

연구보고서 2007-19-9

PROCEEDINGS

**International Seminar on Low Fertility and  
Policy Responses in Selected Asian Countries**

**2007**

한국보건사회연구원

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## I . 세미나 프로그램(국문, 영문)

### 세미나 프로그램

일 시 : 2007년 11월 7일  
장 소 : 한국보건사회연구원 대회의실  
주 최 : 한국보건사회연구원

09:00 ~ 10:00 등 록

10:00 ~ 10:45 개회식

개 회 사: 김용문 (한국보건사회연구원 원장)  
축 사: 박주현 (저출산고령사회위원회 운영위원장)  
기 조 연 설: 조이제 (하와이 동북아시아 경제포럼 의장)

<주 제 발 표>

좌 장: 조남훈(한국보건사회연구원 저출산고령사회연구센터 소장)

10:45 ~ 11:25 일본의 결혼율과 출산율 저하  
토루 스즈키(日국립인구사회보장연구소 연구위원)  
11:25 ~ 12:05 싱가포르의 가족정책 및 출산율 변화  
폴린 데이 스트로판 (국립싱가포르대학교 교수)  
12:05 ~ 13:50 오 찬

- 13:50 ~ 14:30 대만의 저출산 및 대응정책 현황  
 일리 추양(대만 보건부 인구보건연구센터 소장)
- 14:30 ~ 15:10 한국의 저출산과 정책적 대응  
 이삼식 (한국보건사회연구원 저출산정책팀장)
- 15:10 ~ 15:25 휴 식

<종합토론>

좌 장: 김민자 (美동서문화센터 인구보건사업부 선임연구위원)

- 15:25 ~ 17:30 토론자:  
 김두섭 (한양대 사회학과 교수, 한국인구학회장)  
 김서중 (보건복지부 저출산대책팀장)  
 메이린 리 (대만 아시아대학교 사회복지학과 교수)  
 박수미 (한국여성정책연구원 연구위원)  
 유계숙 (경희대 생활과학대학 가족학과 교수)  
 지아오잉 쟁 (중국 북경대학교 인구연구소 소장)

17:30 폐 회

## Seminar Program

Date: November 7, 2007

Venue: Conference Hall, KIHASA

Hosted by Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs

09:00~10:00 Registration

Opening Ceremony

10:00~10:45 **Opening Remarks:** Yong-Moon Kim, President,  
Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA)  
**Congratulatory Remarks:** Joo-Hyun Park, Chair,  
Executive Council, Presidential Committee on Aging Society  
and Population Policy  
**Keynote Speech:** Lee-Jay Cho, Chairman,  
Northeast Asia Economic Forum, Hawaii

Presentation Session

**Chair:** Nam-Hoon Cho, Director  
Center for Low Fertility and Aging Studies, KIHASA

10:45~11:25 **Nuptiality and Fertility Declines in Japan**  
Toru Suzuki, Senior Research Fellow  
National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan

11:25~12:05 **From Population Control to Population Growth – A Case  
Study of Family Policies and Fertility Trends in Singapore**  
Paulin Tay Straughan, Professor and Deputy Head  
Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

- 12:05~13:50 Luncheon
- 13:50~14:30 **Examining Low Fertility and Policy Responses in Taiwan**  
Yi-Li Chuang, Director  
Population and Health Research Center, Department of Health, Taiwan
- 14:30~15:10 **Low Fertility and Policy Responses in Korea**  
Sam-Sik Lee, Director  
Low Fertility Research Team, Center for Low Fertility and Aging Studies, KIHASA
- 15:10~15:25 Coffee Break

Discussion Session

Moderator: Minja Kim Choe, Senior Fellow,  
East-West Center, Hawaii

- 15:23~17:30 Discussants
- Doo-Sub Kim**, Professor  
Department of Sociology, Hanyang University; President,  
Population Association of Korea
- Soe-Jung Kim**, Director  
Population Planning & Family-Friendly Policy Team, Ministry  
of Health and Welfare
- Mei Lin Lee**, Associate Professor and Chair  
Department of Social Work, Asia University, Taiwan
- Soomi Park**, Research Fellow  
Family Policy Center, Korea Women's Development Institute
- Gyesook Yoo**, Assistant Professor

Department of Housing, Child and Family Studies, Kyung  
Hee University, Korea

**Xiaoying Zheng**, Professor and Director

Institute of Population Research, Peking University, China

17:30      Closing

## Ⅱ . 개회사, 축사 및 기조연설

### **Opening Address by Dr. Yong-Moon Kim, President of the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs**

Honorable Ms. Ju-hyun Park, Chair of the Executive Council of the Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy, Dr. Lee-Jay Cho, Chairman of the North East Asia Economic Forum of Hawaii, Distinguished Experts from within and outside the country, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, I would like to extend my most profound gratitude to you all for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here today.

I am certain that all of us here have something in common: we all are concerned about the potential ramifications of low fertility rates that have dominated today's headlines in Korea and many countries around the globe. To be sure, grim projections for the financing of pension schemes and healthcare systems, as well as economic growth and labor productivity, have a lot more to do with people having less number of children than they do with people living longer.

As you all are well aware, Korea's population policy dates back to 1962, when family planning program was put into effect in parallel with the



five-year economic development plans. As Korea's total fertility rate stabilized in the region of 1.6, the government since 1996 shifted its policy focus to population quality and welfare promotion. Despite these changes, from the time of the 1997 Asian economic crisis onwards, Korea's fertility rate plunged to one of the lowest levels in the world. Thus, the adoption of fertility promotion measures in 2004.

As you all know well, low total fertility rate in many countries around the world is said to be traceable to decreases in marriage and marital fertility rates.

Recent increases observed in the fertility rates in a number of Western societies are attributable in large part to extramarital births. However, it is hard to imagine that something similar will happen anytime soon within the context of the conservative Asian mores. Also, although by no means an insignificant effort, raising marriage rate alone will hardly bring fertility rates in Asian countries back to a desirable level.

Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, with the exception of Japan, were hailed in the past as great success stories of family planning. What these countries have in common today is that they all—and this time Japan included—are taking, or poised to take, policy actions in the face of low fertility in the process of rapid aging.

Today's seminar intends to create a forum for a small number of Asian countries of similar cultural backgrounds to exchange experiences they have had with low fertility and pro-natal policies, with a view to contributing to the development of policy options that best fit the Asian socio-cultural context. At

these times, when fertility rates are on the rise, if to a small extent, in Japan, Korea, and Singapore, today's in-depth discussion on such changes is most opportune and will prove to be of significant help in policy development. The outcome of their discussion will also prove to be of great lesson and interest to other Asian countries with prospects for declining fertility.

I wholeheartedly hope that this seminar will not be a one-off, but evolve into a series of back-to-back annual seminars that would bring us together to share our ideas in a regular fashion and contribute towards population stabilization and socio-economic advancement in Asian countries.

In closing, I thank again to Ms. Ju-hyun Park, Dr. Lee Jay Cho, and Presenters and Discussants for the constructive dialogue they will have today. Thank you.

## **Congratulatory Address by Ms. Joo-Hyun Park, Chair of the Executive Council of the Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy**

Thank you all for being here this morning. My most sincere congratulations go to Yong-Moon Kim, the President of the Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs, the organizer of today's seminar. I would also like to welcome Professor Lee-Jay Cho, today's keynote speaker who is the Chairman of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum, and Drs. Toru Suzuki, Paulin Straughan, Yi-Li Chuang, who are going to present on the low-fertility situations, and policy responses thereto, of their countries.

The East Asian countries we will talk about today have a great deal to share with one another when it comes to the subject of low fertility and its causes, as they share much in cultural traditions and customs. One of the most salient features that are commonly observed in these societies is that, because their longstanding patriarchal familism makes it hard for women to balance work and family, marriage and childbirth are increasingly avoided. Also, East Asian countries lack social acceptance of nontraditional family forms. As compared to advanced European countries, the welfare systems of East Asian societies leave something to be desired, not least in terms of child benefits and direct cash assistance. Save for the cases of Singapore and Hong Kong, social acceptance is low for immigrants in most of East Asian societies. Also, the great sense of responsibility people in these societies hold for their children's education is one of the important causes of low fertility. With a lot in common, the East Asian countries we represent here today seem to have every reason to cooperate with one another.

Each country has distinct national characteristics of its own. What comes first to my mind as a defining characteristic of Korea is its dynamism. The country is one of the most rapidly aging societies in the world. Its fertility rates have declined in an unprecedented manner. Such dynamism is equally at play in the country's pro-natal policy effort, as illustrated by the fact that Korea's fertility, the lowest in the world at 1.08 in 2005, rose to 1.12 in 2006 and is expected to hover above 1.25 this year, thanks in part to the broad implementation of the Basic Plan for Aging Society and Population, which is also known as Seromaji Plan 2010, a brainchild of 18 Ministries and the Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy.

Dynamism as such, however, should not be a reason for complacency. Unless people are given confidence that further tangible policy measures will be taken in a consistent manner, the momentum we gained of late may well fizzle out before long. In that regard, as a way to keep itself on guard against complacency, the Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy receives action plans from responsible ministries and local governments every year and examines how they are being implemented.

The second characteristic I think is salient in Korea is the public confusion that the policy turnabout has created. Korea's population control policy lingered on into the mid-1990s, even as the country's fertility rate first went below the replacement level in 1984. The Committee is working to change the social attitude toward marriage, pregnancy and childbirth, using a diverse range of channels including school textbooks, workshops with broadcast writers, lectures at colleges and institutions, public service advertisement, and television programs.

Thirdly, the inordinate financial burden parents have to bear to pay for their children's private education is another factor that brings down birth rates in Korea. The Committee is working to extend public after-school programs to as many children as possible to relieve parents of their financial concerns. Further, the Committee is doing its utmost to provide institutional support that would help induce changes in the culture of marriage and help do away with the rigid attitude that marriage is just impossible without having a job and a place to live beforehand. The new culture of marriage the Committee is seeking to foster is one in which young people feel that they are perfectly safe to get married in early age and work hard with a sense of responsibility for the family, where, when their children become old enough for child care, they can continue working in earnest without having to come across breaks in career.

Some causes of low fertility are common to many countries and others are specific to particular countries. Some factors are common to European countries, some to Asian countries. I hope the exchange of ideas and experiences at today's seminar will provide an additional thrust to the making and implementation of pro-natal policies in the East Asian region.

I thank again to Dr. Yong-Moon Kim, the presenters and discussants who came from afar to share their views and knowledge with us. I would also like to commend the dedication of the organizers of this seminar, and I wish to see further communication and cooperation take place on a continuous basis. Thank you.

# **Post-Demographic Transition: East Asia Economic and Social Challenges for the 21st Century in East Asia**

Keynote Speech by Dr. Lee-Jay Cho,  
Chairman of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum

## **Introduction**

As we look back at the major changes in demographic and economic map of the world during the last century, we wonder what is in store for us in the 21st century.

In spite of the two catastrophic world wars in the first half of the 20th century, the second half witnessed the world population explosion, implosion and dislocation: Explosion in terms of unprecedented growth in numbers, implosion in terms of migration and urban concentration, and dislocation in terms of social disorganization and structural erosion especially in the cities.

History moves in cyclical pattern with the underlying centrifugal and centripetal forces. Europe experienced demographic transition in a span of a century or two. Demographic transition simply put is the process where declines in death and birth rates take place along with societal modernization. The rapid fertility transition that was induced and temporally condensed took dramatically shorter times in East Asia compared with Europe. The demographic transition in Northeast Asia began with Japan with declining mortality from the Meiji period and fertility decline from 1920's. In Korea and Taiwan major declines in fertility took place in 1960's and 1970's and China in 1970's and 1980's.

In what ways do demographic factors matter in sustaining long-term

economic development and social stability? The relevant variables, individually or in some combination are the size, composition, age structure, quality and distribution, along with growth in terms of fertility, mortality, and internal and international migration.

### Changing age structure and young and aging economy

The age distribution of a nation's population and its institutions both economic, social and cultural, may be considered as a vital indicator of the status of its economy.

The economy of a nation may be regarded as going through the process of aging, like the life cycle of an individual person, although it is unlike a human being who can prolong health and vigor for an extended period but is inevitably subject to death through the aging process. By contrast, an economy can rejuvenate itself and sustain its growth and development much longer given the technological innovation and influx of human resources, the proper changes in the conditions (externalities) and policy and structural reforms required for economic longevity. Bloom and Williamson(1998, World Bank, Demographic Transitions and East Asian Economic Miracles) refers to "demographic bonus" in East Asia where the stellar economic performance benefited from lowered child dependency, of course combined with the right policy settings. Demographic dividends may be said to be remarkable in Korea, Taiwan and China in the chronological sequence. Significant part of China's economic dynamism in the recent past came from the low dependency ratios based on the favorable age structure.

### Post Demographic Bonus Challenges

There is an American saying "There is no such thing as free lunch."The

East Asian countries benefited from changing age structures that led to decreasing dependency ratios and thereby increasing the saving that was invested in industrial development and served as a basis for attracting foreign investments. In 1960's and 70's we used to talk about vicious circle of the 40 percent rule of having 40 percent of population under 15 years of age dependent on the working population for survival, population growth of 3 percent and infant mortality 100, leaving no savings for investment for economic growth. This characterized the dilemma of the then so called "underdeveloped country" and Korea and China were typical examples. The Poor Get Children was the title of one book published by Harvard University Press around 1960. During the last generation, Korea and Taiwan and for that matter China by implementing effective family planning policy and programs have succeeded in inducing fertility reduction thereby laying the most important condition for successful industrial development and reaping unprecedented "demographic dividend."

As Laotsu would say nothing in this world is constant, "blessing in one time is the disguised disaster in another time." Joseph Schumpeter stated the success of capitalist development will breed the seed for later disaster. An unbalanced age distribution favorable for economic growth will be followed by an unbalanced age structure that will erode the economic achievement unless creative and innovative reforms and policies are envisioned.

The completion of fertility transition is in general followed by the phenomenon of "marriage bust" and "baby bust" particularly in East Asia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and inevitably China. There are various research endeavors to find the underlying causes of low fertility and marriage rates. The East Asian countries all shared one generation ago "universal marriage" and TFR between 5 and 6.

The impact of globalization and dramatic economic development and



consequent affluence along with social modernization brought about unprecedented changes in the way and style of life for younger generation, especially in childbearing ages. The cost of marrying and child bearing, rearing and socializing in monetary, psychological, opportunity, physical and other terms has gone through unprecedented transformation. The traditional family values have eroded and the "hungry spirit" to achieve family subsistence, lineage and prosperity is disappearing in the face of an emerging social values based on immediate gratification and convenience, pursuit of individual interest and "advertised life style" further intensified by electronic communication and globalization. This in sum over unwitting individuals, seems to be leading to the deviation from the centrality of the societal value, thereby undermining the core value of societal succession through demographic replacement.

Increasing dependency ratios and economic burden of decreasing proportion of working population will take away economic and social dynamism from a nations' economy, especially in an aging economy.

Japan, Korea and Taiwan are experiencing steep declines in fertility, aggravating the aging process of its population, challenging the policy makers in the East Asian countries which share the similar cultural settings and affinities.

Japan has already begun to experience in evitable economic burden of caring for rapidly increasing number of dependent elders in terms of social security and medi-care, and this has become the number one political issue. As is well known, the Japanese are well known for planning ahead, yet the populace are nor satisfied with the current situation.

In Korea we have much more horrendous problems that will very soon will confront us. My friend Dr. Tom Sun of Taiwan (TFR of 1.1) shared the same concern with me recently in Japan. The mainland China will have to start thinking seriously about what need to be done to face the same challenge.

We can speculate on four broad alternative scenarios: 1. the slow fadeout, 2 healthy aging 3. Replacement migration and 4. Successful pro-natalism. The real future will eventually be a series of hybrids or combinations of these idealized scenarios, tempered by actual experience of policy mistakes and correction over time.

In this regard, there is an urgent need for a cross national comparative study in depth of the current situations, experiences and implications for policy reforms covering Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and mainland China from a social, economic, institutional and cultural perspective.

### Urbanization and hierarchy of Cities in a Regional Perspective

In Japan and Korea the proportion urbanized are 80% and in Taiwan 75%. Only one generation ago in Korea for example, percent urban used to be less than 30 or 40 percent. In the course demographic and industrial transition in East Asia, massive rural to urban migration took place on a dramatic pace that led to extraordinary concentrations of population in the capital cities. These cities became primate cities like Bangkok not following the normal rank-size distribution of cities where the largest city would have 2 cities half its size in the next rank, etc.

Movement of people across national borders in East Asia reflect a degree of regional economic integration. It is important to recognize, however, that free movement of goods, capital and technology to where labor is cheap and abundant is more meaningful than international labor migration.

The relocation of manufacturing to lower wage countries has been the major dynamic in the spread of economic development as exemplified by Japanese investment in Korea and Taiwan and Taiwan investment in China.

The distribution of cities is one indicator of the degree of economic

integration for a country or for a region. For example for the Pre-World War II Japan, and its colonies and then Manchuria, the so called "rank size-rule" fits the pattern of cities in size indicating a very high degree of economic integration. Cities in a network are linked in a hierarchy of functions with information handling and service at the top and manufacturing at the bottom. With increasing force of economic globalization exerting ever greater influence across national boundaries, such hierarchies operate fairly independently of national boundaries and of geographic features. Centrality of function rather than population size determines a city's place in the hierarchy and the function can be gained or lost depending on technology and costs. As economic cooperation and physical integration in Northeast Asia intensifies and progresses, the consequent regional economic integration will bring about a new pattern of distribution of cities in Northeast Asia.

### Globalization and Regionalization in the Context of Demography

Today we are witnessing the evolution of new institutional arrangements resulting from globalization and regionalization and dramatically increasing movements of goods, capital, technology and human migration across the national and regional boundaries. What are the challenges for sustainable growth and social stability?

Can Japan, for example, sustain its regional economic primacy with aging and declining population in the twenty first century? Japan's population will start to fall within a few years, and by mid-century it will have dropped 20 million below its peak of 130 million. The aging economy owe something to the "declinist" sentiments engendered by population aging. More serious is the fact that the population is aging fast. China has low fertility but is still about one generation away from any absolute decline in numbers.

If China takes over the economic primacy of the region, will it do so because of demographic factors? Can an aging economy be rejuvenated by demographically aging society? W.W.Rostow observed a few years ago that without massive geographic mobility of the population across the national or regional boundaries, there is a big question mark on the sustainability of current economic growth and primacy in the industrialized regions of the world. Rostow also stated modern Japan's fourth challenge is the successfully managing the political economy of a stagnant and declining population after successfully meeting its third challenge of post-World War recovery. As the second largest economy in the world, what Japan can do or fails to do will have both regional and global influence. As part of a world perspective on aging and economics, East Asia in recent decades have been able to benefit from the demographic opportunity based on favorable age shifts as mentioned earlier and consequently, the economic success greatly raised the stakes for some regional design for an economic community in this region.

Table 1. Demographic Contrasts: Japan, China, and Korea

	2000			2025		
	Japan	China	Korea	Japan	China	Korea
Total Population (millions)	127	1,269	46.7	121	1,445	49.0
Population Age 20~39	71.3	724	27.8	59.2	811	27.3
Births per year (millions)	1.1	17.5	0.49	0.83	16.2	0.36
No. entering Labor Force	1.2	16.4	-	8.7	13.9	3.2
% 65 and over	17.2	6.8	7.4	29.5	13.7	19.6
Median age	41.3	30.0	32.0	50.5	39.4	45.8
GDP per capita	\$36,601	\$956	\$10,938	\$55,896	\$8,035	\$51,923

In Northeast Asia although divided by artificial national boundaries there are complimentary factor endowments which if harnessed together would make this region to be one of the most dynamic economic centers of the world. Vast territory and natural resources of the Russian Far East, oil, gas, timber etc.; rich human and agricultural resources in Northeast China, a large land with a huge resource potential, uranium etc. in Mongolia; Enormous capital and advanced technology and managerial know-how in Japan, and capital and construction and electronic technology in Korea; North Korea with its strategic location currently the missing link. At the same time this region has economies at different levels of development which can interact to generate energetic development toward regional economic integration. The interactive process can be facilitated by the fact that the region enjoys geographic proximity, in most part cultural affinity, and a long history of natural economic territory (NET).

In other words, the aging economy can work with younger economies as partners, the former providing the wisdom based on experience and the latter energy and vigor.

Northeast Asia regionalism will eventually derive from a strong regional economy with each state or part developing at different paces the qualities of civic society and the kinds of bi-lateral and multilateral institutions that tend to develop among the countries on the same path to affluence. The European lesson may be that effective regionalism need only claim a minor part of a person's identity. There is a comfortable vision of the thriving middle income economies eventually ending up with fairly similar demographic structures, promising to generate over time huge numbers of reasonably, eventually very well off consumers.

## Conclusion

As one of the leading English economist J.R. Hicks observed, the transition to a constant population would indeed have profound social, psychological, cultural, military as well as economic meaning, but depending on the spirit in which the possibilities and challenges are pursued, the outcome could be salutary. At this stage one can only conclude that modern society offers many opportunities to expand investment in highly productive ways and to maintain full employment under a regime of stagnant population and rising real wages. The success, however, of such transformation of modern sophisticated societies would not simply consist of a correct series of measures of political economy. I share with Hicks and Rostow that a vision would have to be developed that the world of stagnant population open many opportunities for creative work.

Internationally, the prospect for those who are coming along behind the present affluent nations could flourish in a world at peace. They will not be far behind as China now shows dynamic industrial prowess with rapidly declining fertility. It is not to be ruled out that an enlarging role in a world at peace is the best Chinese option and the best Russian option, as it now has become for the Germans and Japanese. But that will depend on the continued vitality and the positive view of the future by North America and European Union.

Economic and social challenges after the completion of demographic transition in East Asia, namely Korea, Japan, Taiwan and later China are enormous. In the 1960's and 70's we were confronted with then threatening explosion of the population bomb, we had similar sense of urgency but one difference is then, the lurking threat of mass poverty, disease and starvation but today on the other hand, we are overshadowed by the fear of losing

our continuity and what we have achieved. The challenge facing us is not confined to one nation but all of us in this region in different time frame and stages in the larger regional framework thanks to globalization and regional economic integration. The experience and wisdom on one hand of advanced economies and societies and ventures and experiments of younger economies on the other will contribute to a creative and innovative approach to meeting the next challenge for this region. All of us share a little bit of hypochondriac tendency and tend to over- estimate the challenge we face. We have met the challenge overcoming the explosive population growth in the course of one generation, and I believe the countries in East Asia and its leaders if they are able to come up with a strong political will and act as in the previous demographic occasion, will be capable of meeting the post-demographic transition challenges.

