵



As long as leading female voices such as these insisted that the dip in fertility rates was not a problem, they could not contribute much to the conversation about how to fix it, and so the initial policy deliberations in the early 1990s on how to respond to the trend were dominated by bureaucrats. Facing pressure to do *something*, the bureaucrats of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MHW) settled on an initiative in one policy area where they were hearing some voices of concern. Working mothers in rapidly-growing suburban areas of Japan were telling them that public childcare services were not meeting their needs. Waiting lists were long, forcing some women to quit jobs when they were unable to find a space for their child. And short hours, ending at five p.m. in many cases, made it difficult for women working in careers that demanded longer hours.

Other mothers who were not working told MHW bureaucrats that they too needed help. They were trying to raise children all on their own,

By the mid-1990s, some women—especially those who worked for the Ministry of Health and Welfare—were willing to admit there was a problem.

without much help from husbands or family (who often lived too far away to help). In response to these voices of concern, the government adopted the Angel Plan of 1994. It devoted some additional funds to creating additional childcare spaces for young children and provided for longer hours. The government also began setting up consultation centers where mothers could drop by for advice, or could leave their children for short periods while they ran a series of errands.


While these steps no doubt eased the burdens facing some mothers, the continuing drop in fertility rates in the period since they were adopted suggest they were not going to do much to con-

vince women who were not yet married to tie the knot and start having children. These were the ones who were quietly delaying marriage and in some cases opting out of the wife and mother path entirely. MHW bureaucrats I interviewed admitted that they had no way to reach these women. The childcare parents were organized, and even the full time mothers had “child-rearing circles” that brought them together. But there were no groups to articulate what was bothering the young women who were driving the declining fertility trend. Unable to divine what was going on from the survey data, the bureaucrats did little to address the root causes of the trend.

PROPOSING SOLUTIONS

By the mid-1990s, some women—especially those who worked for the Ministry of Health and Welfare—were willing to admit there was a problem. The 1997 population projections had shown that the rate was still falling and looked likely to bottom out at about 1.4 (see Figure 1). If the nation was lucky, the rate would bounce back to 1.6. As they began discussing how to respond to the political pressure they were sure would follow the announcement of these numbers, the group of female officials who gathered to discuss these issues agreed that there were steps they could take to “help women have the number of children they desired.” The goal was consistently expressed in this way in order to avoid raising concerns about government meddling in family matters—concerns that were particularly sensitive because of the history of prenatal interventions during the *umeyo fuyaseyo* period during the war.

The big problem, MHW senior official Mukuno Michiko explained in a series of articles she authored and reports she shepherded through the bureaucracy in the late 1990s, stemmed from the way the Japanese labor market imposed steep “opportunity costs” on working women who opted to have children. Since women had little help at home and Japanese employers were so demanding, these women needed generous childcare leave, extensive childcare services, and flexible work schedules if they were to hold onto their jobs through the years when their children were young.



In the absence of this support, women often had to quit work once they gave birth. And in Japan's lifetime employment system, any woman who left a career job under such circumstances had little chance of ever climbing on that ladder again.

The solutions suggested by this logic were obvious. The childcare leave system, which replaced only 25 percent of wages at that point, needed to be made more generous so that it would be a viable financial bridge that would help working women afford to have a child. Childcare services needed to be expanded further. And the government needed to compel employers to offer reduced hours and flextime to new parents.

One by one, in the period after the Population Problems Advisory Council (under the guidance of Mukuno) made these recommendations, these reforms were put in place. Childcare Leave now provides 60 percent of wages up until a child turns one year old. Flextime is available for at least one year. After Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro made eliminating childcare waiting lists a top priority in 2001, the lists became somewhat shorter.

Yet, seven or eight years after these reforms were put in place, Japan's fertility rate is still below 1.4. The 2002 and 2006 projections, based on updated surveys of married and unmarried women about their marriage and fertility plans, have continued to lower the expected future rate, which is now expected to plateau at about 1.3. The most recent projection assumes that 36 percent of the youngest cohort of women will remain childless to the end of their childbearing years (up from 10 percent for the 1950 cohort).

What went wrong? Why, despite the efforts of a relatively progressive group of female bureaucrats and a number of supportive male policy experts to modify the opportunity cost structure facing Japanese mothers, have their efforts borne so little fruit?

Let me begin by rejecting one possible explanation that may have occurred to some readers. The fertility rate has not fallen to the levels seen in recent years merely because women have decided they *want* to have fewer children. In surveys, young unmarried women continue to report that their "ideal life plans" include marriage (upwards of 95 percent) and children (about 90 percent). Married women still aspire in most cases to have two chil-

dren. That the government expects 36 percent of these women to be childless suggests that there is a great deal of frustration between these ideals and the reality women are living.

The reason reforms haven't gone far enough to address these frustrations, in my view, is because these "exit" decisions—the decisions not to marry and have kids—are still being made privately, one at a time, without generating "voice."⁶ My point of comparison is with the women's movements of the United States and Sweden in the 1960s. At that time, most women in these societies still married and had children at a young age (the average 29 year-old American woman in 1970 had 1.9 children). When significant numbers of these mothers began being drawn into the workforce by changes in their aspirations and economic necessity, they were driven to demand changes in government policy, their workplace, and their marriages by the very difficulty of their situation. They couldn't opt out of having children since they were already mothers. If they wanted to work, they would have to use "voice" to demand changes in the structures that had previously made it so difficult for mothers to work.⁷

The reason reforms haven't gone far enough to address these frustrations, in my view, is because these "exit" decisions—the decisions not to marry and have kids—are still being made privately, one at a time, without generating "voice."

In contrast, Japanese women today have full control of their fertility and have used it to postpone child-bearing into their late 20s and 30s. The women who are most interested in achieving success through careers are most likely to have postponed



marriage and children in order to pursue those goals. Confronted with a system that makes it difficult for mothers to work, they have “exit” options that were not available to the young mothers in the United States and Sweden in the 1960s. They can settle for the option of working without kids, or kids without work if they decide that is best for them. Few women, only about 15 percent, are persevering in the face of the difficulties presented by the Japanese system and trying to stay in careers after having children. A much larger number, about 60 percent, are opting to leave work at least temporarily, usually settling for part-time work when they return to the workplace when their children are older. Then there is the also-sizable group, about 25 percent and on its way up to 36 percent if the younger cohort follows the path projected for them, that is opting not to have children.

The 15 percent of women who are struggling to continue in careers after having children are receiving some help as a result of the reforms shepherded through the policy process by Mukuno and her compatriots, but absent a noisy movement driven by the frustrations of women with “no way out,” the Japanese system is not changing fast enough to make combining careers with motherhood look attractive to the two sizable groups watching from the sidelines. The government can’t make husbands do more housework and spend more time at home with the children. Those battles have to be fought by working mothers demanding more help because they simply can’t do it all on their own (and might leave the marriage if they don’t see change). The government can only do so much to improve the way mothers are treated in the workplace. Progress beyond that point depends on mothers fighting for fair treatment one workplace at a time.

The limits to the ability of government bureaucrats to lead the gender role revolution are illustrated by the fate of one initiative that tried to get fathers more involved in parenting. The “Plus One Plan” announced in 2002 included a proposal calling for the government to encourage employers to offer a “daddy week” of paternal leave immediately after a baby was born. The authors of this proposal hoped that fathers would bond with their newborns during that week and spend more time help-

ing with the baby in succeeding months and years. This policy was indeed adopted, but few firms are doing much to promote the daddy week. Only about 10 percent of fathers are taking it. There is no evidence that the week has done anything to increase fathers’ childcare hours.

CONCLUSION

Last year, the fertility rate ticked upward from 1.28 to 1.32 after a long string of declines. Optimists are hoping that this is the beginning of a trend that will lead Japan out of its declining population problem. Don’t count on it.

Absent a women’s movement energized by the voices of young women explaining why they find marriage and motherhood so unattractive, this Japanese system is not going to change fast enough for Japan to avoid the population decline that is predicted for it. The only way I can see Japan responding more effectively is if the fertility rate falls even further and a female leader steps up to give voice to the silent revolution that has seen so many women opt out of motherhood.

ENDNOTES

1. The projection for 2055 is for the medium variant—National Institute of Population and Social Security Research Government Report, “Nihon no Shōrai Suikei Jinkō: Heisei 18–Nen 12–Gatsu Suikei” [Projection of Japan’s Future Population: December 2006 Projection] (December 2006): 9.
2. Leonard Schoppa, *Race for the Exits: The Unraveling of Japan’s System of Social Protection* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
3. John Campbell, *How Policies Change: The Japanese Government and the Aging Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
4. Ueno Chizuko, “The Declining Birthrate: Whose Problem?” *Review of Population and Social Policy*, No. 7 (1998): 106 and 115.
5. Quoted in Suzuki Kazue, “Women Rebuff the Call for More Babies,” *Japan Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January–March 1995): 14.
6. My book, *Race for the Exits*, develops this logic of exit and voice, building on the work of Albert Hirschman.
7. Leonard Schoppa, “You’re Not Having My Baby: Fertility and Feminism,” *Current History*, Vol. 105, No. 689 (March 2006): 112–120.



JAPAN'S LOW FERTILITY: WHAT HAVE MEN GOT TO DO WITH IT?

ROBIN M. LEBLANC

At academic conferences, in scholarly writings, and in the popular press, Japan's low fertility is usually assumed to be a woman problem. In other words, whether they are explaining what has caused Japanese to have so few babies or offering advice for what might be done to get fertility rates back up to replacement level, commentators almost always begin and end by speaking about women. The explanations and prescriptions for the fertility problem vary from conservative insistence that contemporary women are selfish to feminist claims that decades of male-dominant conservative government have produced social policy that makes child bearing an unattractive choice for many women. Yet we seldom think to ask how, beyond the elite level, men's life choices or masculine gender norms might be contributing to low fertility rates.

Because so much of policymakers' and researchers' treatment of the fertility issue has focused on the question of what would encourage more young women to become mothers, we might be tempted to assume that although women's life goals have changed over time, men are still satisfied with the father/breadwinner role they have been assigned in Japan's gendered division of labor. However, when we examine both popular discourse and recent studies about men, we can see indications that men, too, are growing resistant to a narrowly conceived gender role. Men's breadwinner identity was once so central and highly validated a component of Japan's postwar society that married Japanese men could be generally described as "salarymen"—as if a word describing a man's employment status was a synonym for his entire being. The famous salaryman's stalwart dedication to company and colleagues was seen as the source of Japan's economic triumph. Now, though, after more than a


decade of economic stagnation, the "salaryman" is a less positive figure—by turns blamed for Japan's economic difficulties and depicted as overstressed, lonely, and pathetic.