### III. Presentation Papers

#### **1. An Overview of the Low Fertility and Policy Responses in Selected Asian Countries: Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan**

Minja Kim Choe, Senior Fellow, East-West Center, Hawaii  
Nam-Hoon Cho, Director, Center for Low Fertility and Aging  
Studies, KIHASA

This paper is based mainly on presentations and discussions at the International Seminar on Policy Responses to Low Fertility in Selected Asian Countries organized by Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA), Seoul, Korea, November 7, 2007

Note: In this paper, I use "South Korea" to refer to the Republic of Korea, and "East Asian societies" to mean Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan as a group.

##### 1. Introduction

Among Asian countries, Japan and Singapore experienced economic development earlier than other countries and South Korea and Taiwan followed them soon after. Concurrently, fertility transition from high to low



levels took place in these East Asian societies. Japan and Singapore experienced fertility decline much earlier than South Korea and Taiwan did. In the first two countries, fertility declined to the replacement level in the mid-1970s but in South Korea and Taiwan, the replacement-level fertility was observed about a decade later, in 1983, following a rapid decline since the late 1960s (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007).

After reaching replacement level, steady and slow decline of fertility continued in Japan, reaching the total fertility rate of 1.5 in 1992. In Singapore the total fertility rate has fluctuated between 1.5 and 2.0 during the period between 1976 and 2000. Thereafter, the total fertility rate declined again and stayed below 1.5. The patterns of fertility decline in Taiwan and South Korea are very similar to each other: after reaching the replacement level, their fertility rates continued to decline to a very low level without stopping, and reached the 1.5 level in 1998. The total fertility rate fell below the 1.3 level by 2004 in all four East Asian societies under study (Appendix I).

A total fertility rate below 1.5 is considered critically low by demographers because of its implications on age structure, future population size, and the difficulties in recovering to higher levels in reasonably short time (McDonald 2006; Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2006; Lutz, Skirbekk, and Testa 2006). There have been increasing concerns over the continuing decline in fertility in these East Asian societies where the total fertility remained below 1.5 for many years, and serious efforts have been put forth by governments in order to stop and reverse the trend. Some versions of pronatalist policies began to appear in Singapore in 1984 and in Japan in 1992. In South Korea, serious government effort responding to continuing low level of fertility began in 2004, and in Taiwan in 2006.

The case of South Korea illustrates how population policies and fertility level interacted, one responding to the other as well as being affected by the

other. Total fertility rate declined from 6.0 in 1960 to the population replacement level of 2.08 in 1983 and to 1.67 in 1985, thanks to the national family planning program and economic development plans that took effect after 1962. After some fluctuations between 1.5 and 1.8 during the period between 1985 and 1997, TFR in Korea again fell down to 1.47 in 2000 and to 1.08 in 2005. The unprecedented low fertility seems to have coincided with the 1997 economic crisis. The decline in TFR has been accompanied by the decrease in the number of births per annum, from 870,000 in 1980 to 440,000 in 2005.

In 1996, in response to continuing fertility decline to below replacement level, the government abolished population growth control policies and adopted a new population policy with an emphasis on the quality and welfare of the population. The objectives of the new population policy in 1996 were: (1) to keep the rates of fertility and mortality at levels required for sustainable socioeconomic development; (2) to promote family health and welfare; (3) to balance the sex ratio at birth; (4) to promote women's labour force participation and welfare; (5) to promote the health and welfare of the elderly population; and (6) to achieve a balanced distribution of the population across the country. In line with the new population policy, both government and non-governmental organizations shifted their focus to the health and welfare of the people. Despite the abolition of the anti-natal policy, TFR continued to decrease to 1.47 in 2000. Accordingly, many researchers suggested the necessity of fertility promotion measures, but no pro-natal policy was adopted before 2004. In Taiwan, where the fertility decline has been very rapid and more recent, it was only in 2006 that policy responses were first considered seriously.

Although they differ in timing and speed, these East Asian societies share some common characteristics in the transition of fertility from replacement

level to a very low level. The most notable characteristic, in comparison with the transition in Europe and English speaking countries, is the negligible levels of non-marital births and cohabitation. Analysis of fertility declines after reaching the replacement level in these societies claim that the declines are caused nearly entirely by decreasing proportions of married women, especially of the ages between 25 and 34. Numerous studies attribute these characteristics to the tradition of strong family norms based on Confucian ideas (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007).

Considering the similarities in fertility transitions in recent years, and the similarities in cultural background, traditional family systems, and their implications in fertility transition, the Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs convened an International Seminar on Policy Responses to Low Fertility in Selected Asian Countries with representatives from Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan and international panel members (Cho, 2007; Kim 2007; Park 2007). This paper is based mainly on the presentations by country representatives and discussions among presenters and panel members at the seminar. Some additional references are used to enhance discussions of related issues.

## 2. Causes of fertility decline in East Asian societies

Main causes of fertility decline differ somewhat in Japan on one hand, and in Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan on the other. In Singapore, fertility declined rapidly from about six children per woman around 1960 to the replacement level in 1975 (Straughan 2007) and in South Korea and Taiwan from six children around 1960 to the replacement level in 1984 (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007). During these times of rapid fertility decline, socioeconomic changes such as industrialization, urbanization, rising level of

education especially for women, increases in women's participation in the labour force, and decline in infant and child mortality took place. These socioeconomic changes no doubt contributed to fertility decline. But the strong and efficient national family planning programs in these societies are thought to have contributed to the rapid fertility decline as well. Some common characteristics of the family planning programs in these societies include strong IEC (information, education, and communication) programs promoting small family norms as well as generous financial assistance in family planning services. Furthermore, the family planning programs in these societies were integrated into the national economic development plans and community health programs, and received generous financial and administrative support from many branches of the government (Kwon 2001; Liu 2001 Yap 2001).

Japan, however, did not have official family planning programs. But demographers view the passing of eugenics law in 1948 allowing the use of induced abortions under certain conditions as a signal that the government upheld a small family norm. This is a significant departure from the pre-war position of the government encouraging large family size (Inoue 2001; Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov 2004). Fertility decline in Japan is thought to have resulted from rapid diffusion of small family norms caused by the socioeconomic development after World War II, voluntary use of contraceptive methods, and induced abortions. Although there were no official family planning programs, contraceptive methods, namely condoms, have been made widely available (Inoue 2001; Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov 2004).

In summary, in these East Asian societies, the family size norm changed during the period of rapid economic development and social change, and women were able to prevent unwanted children.

### 3. East Asian pattern of fertility decline

A few characteristics of the fertility decline in East Asian societies differ from those of the Western societies. One of them is that the marriage pattern before fertility transition in East Asian societies has been early and universal whereas in the Western societies, later and fewer marriages prevailed before fertility transition. Since the initiation of the fertility transition, the marriage pattern changed considerably to later marriage and less marriage, contributing to fertility transition in these societies (Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov 2004).

In all four East Asian societies, out-of-wedlock births are rare, consisting of less than two percent of all births, and therefore, declining proportion of married women contributed greatly to the decline of total fertility rate. During the period when fertility declined from high to the replacement level, both the proportion of women who were married and the marital fertility rate decline substantially. Further decline of fertility from the replacement level to a very low level in these societies are thought to have been caused entirely by decline in proportions of married women, especially at ages 25-34. In recent years, however, these analyses have been found to be less than ideal (Suzuki 2007; Bongaarts 2002).

### 4. Family, marriage, and childbearing in East Asia

The traditional family systems in the East Asian societies under study are based on Confucian ideas emphasizing patrilineage and strict gender role division. Some characteristics of the East Asian family system are likely to affect behaviours associated with low levels of marriage and childbearing in the context of modern socioeconomic conditions. One prominent characteristic of the East Asian family

system is the close association between marriage and childbearing. As noted earlier, childbearing occurs almost exclusively within marriage. Furthermore, childbearing is expected to follow soon after marriage (Rindfuss 2004).

Strong emotional and economic ties between parents and children throughout the life span can result in fertility depressing behaviours in modern industrialized societies. The idea that "mother is the best person to take care of young children" prevails much of East Asia and such attitudes are likely to result in low fertility (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007) in modern industrialized societies. Rising levels of education, industrialization, and urbanization have resulted in higher level of women's labor force participation in East Asian societies. It has become nearly universal that women participate in the labor force before marriage. Large proportion of married women desire and choose to be employed outside home (Bumpass et al, 2007). Among them, those with traditional mother role ideals would want to leave employment while they have young children. They are likely to have fewer children (or no children) than those who think that it is alright to have very young children placed in childcare centers. Among parents with school-age children, those who have strong obligation to provide the "best" education are likely to invest heavily on children's education, and often do not consider having more than one or two children economically feasible (Tusya and Choe 2004; Lee 2007).

Single men and women are expected to live with their parents, regardless of their age or employment status. Such living arrangements certainly does not put pressure on young men and women to get married and establish a "home" and begin a "family" as in most Western societies (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007). On the other hand, married couples in East Asian societies are expected to live with the husband's parents or keep close contact, providing social and emotional

support (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007). Such expectations are likely to result in added stress on the part of wives, increasing the "cost" of marriage for women.

The traditional gender division of labor, the husband being responsible for "earning the living" and the wife for "taking care of home and family," is known to be much more prevalent in East Asia than in the Western societies (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Tussy and Bumpass 2004). Such arrangements make some women to drop out of labor market when they have young children or struggle with "double burden" of employment and housework (Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov 2004; Choe et al. 2004). Thus, women are likely to want to continue employment for as long as possible, which results in delay of marriage and childbearing.

Some aspects of strong intergenerational ties are likely to have positive effects on childbearing. Coresiding with parents or living close to parents, which is a common living arrangement in East Asia, may provide help with childcare and housework for young couples with children. Such help from parents would make young wives to combine employment and childrearing somewhat easier (Choe, Bumpass, and Tsuya 2004). Societies where close intergenerational relationships prevail are likely to highly value having children and thus have positive effect on moderate level of fertility (Straughan 2007). In East Asian families, parent-child relationship is viewed as more important and enduring than husband-wife relationship. For example, a study on attitudes found that the importance of having children for a "full and satisfying life" is stronger than the importance of getting married (Bumpass and Choe 2004). Surveys consistently show that most women in East Asia consider having two children as ideal, and large proportion of adult men and women report that marriage is considered complete only when the couple have children of their own (Lee 2007; Straughan 2007).

Although some aspects of the East Asian family system are supportive of childbearing, other aspects seem to outweigh the positive aspects in the context of modern industrialized societies. In summary, marriage is viewed as an important aspect of individual life but for women, it has become a difficult institution to get into when other social and economic conditions of the society has modernized. Nowadays, women in East Asian societies receive high level of education, a large proportion receiving college education. Most women are employed before marriage. After marriage, however, married women's expected roles change drastically to the traditional role. The expected roles include coresiding and maintaining good relationships with in-laws, providing economic, emotional, and physical support to them, having children and raising them with little help from husbands, and dropping out of labor force, or assuming "double burden" after giving births to children. It is not surprising then that women in East Asian societies continue to postpone marriage. Among women aged 30~34, the proportion of the never married increased dramatically during the past 25 years. According to the latest available statistics, about 20 percent in Singapore and South Korea, nearly 30 percent in Taiwan, and more than 30 percent in Japan in this age group were never married (Appendix II).

## 5. The roles of family and the state in East Asia

Consistent with the tradition of strong family system in East Asia, the role of state in family welfare there has been smaller than in Western societies. A South Korean sociologist Chang argues that families assume full responsibility for providing social, economic, and emotional support to their members (Chang 2001). The cost of rearing children has increased dramatically as the future welfare of children depends heavily on their



educational achievements and the level of education in general has increased dramatically (Tsuya and Choe 2004). Under such conditions, having fewer children would be the rational choice of the family to maximize the welfare of its members (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2006).

With the changes in socioeconomic conditions, and family systems, the expected role of the government in family welfare has been growing in East Asian societies, and the recent population policies are designed to meet some of these expectations (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007). Full implementation of such policies, however, seems very costly in terms of financial and human resources.

## 6. Policy responses to low fertility in East Asia

When fertility in these societies fell below the replacement level for the first time, the general policy responses were cautious, waiting to see if the trend would continue or stop and reverse its course. Although there were much discussions on the likelihood of further fertility decline, population policies did not change much. Such is not surprising in the context of an unchanging preference for a family with two children and of a very low celibacy level (Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov 2004). Furthermore, the age structure of the population was such that even when the period fertility level was very low, the population was still growing due to population momentum (Cho and Kim 1992, Choe and Park 2006). Concerns about population pressure on environment have also contributed to the reluctance in shifting the focus of population policy to childbearing (Cho and Kim 1992, Lee and Chuang 2007, Straughan 2007). In fact the policies for slower population growth were reaffirmed as recently as 1983 in Taiwan and 1986 in South Korea.

Among East Asian societies, the first pronatalist policy was implemented

in Singapore in 1984. The Singaporean policy at the time was two-pronged: encouraging more childbearing for women with tertiary education while encouraging small-family ideal for less educated women. Apparently, the policy is aimed at maintaining the population composition when fertility rate was falling rapidly among the college-educated while the fertility rate among the less education remained high (Straughan 2007). There is no evidence of the success of these policies. By 1986, the Singaporean government abandoned fertility reduction policies entirely and closed the Family Planning and Population Board (Appendix III). In 1989, the policy of "have three children if you can afford" was introduced.

In 1990 in Singapore and in 1992 in Japan, more specific pronatalist policies began to appear. Singapore's policies include those encouraging marriage through tax rebate and housing benefits. Most of the policies are designed to improve the compatibility of employment and mother roles. They include tax levies for hiring of foreign maids, improved child care/family care leaves and allowances for young children. Japanese policies are mainly for helping working mothers to carry the double burden of employment and childrearing such as improved child care/family care leaves and allowances for young children. In the 1980s and 1990s, the proportion of never married women among Singaporean Chinese had already reached a level close to or over 20 percent, and the Singaporean government introduced other policies to further encourage marriage such as expanded housing benefits and cash reward. The Japanese policies during the 1990s focussed on making combination of work and family life easier especially for those women who needed to work for family income. In the meantime, the population policies in South Korea and Taiwan have become "neutral,"neither discouraging nor encouraging childbearing and concentrating on quality of reproductive health programs during the 1990s.

From the year 2000 onwards, pronatalist policies in Japan and Singapore were

strengthened. Expanded maternity and child care leaves, paternity leaves, and child allowances were implemented. The Japanese government tried to get local governments and large firms to share the burden of implementing the pronatalist policies. The Singaporean policies tried to promote the idea of happy family with children and be more comprehensive on gender issues whereas Japanese policies remained focussed on improving the compatibility of work and family life.

In South Korea pronatalist began to appear in 2004. For the legal support for Korea's future population policy, the Basic Law on Low-Fertility and Population Aging was enacted in 2005. The major provisions of the law include: 1) roles and functions of central and local governments in population policy, 2) preparation of the comprehensive basic plan for low-fertility and aging society policy every five years, 3) establishment of the Committee on Low Fertility and Population Aging, which is chaired by the President of Korea, and 4) reporting the annual plan and achievements of the population program to the National Assembly.

In June 2006, the South Korean government initiated the comprehensive five-year basic plan (2006~2010) to address low fertility and population ageing. The basic plan is aimed at raising fertility rate to an appropriate level and improving the socioeconomic systems in preparation for an aged society (Cho, 2006). The policies include economic and social support for improving the compatibility of work and family life, providing economic incentives for childbearing, improving reproductive health services, fostering family friendly social conditions, fostering gender equity, and improving children's rights and providing safer environment for children (Lee, 2007). The government announced that one of its demographic goals is to increase Korea's TFR to the OECD average of 1.6 by 2020, which would require a set of feasible long and mid-term strategies. (Cho, 2006).

Taiwan is about to formulate its first set of population policies in

response to very low fertility. It has been reported that the policies will be based on the discussions among broad-based experts including environmentalists and feminists (Lee and Chuang). It seems that Taiwan's policies are expected to be very comprehensive, focused on environment and individual rights. These policies may lead to significant effects on fertility behavior once they are implemented effectively.

## 7. Evaluation of policies and prospects

Singapore's policies, being the oldest among East Asian societies, have been reviewed more than others. The evaluations have been mixed but the general conclusion is that they had limited success (Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov 2004; McDonald 2006; Straughan 2007). Analyses of the effect of Japan's pronatalist policies on fertility generally conclude that the effects have been small (McDonald 2006; Suzuki 2007). The history of pronatalist policies in South Korea has been too short for a rigorous analysis of their impacts. Taiwan has yet to implement its pronatalist policies. McDonald argues that traditional family-centered values such as those prevalent in East Asian societies make it difficult for pronatalist policies to have large impacts. The population needs to accept greater state interventions in family affairs if the pronatalist policies are to have impact (McDonald 2006). Changes in attitudes in East Asian societies indicate that young couples nowadays expect and demand greater involvements of the government in family welfare, especially in care of young children and the elderly. And population policies are becoming more responsive to such demands (Lee 2007; Lee and Chuang 2007; McDonald 2006; Straughan 2007; Suzuki 2007).

Pronatalist policies in East Asia are based on the assumption that the current low fertility is not what most people desire under ideal conditions

but a result of the postponement or modification of desire resulting from difficulties associated with having the desired number of children (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2006). A strong evidence of such argument is the unchanging desired fertility level close to the replacement level. It would then be possible to raise the fertility level by minimizing such difficulties. Providing sufficient support for families to realize their fertility goals in East Asian societies would involve changing many aspects of existing social and economic institutions. It will not be easy, but not impossible (McDonald 2006).

So far, population polices in East Asian societies have not paid much attention to migration and welfare of immigrants, and multi-cultural families. This is apparently an area that needs research and policy recommendations.

## 8. Measurement issues

The period total fertility rate (TFR) is the most commonly used period measure of fertility that combines age-specific fertility rates observed during a given period such as one calendar year (most of national statistics) or five calendar years (most of statistics published by United Nations).

The period total fertility rate, which is the sum of age-specific fertility rates observed during a period, allows the decomposition of the change between two time periods into two components, one due to changes in proportions married for each age group, and the other due to changes in age-specific marital fertility rates. Decomposition of the decline in total fertility rate in these four East Asian countries since reaching the replacement level is entirely due to the decrease in proportion of married women (see, for example, Atoh, Kandiah, and Ivanov, 2004).

Use of total fertility rate and the decomposition of the changes thereof become problematic, however, in the context of rapid and uneven rates of

changes. Two components of total fertility, a set of age-specific proportions married and a set of age-specific marital fertility rates are not independent anymore and the decomposition technique becomes not very accurate. Furthermore, a synthetic measure that spans 35 years of life (from age 15 to age 49) becomes unrealistically far from reality of the experience of any cohort of women during the time of rapid changes in fertility behaviour.

Billari and Kohler (2004) argue that the lowest-low fertility has been associated with a "falling behind" of cohort fertility at higher birth orders and late ages. Analysis of fertility at very low levels, therefore, needs to pay attention to both and age and birth order components. Total fertility rates, without due attention to parity-composition caused by the postponement of fertility distorts period fertility measures, resulting in reduced the level of period fertility indicators below the associated level of cohort fertility (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2006; Bongaarts 2002).

Finally, we need to recognize the inevitability of negative population momentum (Lutz et al., 2003). The annual number of births would continue to decline even if fertility policies resulted in a large increase in the number of children born per woman. The period of negative population momentum can be quite long in countries where very low level of fertility persisted for an extended period of time.

## 9. Concluding Remarks

In hindsight, family planning programs are viewed as having been successful in accelerating fertility transition and contributing to economic development (McDonald 2006). Similarly, although the evidence is not strong that pronatalist policies can affect fertility level to increase from the very low level to moderate and replacement level continue, it is rational to

formulate policies to support childbearing and childrearing.

During the time of high fertility, large proportion of women were having more children than they wanted and the introduction of contraceptives and family planning programs helped to minimize the level of unwanted fertility. The family planning programs also had an impact on altering family size ideals from three to four children to about two children, with the help of improved child survival.

In East Asian societies with very low fertility, a large proportion of women do not achieve their desired family size. For some, childbearing terminates voluntarily but prematurely, or is postponed too long to have enough time to achieve the desired family size. It is not surprising that recent studies have found positive relationships between "happy family" and childbearing (Straughan 2007; Kohler, Behrman, and Skythe 2005).

Population policies can help these families to achieve their family size goals. The policies need to be comprehensive, providing support for all families regardless of their social and economic conditions, and throughout the life span. Basically, the state needs to take a larger role in providing family welfare for all families and throughout the whole life span, in reproductive health, childcare, education of children, health care of children, providing full employment opportunities for the young, creating family friendly work environment, employment friendly home environment (such as increase in husband's contribution to housework), and the care of the elderly.

In East Asian societies with the traditional family system, the state has played minimal role in providing the welfare of family, and implementing the population policies listed above will be costly. Social and emotional costs will also be high. However, it has been documented that the reversal of fertility trend from very low level becomes more difficult when such low level has persisted for an extended period of time. Now is the time to act.