Resistance from Japanese women—who are caught between the social expectations that mothers should sacrifice their own ambitions to the demands of childrearing and a workplace that offers little flexibility for mothers who also want rewarding careers—is certainly part of the reason Japan's fertility has dropped so precipitously and remained so low over the last two decades. Nonetheless, if we want a full understanding of low fertility, we must also investigate the gendered constraints on men. We do not yet have rich data on the relationship between men's life choices and fertility rates. However, we do know the breadwinner role is not as central to defining male adulthood as it once was, and that this is contributing to declining fertility.

DECLINE IN MARRIAGE

A factor in Japan's low fertility is that men and women are marrying later and in smaller percentages than ever before. The decline in marriage is such a striking social phenomenon that a genre of popular social analysis has been devoted to it. Unmarried children who continue to live with their parents have been labeled "parasite singles," and bestselling books with titles like *Why Can't My Kids Get Married? Family Theory for the Era of Unmarriage and Late Marriage* document the worries of an older generation.¹ The marriage rates of women have captured a great deal of attention because, given that very few children in Japan are born out of wedlock, late or no marriage for women is a direct contributor to low fertility rates.² In 1985, approximately 10 percent of women aged 30–34

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were unmarried, but by 2005, 32 percent of women in that group were unmarried.³ Some of this steep trend against marriage may reflect women's choices to marry later. Still, decline in the marriage rate among women between the ages of 35 and 39 indicates that almost one fifth of women will not be married before their fertile years have likely ended. In 2005, 18.5 percent of Japanese women in the 35–39 year-old group had never married, nearly a five-point increase in the percentage of unmarried women in the same age group in 2000, and about 10 points higher than the rates for the same age group in 1985.⁴

Young Japanese women have shown declining enthusiasm for marriage over the last twenty years, but young Japanese men have shown even less enthusiasm for marriage. Strikingly, men are putting off marriage even longer than women. In 2005, 30 percent of men 35–39 had not married, a 4.3 percent increase over the percent of men unmarried in 2000. Among Tokyo residents, the percentage of unmarried men was even higher, 37.9 percent.⁵ In other words, a considerable portion of Japanese men are approaching middle age without finding wives. Their capacity to father children is less age-restricted than women's capacity to bear children, but we might reasonably ask how many men at middle age have good chances of finding young female partners and whether middle-aged men view fatherhood as a priority. If the difficulties with the current gendered division of labor were only to be found among women, we would not necessarily expect Japanese men to go much longer than their female counterparts before choosing a marriage partner, especially because Japanese men could marry younger women without bucking tradition. But men do wait longer. Why?


THE DEMANDS OF THE BREADWINNER ROLE

Japanese men may wait longer for marriage than women because the breadwinner expectations placed on men make it more important for them to establish themselves in their careers. In a five-year panel study of more than 17,000 men and women between the ages of 20 and 34, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare tracked marriages and

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childbirths among men and women in different income brackets and work circumstances. Only 44.5 percent of women who married during the period of the panel study continued in the job they held prior to marriage; 28.7 percent quit working after marriage. Among men who married during the study period however, 72 percent continued in the employment situation they had prior to marriage, and only 1.4 percent quit working altogether. This means that men who marry should expect to stretch their salaries to cover their wives' (and possibly children's) living expenses, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of men should not expect a change in their basic earning power.⁶

Unsurprisingly, men's probability of marrying is also considerably reduced when their incomes are low. For example, the study followed men and women who began the study unmarried but then got married. Although income had some relationship to marriage for both men and women—with the highest percentage of marriages occurring for both men (13.4 percent) and women (15.6 percent) whose annual incomes were within the range of four to five million yen (\$40,000–\$50,000 if ¥100 = \$1)—men with low incomes were much less likely to marry than women with low incomes. Almost 10 percent of women who earned less than one million yen (\$10,000) married over the observation period while only 4.4 percent of men in that bracket married. In the one–two million yen bracket (\$10,000–\$20,000), only 5.1 percent of men married, but 11.6 percent of women with



similar earning power found a spouse.⁷ Perhaps, then, we should not be shocked that marriage and fertility have dropped sharply during years of persistent economic uncertainty, relatively high unemployment, and a growth in irregular employment among young Japanese men.⁸

With the majority of women likely to either change or quit their jobs on marriage, men who expect to marry face strong incentives to seek employment in traditional arrangements, where emphasis is placed on a long-term relationship with the employer and seniority-based wages that will grow along with the breadwinner's family. This is a bitter irony, however, because it means that men who want to have families are likely to make individual choices that contribute to reinforcing aspects of Japan's gendered division of labor that make marriage and children unattractive to young people. For example, employment systems that place a heavy emphasis on long-term employee loyalty are notoriously difficult for women, who are likely to interrupt their careers briefly while having children. Labor markets which generally reward firm loyalty (Germany would be another example) are correlated with low fertility rates.⁹


Plus, in the Japanese case, employees in the sorts of firms that provide job stability and good, seniority-based wages are expected to commit the bulk of their waking hours to the firm's well being. This means that men who might make the best economic partners in a society where women are still likely to face real barriers to career advancement are not available to help with child rearing or to support wives who want to work. Research bears this out. Substantial majorities of men of the postwar generation and younger claim to believe that men and women should share in housework, and that women, as well as men, are entitled to work for pay outside the home. They describe themselves as eager to be more involved in their children's lives. But many of them also admit that they do not contribute to household labor and that they fail to meet their own standards for engaged fatherhood. The more importance they place on caring for their families, the more emphasis they place on their roles as breadwinners, and the work of a breadwinner in the Japanese system often absorbs most of a man's free time.¹⁰

THREE CASES OF BREADWINNER BLUES

Social scientists are only just beginning to examine Japanese men's consciousness about the breadwinner expectations placed on married men and fathers, but some general patterns are emerging. As noted above, in each new postwar generation, men are more accepting of the notion that men and women are equal and that men should share in household and child care tasks traditionally assigned to women. Yet men's roles in the family are not changing in connection with their changed attitudes. For some married men that is doubtless because, although they *believe* they should value less restrictive gender roles, they are happy in the breadwinner role that assigns them to their workplaces and frees them from obligations at home. Not all married men fit this picture, however. A tiny portion insist on seeking greater flexibility at work and a more central role in child rearing.¹¹ The preliminary evidence we do

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have suggests a much larger group of married men lives in uneasy conformity with male gender roles they do not believe they have the power to change.¹² Here I explore the constraints men see in marriage and children by sharing the stories of three men I know. Two of the men are married with children. The third is still in his late twenties, contemplating marriage. While none of these men's life stories is completely typical (among other things each knows an American social scientist well enough to discuss his life goals with her!), all of them reflect patterns widely observable in contemporary Japanese society.



In that sense, each man gives us a provocative view into the individual thinking that may lie behind big social outcomes.

Case I: The Committed Salaryman

I will call the man whose story makes up my first case Abe. Abe is in his late 40s. He has been married for 13 years, and he has one child. He entered the workforce directly after high school, taking a job at one of Japan's largest companies. Abe describes himself as a typical salaryman. Although the unit in the company where he is employed is now technically a subsidiary of the mother company, Abe has never changed his job. He works long hours, is loyal to his firm and expects to leave it only on his retirement from the workforce. Abe says he values the employment stability and good benefits that come with his job. He has also taken advantage of a large range of career enhancement training programs available to him through the company, including attending college with a company scholarship.


In other ways, however, Abe finds his work frustrating. He says that, despite his effort to develop his skills by obtaining more education, his work content and responsibilities have not changed considerably. He thinks this is because he has been unwilling to accept transfers to other parts of the firm in other parts of Japan. Abe has resisted transfers because he values time with his family. In fact, Abe is heavily involved in his son's life and, quite unusual for a Japanese father, an active member of the PTA at his son's school. As he enters middle age, Abe describes his work as boring. His wife has suggested that he look for a different type of work in a more flexible company. However, Abe says he is unlikely to do that, no matter how constraining he finds his current job. His wife, once an employee at a major media conglomerate, had to quit full-time work when their child was born because the hours at her old job were simply incompatible with available child care. The family's entire economic well-being rests on Abe's shoulders, and Abe says that leaving a stable firm with good benefits in economically uncertain times would be unwise. Abe's does not express dissatisfaction with his salary, and it may be that it would not change much, even if his position within the firm did change.

One "benefit" of the lack of change in Abe's employment circumstances is that he still works nights several times a week. This allows him to spend more daytime hours with his son, sometimes seeing him off to school or taking him to afternoon sports practices. When Abe is free to help with his son, Abe's wife can do some part-time work in the media field where she started her career.

Case II: The Accidental Salaryman

Abe represents a "typical" breadwinner in many ways. As a young man, he sought a prestigious employer, and he views himself as committed to that employer for the rest of his work life. Abe expected to support a wife and children on his salary, and values the stability of his current situation, even if he refuses to sacrifice his time with his family to wholehearted competition for advancement in his firm. In this next case, the man I call Yasuda originally sought to avoid a life modeled on the salaryman-breadwinner frame. Yasuda is now just in his early 40s. He graduated from college in the late 1980s, but he did not seek a salaryman position. Instead, inspired by a year of study abroad in America and sobered by the death of his father when Yasuda was in college, Yasuda entered the work world as a part-timer and free-lance writer. He said he had seen little of his father during his childhood because his father had worked long hours and accepted frequent transfers for a large manufacturing firm. Then his father had died young of lung cancer when he had barely reached middle age. Yasuda said he wanted to live a more meaningful life, and he continued to work in a range of part-time positions while writing and publishing social criticism. He said he did not plan to marry or have children.

By his mid-thirties, however, Yasuda had accepted a permanent position with a real estate management firm, filling in around the city when the firm's usual building managers were on vacation or absent from work for other reasons. Yasuda worked 14-hour days but only three or four days a week, and he got cheap housing in the firm's employee dorm. He continued to write. Then one night in the late 1990s, the man who lived in the room next door to Yasuda hanged himself. In committing suicide when he did, Yasuda's company-dorm neigh-



bor inadvertently became part of a much worried about phenomenon among Japanese men. Suicide rates rose by 35 percent quite suddenly in 1998, and they have remained high ever since. Increased suicides by mature males have been of special concern. Since 1998, more than 30,000 Japanese have committed suicide each year; two-thirds of all suicides are men. Men over 50 account for more than half of all suicides. Men between 50 and 59 account for near one fourth of all male suicides.¹³ Suicide has come to be such a prominent element of the salaryman world that some have argued that suicides which seem to bear some connection to work stress should be classified as workplace casualties, and surviving families should be compensated for the loss.¹⁴

Although he had been friends with the neighbor who committed suicide, Yasuda hadn't known the man was considering taking his life. Shocked by the thinness of his connection with his friend, Yasuda began to worry about his own life circumstances. "I decided I didn't want to be alone for the rest of my life," Yasuda said. Through an internet dating service, he met a woman who had an interest in settling down. A year later they married. Because she was also in her thirties and wanted children, they began to try to have children almost immediately. About a year and a half later, as Yasuda neared the end of his thirties, they had their first child. Yasuda said he was excited about his child's birth, but he also said he was worried. His wife had told him she intended to quit her job in order to devote herself to raising their child. In his current arrangement, he would find it hard to support all three of them on his salary. He would have to work more hours, perhaps give up his writing.

Case III: Not Yet A Salaryman


Yasuda decided to marry, have children, and take on the traditional breadwinner role he had long resisted because he feared the emotional costs of living outside of expected masculine roles. But my third case, a college student in his late twenties whom I call Hayashi, has still not committed to a salaryman's life. I met Hayashi when he signed up to do a course I was teaching on gender in liberal democratic political theory for a Japanese university. In some ways, Hayashi is the most atypical of the

The lack of resilience of the male breadwinner role in economically tight times is doubtless a constraint on the optimism Japanese young men feel about marrying and starting a family.

men I discuss here. When he graduated from high school, he joined the Self Defense Forces where he worked for a number of years before deciding to return to college. He is now nearing the completion of his college degree, and he is still undecided about his future career path. Given the number of times Hayashi buttonholed me to ask questions about the roles of men and women in the United States in comparison with Japan, I would also say that Hayashi is uncertain about whether he wants to become a traditional Japanese breadwinner.

The university at which Hayashi is studying is a prestigious one, and he expressed confidence that he could find stable, good-paying work with a solid firm if he so desired. But he says that he also wonders if he should place emphasis on seeking a job in which the work is meaningful to him and in which he has opportunities for creative self-expression. He clearly doubts those qualities are available in most "salaryman" positions in big companies; he says he must decide whether to trade a stable and generous salary for self-fulfillment. Hayashi describes the trade as a very harsh one, pointing out how much of his life in a typical man's career would be spent wearily commuting back and forth to long, boring hours at his workplace. "Do you know how high the suicide rate is among salarymen?" Hayashi asked me once. "I don't want to end up as one of those salarymen who just works and works and then one day throws himself in front of a train."

Still, Hayashi says he is truly torn. He is living with a girlfriend who would like to be engaged, and he says she expects to quit work once she is married. If he is going to marry her, he needs a good job he can count on. Hayashi tells me that



his mother is worried about the number of young people who don't marry. "What does she think the cause is?" I ask him. "She says young women are too strong, they don't need men," he replies. "Why does she think that is?" I persist. "She says women had to get strong because men today are so weak," he answers.

THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN

The lack of resilience of the male breadwinner role in economically tight times is doubtless a constraint on the optimism Japanese young men feel about marrying and starting a family. The labor market they face seems difficult to enter and unforgiving to those who are less than completely loyal to their firm. They describe themselves as responsible not only for the financial well-being of their families but also for fulfilling a larger role in home life than their fathers did. In fact, the men I describe above and that other researchers have surveyed and interviewed express a clear desire for lives that are richer both in human connections and self expression than what they think their fathers managed. This suggests to me that part of the answer to Japan's fertility puzzle might be found in an unexpected place—the overwhelming “success” of the postwar salaryman-breadwinner version of the male gender role. To the extent that young men think there is only one way for them to enact their manhood within family life, they may feel they are faced with a stark “yes” or “no” choice that does not match the values they hold for a meaningful life. This is likely to be especially true if they see older generations of men as not wholly admirable. Certainly, the image of the immediate postwar men once regarded as noble corporate warriors has lost some of its luster in public discourse. Japan may still be a male dominated society, but fewer men aspire to be the dominant type.


The truth of the declining position of the middle-aged breadwinner hit home with me late in the summer of 2007, not long after the July elections for the upper house of Japan's National Diet delivered a history-making defeat to the long-dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). I came across a remarkable political poster tacked to a wall on a

street in suburban Tokyo. The poster was a picture of Ozawa Ichirō, the current leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the party that won the July elections. In the poster picture, Ozawa has his jaw set in stern determination; he looks up and to the right, seeing beyond the poster boundaries, perhaps to the future he imagines for Japan. A caption down the right side of the poster reads: “*Nihon no oyaji, ugoku.*” In the simplest possible translation, this means “Japan's Dad (or middle-aged man), moves.” At first glance the poster seemed to portray Japanese politics as unquestionably patriarchal; it could be held up as an exhibit in support of the claim that fertility has dropped in Japan because women suffer under a political and economic regime that is

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dominated by the perspective of and works for the advantage of middle-aged men.

But a range of different readings are also possible. The poster's slogan is specific in its reference to Japanese men—“*oyaji*” cannot be used to refer to women—and ambiguous with regard to which “*oyaji*” (a middle-aged man or group of men) is referenced and what exactly his (or their) movement is about. This combination of specificity and ambiguity highlights the masculinist nature of Japanese politics while simultaneously drawing attention to growing uncertainty about Japan's masculine gender roles. The crucial ambiguity lies in the word



“*oyaji*.” “*Oyaji*” is an informal term that can be used to refer to one’s own father or to any middle-aged or older man. “*Oyaji*” connotes familiarity, and sometimes even an indulgent friendliness on the part of its user. That may be one reason Ozawa used the term in his poster slogan; we could read it as his attempt to portray himself with a friendly neighborhood patriarch—a respected grandfather, a well-loved uncle, the helpful guy next door.

However, because of its informality and age-specificity “*oyaji*” can also have a negative or condescending tone. Gender scholar Laura Miller points out that in men’s magazines and advertisements for men’s beauty treatments, the “*oyaji*” look is something young men are encouraged to avoid because it is unattractive to women. Miller translates “*oyaji*” as “old fart.”¹⁵ In other words, to the poster reader with a less-than-positive view of Ozawa or his party, the slogan alongside Ozawa’s face could also mean, “Japan’s old fart gets moving.” While I would never claim such an interpretation is intended by the poster’s maker, the possibility of such an interpretation points to the disconcertingly tenuous position of the patriarchy the poster slogan calls to mind. In fact, even without a radical reinterpretation, the poster emphasizes the problematic position of middle-aged men simply by suggesting that what distinguishes Ozawa—and perhaps the *oyaji* who work with him in the DPJ—is that they move (*ugoku*), or get things done.

Most likely, that claim of movement is designed to highlight the distinction between middle-aged politicians who have gone stale, lost touch with the people, and those who are like dependable and resourceful town fathers. But, the reference to movement, set off by a comma, also draws an inevitable contrast with the term *oyaji*, as if the two don’t normally come together. The poster was displayed as part of the DPJ’s contest with the LDP over control of the Japanese government. The LDP, which has dominated the formation of nearly every single government since the party’s formation in 1955, is even more dominated by “*oyaji*” figures than the DPJ; in fact, for more than half his career in politics Ozawa was a member of the LDP. The timing of the poster in the midst of a power standoff between the old, long-ruling LDP and the new DPJ (full of people from old parties) presents the DPJ as

a party of change, the party that can “move”—in contrast to the LDP that presided over Japan’s “Lost Decade” of economic and policy stagnation. Nonetheless, a larger, negative message about *oyaji* remains inescapable. The “Dads” of Japan, the ones who were once known as the country’s most loyal soldiers, its “corporate warriors,” the men who formed a patriarchal order so “natural,” it did not require mentioning, must be set in context, must be described as “moving.” In this day and age, *oyaji* don’t necessarily get things done. In the stories of the three men I tell above, *oyaji can’t move*. I wonder if the connections between constraining gender roles and social stagnation are ever much easier to see than this one is.

MAKING SPACE FOR NEW MEN’S ROLES

The kind of evidence we currently have about how Japanese men view the traditional breadwinner gender role is not sufficient to tell us exactly why Japanese men put off marriage for as long as they do. Still, much of what is available in terms of the marriage rate statistics, interview research, and issues that receive attention in the mass media suggests that men do see the breadwinner role as a highly constraining one—more constraining in younger generations that feel a greater pressure to help out at home. Moreover, whatever other rewards a man might obtain by fulfilling his breadwinner role, becoming an established patriarch, an *oyaji*, is not something young people seem to value highly. We don’t have to engage in mental gymnastics to understand why a man might not rush toward marriage and children under those terms.

Of course, the question remaining is why men don’t try for other arrangements—employment that is a little less demanding, marriage partners who want to split up the financial responsibilities, a life plan with reduced material ambitions. Again, without further investigation, we cannot be sure of the answer. But we might speculate. As long as young Japanese men face both a work world that is quite rigid in what it typically expects from employees (men and women), and an economy in which growth seems unlikely, men will be forced to choose among options they don’t like. They can play out their traditional gender roles with brides

who are also willing to play traditional gender roles. Or they can escape the sense that they are chained to boring and exhausting destinies by putting off marriage and the associated responsibilities. If I were a man, I know which one I'd choose! As long as the workforce is dominated by men who have identified themselves with the traditional breadwinner role, there won't be many incentives to change the terms of the choices for young men.