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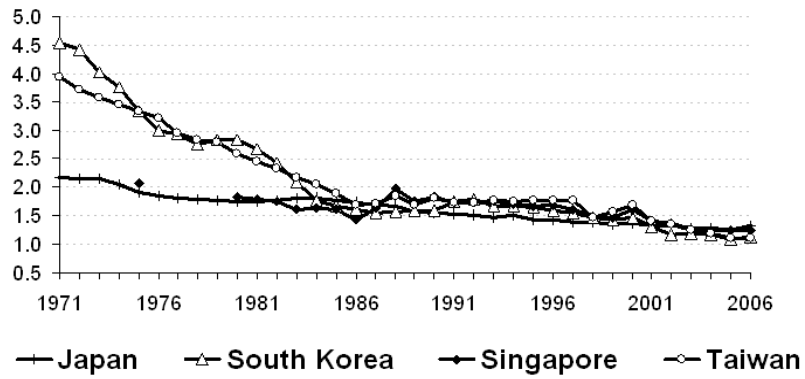
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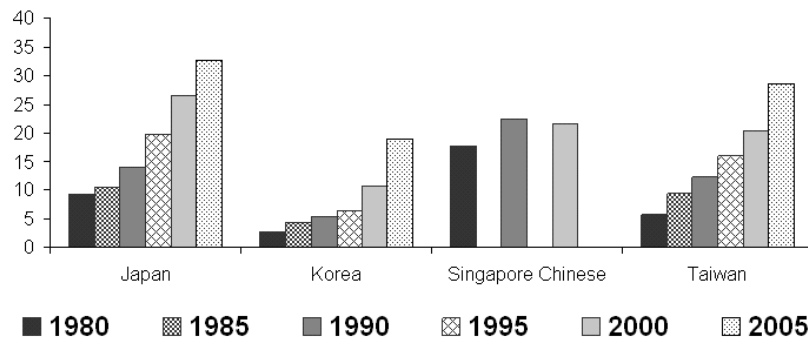
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<Appendix I. Fertility trends in four East-Asian societies: 1971~2006>



<Appendix II. Percent never married, women 30~34 in four East-Asian societies, 1980~2005>



<Appendix III. History of population policies in four East Asian societies, 1980~2007>

Japan	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan
	(1984) Two-prong population policy: pro-natalist family policies for women with tertiary education and monetary incentives for less educated women who abide by the small family ideal.	(1981) New innovative population policies to place greater emphasis on social support policies and the activation of the FP programme.	(1983) Re-announced policy for further reduction in population growth rate.
	(1986) Closed Family Planning and Population Board.	(1987) Revision of the Medical Law to forbid prenatal sex identification.	
	(1987) First major introduction of pro-natalist policies: tax and housing incentives; childcare subsidies, childcare leaves. (1989) Setting up of National Advisory Council on the Family and Aged.	(1989) Revision of the Family Law to give daughters the official right to become the head of the household and claim an equal share of the inheritance regardless of sex and birth order. Revision of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act to prevent the differential treatment of male and female employees	
	(1990) Tax rebate for couples. (1991) Tax rebates for foreign maid levy.		
(1992) Law concerning the welfare of workers who take care of children or	(1992) HDB housing schemes to encourage family formation.		(1992) Revised Guideline for Population Policy: maintain a reasonable growth of population; increase marriage

Japan	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan
other family members including child care and family care leave: Child allowance for children under 3			rates. No concrete policies
(1994) Angel Plan: emphasis on compatibility between work and childcare and public support of childrearing: supplemental income; exemption from payment of social security premium			
(1997) Revision of child welfare law: satisfactory daycare centers for working mothers.		(1996) Shift of the population policy from the pop. growth control to the pop. quality and welfare policy.	
(1997, Dec.) New Angel	(1998) Grant of \$40,000 to singles when they		

Japan	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan
Plan: Improve gender equity and working condition	marry		
(2000) Amendment of Childcare Leave Law and Child Allowance Law: Pay 40% of wage during leave. Child allowance is expanded (from under 3) to all preschoolers.	(2000) Introduction of "the baby bonus" scheme. Increase in maternity leave (12 weeks) and introduction of paternity leave of three days. Public Education Committee on Family; Work Life Unit.		
(2003) Next Generation Law: Requires local governments and large companies to submit their own programs to foster new generations.	(2003) Feedback and advice on policy reviews and new programs.	(February 2004) Established the Presidential Advisory Committee on Ageing and Future Society for mapping up future policy directions and strategies.	
(2004) Expansion of child allowance to the third	(2004) Enhanced baby bonus and maternity benefits. National Population Committee is set up. Work-Life	(May 2005) The Basic Law on Low Fertility and Aged Society.	(2004) Population Policy Panning encompassing declining fertility, population ageing,



Japan	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan
<p>grade. (2004, Dec.) Support Plan for Parents and Children (New-New Angel Plan): Emphasis on the role of local government and companies in providing childcare support and improving gender equity.</p>	<p>Works! Fund to provide financial support to businesses to develop and implement family-friendly initiatives. Five-day work week. (2005) More family friendly benefits. Baby bonus adjusted for flexibility. Edusave top up.</p>		<p>feminists' concerns, environmental concerns. National childcare system, no fertility target, no financial assistance that directly subsidize women's childbearing behavior.</p>
<p>(2006) Child Allowance was expanded to sixth grade; Support Plan for Mothers' Reentry to Labor Market. (2006, June) New Policy to Cope with Low Fertility: Additional cash benefit for children under two; One time cash payment at birth; Family Day; Family</p>	<p>(2006) National Family Council established. Three-prong approach to tackle population problem.</p>	<p>(June 2006) The Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy. (August 2006) Implemented the Comprehensive Plan for Ageing Society and Population for the period 2006~2010, which includes promotion of environment favorable to childbearing and childrearing.</p>	<p>(2006) Revision of 1992 guideline: population quality, population distribution, population education, health education, improving social conditions which would be in favor of childbearing and childrearing, protection of children's rights.</p>

Japan	Singapore	South Korea	Taiwan
Week (2007, Apr.) Additional benefit of child allowance.	(2007) Adjustment mad to Work-Life Works! Fund		(2007) Specific policy measures recommended by research team: childcare; maternal/parental leave; financial support for families with dependent children; friendly occupational environment for childbearing workers; further improvement of reproductive health care system; enhance children's right; improve marriage opportunities and value of children as public goods.
(Plan) increase the cash benefit during the childcare leave from 40% to 50% of wage.			

## 2. Nuptiality and Fertility Declines in Japan

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Japan has been suffering from long term fertility decline since the 1970s. Such low fertility was caused by nuptiality decline as well as by the decline in marital fertility. Although decomposition analyses using age-specific marital fertility rates assert that fertility decline was solely caused by nuptiality decline, there is a serious deficit in the method. More sophisticated methods have revealed that both nuptiality and marital fertility contributed to fertility decline, though their relative importance varies over time.

Today, lower fertility can be found in countries with more robust marriage institute, stronger family ties and lower gender equity. Policy measures to cope with low fertility attempt to socialize childrearing, to improve the compatibility between work and the family, and to achieve gender equity. Problem arises when marriage is concerned. Although encouraging extramarital births cannot be accepted, a governmental effort to raise nuptiality seems invalid because it does not match the long term trend in the developed world. A policy measure that attempts to overturn the existing trend would be less effective than that attempt to promote the ongoing trends.

### 1. Introduction

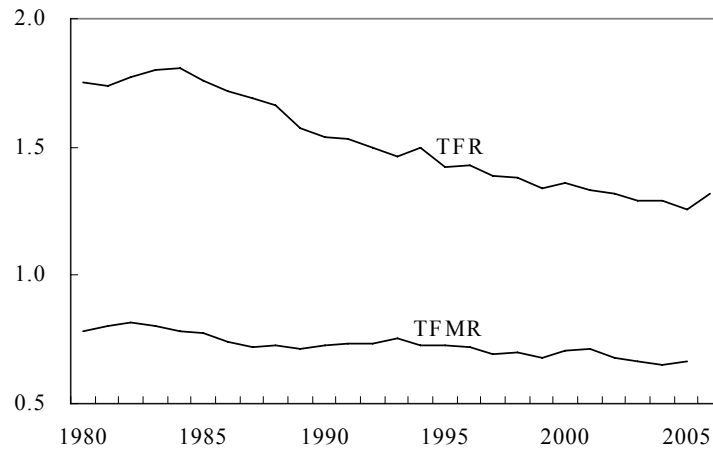
Japan has been suffering from a long term fertility decline far below the replacement level. As the result, the population of Japan is experiencing

rapid population aging and is faced with long lasting population decline. The latest population projection for Japan conducted by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research in December, 2006 revealed that the proportion of the elderly will rise sharply from 20.2% to 40.5% and that the total population will decline rapidly from 127.8 million to 89.9 million in 50 years. It is thought that such demographic changes would cause many serious problems including a crisis of public pension system, labor shortages, economic recession, and loss of societal vitality.

This paper firstly examines the role of nuptiality decline in fertility decline in Japan. Although decomposition analyses using age-specific marital fertility rates assert that fertility decline was solely caused by nuptiality decline, there is a serious deficit in the method. More sophisticated methods have revealed that both nuptiality and marital fertility contributed to fertility decline, though their relative importance varies over time.

Then, the paper discusses validity and efficiency of policy option to raise nuptiality. Although it is apparent that the prevalence of extramarital births is an important factor that divides moderately low and lowest-low fertility, stimulating extramarital births cannot be an acceptable political goal. Thus, the difference between Japan and other developed countries due to extramarital births is beyond the family policy. However, a governmental effort to raise nuptiality seems invalid because such an effort does not match the long term trend in the developed world. Even if a policy effort can delay nuptiality decline or can make temporary rise, there is no reason to expect continuous reverse in nuptiality toward the level that assures moderately low fertility. Thus, policy measures that attempt to overturn the existing trend would be less effective than that attempt to promote such ongoing trends as gender equity, compatibility between work and the family, and public support for childrearing.

Figure1. TFR and TFMR of Japanes Women



## 2. The Role of Nuptiality

Extramarital births are rare in Japan, accounting for only 2.03% of all births in 2005. Thus, it is safe to assume that practically all the births in Japan occur for married couples, although recently many couples get married after pregnancy. The absence of extramarital births implies that nuptiality decline has played a significant role in fertility decline, though its role may not be exclusive. Figure 1 shows the TFR (Total Fertility Rate) and female TFMR (Total First Marriage Rate) in Japan. While the TFR is an estimate of the expected number of children of a synthetic cohort without death, the TFMR is an estimate of the proportion ever married of such a cohort. While the TFR dropped by 28% between 1980 and 2005, TFMR fell only by 15%. Thanks to the economic recovery of Japan, both the TFR and TFMR showed increment very recently. While the TFMR rose by 1.9% between 2004 and 2005, the TFR jumped by 4.8% between 2005 and 2006.

These facts imply that nuptiality change induced fertility change but not

in its entity. Thus, the assertion that 100% of recent fertility decline can be attributed to nuptiality decline is suspicious. Such an assertion was made in studies using AMFRs (Age-specific Marital Fertility Rates) until the mid 1990s in Japan (Atoh, 1992, p.51; Kono, 1995, pp.67~71; Tsuya and Mason, 1995, pp.147~148; NIPSSR, 1997, p.10). However, the result is not reliable because of the serious deficiency in AMFRs (Hirosima, 2001; Kaneko, 2004).

Let  $x$  be the current age,  $a$  be the age at first marriage, and  $y = x - a$  be the marital duration. It is assumed that there is no divorce, remarriage or death during the childbearing age. Thus, the term "marriage" always means first marriage and there is no marital status other than "single" and "(currently) married". The ordinary age-specific fertility rate  $f(x)$  can be expressed as follows.

$$f(x) = \int_0^x n(a) m(a, x-a) da, \quad <2-1>$$

The denominator of AMFRs is the proportion married and is written  $N(x)$ .

$$N(x) = \int_0^x n(a) da. \quad <2-2>$$

The AMFR at age  $x$  is defined as the ratio of fertility to the proportion married.

$$AMFR(x) = \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} = \frac{\int_0^x n(a) m(a, x-a) da}{\int_0^x n(a) da}. \quad <2-2>$$

As far as the marital fertility is a function of marriage duration, dividing with  $N(x)$  does not help. The ratio is theoretically valid only in the pre-industrial setting where no intentional birth control is made and the marital fertility is a function of age. If  $m(a,x-a)$  in (3) is replaced with  $m(x)$ ,

$$AMFR(x) = \frac{\int_0^x n(a)m(x) da}{\int_0^x n(a) da} = \frac{m(x) \int_0^x n(a) da}{\int_0^x n(a) da} = m(x). \quad <2-3>$$

In this case, the age-specific fertility rate is the product of the proportion married and marital fertility rate. However, when the marital fertility is a function of marriage duration as well as of the age at marriage, the ratio is not meaningful.

Decomposition analysis does not always fail, even though AMFRs are not theoretically valid. In the following,  $\Delta TFR$  is the total change,  $\Delta TFR_n$  is the change due to the marriage behavior, and  $\Delta TFR_m$  is that due to the childbearing behavior of a married couple. It can be shown that age-shift in marriage causes a serious problem that other types of changes do not suffer.

$$\Delta TFR = TFR_2 - TFR_1 = \int_0^\infty \{f_2(x) - f_1(x)\} dx, \quad <2-5a>$$

$$\Delta TFR_n = \int_0^\infty \{N_2(x) - N_1(x)\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \left\{ \frac{f_2(x)}{N_2(x)} + \frac{f_1(x)}{N_1(x)} \right\} dx, \quad <2-5b>$$

$$\Delta TFR_m = \int_0^\infty \left\{ \frac{f_2(x)}{N_2(x)} - \frac{f_1(x)}{N_1(x)} \right\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \{N_2(x) + N_1(x)\} dx. \quad <2-5c>$$

Case 1. Age-neutral nuptiality change: Assume that all the age-specific marriage rates are multiplied with a constant  $c$ . Thus,  $n(a)$  turns to be  $cn(a)$ . By (2-1) and (2-2), new age-specific fertility rate and the proportion married will be  $cf(a)$  and  $cN(a)$ , respectively. Then, there is no change in age-specific marital fertility rates. The decomposition shows correctly that the nuptiality change caused the fertility change in its entity.

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta TFR_n &= \int_0^\infty \{cN(x) - N(x)\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \left\{ \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} + \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} \right\} dx \\ &= (c-1) \int_a^b f(x) dx = TFR_1 - TFR_2, \\ \Delta TFR_m &= \int_0^\infty \left\{ \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} - \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} \right\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \{cN(x) + N(x)\} dx = 0.\end{aligned}$$

Case 2. Duration-neutral marital fertility change: Assume that all the marital fertility rates are multiplied with a constant  $c$ . Thus,  $m(a,y)$  is replaced with  $cm(a,y)$ . By (2-1), new age-specific fertility rate will be  $cf(x)$ . There is no change in the proportion married. Then, age-specific marital fertility rates will be multiplied with  $c$ . The decomposition shows correctly that the marital fertility change caused the fertility change in its entity.

$$\Delta TFR_n = \int_0^\infty \{N(x) - N(x)\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \left\{ c \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} + \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} \right\} dx = 0,$$



$$\begin{aligned}\Delta TFR_m &= \int_0^{\infty} \left\{ c \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} - \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} \right\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \{N(x) + N(x)\} dx \\ &= (c-1) \int_0^{\infty} f(x) dx = TFR_1 - TFR_2.\end{aligned}$$

Case 3. Tempo change in marital fertility: Assume that marital fertility rates are uniformly shifted by  $h$ . Thus,  $m(a,y)$  becomes  $m(a,y-h)$  and there is no birth for  $h$  years after marriage. By (2-1), new age-specific fertility rate will also be shifted by  $h$ . There is no change in the TFR, because the whole fertility schedule is shifted while the quantum is kept constant. The decomposition shows correctly that both effects are null.

$$\Delta TFR_n = \int_0^{\infty} \{N(x) - N(x)\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \left\{ \frac{f(x-h)}{N(x)} + \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} \right\} dx = 0,$$

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta TFR_m &= \int_0^{\infty} \left\{ \frac{f(x-h)}{N(x)} - \frac{f(x)}{N(x)} \right\} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \{N(x) + N(x)\} dx \\ &= \int_0^{\infty} f(x-h) dx - \int_0^{\infty} f(x) dx = 0.\end{aligned}$$

Case 4. Tempo change in marriage: Unfortunately, age-shift in marriage does not produce such a nice result even when the change is an ideal shift without a change in quantum. Assume that age-specific marriage rates are uniformly shifted by  $h$ . Thus,  $n(a)$  is replaced by  $n(a-h)$ . New age-specific fertility rate and the proportion married are,

$$f_2(x) = \int_0^x n(a-h) m(a, x-a) da,$$

$$N_2(x) = \int_0^x n(a-h) da = \int_0^{x-h} n(a) da = N(x-h).$$

Since there is no change in marital fertility,  $\Delta FR_m$  should be zero. However, such a correct result can rarely be obtained. Thus, the use of AMFRs should be avoided whenever there is a change in the timing of marriage.

$$\Delta TFR_m = \frac{1}{2} \Delta TFR + \frac{1}{2} \left\{ \int_0^\infty n(a-h) M^+(a) da - \int_\alpha^{\beta+h} n(a) M^-(a) da \right\}$$

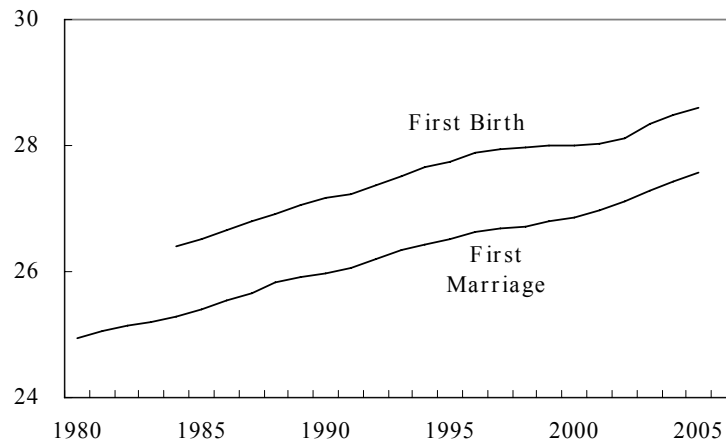
where,

$$M^+(a) = \int_0^\infty \frac{N(x)}{N(x-h)} m(a, x-a) dx,$$

$$M^-(a) = \int_0^\infty \frac{N(x-h)}{N(x)} m(a, x-a) dx.$$

Figure 2 shows that the mean age at first marriage of Japanese women has been rising, which implies that the decomposition using AMFRs is likely to fail. The figure also displays the mean age at first birth. Again, fertility change is not simply a copy of nuptiality change. The mean age at first birth slowed down around 2000 independently of the timing of marriage, causing a reduction in the first birth interval.

Figure2. The Mean Age at First Marriage and First Birth of Japanese Women



More sophisticated methods than that depends on AMFRs have been showing that nuptiality decline does not explain fertility decline in its entity. Hiroshima (1999; 2000) used the proportion of eventually married women and the complete average number of children among married women to decompose the effects of nuptiality and marital fertility. Kaneko (2004) adjusted AMFR by shifting age-specific fertility rates  $f(x)$  in accordance with the delay in marriage. Iwasawa (2002) introduced the eventual average number of children by age at marriage to decompose the decline in cohort cumulative fertility. Suzuki (2005) applied the simplified method of Iwasawa to Japan and the Republic of Korea, assuming that marital fertility does not depends on the age at marriage but solely on the marriage duration. Ogawa (2006) calculated PPPRs (Period Parity Progression Ratios) to decompose fertility decline by parity.

Table 1 summarizes results of these studies. As a whole, nuptiality decline explains between 35% and 75% of the TFR decline, depending on

the period in question. Thus, it is safe to say that both nuptiality and marital fertility have contributed to the recent fertility decline in Japan, and their relative importance varies over time.

Table1. Contribution of Nuptiality in Fertility Decline

Literature	Period	Contribution of Nuptiality
Hirosima (1999)	1974~1997	40%
Hirosima (2000)	1970~2000	70%
Iwasawa (2002)	1970~2000	70%
Kaneko (2004)	1980~2000	74%
Suzuki (2005)	1990~2002	37%
Ogawa (2006)	1972~2000	52%

### 3. Pronatal Measures of the Central Government

The Japanese government was surprised by the historically low TFR of 1.57 in 1989 and started an inter-ministry meeting to invent measures to cope with the declining fertility in 1990. The amount of child allowance was raised in 1991, while the period of payment was shortened to keep the budget. The Childcare Leave Law (formally "Law Concerning the Welfare of Workers Who Take Care of Children or Other Family Members Including Child Care and Family Care Leave") was established in May 1991 and enforced in April 1992. In December 1994, the government publicized the Angel Plan for the period between 1994 and 1999. The program emphasized the compatibility between work and childcare and public support of childrearing. As a part of this program, amendments to the Childcare Leave Law were made to support income and exempt from payment of social security premium in 1994. In 1997, a major reformation was made to the Child Welfare Law to

provide with satisfactory daycare services for working mothers.

In December 1999, the government announced the New Angel Plan for the period between 1999 and 2004. This document asserted the need to improve the gender equity and working condition. In May 2000, amendments to the Childcare Leave Law and the Child Allowance Law determined that 40% of wage should be paid during the leave. Child allowance was expanded from less than three years old defined in the 1991 revision to preschoolers. The Next Generation Law, enacted in July 2003, required local governments and large companies to submit their own programs to foster new generations. At the same time, the Law for Measures to Cope with Decreasing Children Society ordered the Cabinet Office to prepare new measures to prevent the rapid fertility decline. An expansion of child allowance to the third grade of primary school was enforced in April 2004.

In December 2004, the government declared the Support Plan for Parents and Children (New-New Angel Plan) for the period between 2004 and 2009. The document emphasized the role of local government and companies in providing with childcare supports and improving gender equity. In addition, the document pointed out the importance of economic independence of the youth. From the fiscal year of 2006, the child allowance was expanded until the sixth grade of the primary school. In addition, the Support Plan for Mothers' Reentry to Labor Market started. The plan includes such measures as starting a course for reentering mothers at vocational schools, helping a mother who attempts to start business, and running "Mothers' Hello Works" for job seeking mothers.

In June, 2006, the government announced the New Policy to Cope with Low Fertility, including additional cash benefit in child allowance for children under two years old, improving payment procedure of one time cash benefit at birth, supporting the cost of medical check during pregnancy,

establishing "Family Day" and "Family Week," etc. The additional benefit of child allowance for young children started in April, 2007. The Ministry of Health plans to increase the cash benefit during the childcare leave from 40% to 50% of the wage.

### 3.1. Financial Supports

In Japan, financial supports for childbearing and childrearing are provided through the one time cash benefit at birth (baby bonus), child allowance and tax relief. Since October 2006, the baby bonus was raised from 300,000 yen to 350,000 yen. The child allowance system provides with 10,000 yen per month for the first three years and 5,000 yen until the graduation of primary school of the first and second children. For the third and subsequent children, 10,000 yen per month is paid until the child graduate primary school. Japan's child allowance is means-tested. It is estimated that approximately 15% of children were eliminated because of the high income of their parents in 2003 (Suzuki, 2006, p.10).

Under the current taxation system, a parent with a dependent child less than age 16 is exempted 380,000 yen from income tax and 330,000 yen from local taxes. Thus, a couple can receive  $350,000 + 10,000 \times 12 = 470,000$  for the first year after the childbirth. Assuming that tax rates for an average parent are 20% for income tax and 10% for local taxes,  $380,000 \times 0.2 + 330,000 \times 0.1 = 109,000$  yen can be saved from the taxes. As a whole, the cash benefit for the first year after having a child amounts 579,000 yen.