ENDNOTES

1. The term "parasite single" was coined by sociologist Yamada Masahiro. At first he thought young people put off marriage in order to enjoy their parents' financial support longer, but he has revised his thinking somewhat. Yamada Masahiro, *Parasaito Shakai no Yūkue : Deta de Yomitoku Nihon no Kazoku* [The Future of Parasite Society: Reading Japan's Families from the Data], (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2004), 7–12. The Japanese book about low marriages rates I mention above is Kikuchi Masanori, *Naze Kekkon Dekinai no Ka: Hikon/Menkon Jidai no Kazokuron* [Why Can't They Get Married? Family Theory for the Era of Un-Marriage and Late Marriage], (Tokyo: Subaruisha, 2005).
2. Yamada reports that fewer than 2 percent of all Japanese children are born out of wedlock. Yamada, 57.
3. These numbers are compiled by the Japanese government. Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku [Japanese Government Statistics Bureau], "20 Saidai Kōhan Kara 30 Saidai ni Kakete Mikonritsu wa Danjotomo Okiku Jōshō" [Rate of Unmarried Increases Greatly for Cohorts from the Latter Half of the Twenties to the Thirties], (2005). On the Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku website, <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2005/kihon1/00/03.htm>; other statistics were also retrieved from Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku web pages, <http://www.stat.go.jp/info/guide/asu/2002/8-06-081.htm> and <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2000/kihon1/00/04.htm>.
4. Ibid., from <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2005/kihon1/00/03.htm>.
5. Ibid., from <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kokusei/2005/kihon1/00/03.htm>.
6. Kōsei Rōdōshō Daijinkanbō Tōkei Jōhobu [Statistical Information Section of the Minister's Office of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare], Dai Go Kai 21 Seiki Seinensha Jūdan Chōsa (Kokumin no Seikatsu ni Kansuru Jūdan Chōsa) Kekka no Gaikyō [Statistical Outline of the Fifth Execution of the 21st Century Youth Panel Survey (part of the Panel Survey on Citizens' Lifestyle)], Kōsei Rōdōshō Happyō [Report of the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare], No. 7. The most recent data in the survey was collected on November 1, 2006, from the website of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare: <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/judan/seinen08/gaiyo.html>.
7. Ibid.
8. Yamada makes a similar point, 133–134.
9. See Frances McCall Rosenbluth, "The Political Economy of Low Fertility," and Margarita Estévez-Abe, "Gendering the Varieties of Capitalism: Gender Bias in Skills and Social Policy," both in *The Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility*, ed. Frances McCall Rosenbluth (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 3–36 and 63–86.
10. Yamazaki Tetsuya, "Dankai Dansei no Jendaa Ishiki—Kawaru Tatemaie, Kawaranu Honne" [The Gender Consciousness of the Bubble Generation: Changing Values and Unchanging Practice], in *Dankai Sedai, Shinron : "Kankeiteki Jiritsu" o Hiraku* [New Theory for the Bubble Generation: Opening to "Connected Independence"], ed. Amano Masako (Tokyo: Yushindō, 2001), 85 – 146. Taga Futoshi, *Otokorashisa no Shakagaku: Yuragu Otoko no Raifukōsu* [The Sociology of Masculinity: Life Course as Manhood Changes], (Tokyo: Sekaishisōsha, 2006), 121–144.
11. For an example, see Masako Ishii-Kuntz, "Balancing Fatherhood and Work: Emergence of Diverse Masculinities in Contemporary Japan," in *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa*, ed. James E. Roberson and Nobue Suzuki (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 198 – 216.
12. See, once again, both Yamazaki and Taga.
13. Statistics on suicide in Japan are available on the website of Japan's National Police Agency, <http://www.npa.go.jp/toukei/chiiki8/20070607.pdf>. Yamada remarks on this sudden rise in suicide as a symptom of social malaise in Japan, 144.
14. Hayashi Miko, "Rōsai Nintei no Kabe Takaku: Baburu Sedai no Jisatsu" [High Walls for Certifying as Work-Related Disability: Suicide Among the Bubble Generation], *Asahi Shinbun*, December 3, 2000.
15. Laura Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 157.

IMMIGRATION, POPULATION AND MULTICULTURALISM IN JAPAN

KEIKO YAMANAKA

Low fertility and an aging population have become serious policy concerns to many of Asia's developed countries. However, the ways in which each country responds to these demographic problems vary. For example, Singapore, long a country of immigration, seeks to increase its population by providing a generous package of benefits to skilled immigrants, while enforcing strict controls on unskilled immigration. In contrast, Japan and South Korea, which have recently become countries of immigration, struggle to find solutions to their growing ethnic diversity while facing their demographic problems.¹

This article will focus on Japan. First, it will examine Japan's immigration policies during the past two decades. It will then discuss the feasibility of immigration as an option to solve the problems arising from Japan's declining population. Because of its chronic labor shortages in manufacturing industries, special attention will be paid to the country's three major groups of unskilled immigrant workers:

- (1) more than 370,000 "Nikkeijin" (overseas people of Japanese descent), most of whom are Brazilians;
- (2) less than 200,000 unauthorized "visa over-stayers" of diverse nationalities; and
- (3) 70,000 "industrial trainees," mostly from China and Indonesia, with smaller numbers from other Asian countries.²

These long-term foreign residents have lacked access to legal protection because of their foreign nationality and immigration status. Their numbers


began increasing dramatically in the late 1980s, bringing much cultural misunderstanding and friction between foreigners and local Japanese. As a result, there were reports of an increasing number of incidents in which human rights of foreigners were violated by their brokers and employers. A few dedicated Japanese activists responded to the plight of foreign workers by advocating the enhancement of their rights. By the mid-1990s, these actions intensified as ethnic diversity increased, giving rise to multiculturalism nationwide.

In the mid-2000s, the national government, its agencies and private policy research institutions began to respond to the issues and problems of foreign workers by issuing action oriented reports, proposals and recommendations. These policy plans consistently took into account Japan's continuing demands for immigrant labor—both skilled and unskilled—and the need for fundamental reforms in law, public institutions and labor markets if Japan were to function as a multicultural nation-state. This article will discuss recent debates about Japan's future immigration policies and emerging multiculturalism. It will conclude by suggesting some policy options toward a solution to Japan's looming depopulation crisis.

POPULATION AND IMMIGRATION IN ASIA

According to the 2007 World Population Data Sheet (Population Reference Bureau 2007), Asia's developed countries, including Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), are characterized by extremely low fertility rates and resultant rapidly aging populations.³ For example,

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the Hong Kong SAR, South Korea and Taiwan posted the world's lowest total fertility rates at 1.0, 1.1, and 1.1, respectively.⁴ Japan and Singapore reported a slightly higher total fertility rate at 1.3. All of these rates are far below 2.1, the rate required for population replacement.

Fertility below the replacement level foretells population decline in succeeding generations, followed by rapidly aging populations and work forces, and growing dependency by the non-productive population on the productive population. Such demographic trends are alarming to any government so afflicted, which naturally leads it to seek policies that will increase the nation's fertility level. For example, Singapore has provided tax breaks, cash bonuses, state-subsidized child care for families with an additional child, and even a state-sponsored dating agency for young people, none of which has made a significant impact on the fertility level.⁵

Because a country's population changes as a result of rates of birth, death and migration, immigration is an obvious resource to be tapped. However, many

Fertility below the replacement level foretells population decline in succeeding generations, followed by rapidly aging populations and work forces, and growing dependency by the non-productive population on the productive population.

Asian countries that suffer from low fertility and an aging population are reluctant to consider bringing large numbers of foreigners into their midst. Twenty years ago, these countries admitted large numbers of immigrant workers in order to alleviate labor shortages and still today they are regarded as aliens who do not belong to the nation.

At present, Singapore is the only Asian nation to have adopted immigration as a major pillar of its population policy. In his speech at the annual celebration of the country's independence in August 2006, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong told his nation; "We are short 14,000 babies. . . . We have to bring in new immigrants. If our population shrinks, Singapore will face a very serious problem. . . . To grow and flourish, we must welcome those who can help us to reach our goals. . . . That is the way to build Singapore for Singaporeans."⁶ For this goal, Mr. Lee announced the establishment of a "citizenship and population" unit in his administration

Singapore has long been a country of immigration. From its British colonizers it inherited ethnically diverse populations including Chinese, Malay and Indians. From the outset of its independence in 1968, the city-state relied heavily on immigrant labor, mostly from Malaysia, for its rapid industrialization. Once industrialized, Singapore admitted strategically selected talented immigrants to advance the nation's technology while keeping strict control on the large numbers of unskilled immigrants in construction and domestic service.⁷ As shown in Table 1, Singapore's current rate of natural growth is at or near zero, but this has been offset by its high net migration rate of 27 per 1,000. As a result, Singapore is predicted to maintain its current population size at 5.3 million to 2050.

In contrast, Japan and South Korea have, until recently, embraced ethnic and social homogeneity. It was only in the late 1980s that each of these countries first experienced an influx of immigrant workers from other Asian countries, Latin America and even Africa. The governments of Japan and South Korea hastily established immigration policies to control their national borders while meeting the labor demands of industries that could not attract local workers. In the early 1990s, these governments adopted remarkably similar immigration policies, including tight border controls, absence of contract labor systems, and large numbers of *de facto* immigrant workers with few entitlements. These workers were industrial trainees, undocumented residents, and foreign nationals whose ancestors had once been members of the host population (i.e., Japanese Brazilians in Japan and Korean Chinese in Korea).

TABLE 1: Selected Population Characteristics of Singapore, Japan and South Korea, 2006


	SINGAPORE	JAPAN	SOUTH KOREA
Population mid-2007 (millions)	4.6	127.7	48.5
Births per 1,000 Population	10.0	9.0	9.0
Deaths per 1,000 Population	4.0	9.0	5.0
Rate of Natural Increase (%)	0.6	0.0	0.4
Net Migration Rate per 1,000 Population	27.0	0.0	-2.0
Projected Populations (millions)			
mid-2025	5.3	119.3	49.1
mid-2050	5.3	95.2	42.3
Projected Population Change 2007-2050	13.0	-26.0	-13.0
Infant Mortality Rate	2.6	2.8	5.0
Total Fertility Rate	1.3	1.3	1.1
Percent of Population of Age			
<15	19.0	14.0	18.0
65+	8.0	21.0	10.0
Life Expectancy at Birth (years)			
Total	80.0	82.0	79.0
Males	78.0	79.0	75.0
Females	82.0	86.0	82.0
Percent Urban	100.0	79.0	82.0
GNI PPP per Capita (US\$) 2006	31700.0	33730.0	23800.0
Population Density per Sq. Kilometer	6785.0	338.0	487.0

Source: 2007 World Population Data Sheet, Population Research Bureau, <www.prb.org>

If, for the next 40 years, Japan and South Korea maintain their immigration at its current rates of net migration (which are zero and -2 respectively), combined with their near zero natural increase, both countries are bound to lose population in the near future. In that case, Japan is predicted to lose 26 percent of its population (from the current 127.7 million to 95.2 million) by 2050 and South Korea to lose 13 percent (from the current 48.5 million to 42.3 million) by the same year.

Facing the dire prediction of population decline and the increasingly ethnically heterogeneous

populations within the country, South Korea has recently introduced drastic changes in its immigration policies. In 2004 it adopted the “Employment Permit System” by which immigrant workers are guaranteed rights equal to Korean workers. Two years later, the government abolished the “Industrial Trainee System” that had resulted in large numbers of unauthorized immigrant workers. Meanwhile, in response to increasing ethnic diversity in its population, in 2007 the national parliament passed the “Basic Law on Treating Foreign Residents,” which is designed to facilitate smooth incorporation of



immigrants into Korean society. It should be added here that behind the rapid policy changes, there have been intense non-governmental organization (NGO) activities by Korean activist citizens who advocated relentlessly for immigrants' rights. Although consequences of the reforms remain to be seen, it is clear that Korea has taken bold steps to prepare itself for becoming a multicultural society.⁸

In following sections, Japan's response to its population decline, continuing labor shortages and increasing ethnic diversity will be discussed. The focus will be on Japan's immigration policies and immigrant populations, especially the three major unskilled worker groups.

NIKKEIJIN, VISA OVERSTAYERS AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINEES

Almost two decades ago, in 1990, when Japan revised its Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law, the government retained its old rule of admitting skilled workers while prohibiting unskilled workers from being admitted. The new law instituted several new features. First, it added 10 residence categories to the old law, most of which were for professional workers, bringing the total to 28 categories of visa holders under which foreigners could enter and work legally in Japan. Second, it imposed criminal penalties for recruiting and hiring unskilled foreign workers. Third, it created a new visa category of long-term residence for descendants of Japanese emigrants (called *Nikkeijin*, literally people of Japanese ancestry) up to the third generation. Subsequent to enactment of the 1990 Immigration Law, in 1993 a government decree relaxed the regulations for admitting industrial trainees. It permitted trainees to engage in performance of job duties (called "practical training") for another year upon completion of their regular training programs. In 1997 the period of practical training was extended again to two years.⁹

These reforms in immigration policy, from the early to mid-1990s, resulted in a situation that contradicts the Japanese rule that prohibits employment of unskilled foreigners. After the reforms, Japan's foreign population, including foreigners who had arrived before 1990, most of whom were former colonial citizens and their descendants, grew rap-


idly each year, surpassing two million by 2005. This accounted for 1.57 percent of the nation's population, which included a diverse collection of both skilled and unskilled foreigners who entered and worked under differing constraints, conditions and for varying periods of time. Among them, of greater concern to the government and to the industries that had suffered from labor shortages, were unskilled foreigners who arrived under a variety of non-working visas, including *Nikkeijin*, unauthorized visa overstayers, and industrial trainees.

From their arrival in the late 1980s to this day, *Nikkeijin* and visa overstayers have constituted the two largest, but contrasting, unskilled foreign

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, due to Japan's sluggish economy, labor demands for foreign workers have fluctuated greatly.

worker populations (see Chart 1, page 24). Each of the two groups comprises a reservoir of temporary, inexpensive and flexible workers available to small and middle-sized subcontractors for large manufacturing corporations such as Toyota and Nissan. The subcontractors hire these workers through labor contractors who dispatch them to the subcontractors' factories according to the ever-changing demands for labor. Because *Nikkeijin* are legal residents, they tend to work for the larger, more stable subcontractors who can offer better working conditions and wages than those of smaller subcontractors. Unauthorized visa overstayers have no choice but to work for the smallest and weakest employers with inferior wages and working conditions.¹⁰

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, due to Japan's sluggish economy, labor demands for foreign workers have fluctuated greatly. Numbers of *Nikkeijin*, however, have continued to grow, surpassing 300,000 in 2000 and reaching 372,000 by the end of 2006.¹¹ In sharp contrast, the numbers of unauthorized workers have decreased steadily



during the same period, especially after 2001, the year in which the terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Center occurred. Thereafter, Japanese authorities strengthened border control, as a result of which the number of unauthorized visa overstayers declined from 252,000 in 2000 to 194,000 in 2006.¹²

During the same period, there has been a rapid increase in the numbers of industrial trainees in Japan (including practical trainees), almost doubling from 36,000 in 2000 to 71,000 in 2006. Because the foreign workers' employers often engage them in actual industrialized labor, migrant rights advocates call industrial trainees "workers in disguise." The majority of these are Chinese, half of whom are women.¹³ They are frequently hired by agricultural and other industrial cooperatives for harvesting agricultural products, processing food, and manufacturing garments and plastics. Because of their trainee status, they are unprotected by labor-related laws, are paid below minimum wages, and work and live under sub-standard conditions.

Japanese employers of these three categories of workers benefit greatly not only by these workers' inexpensive and flexible labor, but also by their lack of the citizenship that would entitle them to many fringe benefits including health care insurance, old age pensions, sick leave and annual bonuses. Immigrant workers therefore enable their employers to save large amounts in labor and welfare costs, as a result of their vulnerabilities based on their nationality, ethnicity, legal status and/or gender. Despite these extremely exploitative conditions, foreigners, especially those who are unauthorized, have no choice but to accept them, while hoping to save some money to remit to their home countries where wages are even lower than those in Japan.

Among these three foreign worker populations, *Nikkeijin* (who come mostly from Brazil) are distinguished from others by the fact of their ancestral ties to Japan, and consequently for their long-term legal resident status. Over the past two decades, *Nikkeijin* workers and their families have settled in large numbers in the major manufacturing cities of northeastern and central Japan, including Gunma, Aichi and Shizuoka prefectures.¹⁴ Upon arrival, despite their Japanese ancestry, most *Nikkeijin* did not speak fluent Japanese and were unfamiliar with Japanese cus-

toms. This resulted in misunderstanding, which led to ethnic prejudice against them by local Japanese citizens. The mass media fanned their suspicions with lurid attention to crimes allegedly committed by the foreigners, many of whom were *Nikkeijin*.¹⁵ Children of *Nikkeijin* grew up in Japan, speaking fluent Japanese, but often could not keep up with Japanese instruction in Japanese public schools, and often became truants and/or dropouts.

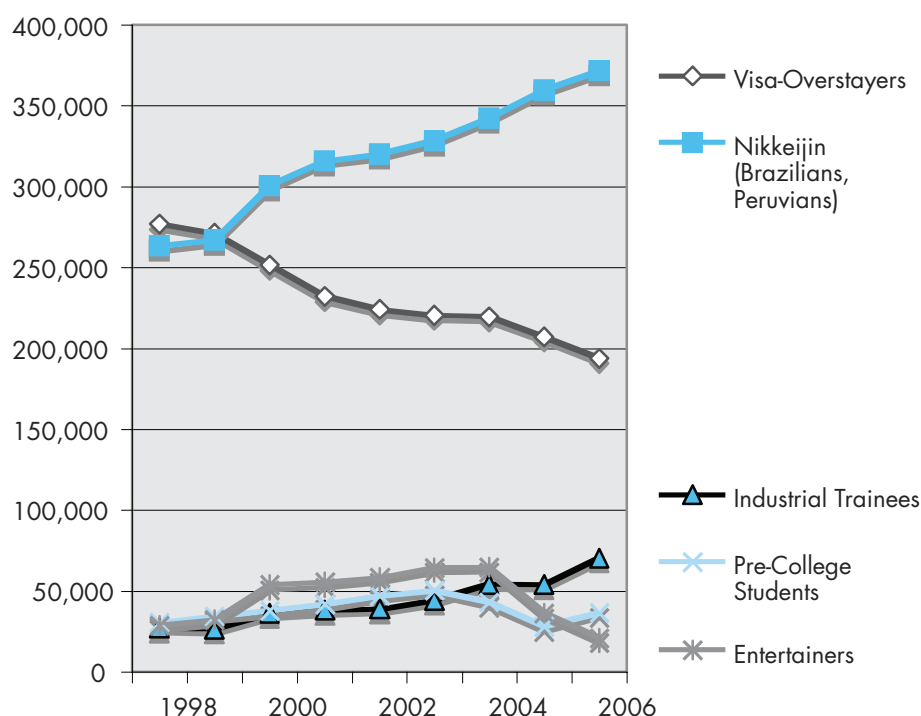
The negative images of *Nikkeijin* thus created have generated stereotypes of *Nikkeijin* as unwanted "others" in the midst of their unfamiliar ancestral homeland. Partly because of marginalization and exploitation, the majority of *Nikkeijin* families have not yet been able to build a solid socioeconomic basis in Japan. A recent survey reports that only 19 percent of *Nikkeijin* informants plan to stay permanently in Japan, while the rest plan to return to Brazil in the near future.¹⁶ The reality of Brazil's economic and political instability, however, diminishes their dream to return home. Some *Nikkeijin* who once returned to Brazil re-migrate to Japan for employment, repeating circular migration patterns between Japan and Brazil.

PRESSURES FOR CHANGE FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Blatant contradictions inherent in economic globalization have generated grassroots movements worldwide, advocating universal human rights. The daily experience of oppression spurs immigrants, ethnic minorities, women and other socially disadvantaged groups to develop collective identities with shared interests that lead them to rally for change. Immigrants and civil activists in Japan are no exception to these processes.

Immediately following an influx of immigrant workers in the late 1980s, waves of social movements for immigrants' rights surged throughout the country.¹⁷ Increasing numbers of incidents in which foreign workers were discharged without pay and uninsured foreign workers who were ill or injured were without medical care, mobilized a few dedicated Japanese citizens to organize and help the vulnerable foreigners. These Japanese citizens also demanded that local and national public agencies relax the rigid administrative rules that

CHART 1: Changes in Numbers of Japan's Unskilled Foreign Workers, 1998-2006



Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice, www.moj.go.jp/PRESS

excluded foreign workers' access to public services, and extend to them welfare benefits.


In my own research since the mid-1990s, in Hamamatsu city, Shizuoka prefecture, I have witnessed increasing community action among Brazilian immigrants, including one group of working parents, some of whom I have interviewed, and among whom I have participated in organized networks to help their children overcome difficulties as pupils in a Japanese public elementary school. Another group of Hamamatsu citizens organized to advocate for immigrants' rights to public services, especially to inexpensive health care. Yet another group worked to provide uninsured immigrants with free annual medical check-ups.¹⁸

The growing population of immigrants, especially Brazilians and their families, has imposed serious problems for Hamamatsu's local government. Increasing incidents of cultural misunderstanding and friction between immigrants and citizens, aggravated by frequent media reports of ethnic discrimination, and high dropout rates of immigrant children, finally led the local government to iden-

tify and work toward closing the institutional gaps. By 2000, the city had established a Foreign Citizens Forum as an advisory board to the mayor. It had also organized Japanese language classes for the many immigrant children who were not enrolled in school, and a bilingual school that instructed Brazilian children in both Japanese and Portuguese.