Because of the small income elasticity of fertility, however, such financial supports in Japan cannot have an impressive effect. As shown in Table 2, the fertility function by Yamagami (1999) implies that an increase in husband's annual income by 10,000 yen will raise the number of births by

0.00244. Then, an increase by 579,000 yen will raise the number by 0.141. The OLS model by Oyama (2004) implies that an increase in husband's monthly income by 10,000 yen will raise the number of births by 0.01. Then, an increase by  $579,000 / 12 = 48,250$  yen will raise the number by 0.048. The OLS model by Morita (2006) shows that the income elasticity of fertility is 0.043. Since the average income of husband in the data she analyzed was 432,000 yen per month, an increase by annual amount of 579,000 yen implies an increase by 11.1%. Such an increase will raise fertility by 0.48%. If we rely on more recent results by Oyama (2004) and Morita (2006), the current financial supports in Japan are very unlikely to contribute raising the TFR by 0.1.

Table 2. Effect of the Current Financial Supports on the Number of Births

Literature	Yamagami (1999)	Oyama (2004)	Morita (2006)
Definition of husband's income	10 thousand yen/ year	10 thousand yen/ month	(standardized)
Partial regression coefficient	0.00244	0.01	0.043
Expected Change in Fertility	0.141 person	0.048 person	0.48%

### 3.2. Childcare Leave

Childcare leave is available for a male or female worker with an infant until the first birthday. A worker who worked for more than a year before the leave can receive 50% of his/her wage. Under the current system, 30%

is paid monthly during the leave and 20% is paid after returning to work. Although the leave is basically allowed until the first birthday of a child, public servants can leave until the third birthday. Other workers can prolong the leave for six months if a daycare center is not available. However, no cash benefit is paid in either case for the prolonged period.

According to the Basic Survey of Employment Management of Women in 2003, 73.1% of female workers who gave birth in fiscal year 2002 took childcare leave. However, many women retire from work before childbearing and are not included in the denominator (Atoh, 2005, p.46). A female worker who does not plan to come back to her job is also excluded. There were 118,339 cases that received cash benefit during childcare leave in 2005 (NIPSSR, 2005, p.381). This was only 11.1% of the number of annual births.

There are several studies that evaluate the effect of childcare leave on fertility in Japan. Table 3 shows partial regression coefficients in four studies. Since each coefficient  $b$  is supposed to show a log-odds ratio of fertility between a female who can take childcare leave and one who cannot,  $\exp(b)$  gives a odds ratio. Because Shigeno and Matsuura (2003) and Yamaguchi (2005) analyzed fertility of a five-year period,  $\exp(b/5)$  is shown in the table. While Suruga and Nishimoto (2002) used Basic Survey of Employment Management of Women by the former Ministry of Labour, other three studies used Japanese Panel Survey on Consumers by the Institute for Research on Household Economic. Thus, the difference in magnitude seems to come from the difference in data source.

If we express the average fertility rate of a female who cannot take childcare leave with  $f_0$  and that of one who can take with  $f_1$ , the odds ratio is;

$$\exp(b) = \frac{f_1}{1 - f_1} \bigg/ \frac{f_0}{1 - f_0}.$$



If the proportion of women who can take childcare leave is expressed as  $p$ , then the TFR can be written as follows.

$$TFR = 35 \{(1 - p)f_0 + pf_1\}.$$

The multiplier 35 comes from the length of reproductive period. The expressions above give the following quadratic equation of  $f_0$ .

$$(1 - p)(1 - e^{-b})f_0^2 + \{p + (1 - p)e^{-b} - \frac{TFR}{35}(1 - e^{-b})\}f_0 - \frac{TFR}{35}e^{-b} = 0.$$

Though the expression is a little messy, it is possible to determine the value of  $f_0$  if one gives an adequate value for each parameter. In Table 3, the values in 2005 namely 1.29 for the TFR and 0.1114 for  $p$  were applied. Once the values of  $f_0$  and  $f_1$  are determined, we can simulate the effect of rise in  $p$ , the proportion of women who take childcare leave. The hypothetical proportion that is required to raise the TFR by 0.1 is also shown in Table 3. If the reality is close to the analysis by Suruga and Nishimoto, it is impossible to elevate the TFR by 0.1 with the use of childcare leave. Even if we rely on other three studies, a dramatic improvement from 11.1% to more than 45% is required. It would be difficult to make such an advance within a decade or two.

Table3. Effect of Childcare Leave

Literature	Suruga and Nishimoto (2002)	Shigeno and Matsuura (2003)	Yamaguchi (2005)	Suruga and Chang (2003)
$b$	0.0231	0.1244	0.1886	0.22298
$\exp(b)$	1.0234	1.1325*	1.2076*	1.2498
Fertility without leave ( $f_0$ )	0.0359	0.0355	0.0352	0.0351
Fertility with leave ( $f_1$ )	0.0367	0.0400	0.0422	0.0434
Proportion of leave takers ( $p$ )	0.1114	0.1114	0.1114	0.1114
Required $p$ to raise TFR by 0.1	--	0.7443	0.5195	0.4524

\*  $\exp(b/5)$

### 3.3. Childcare Services

The Japanese government has been paying efforts to improve the compatibility between the family and work by providing with childcare services. As the result, the enrollment of young children under age two has been growing steadily. There were 640,293 children under age two (18.8% of the population) in daycare center in April 2006. Since the proportion was 13.4% in 1998, there was an increase by 5.4 percentage points in eight years. However, the figure is far below Northern European countries that exceeds 40%. It also seems that the compatibility between the family and work in Japan is much poorer than that in these countries.

The simplest measure of compatibility between wife's work and childbearing would be the proportion of working mothers among all women. This measure is the key to understanding the micro-macro paradox that the international comparison demonstrates the positive correlation between fertility and mother's work (Engelhardt and Prskawetz, 2005, pp.2~3; Billari and Kohler, 2002, pp.20~21; Atoh, 2000, p.202) while micro data analyses have

been revealing the negative impact of female labor force participation on fertility (Asami et al., 2000; Oi, 2004; Oyama, 2004; Sasai, 1998; Shichijo and Nishimoto, 2003; Tsuya, 1999; Fukuda, 2004; Fujino 2002; Yashiro, 2000; Yamagami, 1999; Yamaguchi, 2005). Let  $g$  be the proportion of working mothers,  $m$  be that of all mothers, and  $w$  be that of all workers. Then, a two by two contingency table can be written as follows;

	Not Mother	Mother	
Not Worker	$1 - w - m + g$	$m - g$	$1 - w$
Worker	$w - g$	$g$	$w$
	$1 - m$	$m$	$1$

For all four cells to be positive, the following condition is necessary in addition to  $0 < g < m$  and  $0 < g < w$ .

$$1 - w - m + g > 0.$$

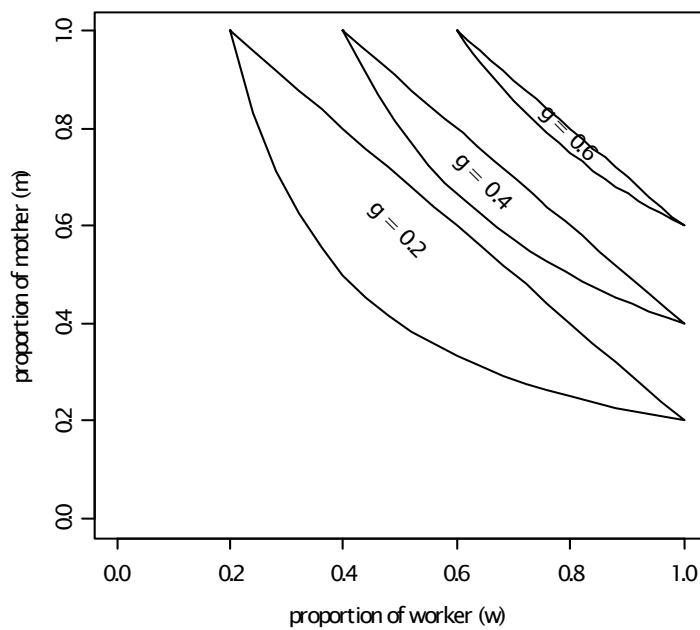
For the work status and presence of a child to be negatively correlated,  $g$  must be smaller than the expected value of the independence model.

$$g < w m.$$

If we coordinate the proportion of workers ( $w$ ) on the horizontal axis and that of mothers ( $m$ ) on the vertical axis, the area enclosed by a straight line and a hyperbola simultaneously satisfies two conditions above. Figure 3 shows such areas for  $g = 0.2, 0.4$  and  $0.6$ . If we consider  $g$  to be a measure of compatibility, the area moves in the upper-right direction as the compatibility is improved. Thus, the paradoxical situation can be understood

as a result of an increasing compatibility. When women's work and childrearing was less compatible, all the countries were located at lower-left region of the graph. However, some countries succeeded in improving the compatibility and moved to upper-right direction. In this way, the positive correlation appeared at the macro level while the negative correlation is sustained at the micro level.

Figure3. Area with Negative correlation for Defferent  $g$



One implication of Figure 3 is that the higher the compatibility, the narrower the area in which the micro-macro paradox holds. Then, it is expected that a country with high compatibility may easily escape from the

area and the micro level correlation may turn to be positive. This expectation is materialized in Sweden where recent micro level analyses showed the positive impact of women's works on fertility (Hoorens, et al., 2005, pp.226~227). However, Figure 3 suggests that in a country with low compatibility such as Japan, there is a wide room of fertility decline.

In Japan, however, the governmental efforts have not been successful in improving the compatibility. Table 4 shows contingency tables of work status and the presence of a child of married women aged 30~34. This age group is the bottom of the M-shaped labor force participation pattern, implying the compatibility is most crucial. The proportion of working mothers (g) decreased slightly from 31.4% in 1997 to 30.2% in 2004 while labor force participation (w) and fertility (m) showed no significant changes. This implies that the compatibility in Japan has not been improved but possibly deteriorated. Thus, a question arises if public daycare services have any impact on the compatibility.

Table4. Labor Force Participation and Motherhood of Married Women Aged 30~34(%)

1997		Not Mother	Mother	
	Not Worker	9.6	47.1	
Worker	11.9	31.4	43.3	
	21.6	78.4	100.0	

2004		Not Mother	Mother	
	Not Worker	8.2	48.7	
Worker	12.9	30.2	43.1	
	21.2	78.8	100.0	

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Employment Status Survey.

Some analyses of micro data in Japan identified the effect of childcare services on the work status of wives. For example, Oishi (2003) found that the cost of daycare service has negative impact on a wife's labor force participation. However, recent multivariate analyses did not identify a significant effect of childcare service on fertility. Shigeno and Ohkusa (1999) included such indices as waiting list for daycare service, availability of infant care and night-time care into their model but none of them had significant effect on recent birth. Shigeno and Matsuura (2003) included respondent's substantive evaluation for local childcare service into their fertility function but its t value was 1.19. A statistically significant result was that in a bivariate analysis and was not a net effect (Shigeno, 2006, p.109). Thus, even if there is a net effect of governmental effort for childcare service, its magnitude seems to be too small to be verified clearly.

#### 4. Lowest-Low Fertility in Comparative Perspective

##### 4.1. Spread of Lowest-Low Fertility in Europe and Asia

Lowest-low fertility appeared in Europe during the 1990s causing a drastic change in the demographic map of the region. Forerunners of fertility decline by the 1980s were characterized by developed capitalist market system, high female labor force participation, and the emergence of postmodern behaviors such as cohabitation and extramarital births. However, while these forerunners stayed at moderately low fertility, late comers showed unexpected declines to lowest-low fertility. This change caused not only a reverse in the geographic pattern of European fertility but also that in the correlation with fertility of the female labor force participation rate, the total first marriage rate, and the proportion of extramarital births (Kohler et al., 2002, pp.643~644).

Table 5 lists up the countries having lowest-low fertility since 2000. While Kohler and his coauthors (2002) listed 14 countries in 1999, there are 20 countries on this new list. Small countries and areas such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Luxemburg, Andorra, and San Marino were excluded. The Republic of Korea arrived at the threshold of 1.3 in 2001, followed by Japan and Taiwan in 2003. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Lithuania joined the group after 2000. On the other hand, Estonia, Armenia and Russia escaped from lowest-low fertility. Belarus was excluded from the table because of the lack of recent data.

Table5. Lowest–Low Fertility after 2000

Region	Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Eastern Asia	Japan	1.36	1.33	1.32	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.32</b>
	Republic of Korea	1.47	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>1.13</b>
	Taiwan	1.68	1.40	1.34	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.12</b>
Southern Europe	Bosnia and Herzegovina	<b>1.28</b>	1.44	<b>1.23</b>				
	Greece	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.27</b>				
	Italy	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.29</b>			
	Slovenia	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.20</b>			
	Spain	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.30</b>			
Eastern Europe	Bulgaria	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.23</b>			
	Czech Republic	<b>1.14</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.18</b>			
	Hungary	1.32	1.31	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.28</b>			
	Poland	1.34	<b>1.29</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.22</b>			
	Romania	1.31	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.27</b>			
	Slovak Republic	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.20</b>			
Former USSR	Armenia	<b>1.11</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>1.21</b>	1.35			
	Latvia	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.29</b>			
	Lithuania	1.39	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.26</b>			
	Moldova	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.22</b>			
	Russian Federation	<b>1.21</b>	<b>1.25</b>	1.32	1.32			
	Ukraine	<b>1.09</b>		<b>1.13</b>	<b>1.17</b>			

(Source) Japan: Statistics and Information Dpt, MHLW  
Korea: Korea National Statistics Office  
Taiwan: Taiwan Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics  
Europe: Council of Europe, Recent Demographic Development in Europe 2003&2004

#### 4.2. Cultural Deterministic View on Fertility

There is a cultural divide between moderately low fertility and lowest-low fertility. As suggested in Table 5, all Western and Northern European countries and English-speaking countries have successfully avoided lowest-low fertility. McDonald (2005) chose the line of 1.5 to divide moderately low fertility and very low fertility. In his cultural



divide, all Nordic countries, all English-speaking countries, and all French and Dutch speaking Western European countries have TFR of 1.5 or higher. The countries with very low fertility are all advanced Eastern Asian countries, all Southern European countries and all German-speaking Western European countries. While emphasizing the role of policy intervention, McDonald suggested that this divide has deep historical roots and is difficult to change. Atoh (2005:51~52) pointed out the influence of traditional values as one of factors beyond family policy.

When lowest-low fertility was a phenomenon within Europe, it was natural to look for features common in lowest-low fertility countries. However, once lowest-low fertility has spread out from Europe, the appropriateness of this attempt is questionable. Because lowest-low fertility has appeared in very different cultural settings in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia, the phenomenon seems to be a natural response to socioeconomic changes in the postmaterial era. In this respect, those countries that have avoided lowest-low fertility should be seen as exceptional and requiring explanation.

Reher (1998) asserted that the contrast between weak family ties in Western and Northern Europe and strong family ties in Southern Europe has deep historical roots. In contrast to the Oriental family system that affected Southern Europe, the "Occidental" structure was based on the conjugal pair and women's position was high in the northern part of the continent. The Reformation changed the meaning of marriage from a sacrament to a civil contract, enhanced women's position further, lowered parental authority, and promoted individualism (Reher, 1998:213~214). Thus, gender equity and compatibility between wife's work and childcare in today's moderately low fertility countries have long historical background. This is why these countries developed non-parental childcare activities by baby sitters, tutors, childcare workers and other professionals. In contrast, countries with strong family ties

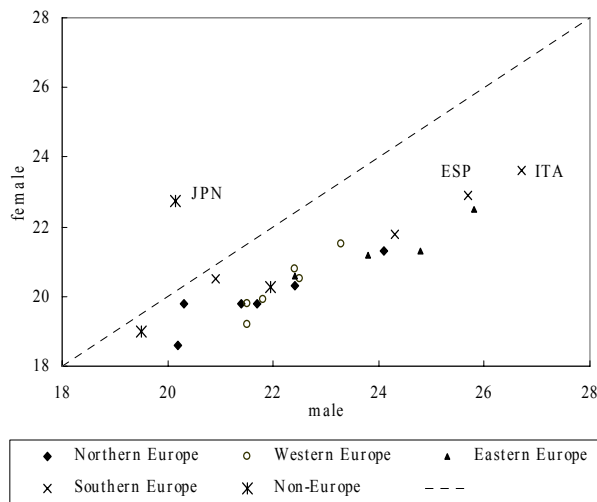
are still clinging to maternal cares. According to the Third National Family Survey in 2003 by NIPSSR, 82.9% of Japanese wives agreed that "A mother should not work but take care of her child for three years after the birth". Such an emphasis on mother's supreme role could be the factor that intercepts the effect of childcare service on fertility. According to Retherford and Ogawa (2006, p.36), Japan's low enrollment rate of young children in day-care centers is not because of the short supply of day-care service but because of mothers' attitude that "I want to raise my children on my own."

The domestic gender equity is the key issue in very low or lowest-low fertility. McDonald (2002, p.437) asserted that fertility falls to very low levels when gender equity rises in individual-oriented institutions while remaining low in family-oriented institutions. Japanese husbands spend considerably shorter time in housework than the US husbands (Tsuya and Bumpass, 2004) or Scandinavian husbands (Tsuya, 2003, p.63). There is a problem of long working hours in its background and governmental efforts to shorten working hours have not been successful except for manufacturing industry (Retherford and Ogawa, 2006, p.37). It is uncertain, however, whether Japanese husbands will be as cooperative as Western husbands even when the working condition is improved. The problem that Italian husbands are not accustomed to housework and childcare because of the traditional gender role in their family of orientation (Caldwell, 2006, p.360) may apply to husbands in Eastern Asia. Since the gender equity in Northern and Western Europe has such a deep root, it would be difficult for other cultural containers to catch up with.

Another prominent feature of Western-Northern Europe and its descendents is early home-leaving. In these countries in the pre-industrial era, young men and women left the parental home before marriage to work as servants (Reher, 1998; Wall, 1999). The tradition of the majority of men and

women leaving home before marriage still remains today (Billari et al., 2001:18~19). Premarital home-leaving is supposed to promote union formation through both consensual union and formal marriage, while Southern European adolescents are suffering from postponement syndrome, which discourages autonomy and decision making ability in their own lives (Dalla Zuanna, 2001; Livi-Bacci, 2001). As shown in Figure 4, Japan occupies a singular position in that men leave as early as Northern Europeans while women leave as late as Southern Europeans. However, since late leaving of either sex discourages union formation, Japan may suffer from the same problem as Southern Europeans.

Figure 4. Median Age at Home-Leaving of Cohorts Born around 1960

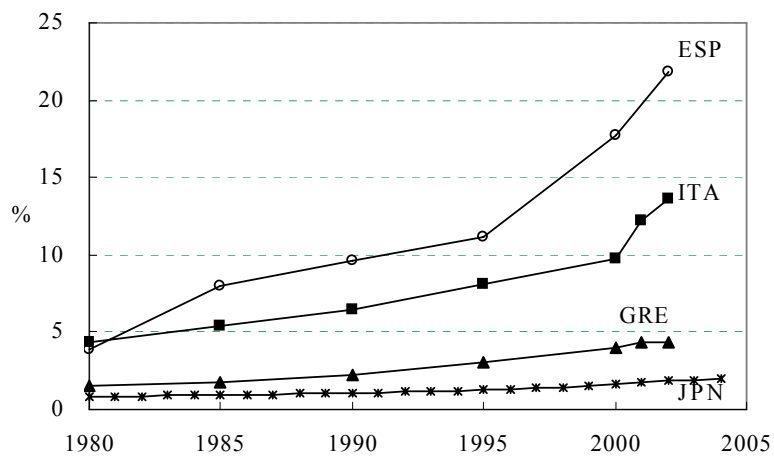


Source: Billari, et al. (2001), Goldscheider&Goldscheider (1994), Ravanera et al. (1995), Suzuki (2003)

Last but not least, a clear cultural divide in cohabitation and extramarital birth has been observed. These postmodern behaviors were once related to the fertility decline to below replacement level. Today, however, the low

frequency of such behaviors is a good predictor of lowest-low fertility. Japan is characterized by very robust marriage institution. As shown in Figure 5, the proportion of extramarital births in Japan has been extremely low even compared with lowest-low fertility countries in Southern Europe. The proportion in 2004 was 1.99%, which hardly changed from 0.80% in 1980. As long as the Japanese people cling to reproduction via marriage, it would be difficult to avoid postponement syndrome, cease overprotecting children, flatten continuously rising cost of children, and socialize childrearing.

Figure 5. Proportion of Extramarital Birth



Source: Council of Europe, NIPSSR

The explanation by the family pattern implies that very low or lowest-low fertility will keep spreading around the world. When a society arrives at a certain level of economic development, social forces such as increasing human investments, occupational insecurity and female labor force

participation will severely depress fertility. Because no society has such a unique family pattern as in Northern-Western Europe, fertility will go down to the extremely low level. This may happen in a decade or two in Southeastern Asia, Latin America, or coastal region of China.

## 5. Orientating Policy Intervention

Most of the developed countries except for the United States are suffering from below replacement fertility. It seems that an agreement is emerging that a well-developed country cannot reproduce itself (Caldwell, 2006, p.373). Even so, very low or lowest-low fertility is by no means acceptable. The governmental task for countries experiencing such fertility is to reduce the difference with Northern-Western Europe and English speaking countries and to secure moderately low fertility, if not the replacement level.

Japan has been adopting and extending policy measures to cope with low fertility. However, those efforts have not been successful in preventing fertility decline. As the quantitative analyses in Section 3 revealed, the effects of policy interventions are so weak that it is very difficult to raise the TFR by 0.1. The experience of Eastern European socialist countries in the 1960s and 1970s tells that the massive transfers, amounting around 10% of the national budget, could induce a significant fertility recovery (Caldwell, 2006, p.340). However, such a magnificent allocation of budget is definitely impossible in today's capitalist country under the new market economy. Especially, Japan has recently chosen a very neoliberalistic course aiming at a small government under the leadership of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001~2006). Thus, it is very unlikely that Japan can allocate budget for pronatal policy as large as France today, not the mention to Eastern Europe in the 1960s.

Even though an immediate effect cannot be expected, governments of extremely low fertility countries such as Japan should sustain pronatal policy to delay fertility decline and to narrow the difference with moderately low fertility countries. For a governmental effort to be successful in a very long run, it should match the direction of long term changes that have been taking place in the developed world. Although the difference in gender equity between different cultures has long historical root, efforts should be paid to improve the equity, especially within family. Gender education in school may change attitudes of young men and women gradually if it is not too radical. There should be a clear opposition against so called three-year-old myth that mother's work is harmful to the development of a very young child. Efforts must be sustained to improve the compatibility and family-friendliness at working place. Such institutions as maternity and childcare leave, flexibility in working condition, and childcare services are included in this area. A clear and simple message is required that society will support childrearing. Reduction in financial supports such as child allowance and baby bonus could have a serious negative impact on such a message.