Despite the good intentions of activists and administrators in Hamamatsu, many of their actions and programs on behalf of immigrants failed or were discontinued before they had a chance to succeed. This was because most immigrants' and citizens' organizations lacked enough manpower, leadership, resources and expertise to expand their activities. At the same time, the Hamamatsu municipal government lacked authority to make decisions about, and funding to implement, policies regarding immigrants' access to public services, including health insurance and public education for immigrant children.

Already, by the late 1990s, at the national level, small, loosely connected citizens' groups advocating immigrants' rights had begun coordinating their efforts and resources to implement systematic



strategies and lobbying.¹⁹ In 1997, they established the National Network in Solidarity with Migrant Workers (*Ijuusha to Rentai suru Zenkoku Nettowaku*) to project their agenda directly into national politics by networking policy-specific expertise and exchanging knowledge of local implementation practices. Over the years, as advocates became familiar with administrative procedures in relevant ministries and grew sophisticated in employing policy expertise, they were able to make inroads in negotiating with, and mediating among, various public agencies. Despite some achievements and desired outcomes, however, on the whole, advocates' efforts have not been successful in bringing about major changes in governmental policies on immigrants' rights at the national level.

All of the demands for change at the grassroots have pointed in one direction: the government must be actively involved, and take leadership in, transforming this homogenous society into a multicultural one. Civil society and local governments will not be able to complete this task on their own. Social harmony can result only from comprehensive legal and administrative systems that promote respect among diverse groups of people.

POLICY PROPOSALS, CONTRADICTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

By the mid-2000s, a flurry of study reports and policy proposals by government ministries, their agencies, and policy research organizations had addressed the increasing concerns about economic restructuring, a declining population and immigration issues.²⁰ These documents were issued in response to complex economic, political and social forces that had been building up following the 1990s' influx of immigrants.²¹ These forces included growing demands for skilled foreign workers in order to facilitate global competition, heightened concerns for national security, a reportedly increased incidence of crimes allegedly committed by foreigners, and intensified grassroots pressures to relax immigration rules and expand immigrants' access to public services.

Official statements in these studies and proposals commonly acknowledge a number of concerns and problems associated with population decline, immigration policies and employment systems.

These include:

- The number of long-term foreign residents has rapidly increased. Given the globalized economy and labor force, more foreigners are likely to settle down and become members of Japanese society. The state and the nation must therefore make concerted efforts to build a genuinely harmonious multicultural society.
- Low fertility, combined with an aging population, will continue to demand foreign labor at both skilled and unskilled levels. For Japan to maintain a technological edge, immigration of skilled foreign workers is desirable, while immigration of unskilled foreigners must be addressed with caution.²²
- Foreigners (mainly *Nikkeijin*) who currently live and work in Japan face difficulties due to language barriers and cultural differences. To ease these difficulties, Japanese language classes should be widely accessible for school children and in adult, evening and weekend classes. For foreign children to study in Japanese public schools, they need special support from their schools, including Japanese lessons and instructional assistance.
- Under the current employment system, foreigners suffer from a lack of job security and access to health insurance, pensions and other welfare benefits. This is due to the fact that many employers ignore laws related to labor contracting and neglect responsibility to enroll their employees in social security plans. To prevent violation of such laws, labor supervisors need to strengthen the enforcement of laws among employers who hire foreigners.²³
- Given the increasing number of reports of trainee abuse, the existing industrial trainee system needs to be overhauled. How the system is to be overhauled is currently under study by relevant government ministries.²⁴

The heightened attention of national policy makers to immigration and multiculturalism clearly indicates their shifting perceptions towards these issues in recent years. This is a major change



and step forward compared to 10 years ago when local administrators, civil activists and immigrants were the only actors responding to the plight of foreign workers and the consequences of emerging multiculturalism. A close reading of recent policy debates, however, raises important concerns and questions about their nature, goals and feasibility.

Does Japan seriously consider immigration to be an option to counteract its declining population? Will Japan be successful in integrating immigrant workers into its national community? My tentative answer to both questions is “No.”

Here I will focus on two major contradictions. The first relates to a question of citizenship and legal status. As discussed above, Japanese employers demand that foreign workers be available to fill jobs shunned by Japanese workers. Lacking resources to improve working conditions, small-scale manufacturers seek a labor force that is willing to take such jobs at almost any cost. Without citizenship or a legal visa, these are the only jobs available to unskilled foreigners. It is this kind of raw economic necessity that draws immigrant workers and enables employers to sustain the status quo by subjecting immigrants to inferior conditions. These days, as a result of economic restructuring, a high proportion of Japanese workers themselves are employed as temporary workers with few rights. In their cases, citizenship offers little help in protecting their rights. Without citizenship, foreigners are even more deeply disadvantaged than Japanese workers. Given the progressive restructuring of the labor market, national policy makers will be

well advised to address the growing inequalities built into Japan’s industrial structure that continue to generate increasingly disadvantaged workers, regardless of nationality or legal status.

The second contradiction to be discussed here concerns cultural assimilation, which in Japan is implicitly required of long-term foreign residents. The governmental proposals described above frequently refer to the prime importance of Japanese language, if a foreigner, whether skilled or unskilled, is to be admitted for employment. For example, the 2006 proposal, “Basic Stance on Admittance of Foreigners in the Future” (*Kongo no gaikokujin no ukeire ni kansuru kihontekina kangaekata*), issued by the Ministry of Justice, elaborates at length some policy options for *Nikkeijin* and their families who currently enjoy free admission based on their Japanese ancestry.²⁵ In this report, the Ministry suggests that in the future *Nikkeijin* be required to have the same “special skills” to fill the new category of technical workers that the Ministry is currently considering, if they wish to stay in Japan for the purpose of employment. Those *Nikkeijin* who are able to satisfy such skill requirements would be covered by health and other welfare benefits. Similarly, the document suggests that, as a condition to their long-term residence, *Nikkeijin* be required to acquire a certain level of proficiency in Japanese language and demonstrate their ability to maintain a stable household.

The “carrot and stick” approach proposed to induce *Nikkeijin* to assimilate appears here to exemplify a strictly nationalist model intended to maintain the narrow nation-state ideology that embraces ethnic homogeneity. As discussed above, in many manufacturing cities where *Nikkeijin* workers have settled, they and their families are marginalized as aliens despite their valuable contributions to the local economy and to emerging multiculturalism. Governmental proposals rarely take into account the social processes that have rendered *Nikkeijin* to be relegated to the status of outsiders, while requiring that they become culturally assimilated. Such discourses appear to be geared toward achieving the major goal of the nation-state, that is, to homogenize people of diverse backgrounds and integrate them into a single unified nation by eliminating cultural differences among foreigners and between foreigners and Japanese.

CONCLUSION

Does Japan seriously consider immigration to be an option to counteract its declining population? Will Japan be successful in integrating immigrant workers into its national community? My tentative answer to both questions is “No, not at this writing, not while governmental agencies continue to kill time without action as they contemplate what might be the best immigration policies for Japan, and not while 700,000 *de facto* immigrant workers continue to labor in sweatshops with little legal protection.” Heightened political attention notwithstanding, recent policy debates on immigration reform have touched only the surface of this complex issue. Fundamentally, Japan must reach a consensus on what it desires to become as a nation in the next few decades during which, without encouraging immigration, its population will rapidly and fatefully decline. The clock is ticking.

ENDNOTES

1. From 1910 to 1945, Japan hosted more than 2 million immigrant workers from its annexed territories, mostly from Korea and China. More than half a million of these former colonial citizens and their descendants have lived in Japan as “Special Permanent Residents” throughout the post-WWII period. Following an influx of foreign workers in the late 1980s, the media, for the purpose of distinguishing them from the Korean and Chinese permanent residents, began to refer to the former as the “newcomers” and the latter as the “oldcomers.” This article addresses issues and problems surrounding the newcomer foreign population.
2. The statistics are available at <http://www.moj.go.jp/PRESS>. Two other major categories of Japan’s unskilled foreign workers are not discussed here. They are the following: (1) “pre-college students,” numbering 37,000 in 2006, most of whom are enrolled in Japanese language schools, are permitted to work four hours per day, and are employed in a broad range of service industries; and (2) “entertainers,” numbering 21,000 in 2006, most of whom are female, officially categorized as skilled workers, though most of them work as bar hostesses.
3. For the demographic information cited here, see *2007 World Population Data Sheet* by Population Reference Bureau at http://www.prb.org/pdf07/07WPDS_Eng.pdf.
4. Total fertility rate is defined as the average number of children a woman would have assuming that current age-specific birth rates remain constant throughout her childbearing years (ages 15 to 49).
5. “Singapore Prime Minister Promotes Immigration as Birth Rate Drops,” available at http://www.workpermit.com/news/2006_08_22/global/singapore_needs_immigrants.htm.
6. Ibid.
7. For Singapore’s immigration policies, see Diana Wong, “Transience and Settlement: Singapore’s Foreign Labour Policy,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1997): 135–67; and for Singapore’s immigrant population, see Shirлина Huang and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, “The Difference Gender Makes: State Policy and Contract Migrant Workers in Singapore,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1–2 (2003): 75–97.
8. For recent changes in Korea’s immigration policies and NGO activities that helped expand immigrants’ rights there, see Joon K. Kim, “State, Civil Society and International Norms: Expanding the Political and Labor Rights of Foreigners in South Korea,” *Asian Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2003): 383–418; and Timothy C. Lim, “NGOs, Transnational Migrants, and the Promotion of Rights in South Korea,” in Takeyuki Tsuda (ed.), *Local Citizenship in Recent Countries of Immigration: Japan in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 235–69. For Korea’s new policies on immigration and multiculturalism, see Keizou Yamawaki, “Kankoku” [South Korea] at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/shingikai/koryu/h18_sokai/pdfs/11c.pdf.
9. The health, welfare and labor research office of the research bureau in the Japanese House of Representatives (*Shuugiin Chosakyoku Kousei Roudou Chosashitu*), *Gaikokujin Roudousha Mondai—Gaikokujin Kenshuu, Ginou Jisshuu Seido Wo Chuushinni* [Foreign Worker Problems: Centering on Foreign Trainee and Technical Intern System], 2007.
10. Naoto Higuchi and Kiyoto Tanno, “What’s Driving Brazil-Japan Migration? The Making and Remaking of the Brazilian Niche in Japan,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2003): 33–47.
11. The figures account for a total number of the *Nikkeijin* population each year, comprising the two major nationalities of *Nikkeijin*, Brazilians and Peruvians. In 2006, 313,000 Brazilians and 59,000 Peruvians were registered as long-term residents.
12. In 2003, in its “*Hanzai ni Tsuyoi Shakai no Jitsugen no Tame no Koudou Keikaku*,” [Action Plan for Materializing a Society Resistant to Crimes], the Ministry of Justice announced its goal to halve the number of visa-overstayers in the following five years (that was then more than 250,000).
13. *Gaikokujin Kenshuusei Mondai Network* [Foreign Trainee Problems Network], ed. *Mayakashi no Gaikokujinn Kennshuusei Seido* [The Foreign Industrial Trainee System in Disguise], (Tokyo:

- Gendai Jinbunsha, 2000); *Gaikokujin Kenshuusei Mondai Network* [Foreign trainee problems network], ed., *Gaikokujinn Kenshuusei* [Foreign Industrial Trainees] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2006).
14. For ethnographies of Brazilian *Nikkeijin*, see Daniel Touro Linger, *No One Home: Brazilian Selves Remade in Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Joshua Hotaka Roth, *Brokered Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Migrants in Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Takeyuki Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
 15. For example, see Keiko Yamanaka, "A Breakthrough for Ethnic Minority Rights in Japan: Ana Bortz's Courageous Challenge," ed. Mirjana Morokvasic, Umut Erel, and Kyoko Shinozaki, *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries* (Opladen, Germany: Leske+Budrich), 231-59.
 16. Shigehiro Ikegami (ed.), *Gaikokujin Shimin to Chiuiki Shakai Heno Sanka* [Participation of Foreign Citizens in the Local Community], (Hamamatsu: Shizuoka Bunka Geijutsu Daigaku, 2008).
 17. Glenda S. Roberts, "NGO Support for Migrant Labor in Japan," ed. Michael Douglass and Glenda S. Roberts, *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 275-300; Apachai W. Shipper, "Pragmatism in Activism: Organizing Support for Illegal Foreign Workers in Japan," *Civil Society in the Asia-Pacific Monogram Series* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Program on U.S.-Japan Relations, 2002).
 18. Keiko Yamanaka, "Feminized Migration, Community Activism and Grassroots Transnationalization in Japan," *Asia and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2 (2003): 155-187; "Migration, Differential Access to Health Services and Civil Society's Responses in Japan," in Santosh Jatrana, ed. Mika Toyota and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, *Migration and Health in Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005); "Immigrant Incorporation and Women's Community Activities in Japan: Local NGOs and Public Education for Immigrant Children," ed. Takeyuki Tsuda, *Local Citizenship in Recent Countries of Immigration: Japan in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 97-119.
 19. Deborah Milly, "Policy advocacy for foreign residents in Japan," ed. Takeyuki Tsuda, *Local Citizenship in Recent Countries of Immigration: Japan in Comparative Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 123-51.
 20. A few examples of these study reports, recommendations, and proposals are: "Seikatsusha to Shite no Gaikokujin" [Foreigners As Residents] by the Committee on Foreign Migrant Workers Problems (2006), which consisted of high-ranking Japanese governmental officials of relevant ministries; "Kongo no Gaikokujin no Ukeire ni Kansuru Kihontekina Kangaekata" [Basic Stance on Admittance of Foreigners in the Future] by the Project Team on the Future Admittance of Foreigners of the Ministry of Justice (2006); and "Gaikoku Jinzai Ukeire Mondai ni Kansuru Dainiji Teigenn" [Proposal on Receiving Foreign Human Resources], by the Japan Business Federation (2007).
 21. Glenda S. Roberts, "Immigration Policy: Frameworks and Challenges," ed. Florian Coulmas, Harald Conrad, Annette Schad-Seifert and Gabrielle Vogt, *The Demographic Challenges: A Handbook about Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 765-79.
 22. At present, policy debates about skilled migration revolve around Filipino nurses under the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement. See Nobue Suzuki, "Carework and Migration: Japanese Perspectives on the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement," *Asia Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2007): 357-81.
 23. In 2007, the "Employment Policy Act" was revised so that business owners are now required to report to the authorities when they employ foreigners.
 24. See Endnote 9.
 25. For a more detailed discussion of this proposal, See Roberts, "Immigration Policy: Frameworks and Challenges," 775.



SCIENCE FICTION AS DOMESTIC POLICY IN JAPAN: HUMANOID ROBOTS, POSTHUMANS, AND *INNOVATION 25*

JENNIFER ROBERTSON

Faced with a rapidly aging and shrinking population, Japanese politicians are continuing, if by default, the postwar precedents of pursuing automation over replacement migration and disregarding women as a talented and vital labor force, although pundits are quick to blame women alone for the low birthrate. The birthrate presently stands at about 1.3 children per married woman, and over 21 percent of the population of 127.8 million people (which includes permanent foreign residents) is over 65 years of age; that percentage is expected to increase by 2050 to over 40 percent. The latest estimates produced by the health ministry project that the population will shrink to less than 111 million in 2035 and to less than 90 million in 2055. Moreover, demographic estimates made back in 1995 indicated that over 600,000 immigrants a year for the next 50 years were needed to keep the labor force at its 1995 level of 87.2 million persons.¹

Japan accounts for over half of the world's industrial and operational robots, including humanoid household robots that are being developed to care for children and the elderly, to provide companionship, and to perform domestic tasks. By 2016, by which time each household is predicted to own at least one robot, the size of the household robot market in Japan is expected to top 18.6 million units.² Japanese robots are forecast to be in this century's global marketplace what Japanese automobiles were in the last century's.³

Already in Japan there is a market for "intelligent," autonomous humanoid robots and androids that can: push or carry heavy loads (Hitachi's Emiew); patrol premises and extinguish fires

(Alsok's Reeborg Q); replace human service sector employees (Kokoro's Actroid, ATR's Robovie, Honda's Asimo); babysit and tutor children (NEC's PaPeRo, Mitsubishi Heavy Industry's Wakamaru); housesit (ZMP's Nuvo); nurse the infirm and elderly (Riken's Ri-man); and provide companionship and entertainment (Business Design and Futaba Industries' ifbot, Flower Robotics's Posy and Pino). Of the 62 household robots now commercially available, "entertainment robots are the most popular, followed by surveillance, educational, research, nursing, and cleaning robots."⁴ Of course, several of these tasks are performed by one robot.

Consumers in the public sphere provide Japanese roboticists with important data on human-robot interactions. For example, at Expo 2005 in Aichi Prefecture, Japan, roboticists were able to closely observe tens of thousands of visitors participating in "robot interaction experiments," as a result of which, a "variety of research and performance improvements...[were conducted]...that will advance the research and development of personal robots."⁵ It is clear that the sites of humanoid robot-based services and entertainment, from exhibitions halls to the home, are utilized by robot engineers as giant laboratories. In fact, Japanese society itself could be considered as a giant laboratory for robot research and development. In the United States, in contrast, it is the military (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA) that invests deeply and is deeply invested in robotic technology. Of course, one can reasonably speculate that data from entertainment and household robot experiments are also being utilized by Japan's new Ministry of Defense.

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ROBOTS ARE LIVING THINGS

There are two key cultural factors that influence the way in which robots are perceived by Japanese. First and foremost is Shinto, the native animistic beliefs about life and death. Monotheism has never had a home in Japan, and unlike the three major monotheistic religions, Shinto lacks complex metaphysical and theological theories, and is primarily concerned with notions of purity and pollution. Shinto holds that vital energies or forces called *kami* are present in all aspects of the world and universe. Some *kami* are cosmic and others infuse trees, streams, rocks, insects, animals and humans, as well as human creations, like dolls, cars and robots.⁶

...humanoid robots are
also regarded as preferable
to foreign laborers...

The second factor concerns the meanings of life and living—life and fertility are especially celebrated in Shinto. *Inochi* is the Japanese word for “life.” It encompasses three basic, seemingly contradictory but interarticulated meanings: a power that infuses sentient beings from generation to generation; a period between birth and death; and the most essential quality of something, whether a living thing or a made object, such as a puppet.⁷ Thus robots, humanoid and otherwise, are “living” things within the Shinto universe, and in that sense, are very much a part of the natural world.


PREMIUM ON TECHNOLOGY: INNOVATION 25

Over the course of my interviews with roboticists in early 2007, and on the basis of the ballooning literature on humanoid household (or partner) robots, it occurred to me that humanoid robots are also regarded as preferable to foreign laborers, and especially to foreign caretakers, for the reason

that unlike migrant and minority workers, robots have neither cultural differences nor, in the case of East Asians, unresolved historical (or wartime) memories to contend with. Household or partner robots are fitted with algorithmic software which enables them to learn from their immediate environment, quickly memorizing the names and routines of family members or office staff. They have no vexatious historical memories. After their own children, elderly Japanese seem to prefer robot caretakers to foreign ones.⁸ So, robots can alleviate the stress of dealing with foreign caretakers and also help perpetuate the myth of Japan as a homogeneous nation.

It also occurred to me that the declining birth-rate, labor shortage, and the rapidly aging population are being addressed to a significant degree as problems calling for *technological solutions*. In the popular media and robotics literature, these trends are mostly not contextualized or analyzed in terms of the constellation of historical, political, social, and economic conditions that occasioned their emergence. Rather, they are simply treated as surface abnormalities rather than indicative of a deeper malaise within the sociocultural system itself.⁹ Women who choose not to marry or to give birth, for example, are referred to disparagingly as “selfish” or “parasites.”

The premium placed on technology as domestic policy is clearly evident in *Innovation 25*, the government’s visionary blueprint for revitalizing Japanese society—and especially the household—by 2025, a mere 17 years from now. Introduced in February 2007 by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, *Innovation 25* promotes a robot-dependent society and lifestyle that is safe (*anzen*), comfort-inducing (*anshin*), and convenient (*benri*). *Innovation 25*, which was drawn up by a cabinet-level committee, is organized by five key rubrics: a society that enables a healthy lifestyle (*shōgai kenkō na shakai*); a safe and comfortable society (*anzen, anshin na shakai*); a society that can enable manifold lifestyles (*tayō na jinsei o okureru shakai*); a society that contributes to solving global issues (*sekaiteki kadai kaiketsu ni kōkensuru shakai*); and a society open to the world (*sekai ni akareta shakai*). Subtitled, “Making the Future; Toward the Challenge of Limitless Possibilities,” *Innovation 25* emphasizes the roles



that biotechnology and robotics will jointly play in securing the stability of both the Japanese economy and Japanese social institutions.