Assuming that the long term trend of value changes is toward secularization and individualization, it is questionable that an approach emphasizing traditional family value can be successful in a long run. Until the 1980s, forerunners of fertility decline were found in Scandinavia, Benelux low countries, and German speaking central Europe and were characterized with postmodern behaviors such as cohabitation, extramarital births, divorce, one-person and female-headed households. The second demographic transition theory (van de Kaa, 1987) assumed that value changes of secularization and individualization are the main cause of fertility decline. However, the emergence of lowest-low fertility in the 1990s had a serious damage to this theory. Today, a demographic map of developed world shows a paradoxical

pattern that countries with robust system of marriage and the family tend to have lower fertility than countries with advanced secularization and individualization. It is interpreted that the traditional non-Western family pattern is less adoptive to social forces that depress fertility than Northern-Western European family pattern with weak family ties. Then, emphasizing or restoring the traditional family value is unlikely to induce fertility recovery to the moderately low level.

There is a widespread feeling that it is not the government's role to define the desirable type of family or individual lifestyles (Caldwell, 2006, p. 333). In Japan, a governmental campaign stating "A man who does not participate in childcare cannot be called a father" in 1999 caused more opposition than support under the condition of long working hours and family-unfriendly work environment. Japanese government is very careful recently not to be seen forceful and interfering individuals' autonomy. Although "Plans to Support Children and Childrearing (New-New Angel Plan)" announced in 2004 has chapter entitled "Understanding Value of Life and Role of the Family," the chapter is very brief and avoids stimulating those who stay single or childless.

The validity of policy measure aiming at increasing marriage is more difficult to evaluate. The intention is not as ridiculous as attempting to restore the conservative family values. However, the natural response to social forces in postmodern society seems to be decline in marriage and shift to extramarital births. As shown in Figure 5, the direction of change is apparent even though the tempo is extremely slow in Japan. Thus, an effort to raise nuptiality may not help convergence to Northern-European family pattern and to moderately low fertility. Though a government should not attempt to increase extramarital births by encouraging welfare mothers, a government also should not devote too much to an effort which effect is

questionable in a very long run. In fact, the central government of Japan has not attempted to encourage marriage. Such an attempt as helping match between single men and women is conducted only by local municipalities and private companies. According to newspapers, Hyogo prefecture started matchmaking service in 2006. An NPO group supporting arranged marriage was launched in Kyoto prefecture in 2007. The Mizuho Financial Group has been operating a dating service for their employees (Retheford and Ogawa, 2006, p.43).

## 6. Conclusion

If the explanation by the family pattern is correct, it will take long time for countries with extremely low fertility to resume moderately low fertility. Although gender equity and compatibility between work and the family are widely accepted political goals, it would be difficult to catch up Western-Northern Europe that has long historical background. It is questionable if a consensus can be made that a government should promote early home-leaving and union formation of young people. A government definitely should not induce extramarital births by encouraging welfare mothers. Thus, no positive intervention can be made to some aspects of the difference. Still, the direction of effective intervention seems to be apparent. An attempt to reverse the global family change and to restore the old family pattern would fail in a long run.



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### **3. From Population Control to Population Growth – A Case Study of Family Policies and Fertility Trends in Singapore**

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Singapore has one of the lowest birth rates in Asia. With a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.25, it ranks below that of Taiwan and Japan and is slightly above that of South Korea and Hong Kong. The demographic trends of this little nation state are dramatic. The TFR went from 4.7 in 1965 to 1.25 in 2006. In a mere period of 40 some years, the population policies went from birth control to pro-fertility. Much of this is attributed to economic development, structure changes, and social changes. As the demands of the demographic patterns shift, the Singapore government also shifted the focus of the state's family policies. This paper will present an overview of the developments of state-sponsored family policies, and a critical discourse on the impact of such policies on fertility rate. In addition, social and cultural barriers to family formation in the modern city state will be highlighted, and findings from a recently concluded project on fertility concerns will be shared. Of particular concern is the contradictions in ideologies relating to family, work, and gender roles. The author posits that much of the optimism towards an upward trend in TFR will be dependent on how well the state is able to resolve these contradictions.

#### **1. Introduction**

Singapore is a city state with a total population of about 4.5 million and

a resident population of about 3.6 million (Department of Statistics, 2006). The current imagery of Singapore as a cosmopolitan multicultural society at the forefront of technological advancements and international commerce is a stark contrast to the sleepy fishing village it once was pre-1960s. Yet, in the 40 years or so since the city state gained independence, the transformation from developing to developed status has had serious implications, particularly on the family. In this short period, the total fertility rate fell from 4.7 in 1965 (the year of independence) to 1.26 in 2006 (Department of Statistics 2002). It is now one of the fastest ageing societies in the world (after Macau, Japan and South Korea), and for a nation that is totally dependent on manpower as its main resource, population concerns is one of the most serious issues that state faces.

From a sociological perspective, it is significant to study the demographic trends of Singapore. First, as it is a small nation, implications of state policies on fertility can be monitored with relative ease. Second, as a multicultural society housing four main ethnic groups (75.2% Chinese, 13.6% Malay, 8.8% Indians, and 2.4% of other ethnic identities), it is interesting to see how cultural factors intertwine with other developments to effect family life. Of particular concern is the effect of rapid modernization on work-family dynamics and gender role identity.

The study of effects on fertility outcomes is necessarily complex as the processes involved are dynamic, particularly when medical advances have now render childbirth as a choice rather than an act of nature. Because we can now choose – to a certain extent – when we want children, and how large a family we want to grow, it is important that we understand the barriers and facilitators of such decisions.

Macro factors like state policies, growth rate, and global outlook inevitably play significant role in shaping fertility patterns. This is particularly so for a

small country like Singapore where international trade is of paramount significance for the health of the national economy. To stay competitive, the state has to manage the fine balance between nurturing a culture that favours competitive work ethics (to attract investors), and one which values investment in family (to achieve a sustainable labour force). Yet, these ideals are inevitably perceived as being contradictory to each other. The contradictions are more evident when traditional family structures have to make way for new family arrangements that favour the needs of the new economy.

One critical development is the foray of women into paid work. As Singapore is highly dependent on manpower as a resource, women are encouraged to enter the labour force, and remain there through retirement. This push towards paid work has important implications on work-family dynamics, and gender ideologies. In pre-industrial Singapore, the family functions through a strong reliance on a clear division of labour along gender lines which allowed men to focus on work commitments outside of the home while women managed domestic affairs and raised children. With the advent of industrialization and modernization, the family had to adapt to meet the challenges that arise. In turn, these developments affect how family is perceived, and the role of children in the family.

Cultural attitudes towards family distinctive to the major ethnic groups in Singapore also affect how group members perceive family and their fertility decisions. For example, Chinese couples favour certain zodiac signs as conducive for procreation. So in the year of the dragon, the birth rate for the Chinese subgroup goes up. Conversely, in the year of the white tiger – a zodiac sign that does not favour children, the birth rate goes down. However, while cultural factors are still influential among middle-aged married couples, we see less differentiation among the younger adults. For example, in a recent study on young adults and their attitude towards

marriage and children, we observed a convergence of attitudes among the respondents from different ethnic groups (see Straughan et al. 2007). Past trends on marriage and procreation data consistently showed Malays enjoying higher fertility rates while the Chinese favoured smaller families. Sociologists often attribute this ethnic difference to, among other reasons, the more traditional Malay culture which continued to value family formation and strong community ties. However, the focus group discussions with young adults showed career aspirations as top priority across the different ethnic groups. This is very likely due to equal access to formal education, which homogenizes attitudes and beliefs regarding the family.

This paper will focus on family policies and a discourse on their effectiveness in promoting procreation in Singapore. To complete the macro analysis, I will share the findings from a recently concluded large scale survey on attitudes and barriers leading to low fertility among married couples. In the discussion, I will address how family policies can be invoked to overcome the barriers to growing larger families.

## 2. Population and Family Policies in Singapore

### 2.1. The Post-Independent Years 1965~1975

Like population trends elsewhere, fertility patterns in Singapore correlated strongly with economic development. Table 1 details the total fertility rate from 1960 to 2006. In the 1960s and early 1970s when the nation state first achieved independence, farming and fishing were the primary economic activities. Birth rates were high, and the leading concern of the government was population control.

Riding the tide of global rapid industrial growth in the late 1970s, national



focus was attuned to training manpower for the needs of manufacturing industrials that dominated the economic sphere. As more jobs were created and the demand for skilled labour increased, formal education becomes an important channel for social mobility. Given the limited manpower base for the nation state, all able citizens – regardless of gender –were encouraged to pursue the requisite skills through formal education and vocational training and join the labour force. In order to sustain, many had to heed the call, for the government held on steadfast to an anti-welfare philosophy.

Concurrently, the family policies were focused on population control. The government believed that as an emerging economy, it was important to curb population expansion so that the state's resources could be efficiently focused on economic advancements. The concern with arresting population growth was fueled by the high growth period between 1947 to 1970, which saw the population of Singapore increased two-fold (Wong and Yeoh 2003). The Family Planning and Population Board (FPPB) was formed in 1966 when the government took over control of all responsibilities for family planning, and the tag line was "Stop at Two" (Wong 1979). Family policies were focused on disincentives to those who had more than two children, and incentives for those who conformed (for a detailed description of the population control policies, see Saw 2005).

## 2.2. Period of Rapid Economic Growth and Population Decline 1975~1985

By 1975/1976, the total fertility rate (TFR) had dropped to replacement rate, and has remained at below replacement rate since. Nonetheless, the tone of family policies did not change. By 1983, the TFR had fallen to an all-time low of 1.61 – well below the replacement rate.

Why were the population control policies so effective? One reason is the comprehensive approach that governed the policies. Incentives covered a range of services and benefits which include public housing (which provides for more than 80% of the housing needs of the population), personal income tax, accouchement fees, maternity leave, and even education for children (see Saw 2005). But perhaps a more significant factor that facilitated the downward fertility trend was the underlying economic climate.

In her reflections on Singapore's family planning program in this period of the nation's development, Wong (1979) argued that the social and cultural factors governing the nation-state at that time acted as catalysts for population control initiatives. Certainly, the availability of birth control options (including cheap and safe abortions) and the social acceptance of contraceptive use helped women gain control over their fertility decisions. This freed them from unwanted pregnancies, and gave them freedom to pursue careers outside of the family. The timing for opportunities to achieve self-actualization for Singapore women could not have been better. Post-independent Singapore saw tremendous opportunities for economic development and industrialization. Job opportunities were abundant as factories sprouted up throughout the island, and agricultural space was transformed to industrial parks. To meet the need for skilled labour, formal education was accessible to all regardless of race or gender. Women were trained, and soon became an indispensable part of Singapore's labour force. The female labour force participation rate rose steadily, from 28.2 in 1970 to 44.8 in 1984

(see <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/themes/economy/hist/labour.html> for details). While the opportunities for educated women were tremendous, the effects were devastating for fertility trends. Marriage rates and the TFR for this group of women fell sharply, and it was inevitable that the static

population control policies had to be revamped.

In 1984, the government reversed its population control policies for a select segment of the population. Popularly known as the eugenics phase of population policies in Singapore, new pro-natalistic family policies were introduced to encourage tertiary educated women to marry and have more children. The Social Development Unit (SDU) was set up in 1984 to facilitate this. Concurrently, monetary incentives were offered to less educated women who abided by the small family ideal encouraged by the state. In short, a two-prong population policy was adopted: those who were deemed to be capable and able parents were encouraged to have more children, and those who were not were encouraged to stop at 2 –the replacement level. This was the beginning of a differentiated population policy, where the more able Singaporeans were encouraged to have more children while the less able were given incentives to keep their family size small. However, this did not go well with the population in general (see Wong & Yeoh 2003, p.10). And the TFR continued to fall. By 1986, population control was no longer a national issue and the government closed down the Family Planning and Population Board as it was deemed redundant. Many lamented that the Board was a victim of its own success.

### 2.3. Balancing Work-Family Interweave 1986~1999

Though the TFR continued to drop, new population policies rolled out during this period were still selectively pro-natalistic. To set the tone for a change in population policies, a new slogan was adopted. "Have Three or More Children, if You Can Afford it" became the tag line for this era, and the leadership shifted focus from eugenics to economics. There was growing awareness of the change in ideology towards having children, and that

married couples were moving away from larger families to a concentration on providing quality nurturing for children.

Sustained economic growth had resulted in accumulation of excess, and popular culture began to portray an ideology of child which valued the intrinsic. In pre-industrial societies, children were often viewed as pre-adults that were economically worthless. With industrialization and modernization, family size decreased and mortality rates fell. With a lowered dependence on child labour, children were now valued for their emotional and social worth. Zelizer (1994) argued that this is the process of "pricing the priceless child."

In many ways, much of this ideological work on re-defining the child was reflected in the population policies' tag lines. Campaign slogans began to impress on the society the importance and significance of children in families. These included "Children – Life would be empty without them", "Life's fun when you're a dad and mum", and "The most precious gift you can give your child is a brother or sister" (Wong & Yeoh 2003, p.12).

This period saw the dominance of paid work over family, and the extrinsic rewards from career appealed to the educated young adults seeking returns from investment in formal education. Marriage and procreation took a back seat, and age at first marriage for both brides and grooms rose, as did the proportion of singles. To address this alarming trend, part of the new population policies focused on the never married segment of society. Media messages like "Why Build Your Career Alone? Family Life Helps" and "Make Room For Love In Your Life" for "Life Would Be Lonely Without A Family" engaged the singles and highlighted the government's concern that the push towards economic productivity may have made Singaporeans too work-focused (Wong & Yeoh 2003).

Several government-lead initiatives set in to reinstate the family to a centrally valued position. In 1985, the National Family Week –an annual

event - was established to celebrate the family. This was followed by the inception of the National Advisory Council on the Family and Aged (NACFA) in 1989, which was supported by two other committees – the Committee on the Family (COF) and the Committee on the Aged (COA). Together, these people-sector led civic groups serve to provide a continual focus on family issues and recommend policy directions for the government.

The new population policies focused on four main dimensions: tax incentives, housing, delivery costs, and child care (see Lien 2002 for details). Tax incentives and housing incentives which were in place to encourage small families a decade ago were now restructured and refined to encourage those who could to have more children. To facilitate living arrangements for larger families, housing policies gave priority to large families for upgrade to larger HDB flats. The tax incentives were designed with a dual-intent: to encourage middle and higher income couples to have more children, and to encourage women to stay engaged in the work place while they raise their children. For example, under the Enhanced Child Relief, a progressive increase in percentage of tax relief is given for each child based on the mothers' earned income.

Prior to the new population policies, couples could only use Medisave, a compulsory saving scheme for medical expenses, to cover delivery expenses for their first two children. The intent then was to encourage couples to stop at two children as delivery costs for the third child would have to be paid in cash. The new population policies extended use of Medisave to cover delivery costs to the third child.

To help working mothers manage the demands of work and family, a centre-based childcare subsidy was initiated and working mothers were given a set amount for each child they place in a licensed childcare centre (for the first four children). Various leave schemes were also introduced in the civil

service for married female officers only. These included no-pay leave for childcare up to a maximum of four years for each child below four years old, part-time employment for up to three years (regardless of the child's age), and full pay unrecorded leave of five days per year to look after a sick child below six years old.

These policies relating to maternal employment had a significant impact on the ideology of the family in Singapore. While the state's intent was to lure mothers back into the workforce to ensure that its manpower needs are met, the message sent to both men and women was very clear: childcare is the sole responsibility of the mother. This continues to have serious implications on marriage and procreation trends now. When women weigh the pros and cons of family formation, many often end up overwhelmed by the perceived costs of retreating from their careers and the direct costs of family labour. It is not surprising that the foray of women into paid work is not reciprocated by men greater involvement in family matters (Siberstein 1992). Costs to child rearing are permutated as individual costs, and bore disproportionately by women. And given that women play the primary role in fertility decisions, it is not surprising the TFR continues to fall.

The second significant consequence of the population policies is its philosophy of promoting self-sufficiency and encouraging those who could afford to have more children. Underlying this is the concern that all children have a right to a decent family life where their basic needs are met and they have a good chance of succeeding as adults. This philosophy will later reinforce the ideology of the sacred child where couples who are well-positioned economically believe that they cannot afford to have children because they perceive that they do have not sufficient to provide for the needs of a child. Taken together, these ideologies placed tremendous stress on women. The state upholds an ideology of childhood which requires that the child should

be well-looked after, and the mother has been assigned this important role.

Up to this point in the population policies, fathers continue to be economic providers only. This will have serious implications for the fertility trends in Singapore as women continue to struggle between the economic benefits of paid work, and the demands of maternal duty.

#### 2.4. Shifting the Focus on the Family - 2000 and Beyond

In 2000, the government introduced what is popularly termed "the baby bonus" scheme, which was further enhanced in 2004. Under this scheme, a Children Development Account will be opened for a family upon the birth of the couple's first four children. A Baby Bonus of S\$3000 cash is given upon the birth of the first child, and for subsequent children, the Government will contribute S\$500 each year into the account and up to another \$1000 each year to match contributions dollar-for-dollar from the parents. This contribution will add up to S\$9000 for the second child and S\$18 000 for the third and fourth children (Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports, 2004). In addition to monetary incentives, the government also announced that working mothers will get twelve weeks of maternity leave for the first four children (Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports, 2004; Straits Times, 21.08.2000).

To fill the gap at home when the wife enters paid work, the state initiated the foreign domestic workers scheme which allowed families to employ full-time live-in maids from around the region (mainly from Indonesia and the Philippines). About 20% of households in Singapore hire foreign domestic maids to help manage their households. When a household hires a foreign domestic maid, a tax of S\$250 per month is levied by the state. To help dual-earner families cope with childcare and family

responsibilities, tax relief for the Foreign Maid Levy was introduced to encourage working married women to have children (Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports, 2004).

Public housing allocation policies were also introduced to facilitate larger families. The Third Child Priority Housing Scheme was set up to give priority to families who wish to upgrade to bigger public housing (HDB) apartments upon the birth of the third child (Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports, 2004). While foreign maids are an option for dual-earner families, the state is mindful that this remains a temporary solution, and that families should seek a long-term solution that is more stable and not dependent on the availability of foreign labour (Huang and Yeoh, 1996). The logical solution to childcare needs lies in support from grandparents. This will ensure that the children are socialised by adults from the same cultural backgrounds. The Grandparent Caregiver Tax Relief initiated in 2004 to encourage grandparents as primary caregivers when the mother is engaged in paid work. To facilitate the three-generation extended family, several public housing policies were also initiated (see Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports, 2004).

Overall, the pro-family policies announced in 2004 under the new Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong addressed three main areas: family time, childcare options, and work-family balance (details of the new family policies can be found at [http://fed.ecitizen.gov.sg/family\\_population.html](http://fed.ecitizen.gov.sg/family_population.html)). One significant variation from previous policies is the removal of mothers' education qualification from the tax incentives. The fertility rate has slipped so low that it is no longer feasible to hold on to a selective pro-natalistic policies.

Perhaps the most significant change in the post-2000 population policies is the ideological change on men's role in the family. Prior to this, childcare leave was only provided for mothers as it was expected that the mother is



responsible for looking after young children. Fathers were expected to play the traditional role of economic provider. In 2000, paternity leave was introduced as part of the new population policies. Although it grants only three days of leave for fathers (compared to 12 weeks for maternity leave for mothers), the significance was symbolic because for the first time, men were directly involved in childcare. In addition, men are now eligible to take unrecorded childcare leave which was previously only available to their female counterparts in the civil service. This sends a clear message that childcare is a shared responsibility between husbands and wives.

Table 2 summarizes the inception of the various family population policies, and notes the corresponding TFR in that year. The details show that despite the introduction of the various initiatives, TFR continues to drop. A slight relief was brought by the years of the dragon in 1988 and 2000, where birth rate rose slightly for the Chinese who believed in the cultural belief that dragon sons were auspicious. It registered at 1.26 in 2006, a 0.01 increase over the previous years. In an era of falling rates, an arrest in the decline must be interpreted as good news for trend observers. The arrest is partly due to a blooming economy, and partly to the ideological clout of the family at the present. The enhanced family policies post 2000 have signaled that it ideologically, socially and politically correct to support investment in family. This was further enhanced when the state leaders stood up for the social significance of the family at recent public speeches.

*"As a husband, a father and now a grandfather, I can only tell you that a family adds warmth and meaning to our lives. Friends are important, but a family is indispensable. We would be so much lonelier if we did not have a partner with whom to share our achievements and anxieties, our joys and sorrows. The house would be so much emptier without the laughter of children. How miserable we would be if we have no children to look after*

*us when we grow old and weak."* Goh Chok Tong, 2000 National Day Rally Speech

It's fulfilling to bring up a child. You can have the most successful career, you can be the richest man on Earth or the most powerful man or woman on Earth, but if you don't have a family and don't have children, I think you're missing something. It starts off with missing changing nappies when you have a child, but then you miss watching a child learning to walk, learning to talk, going to school, getting sick, depending on you, walking with you, playing with you. You are teaching him, doing homework with him or her. Then you'll find that he's got his own temperament, character, personality, he's different from you. He's got his own ideas and after a while, one day, you are helping him or her do homework and he says, *"No, no, you do it like this" and I look puzzled and I don't quite know what he is talking about, but he does and you know he's taken a step forward and he's on his own. And then they grow up a bit more and you have to, come a time when they ring up and say, "Can you pick me up at the cineplex?" Then you will worry whether they have found girlfriends or boyfriends. Then you will worry if they have not found girlfriends or boyfriends and you will think by the time they are 20 years old, they would have grown up, but actually, even when they are 50 years old, if I'm still around, I will still be fussing. "Drink your pao shen" (泡參 inseng), take care of yourself, don't overstrain because my parents do that and I think if I'm still compos mentis, I will do that too."* Lee Hsien Loong, 2004 National Day Rally Speech

The key question remains – is it enough to encourage young adults to marry early and start their families early?

### 3. Social and Cultural Barriers to Low Fertility – the Sociological Glance

#### 3.1. Macro Analysis – Environment Factors and TFR

Family policies can only be effective if they address the root cause of the problem. In the introduction, to this paper, I highlighted both macro and micro issues that might affect fertility decision. On the macro perspective, in addition to family policies, concerns on economic health which affects employability and outlook to the future are assumed to be important. Taking annual economic growth (in %) as indicator of economic health, and male and female labour force participation rates as indicators of employability, I ran a regression model to predict fertility rate.