However, as I have argued and will illustrate further, the rhetoric of “innovation” deployed in *Innovation 25* is misleading; “renovation” is perhaps a more accurate term, for it is not *new* values but rather *renewed* values—and especially those represented by the traditional patriarchal extended family—that constitute the “significant changes” recommended in the proposal.¹⁰ The traditional Japanese household (*ie*) is a corporate labor unit that persists for generations beyond any member’s lifetime. It consists at least of grandparents (husband’s parents), parents and children. Idealized in the early 20th century as a microcosm of Japanese society, it is only with the greatly increased life expectancy since 1945—which now averages over eighty years for both sexes—that this ideal type of family could become a possible reality, even though it has not. Nearly 75 percent of all households today are nuclear.

MEET THE INOBE FAMILY


In *Innovation 25*—and in the ballooning popular literature on robotics—robots are represented as members of a household. The very low birthrate makes the continuity of the household more difficult, and humanoid robots are imagined to play an essential role in perpetuating it. The image of the extended household, and its desirability, is especially emphasized in one section on *Innovation 25* that is a fictional ethnographic sketch, with cartoon illustrations, of a day in the life of the “Inobe family”—their fabricated last name is a shortened form of *inobēshon* (innovation) and is written with the ideographs 伊野辺. As an aside, illustrations are an important component of *Innovation 25*, which includes a section that provides a cartoon summary of its main points. Although the Prime Minister’s website provides an English summary of *Innovation 25*, the Inobe ethnography appears only in Japanese.¹¹

The Inobe’s are introduced as *the* typical Japanese household of the future, that is, 17 years from now. The family consists of a heterosexual married couple, Naoyuki and Yumiko, their daughter Misaki and son Taiki, the husband’s parents Ichiro

and Masako, and Inobee-kun, a male-gendered robot. The Inobe household is a futuristic model of the traditional virilocal extended family, with conventional gender roles intact, and Inobē-kun the robot plays a critical role in maintaining it. The newest member of the household, Inobe is five years old and “the size of an elementary school student.” He is connected to the household’s own and regional networks, and can “converse” to an “impressive extent” with family members. The fictional ethnography records each member’s daily routine, beginning at 6:30 a.m. when the elderly couple arises, and ending at 11:00 p.m., when the LED lights in the house dim and then turn off automatically.

Innovation 25 promotes a robot-dependent society and lifestyle that is safe (*anzen*), comfort-inducing (*anshin*), and convenient (*benri*).

In the interest of space, I will focus only on several parts of the Inobe family story that feature Yumiko (the wife and mother), who has the closest relationship with Inobē-kun. This is not surprising, as household robots are imagined to serve as surrogate housewives, that is, as devices through which a human housewife distributes her personal agency.¹² This is a point clearly illustrated in *Innovation 25* by a cartoon of a pink, multi-armed humanoid “fembot” simultaneously holding a basket of clothes to be ironed, rocking and bottle-feeding an infant, and helping a young girl with her geometry homework. Implicit in *Innovation 25* is the notion that a married woman who is relieved by advances in internet technology and robot labor of house-keeping, caretaking, and childraising chores will be free not only to maintain a career, but also to have more children. The use of the suffix *kun* to indicate a male person, the boy-bot’s use of familiar kinship terms, and references to his ability to think, make



clear that the Inobe's household robot is regarded as a living member of the corporate household.

There follows two examples of a day in the life of the Inobe family. At 7:00 a.m., Yumiko, Naoki and Taiki arise. (The elderly couple is already up.) The extended family eats breakfast together in front of a 103-inch flat-screen display, which is actually a composite of many different screens enabling each person to watch his or her preferred program wearing headphones. But this morning, they are all watching Misaki in a broadcast from Beijing (where she is an exchange student like Taiki earlier), and they all talk and laugh among themselves.

At 5:00 p.m., Yumiko finishes “teleworking” in her home office and has a conversation with Inobē-kun. She asks the robot: “Have you finished cleaning the house? Are there any messages? Have you started preparing the bath?” Inobē answers, “The whole house is clean except for mama’s [i.e. Yumiko’s] office. Granpa will be home at around 6:00 p.m., and there was a message from Grandma saying that she would be home at 5:00 p.m. so she should be here any minute now. I’m thinking of preparing the bath at 6:00 p.m.. Papa said he would be home at 7:00 p.m..”

Innovation 25 has provoked a number of criticisms on Japanese blogs. As one critic, a housewife and mother of two who manages a website on social issues, fumed:

*There’s absolutely no reality to the image of everyday life (in the proposal). It reads like a 20-year old science fiction novel! Am I the only person who doesn’t share (the government’s) view of an ideal future (risō no mirai)? If the Japanese have become spiritually and intellectually impoverished, it’s because they leave things up to machines in the name of convenience; they’ve lost the ability to gain knowledge from the natural environment.*¹³

Nevertheless, however much its vision of the future reads like blog-worthy if dated science-fiction, *Innovation 25* is the platform on which the state has based the new national budget. \$26 billion has been earmarked for distribution over the next 10 years to promote robot technology, which is widely thought to be the industry that will “rescue” Japan.¹⁴ The goal for the near future is, within

eight years, to develop intelligent robots that rely on their own decision-making skills in the home and workplace.¹⁵

CONCLUSION: POSTHUMAN SOCIETY

Innovation 25 develops a view of the Japanese household and its members as “posthuman.” Posthuman most generally refers to humans whose individual and collective capacities are radically enhanced by biotechnological means so that they surpass those of “ordinary—or unenhanced—humans.” The posthuman condition already is a staple of Japanese *manga* (comics) and *anime* (cartoons). We are all dependent on and converging with technology, but perhaps this trend is actualizing more explicitly and relentlessly—and is even more desired—in Japan. I think that it is safe to claim that the Japanese state is the first to attempt to organize and orchestrate society around robotic technology and the advent of humanoid robots who will both compensate for the declining and aging population and make replacement migration less necessary (or even unnecessary).

Innovation 25 conjures an image of robot-dependent Japan as a “technologically gated country.”¹⁶ References to “openness to the world” belie the proposal’s insularity. For example, the Inobe’s make use of simultaneous translation devices that allow them to communicate easily with foreigners without having to learn another language (and, by association, another worldview). So, I was not really surprised when, in May 2007, the government announced its plan to establish an experimental “ubiquitous internet zone,” where “everyone and everything (will)... be connected anytime and anywhere by internet technology.”¹⁷ The newspaper copy of this “technologically gated community” (selections given below) reads as though it were lifted directly from the account of the Inobe family in *Innovation 25*:

- The government will set up a special zone next fiscal year to test “ubiquitous” Internet technology in situations as varied as providing medical services for the elderly, preventing car accidents and buying vegetables, officials said Saturday.

- The Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry hopes the experiment will lead in a couple of years to groundbreaking telecommunications technologies and nationwide consumer-friendly services, the officials said.
- The special deregulation zone for achieving the ubiquitous network—a system allowing everyone and everything to be connected anytime and anywhere by Internet technology—is expected to be set up in an area where there is less radio wave interference.
- The most likely candidates are Hokkaido and Okinawa. According to the ministry officials, the test will involve a number of private businesses, such as telecommunications carriers, broadcasters, electric machinery makers, automakers, venture firms and other companies.
- In the zone, people will be able to buy vegetables after checking the names of producers and how the produce has been grown by simply holding their mobile phones over products carrying IC tags.
- Efforts to prevent traffic accidents will include setting up sensors along streets to monitor pedestrian movements, sending the data to onboard terminals in cars to control their speed.
- Senior citizens living alone will receive medical assistance via sensors and wireless networks. Blood pressure and pulse data will be continuously sent to hospitals, where doctors will take prompt countermeasures when abnormalities are detected.¹⁸

It seems clear that the Japanese state has already embarked on the construction of a gated and robotized society spurred on by the specter of a rapidly declining, graying population. Japanese women exercising their constitutional right

as sovereign individuals by not giving birth have, in part, exacerbated this demographic trend. How will—or should—they respond individually and as a constituency to a utopian—or robotopian—proposal that resurrects the same-old patriarchal extended family and simply enhances it with the addition of a household (or, more accurately, a housewife) robot?

It seems clear that the Japanese state has already embarked on the construction of a gated and robotized society spurred on by the specter of a rapidly declining, graying population.

As eulogized in *Innovation 25*, the posthuman condition may offer unprecedented convenience to the majority of Japanese, but that convenience is accompanied by the state's and corporations' almost total surveillance power over every aspect of the individual, inside and out. With their built-in web servers and live video feeds, household robots are part of one of the fastest growing markets in Japan: surveillance and observation. Recent reports in the mass media suggest that any discomfort about the surveillance cameras and devices already in place on the streets and in schools and department stores are offset by the “peace of mind” (*anshin*) that they provide.¹⁹

A seductive ideology of convenience and peace of mind lies at the core of *Innovation 25*. The deployment of humanoid robots is being imagined in ways that underscore how much simpler and more reassuring it is to forget the existence of “something”—whether that “something” be war-time memories, history, immigrants, individualism, privacy, autonomy, feminism, multiculturalism, and

so forth—than to actually deal with the challenges that “that something” presents or represents. The twinned ideologies of convenience and peace of mind in the name of security forgive such strategic forgetting and even indulge it. There is a lot of *inconvenient* thinking that the Japanese—and all of us—have to do about the place and extent of technology in our daily lives.

ENDNOTES

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16. I coined the expression in Japanese, *gijutsuteki sakoku*, or “technologically closed country,” a reference to the isolationist policy of the Tokugawa shogunate which selectively closed off Japan and the Japanese to the rest of the world between the early 17th and late 19th centuries.
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19. See the collection of reports on RFID (radio frequency identification) tags used in Japan for taking attendance in school and for tracking people and vehicles in http://ubiks.net/local/blog/jmt/archives3/cat_60.php?page=all.

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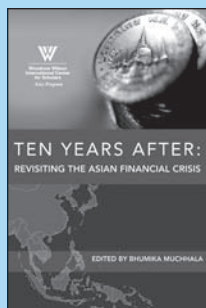


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