The bivariate correlations show that TFR is positively correlated to male labour force participation rate and % growth in the economy, and negatively correlated to female labour force participation rate (see Tables 3A,B). In the multiple regression model, only two factors were statistically significant in explaining variation in TFR - % economic growth, and female labour force participation rate. Overall, the model with the three predictor variables explained 56.3% of the variation in TFR (see Table 3C).

That economic growth is directly correlated with the TFR is not surprising. In contemporary society when fertility decisions are – to a certain extent – dependent on individual choice, many would delay starting a family or adding to a family when economic outlook is bleak. Growing a family is an affirmation of one's optimistic outlook on the future of our society. This relates also to contemporary ideology of child, which prescribes that the sacred child deserves a stable environment to grow up in, and that his/her needs are adequately met.

As expected, when female labour participation rate increases, TFR

decreases. This shows the difficulties faced by women as they struggle to straddle between work and home. The absence of a dedicated full-time mother in the context of an ideology of child which prescribes delicate care poses a contradiction that is difficult to resolve. Hays (1997; 1996) described this expectation on mothering as the ideology of intensive motherhood. The ideology, supported by various influential social agents (like the state, child care experts, popular culture and upper-class women) argues that the mother is the best caregiver for the child, and a good mother must engage intensive methods of parenting. These methods are time consuming and often times very expensive, so few can really afford them.

While the macro analysis is useful and affirms my hypotheses, when it comes to informing interventions, there are limited exploitations. It is therefore important to augment these findings with an individual perspective. Given constant environmental conditions, what explains the variation in family size within the same community?

### 3.2. Surveying Individuals –Perceived Impact of Pro-family Policies in Fertility Decisions

My project team (comprising Professor Gavin Jones, A/P Angelique Chan and myself as Principal Investigator) carried out a large-scale survey of a probability sample of about 1512 married Singapore residents. The unit of analysis was Singapore residents (which include citizens and permanent residents) who were married in 1980 or later. We chose 1980 as the window for sampling for an important reason. Given that median age at first married in the 1980s was early-mid twenties, the defined target group of couples who married in 1980 to 1985 would be between 40~50 years old. They would have lived through the three phases of family policies, and would

have just completed their procreation phase. Reflections from this group would be helpful when we compare them with those who married after 1985, when population policies favoured larger families. The fieldwork was completed in the first quarter of 2007, and data analysis is in progress. Response rate for the survey was 65%.

For this paper, I extracted information on perceptions of the new pro-family policies and investigated how these perceptions impact decisions of have children in the near future. As procreation decisions are increasingly determined by women more than men, for this paper, I selected on the responses from female respondents.

We had three indicators measuring reaction to the new pro-family policies announced by the government at the end of 2004. The first measured awareness, and we documented the different levels of awareness. The second registered respondents' opinions on whether these policies would help increase fertility rate among Singaporeans. The final indicator measured a more direct impact of these announcements on the respondents' fertility decisions. We asked if the new pro-family policies will encourage respondents to have more children. The frequency distributions are detailed in Tables 4A-C.

While almost 40% were well-informed about the new family policies, it is interesting to note that almost a quarter had not heard about the new initiatives at all. Given the limited geographical expanse of this nation-state and the effect communication channels in place, this is indeed surprising. Interestingly, while 67% felt that the fertility rate for the nation would increase because of these new initiatives, only 26% indicated that the pro-family policies will make an effect on their personal fertility decisions. Who are those who are likely to be encouraged to have more children?

To investigate this, I created a logistic regression model that predicted likelihood of having a child in the near future. The responses were coded in

dichotomous form, with 0 indicating 'NO" and 1 indicating "YES". About a quarter of the respondents indicated affirmative in this dependent variable. A logistic regression model was built with 11 predictor variable.

The first set measured ideology of motherhood, which looked at the perceived role of "mother."Two indicators measuring expectations of motherhood were used here – whether the mother is expected to be on call 24-hours a day for their children, and if the mother is the best caregiver for her children. Both were dichotomous variables, with 1 indicating affirmation to the statements. The second set measured the expectations of child –which ties directly to the articulated reasons for wanting children. This is an index which is made up of 3 indicators (see Table 5). The index ranged from 4 to 12 points, with high scores correlating to a belief that children should bring extrinsic returns (which runs contradictory to the sacred child ideology). The Cronbach Alpha for this index was 0.682. The third set of predictors measured marital satisfaction. This 14-item scale was validated in several surveys in Singapore (see Straughan 2006; Straughan et al. 2000). The scale has a Cronbach Alpha of 0.867, and is detailed in Table 6, The fourth attitudinal predictor looked at satisfaction with division of domestic labour – also a dichotomous variable with 1 indicating satisfaction.

The rationale for the inclusion of these variables is to observe the collective effect of these attitudinal indicators on fertility decisions. The slate of attitudinal predictive variables included reactions to intensive mothering, expectations of child, marital satisfaction, and satisfaction with division of domestic labour. These are all intricately interlinked. Contemporary expectations of child require the commitment of a full-time care giver in the form of the biological mother. The child should also be nurtured in a social environment that is blissful and free from conflict (as indicated by the level of marital health). And as demands on the caregiver are intense, we must

take note of how well the mother is coping at home (thus, satisfaction with division of domestic labour).

In addition to attitudinal measurements, I controlled for demographic factors in the model. These include the respondent work status (working full time or not), number of biological children, importance of religion, household income, ethnicity, and age.

Overall, the model performed well (see Table 7). It was able to predict the outcome accurately 90% of the time, and the Nagelkerke R-Square (a pseudo R-square indicator in logistic regression) was 0.631. This suggests that about 63% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained by the model.

Six predictor variables were statistically significant. The results showed that women who likely to have a child in the future had the following profile:

- i. did not embrace intensive mothering ie, that a good mother must be on-call 24 hours a day for her children,
- ii. had fewer children,
- iii. worked full-time,
- iv. had higher marital satisfaction,
- v. believed that having children would result in extrinsic returns,
- vi. not Chinese, and
- vii. younger.

These results are not surprising, and at the most basic level, it shows that fertility decisions are affected by both attitudes on family ideals embraced, and also by social background characteristics. As hypothesized, the dominant ideologies of child which highlights the intrinsic worth of having children and intensive mothering practices run contradictory to increase fertility. Practically, those in happy marriages are more receptive to growing

families. Women working full-time indicated stronger inclination towards having children in the future, very likely because they have delayed childbearing in lieu of career advancement. And Chinese women continue to be most resistant to larger families.

Taken as a whole, these findings tell us we can count on younger, non-Chinese working women with few children and in happy marriages, and who still believe in traditional expectations from children and do not prescribe to intensive mothering to help improve the fertility rate in Singapore. Realistically, how many of these women are there in our society?

#### 4. Discussion

This paper has taken a critical look for the evolution of family policies in Singapore. Family policies play two key roles. First, they entice compliance behaviour through attractive incentives. Second, they set the ideological tone on the value of family for the society. In these regards, the family policies in Singapore have been very successful.

Family policies under the population control period were focused on fiscal incentives, and these were much valued under the economic conditions at that time. The nation-state was developing and household income was relatively lower. Family policies that were tied to housing policies were particularly potent as many did not yet own their homes. Ideologically, the family policies succeed in establishing small, self-sufficient families as the preferred family types, and responsible parenting as the governing norm. The family policies from 1965 to 1985 were indeed text-book examples of what government policies can achieve under ideal environment conditions.

As the nation-state progressed, and after extended periods of sustained growth, fiscal policies lost some of their attraction. In the period between



1985 and present, Singaporeans have accomplished remarkable progress in terms of formal education, acquired skill sets, home ownership and along many other social indicators. As a result, family policies that focus primarily on fiscal returns as carrots find fewer converts.

Just as the economic and social conditions of the 1960s and 1970s facilitated the success of the population control measures, these socio-economic factors are also responsible for the limited success of the new pro-family policies. The sustained economic growth in the 1980s through to present (despite the interruptions by periods of economic slow-down) has resulted in a fairly affluent population – especially among the educated young adults. Armed with tertiary educational and the requisite professional skills, they find themselves entrenched in careers that reward total commitment. The rewards to paid work are tremendous – comprising both extrinsic and intrinsic returns. So for many, the enticement of the new pro-family policies which promises cash incentives for compliance is limited. After all, they will stand to lose more if they retreat from career investment.

While the fiscal dimension of the new pro-family policies has limited success thus far (as reflection in the continued decline of the TFR), the ideological dimension has succeeded. First, with the introduction of paternity leave and child care leave for both men and women, the government sets the normative expectations for men's involvement in the family. Second, the emphasis and commitment to work-life balance has set the tone for work-family engagement. While it would have been disastrous for an employee to take time-off for family commitments in the early years, employers now handle such requests delicately in our family-friendly environment.

Several initiatives that were announced in this period consistent point to the importance of family time. Specifically, these initiatives are intended to attract women to the work force while growing their families. Work-life

strategies, (defined as strategies employers implement to facilitate flexible work arrangements, employee support schemes and family care leave) are promoted by the government as good business practices (for details, see <http://www.businessstoolkit.com.sg/>). For example, two dedicated grants were set up to entice businesses to these best practices. The Pro-family Business Grant (PFB) gives up to S\$20,000 to help businesses achieve "pro-family" qualities in their organization. The government also committed S\$10 million to the new WoW! (Work-life Works!) Fund. This Fund aims to provide financial support to companies, and facilitate the development and implementation of family-friendly work practices. Under WoW!, companies can get reimbursement of up to 70% of the cost of family-friendly initiatives at the workplace, up to a cap of S\$30,000. While the jury is still out on the success of WoW! as it was only implemented in October 2004, the initial take-up rate is not encouraging. As of August 2005, less than 10% of the S\$10 million fund has been committed for 32 projects (Straits Times 23 August 2005). Particularly problematic are the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which employ more than half of Singapore's workforce, who tend to see family-friendly practices as "luxuries, distracting from their main aim – survival" (Straits Times, 23.08.2005, p18). Similarly, other existing schemes for part-time and flexi work opportunities have not been encouraging (Straits Times 18.01.2005; Ministry of Manpower 1999). This suggests that either women themselves are reluctant to reduce their economic participation rate, or that their employers are not able to easily adopt flexi-work schemes because of the rigid organizational structure. The reality is very likely a combination of both.

Finally, the government – after much deliberation – instituted the 5-day work week in 2004. Incidentally, this was one of the proposals tabled by the Committee on the Family. This was one of the proposals tabled by the

Committee on the Family in 2003, which was Chaired by Mr Noel Hon, Managing Director of NEC Singapore. The government continued to engage prominent business leaders in people-sector driven committees that looked after many family-related social issues. In May 2006, the National Family Council was formed, and takes over the roles of the Committee on the Family and the Family Matters! Singapore Committee. It serves as an advisory and consultative body for family-related matters, and the inaugural committee comprised of several prominent business leaders. Through such participation, the government hopes to solicit buy-in from the private sector in its quest to grow a conducive business culture that favours family commitments.

While the TFR may not have risen significantly since the 2000 pro-family policies were in place, it is important to note that the fall was arrested since 2003. Given the current constraints for family work, this is certainly a significant achievement. I believe that much is due to the affirmation of the family by the state.

Taking stock of what has been achieved thus far, I would argue that while there is modest ideological gains in repositioning the family, there is still a lot of work to be done to promote a pro-family environment where investment in family does not lead directly to tremendous personal costs. Currently, the perceived cost to raising a child has been inflated so much (the latest I have see is the estimate from a bank, which pegs the cost of raising one child to over S\$300,000), no fiscal incentive can be enough to attract the pragmatic-minded. Part of the reason for this high estimated cost is the inherent contradictions in various aspects of the social reality relating to the family. I shall highlight some of the more evident ideological contradicts we battle with in everyday when we try to do family.

## Ideology of Paid Work versus Ideology of the Family

The recent restructuring in remuneration packages across all sectors replaced seniority with performance indicators as key factors for calculation of rewards and incentives. While it is true that flexi-work policies are more widely practiced now, and these are considered family-friendly as they free the worker from a rigid schedule that ties her to time and spatial considerations, running contradictory to these gains is the performance-base remuneration system. As with any output driven reward system, it is not when you do it, but how much you can produce that matters. Though the message sent clearly favours the efficient and effective worker, many on the ground see this as an open-ended work call.

The result is a work culture that is characterized by a 24/7 commitment, and a gradual eradication of clear work-family boundary that favours overwork (see Lopata 1993). This is, to a large extent, fueled by the increasingly borderless economy we serve – one that crosses several time zones which results in work being relevant at all times. With advancements in technology, work becomes portable, thus further blurring the spatial separation between home and office. Hochschild & Machung (1989) wrote about the second shift for women, detailing how working women serve the first shift in the office, and returns home for a second shift in home work. With the advancements in telecommunications and computing gadgets, it is now the norm to put in a third shift – turning on the laptop with built-in modem after the kids are in bed. E-mail is one example of the long arms of the office – you are only a click away from your bosses. And given that contract work is now the norm, most employees are not secure enough to ignore the "you've got mail" icon.

In the attempt to make labour cost more efficient, family wage – where

one income (usually the man's) would support the worker and his dependents – has now been replaced by less costly individual pay packages. And more and more families are dependent on two incomes.

Just as ideology of work demands a 24/7 commitment from the employee, the ideology of the family – as exemplified by the ideology of child and intensive mothering –also demands a 24/7 commitment. Realistically, how can one give a 100% to both work and family concurrently?

### **Gender Role Expectations: Homemaker verses Career Woman**

Singapore, like other Asian societies, is still very much governed by patriarchy. Even as women continue to main gains in terms of career achievements and formal education, men continue to be viewed as head of household. The gender expectations for men have remained fairly constant –they are expected to take care of their family financially, through active engagement in paid work. While they are encouraged to play more active roles in the home and especially in child care, many continue to hide in their work responsibilities, leaving the management of home and children to their wives.

The 2000 Singapore census showed that 40.9% of all married couples were dual-earners compared to 40.2% where only the husbands worked (Leow, 2004). A significant proportion of married women are engaged in paid work. How do they manage these contradictory demands? Hochschild & Machung (1989) detailed the emergence of the Super-mom syndrome. The Super-mom, an imagery of a woman who has successfully embraced the multiple roles of career woman-ideal wife-model mom, exemplifies how a single individual can absorb such a mosaic of responsibilities without help from others. Hochschild wrote,

*"There is no trace of stress, no suggestion that the mother needs help from others. She isn't harassed. She's busy, and it's glamorous to be busy."* (1989:23)

However, this image of the Super-mom serves only to suppress the problems inherent in the multiple responsibilities imposed on the working mother. It succeeds in highlighting the competence of women, and reinforces the message that women are special beings who are able to take on all the domestic responsibilities over and above that of her job. There is no mention of the presence of a sound social arrangement that enables the woman to embrace a career as well as to nurture a family (Straughan, Huang & Yeoh 2005). This imagery is constantly reinforced by popular culture, and as a result, the myth is perpetuated so much so that society assumes that working mothers need very little help to manage.

Thus, the conflict between work and family is assumed to be non-existent because Super-moms are expected to take care of everything. And if they cannot manage, perhaps they should reconsider their full-time status in the work force. So women end up having to choose between motherhood and career. While the returns to motherhood are tremendous, it is a long-term investment, and the rewards are largely intrinsic. Career investments, on the other hand, then to yield tangible results in a much shorter period of time. Increasingly, women are opting to invest in work, then in the family. This is demonstrated through the trend data on the proportion that remain single, and the proportion of childless married couples or DINKS (double-income, no kids).

### **Ideology of Child: Freedom to Grow?**

The final contradiction I shall highlight in this paper is that relating to the social expectations of "child". Obviously, one reason why many find fertility

decisions difficult is the perceived demands of child rearing on the parents. The ideology of child requires that parents devote themselves to giving the best to the child. While one would expect that this would include ensuring a blissful period of innocent childhood where the child is allowed the luxury to dream, play freely, and just enjoy not having serious responsibilities, this is sorely missing from the Singapore adaptation of the ideology.

Given our strong emphases on self-sufficient and achievement orientation, we have conceptualized parental responsibilities to include the demand that parents are expected to give the child a head-start in life, so that he can make remarkable gains in the education system. In our focus groups interviews detailed early, many respondents talked about their fear of parenthood because through the child, the parents will be drawn directly into the very competitive education system. Methodologies that promise head-starts involved serious commitment of time and money from the parents. When those contemplating parenthood see the stress and anxieties parents go through when their kids are in the system, many decide that they would not want to participant in the mayhem.

So how do we move forward from here? The next phase of family policies will have to address these contradictions in our society. These ideological contradictions make it difficult for many to choose between having children and remaining childless. When we force people to choose, many would go the route of least resistance. It is not easy to raise a family in contemporary society. Yet, resisting family formation is not an option any society can accept as the norm. Therefore, it only makes sense that we should continue to work at making sense of these contradictions and freeing the path towards family formation.

Table 1. Fertility Rates 1960~2006

Year	fertility rate
1960	5.76
1965	4.66
1970	3.07
1975	2.07
1980	1.82
1981	1.78
1982	1.74
1983	1.61
1984	1.62
1985	1.61
1986	1.43
1987	1.62
1988	1.96
1989	1.75
1990	1.83
1991	1.73
1992	1.72
1993	1.74
1994	1.71
1995	1.67
1996	1.66
1997	1.61
1998	1.48
1999	1.47
2000	1.60
2001	1.41
2002	1.37
2003	1.26
2004	1.25
2005	1.25
2006	1.26

Reference: Department of Statistics, Singapore. Compilations from various reports.



Table 2. Summary of Singapore Family Policies and TFR (1980 to Present)

Policy	Year	TFR	Zodiac Sign
• Continuation of "Stop at two policy"	1980	1.82	Monkey
	1981	1.78	Rooster
	1982	1.74	Dog
	1983	1.61	Pig
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Mothers Scheme introduced</li> <li>• Sterilization Cash Incentive Scheme</li> <li>• Establishment of SDU for university graduates</li> <li>• Enhanced Child Relief scheme</li> <li>• Multi-tier family housing scheme</li> </ul>	1984	1.62	Rat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Mothers Program scrapped</li> <li>• Setting up of Social Development Service (SDS) for non graduates</li> <li>• Establishment of National Family Week</li> </ul>	1985	1.61	Ox
• Closing of Singapore Family Planning and Population Board	1986	1.43	Tiger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First major introduction of pro-natalist policies</li> <li>• Phased in terms of affordability</li> <li>• "Have 3 or more if you can afford it"</li> </ul>	1987	1.62	Rabbit
	1988	1.96	Dragon
• Setting up of National Advisory Council on the Family and Aged (NACFA for short)	1989	1.75	Snake
• Tax Rebates for couples	1990	1.83	Horse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aged Parent Relief</li> <li>• Relief for Handicapped</li> <li>• Tax rebates for foreign maid levy</li> </ul>	1992	1.72	Monkey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HDB housing schemes implemented to encourage family formation</li> <li>• First Timers</li> </ul>	1992	1.72	Monkey

Policy	Year	TFR	Zodiac Sign
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiancé / Fiancée</li> <li>• Married Child Priority</li> <li>• Third Child Priority</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Families Improvement Scheme (SFIS) set up</li> </ul>	1993	1.74	Rooster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of Parents Bill</li> <li>• New inter-ministry committee set up to study problems of broken families</li> </ul>	1994	1.71	Dog
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Court set up</li> <li>• Government moves to help families</li> <li>• HDB introduced housing schemes aimed at young couples</li> </ul>	1995	1.67	Pig
	1996	1.66	Rat
	1997	1.61	Ox
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPF top up grant of \$40,000 given to singles when they marry</li> </ul>	1998	1.48	Tiger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee of Family (COF) reconstituted to a people-sector led civic group</li> <li>• Launching of Family &amp; Community Development @ eCitizen portal</li> </ul>	1999	1.47	Rabbit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of "Baby Bonus"</li> <li>• Increase in maternity leave and tax rebate for working mothers</li> <li>• Public Education Committee on Family was formed</li> <li>• Setting up of Work Life Unit by MCDS</li> <li>• MCDS also formed the Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy with the Ministry of Manpower, the National Trades Union Congress and the Singapore National Employers Federation</li> </ul>	2000	1.60	Dragon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$50 million boost to educate public on the value of family life</li> </ul>	2001	1.41	Snake

Policy	Year	TFR	Zodiac Sign
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Education Committee on Family renamed to Family Matters!</li> </ul>	2002	1.37	Horse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current COF was reconstituted again in August 2003</li> <li>Members from different backgrounds to provide feedback and advice on policy reviews and new programs impacting on the family.</li> </ul>	2003	1.26	Sheep
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major policies for the family announced during National Day Rally</li> <li>Baby Bonus enhanced and Medisave maternity package introduced</li> <li>Tax rebates and family friendly policies implemented</li> <li>Family Conference was held in Nov 2004</li> <li>State of the Family Report released by COF</li> <li>Committee of Aging Issues set up in Dec 2004</li> <li>National Population Committee set up</li> <li>HOPE scheme set up to replace SFIS</li> </ul>	2004	1.25	Monkey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More family friendly benefits doled out after the Budget Speech by PM Lee</li> <li>Baby Bonus adjusted for flexibility</li> <li>Edusave top up</li> </ul>	2005	1.25	Rooster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Family Council (NFC) established</li> <li>Taking over of Committee on the Family and Family Matters! by NFC</li> <li>Government announced 3 pronged approach to tackle population problem</li> </ul>	2006	1.26	Dog
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjustment made to Work-Life Works! Fund</li> </ul>	2007	NA	Pig

Table 3A. Macro Data on Economic Health & Employment

Year	fertility rate	% growth	Female LFPR*	Male LFPR
1980	1.82	9.7	44.30	81.50
1981	1.78	9.7	44.80	81.10
1982	1.74	7.1	45.20	81.50
1983	1.61	8.5	45.70	81.60
1984	1.62	8.3	45.80	81.20
1985	1.61	-1.4	44.90	79.90
1986	1.43	2.1	45.60	79.40
1987	1.62	9.8	47.00	78.60
1988	1.96	11.5	47.80	78.50
1989	1.75	10.0	48.40	78.60
1990	1.83	9.2	48.80	77.50
1991	1.73	6.6	48.00	79.40
1992	1.72	6.3	48.60	79.40
1993	1.74	11.7	48.00	78.80
1994	1.71	11.6	48.60	79.20
1995	1.67	8.2	46.80	77.20
1996	1.66	7.8	49.90	78.70
1997	1.61	8.3	49.50	78.20
1998	1.48	-1.4	49.40	77.40
1999	1.47	7.2	50.70	77.80
2000	1.60	10.1	50.20	76.60
2001	1.41	-2.4	51.60	77.70
2002	1.37	4.2	50.60	77.20
2003	1.26	3.1	50.90	76.10
2004	1.25	8.8	51.30	75.70
2005	1.25	6.6	52.00	74.40
2006	1.25	7.9	54.30	76.20

\* Labour Force Participation Rate

Reference – Singapore Department of Statistics Population Trends 2006

Table 3B. Bivariate Correlations between TFR and Economic Health Indicators

Variables		Total Fertility Rate (TFR)
Overall GDP (\$m)***	N	27
	Pearson Correlation	-.760(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
female labour force participation rate	N	27
	Pearson Correlation	-.652(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
male labour force participation rate	N	27
	Pearson Correlation	.646(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	27

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3C. Regression Model Predicting TFR - Macro Factor Coefficients(a)

Model		B	Beta
1	(Constant)	.521	
	percentage growth in economy*	.020*	.401*
	female labour force participation rate**	-.028**	-.366**
	male labour force participation rate	.029	.281
	Adjusted R-Square	0.563*	

Dependent Variable: fertility rate

\* Statistically significant at 0.01 level

\*\* Statistically significant at 0.10 level

Table 4. Frequency Distributions of Attitude towards New Pro-family Policies

Table 4A – Indicator 1: Awareness of pro-family policies announced by the Government at the end of 2004

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes, I have read up on them	589	39.0	39.0
Yes, I heard about them but do not know the details	560	37.1	76.1
No, I have not seen the announcements	361	23.9	100.0
Total	1510	100.0	

Table 4B – Indicator 2: Perception that pro-family policies will help increase the number of children Singaporeans will have

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Definitely yes	144	15.2	15.2
Yes	488	51.5	66.7
No	258	27.2	93.9
Definitely no	58	6.1	100.0
Total	948	100.0	

Table 4C – Indicator 3: Would respondent consider having more children with pro-family policies in place?

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Definitely yes	45	4.8	4.8
Yes	199	21.1	25.8
No	505	53.4	79.3
Definitely no	196	20.7	100.0
Total	945	100.0	

Table 5. Items in Scale Measuring Extrinsic Expectations of Child

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (on a 4-point Likert Scale) to the following statements:

1. We have children so that we will not grow old alone.
2. I expect my children to take care of me when I get old.
3. I expect my children to provide for me financially when I get old.

Table 6. Marital Satisfaction Scale.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (using a 4-point Likert Scale) to the following statements.

Statements Measuring Marital Satisfaction
a. I know what my spouse expects of me in our marriage
b. I worry a lot about my marriage
c. If I could start all over again, I would marry someone other than my present spouse
d. I can always trust my spouse
e. My life would seem empty without my marriage
f. Ever since I got married, I lost my personal freedom
g. My marriage has a bad effect on my health
h. I often become upset, angry, or irritable because of things that occur in my marriage
i. I feel competent and fully able to handle my marriage
j. I expect my marriage to give me increasing satisfaction the longer it continues
k. I must look outside my marriage for those things that make life worthwhile and interesting
l. I have definite difficulty confiding in my spouse
m. Most of the time, my spouse understands the way I feel
n. I am definitely satisfied with my marriage

Table 7. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Future Procreation Decision

Table 7A – Performance of Model I

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	440.513	.446	.631

Table 7B – Performance of Model II

Observed			Predicted		
			Likely to have child in future DUMMY		Percentage Correct
			NO	YES	
Step 1	Likely to have child in future DUMMY	NO	458	25	94.8
		YES	48	162	77.1
Overall Percentage					89.5

Table 7C – Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of Having Child in Future

Predictor Variables	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Mother as 24 hour job*(Dummy – 1=YES)	-.378	.150	.685
Mother as Best Caregiver(Dummy – 1=YES)	-.090	.737	.913
Number of biological Children*(Scale)	-1.547	.000	.213
Working Full Time*(Dummy – 1=YES)	.762	.019	2.142
Importance of Religion(Dummy – 1=YES)	.079	.785	1.083
Satisfaction with Division of Domestic Labour (Dummy – 1=YES)	.246	.637	1.279
Marital Satisfaction*(Scale)	-.057	.019	.944
Perception of Child as Extrinsic Value*(Scale)	-.226	.006	.798
Household Income	-.019	.594	.981
Ethnicity(Chinese as reference group)		.001	
Indian*	.888	.018	2.429
Malay*	1.593	.000	4.920
Others*	1.086	.048	2.964
Age of Respondent*(Scale)	-.145	.000	.865
Constant*	9.537	.000	13860.806
Cox & Snell R Square	0.446		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.631		

\* statistically significant at 95% confidence



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## 4. Examining Low Fertility and Policy Responses in Taiwan

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### 1. Drastic Fertility Decline in Taiwan

Fertility has been declining in Taiwan since 1950s, as indicated by both birth rates and total fertility rates. In 1984, the TFR in Taiwan declined to a level below 2.1, signified a warning of future population decrease. TFR stagnated around 1.75 during the period of 1986 to 1997 and resumed a significant trend of decline after then, touching an even lower level of 1.23, which thus put Taiwan into the list of nations with the lowest-low fertility in the world (Kohler et al. 2002) . TFR showed a further decline in 2004 and 2005, less than 1.2 were observed (Chen 1997, Chang 2005). Crude birth rates and absolute number of births demonstrate another aspect of fertility change in Taiwan. In 1960, the CBR was about 39.6 per thousand and the number of births was 419,442. CBR shrunk to 10.1 per thousand in 2003, equal to only one fourth of that in 1960. It has then decreased to less than 10 per thousand since 2004. The absolute number of births has recently shrunken to only 205,702 in 2006, which is even less than a half of the number of births in 1960.

Table 1 Annual Number of Births, Crude Birth Rates, and Total Fertility Rate in Taiwan

民	Number of births	Crude birth rate (‰)	Total fertility rate (‰)
1950	323,643	43.3	6030
1960	419,442	39.6	5750
1970	394,015	27.2	4000
1980	413,177	23.4	2515
1990	337,042	16.6	1805
2000	307,200	13.8	1675
2001	257,886	11.7	1395
2002	246,758	11.0	1335
2003	227,447	10.1	1230
2004	217,685	9.6	1180
2005	206,465	9.1	1115
2006	205,720	9.0	1115

Sources: Annual Demographic Books of Taiwan.

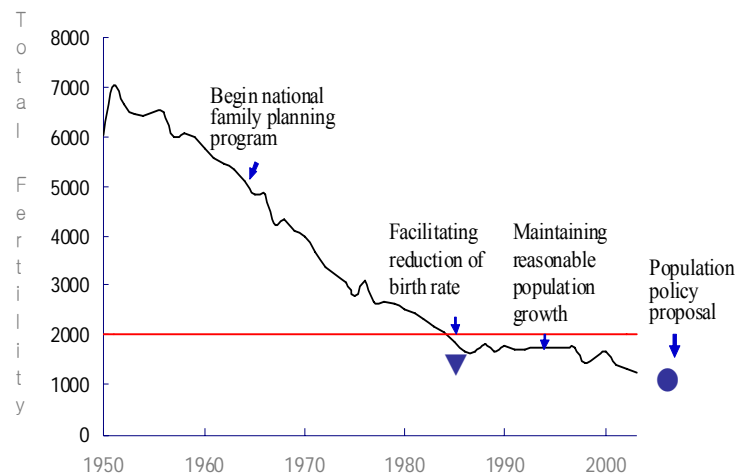
## 2. Demographic Transition and Policy Timing in Taiwan

Taiwan experienced and completed demographic transition during the twentieth century. The mortality started a steady decline trend in 1920s (Barclay 1954, Wang 1986, Chen, 1979). Since then, the population grew rapidly with an accelerated speed without check of fertility decrease. The fertility level approached its peak in 1950s, reaching a TFR of 7 per woman and crude birth rates over 40 per thousand. The government initiated a national family planning program in 1965 with the intension to control the number of births. As a backing force of the family planning movement, the government promulgated in 1969 the first version of the country's Guideline

for Population Policy aiming at the goal for birth control.

Through twenty years of family planning program implementation, the crude birth rate declined to about 20 per thousand in early 1980s. The population growth rate, however, remained rather high in those years, partly because of the deep-dropped low level of the crude death rate. Allured by the seemingly growing pressure of the population, the government decided to reinforce the family planning program and re-announced a stronger policy in 1983 for further reduction of population growth rate, even though the TFR in Taiwan was soon reaching the below-replacement level in 1984.

Figure 1 Fertility Transition and Policy Timing in Taiwan



### 3. Anxiety of Demographers about Ageing Effects

During the mid-years of 1980s, population ageing grasped new attention of demographers in Taiwan (Tu & Chen 1989, Chen 1997). In particular, the drop of net reproduction rate that fell below replacement level in 1984

revealed the alerting sign of it. After many efforts, demographers finally influenced the concerns of population policy from aiming at birth control to the attention on population ageing. The relationship between low birth rates and ageing of population was emphasized and their consequences and mechanism were illustrated (Tu & Chen 1989, Tu, Chen & Chen 1992). A research on re-assessing the population goals was launched out by the government in 1988 (Chang 2005), which resulted in a paradigm shift in addressing population problems. In 1992, the Guideline for Population Policy was thus revised. The previous goal for reducing population growth was then modified into that for maintaining a reasonable growth of population.

Given that the warning and subsequent efforts of demographers in the 1980s did make significant change to population policy goals in Taiwan, the 1992 revision of the Guideline, however, did not account a drastic change to become a pro-natal policy. People have been used to the idea that limitation of births is good for family as well as for the nation's development. Evidences of association between successful planned family and economic development of the country seemed to well support the ever prevalent ideology of birth control. The government, as well as the society, was not yet well prepared for a drastic change from policies with anti-natal nature to a pro-natal one. Even then, both the demographers and the policy makers did not realize the substantial changes in the nature of people's fertility behavior.

Accompanied with the 1992 revision of the Guideline, policy strategies for maintaining fertility level tended to focus on increasing marriage rates. Previous demographic analyses showed significant effects of nuptiality change on fertility decrease. At that time, total fertility rate still remained around 1.8 to 2.0 per woman, not far from the replacement level of 2.1. Policy makers were convinced that encouragement of marriage could bring more young people into sexual unions and hence brought in more childbearing as its

consequence. A higher nuptiality rate, in accordance with the prevalent marital fertility rate, would together effect to compensate the gap of fertility below the level of replacement.

The population policy revision in 1992, with its mild strategies, only existed in analytically wishful thoughts. No further concrete policy measures, financial plans, or budget resources were ever put forward to implement the policy for maintaining the so-called "reasonable level" of fertility. Meanwhile, the fertility level kept on declining in a rather fast pace during the subsequent years of the 1990s. Along with the new tendency in the late 1990s, population ageing and its social and economic consequences became the central issues for demographic discussions (Tu & Chen 1989, Tu, Chen & Chen 1992).

Beyond the discussion among demographers and other social scientists, the issues related to population ageing gradually gained the attention from the government as well as from the media and the public. The potential burden of an over-aged population and the necessity of further enhanced social security mechanism like pension system also gradually became comprehensible to many of the officers and legislators. (That eventually leads to the recent legislation for the universal pension insurance to be enforced in 2008.) However, when it came to the proposition for a direct pro-natal policy to explicitly encourage births for raising the fertility level, the government's reaction became rather cautious and hesitating, while the social opinions about it remained diverse and undecided.

#### 4. Concerns from Feminists and Environmentalists

Given the high density of the population in the country plus various incidents related to environmental exploit, it has not been easy for the pro-natal policy to achieve a public consensus in Taiwan. As a contrast, the



launching of the family planning program in the 1960s now seemed rather straight-forward and determined. The authoritarian political climate in the era provided the government with the convenience to implement all kinds of national policies. However, the lift of the Martial Law in 1987 brought about a series of democratic process. In the present time, it usually takes a long period for negotiation among stakeholders and public communication before any new policy can be formulated or determined. In the late 1990s, when the government intended to initiate some substantial modification on the Guideline for Population Policy in order to confront the continuously descending tendency of the fertility level, feminist scholars and environmentalists jointly expressed their serious concerns and dispute.

The oppositional rationales, which have been influencing through international fronts (Mitchell 2000, Martin & Mitchell 2000), consist of three major points of argument. The first claim regards the standpoint that takes population ageing to be problematic as being based on false presumptions. It argued that labor productivity can be increased through technological improvement and productivity of the elderly can also be extended through later retirement policy in the future, while both of these factors have usually been undervalued. Secondly, low fertility is seen as a precious opportunity for making compensation for environmental destruction due to the past economic development and current situation of an over-dense population. Policy that intends to raise fertility is seen as a foe that would further worsen the already-exploited natural environment in Taiwan. Such environmentalist argument has even won the strong support from the former President of the Academia Sinica, the renowned Nobel Prize winner Dr. YT Lee. His viewpoint could certainly exert tremendous impact on the reluctance against population policy favoring fertility.

Thirdly, the discourses phrased by some active feminist scholars forcefully

dispute pro-natal policy as a sort of instrumentization of the women's body, i.e. taking women as the instrument of childbearing for the state's purpose., which also represents the objectification of women, depriving women's autonomy and subjectivity. From such a radical perspective, the historical family planning movement has done the same humiliation on women collectively. Any reproductive health concerns for women should not be embedded with the population policy that set a quantitative fertility goal or a targeted number of births. The quantitative goal of fertility implies a certain amount of childbearing tasks that requires women to fulfill. Either control or elevation of births shares the same nature of employing women's reproductive function to accomplish a national goal with the male's dominance. They argued, in such cases, women's will is neglected.

Environmentalists also share values with vocative feminists, welcoming low fertility and population reduction as a good sign for Taiwan to be relieved from the burden and over-consumption on natural resources that were caused by overpopulation and resultant economic development in the past forty years. They were concerned that once the government adopt pro-natal policy, it might bring in another increase of population and interrupt the recovery opportunity for the balance between population and the ecological environment. During the later years of the 1990s, the loud voices from the coalition of the feminist and environmentalist groups, with their discursive yet forceful argument and dispute, drew back the government's planning for a new pro-natal policy almost to a stand for several years. Recent Progress of Population Policy Total fertility rate in Taiwan kept declining when turning into the new twenty-first century. It was 1.40 in 2001, 1.34 in 2002, 1.23 in 2003, 1.18 in 2004, 1.12 in 2005, another 1.12 most recently in 2006. Such drastic decreasing trend showed no signs of standing or even recovery, and eventually aroused the government's anxiety

on its salient tendency (Hsieh 2004). The government resumed its policy planning in 2004, aiming at the formulation of a white paper on population policy (population policy white paper), as a determination to mobilize resources and construct new measures for implementation. In pursuit of public consensus, the government tried to arrange more forces to be included.

In response to the feminists' concerns, Foundation for Women Right Promotion and Development (FWRPD 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005), supported by Executive Yuan, was included in the committee. In 2005, FWRPD set up a platform for communication with various women's groups. The platform reached a common stance that the population policy considerations from the past to the present have been over-stating the value of fertility goals and over emphasizing the national productivity and economic growth. The policy used to lack of gender perspective and ignore the needs of women, on whom the fertility change really depends upon. The platform organized by FWRPD then proposed an ideal version of the guideline of population policy which stresses the value of co-existence of all creatures, socially and naturally. Reflections in this version proposed by women groups highly emphasized the priority of building up a national childcare system, which would relieve women's family burden and benefit women for participation in labor force. On the contrary, the guideline opposed to set any fertility target and disputed the proposal of financial assistance that directly subsidize women's childbearing behavior.

During the process of inclusion for extended participation, various people, including a big group of social scientists and representatives from the general public, were invited to public hearing sessions. Such hearings were separately held in different parts (northern, southern and central) of the country. Discussions from each session were recorded and documented.

## 5. The 2006 Population Policy Guideline Revision

As a consequence of the endeavors since 2004, a new revision of the national Guideline for Population Policy since 1992 was accomplished in June 2006. This revision incorporated much of the ideas pursued by women's group and the environmentalists. Compared to its previous version of 1992, the 2006 version forgave most of the population growth ideas; put more emphases on population quality through improvement of educational system, and on population distribution through more balanced development between urban and rural areas, with a careful watch on ecological equilibrium. With respect to the family and reproduction, the new version Guideline stresses the ideas of implementation of population education and health education which emphasize the value of respect for life. In terms of promotion for sound family functions, the Guideline also stresses the needs for improving social conditions which should be in favor of assisting the parents for childbearing and childcare and providing vigilant protection of children's right.

## 6. The 2007 Population Policy Proposal

In order to formulate concrete measures for population policy in response to current and emergent problems, Ministry of the Interior (MOI) initiated in July 2006 a major project, inviting scholars covering sociologists, demographers, and social welfare scientists, for research in policy planning and integration, in expect of application of research reports as foundation of White Paper on Population Policy for the country.

This research team was assigned the work of examining all current situations, integrating the opinions of various groups in the country, and then

proposed relevant policy measures or strategies in accordance with the basic principles highlighted in the 2006 version of the Population Policy Guideline. Besides, an addition is to overview the other country's experiences and policies for references (McIntosh 1981, Walker 1994, Chamie 1994, McNicoll 2001, Sleenbos 2003, Va de Kaa 2004, D'addio & D'ercole 2005, Li 2005, McDonald 2006). The research team is organized and divided into three groups, separately in charge of three major population issues that are currently encountering Taiwan and probably already experienced by many developed countries. The three issues are: low fertility and social response, population ageing, and cross-border immigrations. Reports (in Chinese) have been published in June 2007.

One of the research reports on policy planning, pertaining to the low fertility issues and social response, achieved a proposal of seven major policy measures at its conclusion (Lee et al. 2007).

#### ■ Building up comprehensive public childcare system

The first policy proposal is to build up a comprehensive childcare system. Specific aim of childcare policy is to reduce the burden of childcare for parents therefore increase the compatibility of family and work for employed women. The current childcare practice is examined as highly relying on family and market (Fong 1997, Wu 2006). Thus either Mother's childcare burden is high or childcare cost is expensive for a family. The evidences also show that married women's participation rate is relatively low that other industrialized countries. (Daly 2000, Hsu 2005) Policy proposal calls for establishment of public childcare system that government should provide sufficient, affordable, and quality assured childcare services for parents. Measures should emphasize on enhancement of community nanny supportive

system. The ideal community nanny supportive system consists of management, training, licensing, registration, supervision of nannies in community, and making matches for family in need of childcare. Community nanny supportive system should be operated by non-profit organizations, with some public subsidy, working at community level. Inspired by women's group, the National Bureau of Children's Welfare already started some pilot projects in 2001, with subsequent extension to 40 supportive systems spreading over 23 counties until 2005. There are 7,582 nannies, among a total of 40,553 licensed nannies in the whole country, registered in community supportive system. However the care capacity of community nanny supportive system has to be further enhanced with public resources assistance in order to benefit more family.

■ Improvement of an equal maternal leave and unrealistic parental leave policy

The second policy proposal is to improve the maternal leave and parental leave policy. This policy aims at reducing the cost immediately following childbearing for parents. In respect of maternal leave, examination of current regulation found insufficient and unequal problems remained in maternal leave benefits among different occupational categories. It is proposed that no matter what occupational category a family is, maternal leave benefit should be raised to three months'salary and should stipulate within employment insurance. As for parental leave, the Equal Employment Act has been promulgated since 2002 in Taiwan, and a parental leave of two years at maximum is stipulated in the act. However, only few workers applied the allowance. Women employed in public sector have been the major applicants

if any, since jobs in public sector have more warrant for their return after leave. Woman workers in private sector face less supportive environment. Employers have to undertake cost from leave-mother's job discontinuity, thus employers' attitude is not favorable. As for women, a general reason why only few applied because income is interrupted during parental leave. Interruption of mother's income causes a financial problem for two-income family at a time that the living cost of the family is about to increase after childbearing. Policy improvement proposes a benefit of six months' salary at maximum should be entitled to parental leave workers by employment insurance. Measures should be expected to relieve to some extent the financial burden caused by the income interruption due to parental leave on one hand, and also be expected to avoid the increase of employer's direct cost on the other hand. As an enforcement of the Equal Employment Act, which allows a parental leave of two years, a supervision system needs to be set up.

#### ■ Provision of financial support with dependent children

The third policy proposal is to provide financial support for family with dependent children. An examination of the rearing and educational expenditures on children that government and family each shared in Taiwan finds that the government in Taiwan played a less sufficient role when compared to Japan.(Cheng 2007, Cheng & Hurng 2005) As the situation in 2002, Taiwan's government shared only about 24% of the total childrearing cost for families with one preschool-aged child, and shared 35% of that for families with two children aged 13 to 15. In Japan, as a contrast, the government shared 51.84% of the total childrearing cost for families with children aged below 18 in 2002. Such evidence indicates that family's

financial burden for raising children is relatively high in Taiwan than in Japanese. Therefore a scheme of children's allowance for family with small dependent children is proposed. The allowance proposal is rather moderate in consideration of the government's recent shortage on financing capability. It is proposed a monthly allowance of NT\$2000 for family with a child aged under six years old, NT\$5, 000. for family with two children aged under six, and NT\$10,000 for family with three or more children aged under six. An amount of NT\$5,000 for family with two children under age of six is nearly equivalent to one forth of its children's expenditure on average in 2002.(Cheng 2007)

Besides child allowance, proposal also made for income tax reduction. By year 2006 in Taiwan, each family member has an income deduction of NT\$77,000 except for the elderly the deduction is higher of NT\$115,500 (1.5 times of the usual ages). The proposal calls for an equivalent deduction for each dependent child aged below 18 to the same amount as of the elderly. Other measures include the income deduction of childcare payment, and educational cost deduction of NT\$25,000 for each schooling child, while currently the amount NT\$25,000 is the upper limit of childcare deduction for a family with schooling dependent children as a whole.

In term of housing policy, the proposal call for an interest subsidy for house loan, to family with three or more children, in consideration of their needs for a larger house or a bigger flat for the number of children they have.

#### ■ Construct friendly occupational environment for childbearing workers

The fourth policy proposal is to construct friendly work environment for childbearing parents. During 1990s, the Worksite Childcare Project caught the attention of the National Council of Labor Affairs and some actions were



initiated to encourage the industries for setting up childcare facilities by measures of cost subsidy. The original idea of such worksite childcare project was to promote women's participation in labor force. The 2002 Equal Employment Act even stipulates employer's responsibility in provision of adequate childcare services for employees. However, the Act only regulates those big enterprises with 250 or more employees, while small enterprises were not applied with the request. As a result, most of employees were not benefited since small enterprises are the characteristics of Taiwan's industries. Accumulatively only around 40 to 80 enterprises were subsidized for their childcare facilities during 2004 to 2006. The portion of childcare provided by nearby worksite services was almost insignificant when compared to the whole population. The beneficiaries are mostly the employees in public enterprises. When further examined, the government's attitude seemed to be somewhat reluctant to really enforce the law, which requires vast manpower input for supervision on the whole labor conditions. Besides, the particular political and economic circumstances in Taiwan may affect the government's stand to favor the employer's side.

Logic of dealing with low fertility shares the common ground with the logic of increase women's labor force participation. Both need to ease the conflicts between family care and work requirement. In argument for construct friendly work environment for childbearing parents, a proposal is decentralization of authority and responsibility of government to each county level. The usual project enforcement by branches of the central government in terms of providing subsidy and supervision, were too far from the local enterprises. It is argued that the local city/county Bureau of Labor Affairs should take more responsibilities, especially in coordination with other local agencies such as county's social and educational administration. The joint efforts at the local level can be more effective in terms of actively providing

information and assistance to help with working parents' needs on childcare. More flexible measures are suggested when operated at county level. Flexibility includes the united cooperation among different enterprises to gain the economy of scale, or connection with local community childcare programs, or even utilization of resources in private sector.

■ Further improve the reproductive health care system

The fifth policy proposal is to further improve the reproductive health care system. Through years of successful implementation of family planning program, the consequences include the improvement of reproductive health delivery services in public health and medical system, in addition to effective control of births in Taiwan. For the new goal of raising fertility, the existing apparatus has been ready for providing knowledge and services for safe and healthy pregnant and maternal deliveries, except an ideological change of the health or medical professionals from birth control into pro-childbirths needs to be disseminated. However, new problems still occurred with ill effects on low fertility. One problem is the high prevalence of induced abortion; the other is sex selection of fetus which results in higher sex ratio at birth. Regarding the induced abortion issue, demographers and health policy makers ever proposed to fasten legal abortions by imposing counseling and three-days waiting period upon pregnant woman. Such idea was aborted as it encountered fierce reactions from feminist group. The research can only reaches a consensus policy proposal that abortion should be reduced through health education particularly for teenagers, and more tolerable social attitudes towards premarital childbirths. The other issue of imbalance of sex ratio easily reaches a proposal arguing for prohibition of the practice of induced abortion due to fetus's sex reason. Difficulties of supervision challenge the

implementation of the physician's abortion practice.

■ Enhance children's right and improve child protection system

The sixth policy proposal is to enhance children's right and improve child protection system in Taiwan. Child protection movement started to gain social notice since late 1980s in Taiwan. In 1990s, this movement had important progress in term of legislative revision of Children's Act in 1993, Prohibition and Prevention Act of Child-and-Teen's Sexual Transaction passed in 1995, and Bureau of Children was instituted in 1999. However, child abuse and low fertility were two problems ranked among the top ten social welfare issues of Taiwan in 2005 (Yu 2005). Child abuse doesn't show decrease along as the number of childbirths declines. On the contrary, the parallel between increasing trend of child abuse and decreasing trend of childbirths together signify an important dangerous condition of children i.e. children's lives are threatened day after day. Both phenomena tell a same story of the break of family function today. It also tells a truth of a decreasing value of children for parents in contemporary. Thus a policy proposal is raised that children's right needs to be reinforced, thus the value of children would be enhanced at the societal level is therefore a precondition for the raise of fertility. Measures proposed include reinforce family supportive system and pervasive social education for children's right.

■ Improve marriage opportunity and children's value as public goods

The final policy proposal is to improve opportunity of marriage and enhance the value of children as public goods. Marriage rate has been decreasing which brought about the decreasing proportion of married

population. Taiwan shares the similar cultural norms with Korea and Japan that praise the virtue of chastity of women and reproduction within marriage (Sun & Lee 2006). Nuptiality decline always exerts important influence on low fertility in such like societies (Chen & Yang 2005). As a matter of fact, the proportion of extramarital births has been negligible in Taiwan even in present decades. Marriage looked as a precondition for childbirth. Thus if marriage rate has not been raised, there will be less hope for increase of fertility.

Examining the causes of low marriage rate find there are factors working at different levels. At the societal level, high education and employment competition contribute to the postponement of marriage for a large scale of male and female population. The obligation of military service for highly educated males also has important effect. At the individual level, lacking motivation of marriage is a syndrome in postmodern era (Van de Kaa 2002, Bernhardt 2004), particularly prevalent among female population (Chuang et al. 2005). On one hand, more women gain independent economic status, however, many resent the traditional and patriarchal dominance of gender relationship in family (Bahr 1982) on the other hand. Cohabitation behavior increased but did not result in stable unions and hence not bring in fertility raising among young cohorts.

Population policy research proposes measures to improve opportunity of marriage by freeing the tight institutional restraints that force young cohorts can only think about getting marriage at very late ages. The high educational institutions might provide family housing for graduate students with spouse or children. The compulsory military service should allow those married young males with children take substitute social services that are compatible with care responsibility for family. Such policy measures are expected to reduce the holding-up effect of university education plus the serial career of military service and employment that may relinquish any

hope for marriage among the youngsters.

Gender equality in marital relation and housework division is seen important to the reviving of motivation for marriage. However men's step of sharing housework has always been reluctant. Related measures are proposed through obligatory education, currently nine years' schooling, both male and female students will be exposed to family life education which stress values and the practice of liberal, equal and cooperative gender relationships in family.

In addition to improvement of marriage opportunity at societal level, policy proposal argue that the nexus of fertility need to change the whole society's recognition that see children as public goods not only as private goods of family. To advance children's value in terms of public goods, child allowance is of course a representation. More public support for family with children need to be practiced. It is proposed public transportation, public museums, concerts, and other public recreational services should consider reduce significant costs for whole family with two or three children.

## 7. Conclusion

Instead of manifesting any successful stories concerning the effective policy measures that can be applied to raise up the fertility level in Taiwan, or in any other Asian country, we reviewed and examined the historical developmental process of Taiwan's policy change on population in recent years. What impressed us the most is that, in a democratic society, people's ideation as well as the government's political agenda is complicated. Tremendous endeavors are needed not only on the issue-research side but also on the continuous dialogue, debates and communication side among various societal forces. The government itself is at most time not a united efficient crew for a constant policy direction. The seven policy proposals

presented in this paper shall not necessarily become the real policies of the government. More communication and negotiation efforts among the different sectors inside the government are yet needed in the future and timely political efforts are sometimes very critical. The consensus building inside and out the government seems to be one of the most challenging parts preceding the build-up of an effective policy for fertility lift.

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## 5. Low Fertility and Policy Responses in Korea

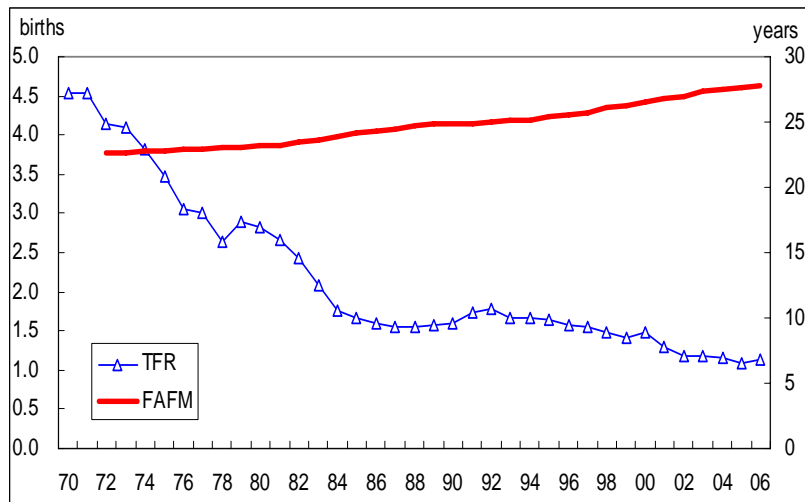
Sam-Sik Lee, Director, Low Fertility Research Team, Center for  
Low Fertility and Aging Studies, KIHASA

### 1. Trends in Fertility

During the 1950s, baby boom-fueled explosive population growth had been eating into the poor basis of economic growth, working as a major cause of the vicious cycle of poverty. Therefore, the Korean government adopted the anti-natal policy and initiated a strong family planning program in the early 1960s when Korea's economic development began to step up. As the family planning program began reaping its benefits and socio-economic changes came into being, including the increase in the standard of livings in the wake of rapid economic growth and better and wider education, the traditional value on high fertility began to wane.

As a result, the total fertility rate (TFR) dropped sharply from 6.00 in 1960, declining to the population replacement level in 1983. Thereafter, a phenomenon of low fertility under TFR of 2.1 has lasted in Korea. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the TFR maintained between 1.6~1.7. However, after this period Korea's TFR declined rapidly as the country struggled through the financial crisis in 1997, below 1.2 in the 2000s, the lowest in the world. The number of children per year was over 1 million during the period between 1960 and 1971 but decreased to below half a million since 2002.

Figure 1. Trends in TFR and Age at First Marriage for Female(AFMF), 1970~2006



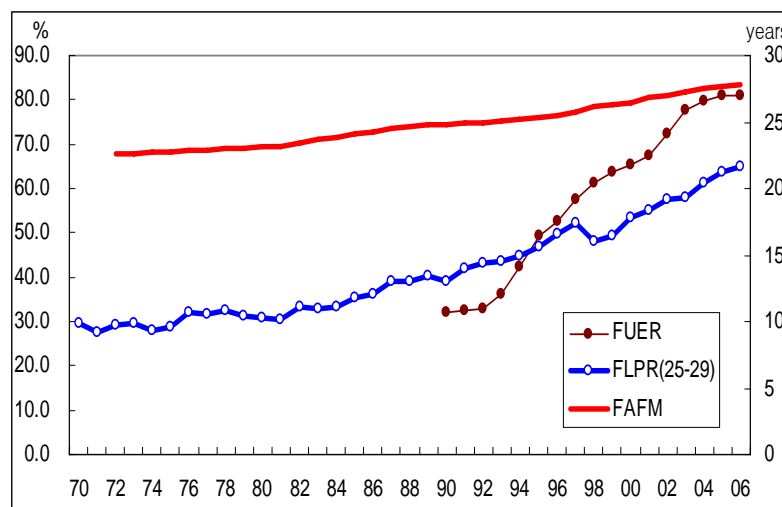
## 2. Causes of Fertility Change in Korea

### 2.1. Demographic factors

Demographically, fertility is determined by two factors, female age at first marriage (FAFM) and fertility rate of married women (Marital fertility rate, MFR). The FAFM was 24.1 years in 1970 but soared up to 27.8 years in 2006, along with the rise of female enrollment in university (FUER) and female labor force participation rate (FLPR) FUER increased from 31.3% in 1990 to 81.9% in 2006. The FLPR increased from 39.3% in 1970 to 50.2% in 2006 (29.4% to 64.9% for ages 25~29 and 37.5% to 51.1% for ages 30~34). Since most births still come from legally married couples in Korea, the increase of age at first marriage has played a role in decreasing fertility

level through curtailing the childbearing span and increasing infertility.

Figure 2. Trends in Female Labor Participation Rate (FLPR), Female University Enrollment Rate (FURE) and Female Age at First Marriage (FAFM)



The marital fertility rate (MFR) shows a decreasing trend in most age groups with some recent exceptions at older age groups. For example, the MFR of age 20~24 continued to decrease from 460 per thousand married women in 1970 to 259 in 2004. The MFR of 25~29 was 362 in 1970, which decreased up to the mid-1980s. MFR, with a short-period increase, again came to decrease since the mid-1990s, reaching 193 in 2004. The MFR of age 30~34 decreased from 217 at age 30~34 in 1970 but began increasing since the mid-1980, reaching 99 in 2004. Such a change of age pattern in MFR was attributable to increases in FAFM and age at birth.

Table 1. Change in Marital Fertility Rate in Korea

Age of Women	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004
20~24	460.3	405.6	426.3	363.6	259.0
25~29	362.8	285.4	219.8	254.5	193.4
30~34	217.5	120.9	54.7	96.8	99.5

Source: KNSO, Causes of Decrease in Number of Births, 2005.

The influence of FAFM and MFR on TFR has been different by period. Until the 1980s the decrease in MFR was responsible for the rapid decrease in TFR. The TFR decline during the 1990s was caused mainly by the increase in FAFM rather than decrease in MFR. However, the rapid decline in TFR during the period of 1999~2004 was attributed to decline of both FAFM and MFR, to the almost similar extent.

Table 2. Contribution of Female Age at First Marriage and Marital fertility Rate

(unit: %)

Factors	1959~1969	1970~1979	1980~1989	1990~1999 (1995~1999)	1999~2004
Decrease of MFR	90	85	61	-95(-2)	49.1
Increase of FAFM	10	15	39	195(102)	50.9

Source: Lee, et al., Causes of Low Fertility and Comprehensive Policy Responses, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, Ministry of Health and Welfare, KIHASA, 2006a.

## 2.2. Socio-cultural and economic factors

Changes in socio-economic circumstances and attitudes on family and having children have had an interactive effect on the above demographic

factors and fertility in Korea.

Low fertility rates take place not only for financial reasons but also for socio-cultural reasons, such as delayed marriage and childbearing, of younger generations from individualistic motives (Freedman, 1995). As economic development makes people better off, stabilizationism and individualism dominate their values and young unmarried people rush to consume, deferring marriage and childbearing which lead to low fertility rates (Lesthage et al., 1988). Younger generations tend to go to work stably from their parents' home, depend on their mothers in their daily lives, and enjoy consumption. This trend increases some kind of aristocratic or parasite singles who do not assume the responsibility to support the family, resulting in lower fertility rates (Atoh, 1998).

There has been a considerable change in values on marriage and having children; in Korean society, marriage and childbirth are no longer a necessity, but a matter of choice. In a 1998 survey by the National Statistical Office, Korea, among the surveyed unmarried women who considered marriage as a necessity accounted for only 20.3% and those who said "it is better to get married than not" made up 63.3%. According to the '2005 National Survey on Marriage and Fertility Dynamics', 28.6% of unmarried men and 50.8% of unmarried women expressed negative attitude on marriage (KIHASA, 2005). Only one fourth of the women expressed that they must have children.



Table 3. Unmarried People's Attitude on Marriage, 2005  
(unit: %)

	necessary to marry	better to marry	does not matter	better not to marry	do not know	total(n)
single male	29.4	42.1	23.4	2.2	2.9	100.0(1,461)
single female	12.8	36.3	44.9	3.7	2.2	100.0(1,204)

Source: Lee. et al., 2005 National Survey on Marriage and Fertility Dynamics, Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, Ministry of Health and Welfare, KIHASA, 2006b.

Married women's views on having children have also changed considerably. The proportion of those who answered that people should have children was 40.5% in 1991. The ratio decreased to 16.2% in 2000 and further to 10.2% in 2006. People's expectation of their children's utility in the past was mostly a means of securing the family labor force, a source of security in retirement, and a succession of the family line. As social security has developed and consciousness on blood relationships has weakened, more emphasis has been placed on children's values as agents of emotional dependence and support. The changes in the values on the qualitative utility of children have affected the quantitative value of their numbers, helping firmly establish people's views favoring a small number of children in Korea.

Table 4. Married Women's Attitude on Having Children

(unit: %)

	must have	better to have	does not matter	do not know	total(n)
1991	40.5	30.7	28.0	0.8	100.0(7,448)
1994	26.3	34.3	38.9	0.5	100.0(5,175)
1997	24.8	35.0	39.4	0.8	100.0(5,409)
2000	16.2	43.2	39.5	1.1	100.0(6,350)
2003	14.1	41.8	43.3	0.8	100.0(6,599)
2006	10.2	39.3	49.8	0.7	100.0(5,386)

Source: Kim et al, National Fertility and Family Health Survey, KIHASA, Each year.

Socio-economic and individual factors that have had a negative influence on fertility, include increase in uncertainty for the future due to high unemployment rate among young population, instable job security, etc., growing economical burden of childrearing including costs for private education of children, incompatibility between works and home, lack of infrastructure for childcare, aggravation of reproductive health, etc. These have also influences on values on marriage and birth.

In a broader view, unstable employment and slow business have been known to be the causes of low fertility rates. As an example, the United Kingdom saw a decrease in fertility rates due to wobbling job security since the early 1970s. In Sweden, an increase in the social security expenditure helped raise childbirths during the 1980s. A recession in the 1990s, however, curtailed its social welfare budgets and helped bring down birthrates (Hoem and Hoem, 1996). Some attribute the reason of East Germany's fertility rates falling from 1.6 before the unification (1990) to 0.7 after the unification (1993) to East Germans' efforts to cope with socio-economic changes following the unification, including high unemployment rates and depreciated labor prices (Witt and Wagner, 1995). Age at marriage sharply rose and birthrates dived in Korea after it was hit hard by the financial crisis in

1997, an indication that a sluggish economy and increased unemployment and job insecurity are contributing factors to lowered fertility rates. According to 2005 National Survey on Marriage and Fertility Dynamics, main reasons for delaying marriage and birth appeared to be individual's unemployment and unstable status of employment.

An increase in educational expenses also helps lower fertility rates. Because of the exorbitant costs of education from preschool to college, parents often put priority on quality rather than quantity and prefer fewer children or no children at all. According to 2005 National Survey on Marriage and Fertility Dynamics, 9.9% of the women at age 20~39 stopped their childbirth with 1 child due to burden of childrearing cost and 18.2% due to burden of educational cost (those with 2 children were 11.9% and 23.8%, respectively). This is partly because children are no longer taken as an investment for their parents' retired years, and raising them is now regarded as an opportunity cost for the time and income of the couples, especially for the women. Such burden of child-rearing was associated with stability of income and housing.

In Korea, women have increasingly participated in economic activities; The economic participation rate of women at age 25~29 increased from 47.9% in 1995 to 65.9% in 2005 and 47.6% to 50.1% for the women of 30~34. However, in Korea social circumstances and infra have been not well established in favor of women's compatibility between work and home including childcare. Grant of maternity leave and childcare leave were poor in sustaining household expenditures. Above all, the social-cultural such as family-friendly employment and gender-equal family were not well fostered. For example, working mothers spent 197minutes on house chores and child care but her husbands spent only 72 minutes, on average, in a working day (Lee et al, 2006b). Childcare services and facilities were inappropriate for the

various demands of working mothers, in terms of both quantity and quality. For example, the provision of childcare facilities met only 30% of demand as of 2005 (Lee et al, 2006b). Culturally, Korean men's roles in house-work remain more or less the same. As balancing housework and economic activities emerges as a great challenge to women, they tend to have children as late, and fewer, as possible and some even do not want any at all. Eventually, women have to choose one between job and housework, in Korean society. According to 2005 National Survey on Marriage and Fertility Dynamics, 60.6% of the working women were out of work due to marriage and 49.8% due to first childbirth.

Table 5. Costs for Childcare and Education, Imposing on Household  
(unit: thou. won, %)

	1 child family				average	2 children family	3 children family
	0~2 years	3~5 years	primary sch.	secondly sch.			
high Income Household	214 (4.8)	432 (8.3)	843 (16.0)	1,027 (20.9)	660 (13.6)	898 (19.3)	1,160 (23.0)
low Income Household	152 (8.2)	332 (16.7)	362 (17.0)	562 (26.0)	372 (19.6)	505 (24.3)	582 (26.7)

Note: 1) the criterion is the monthly average income (3,073,029 Korean won) of the nuclear family as of 2003, provided by KNSO.

2) ( ) denotes percentage of cost for childrearing and education to the total income.

Table 6. Number of Childcare Leave

	grant (Mil. won)	childcare leavers			monthly paid per each	ratio of childcare leavers to maternity leavers(%)
		total	female	male		
2003	10,576	6,816	6,712	104	300,000 won	21
2004	20,803	9,304	9,123	181	400,000 won	24
2005	28,242	10,700	10,500	200	400,000 won	26

Source: Ministry of Labor, Press Report, 2006. 2.

One thing that distinguishes Korea from such Western countries as France and Sweden is that in Korea premarital childbirth is strongly suppressed both socially and individually. The socio-biological gap between the age at marriage and sexual activities has increased the number of premarital pregnancies. However, in Korea where ceremonial marriage is established as a strong social norm and extramarital childbearing is not socially accepted, most such pregnancies end up being compulsorily aborted for reasons of society's cold treatment and criticism. According to a 2005 survey, 42% of some 350,000 induced abortions that take place annually are carried out on unmarried pregnant women. This shows that Korea's fertility rates are more directly affected by nuptiality; an increase of age at marriage leads to a decrease in fertility rates.

### 3. Policy Response to Low Fertility in Korea

#### 3.1. Shift of population policy

In Korea, the national family planning program, as a major means of population control policy, was adopted in 1962. This program includes the demographic target of reducing the annual population growth rate and the total fertility rate, and it was vigorously implemented as a categorical program through the successive five-year economic development plans. The strength of family planning program lied in its limited goals, the acquisition of resources and the building of an organizational process specifically for the demographic goals. Also, commitment to family planning goals led to development of extensive linkages with other sectors such as the mass media, and private practitioners' clinics and hospitals.

As a result of these efforts by the government in increasing population

control programs, fertility took a drastic downturn in the 1980s. In 1988 the national family planning program in Korea achieved its primary objectives of reducing the fertility rate to below the replacement level and accomplishing near universal contraceptive use. As a result, the government began to move away from its policy on free contraceptive distribution through government programs toward a self-paid system, administered by private and commercial sectors, such as the nationwide health insurance program.

Nevertheless, no sooner was one set of problems overcome than new challenges of a totally different nature arose out of the decreased fertility rate. Some of the unfavorable consequences of rapid fertility decline in Korea include an unbalanced sex ratio, an increase in the elderly population, and a high prevalence of selective abortions. In order to deal with these new problems, it became apparent that Korea would have to shift its population policy directions in a way that best reflected the changing socio-economic and demographic conditions currently being witnessed and forecast for the immediate future.

For this purpose, the government established a Population Policy Deliberation Committee in December 1994 to review population policy by focusing on its past accomplishments and future prospects, as well as related socio-economic problems, in an effort to work out new policy directions and measures for the 21st century. In 1996, the government officially adopted new population policy with emphasis on reproductive health care services.

As the fertility rate has, however, continued to decrease, a Committee on Ageing and Future Society(CAFS) was established to prepare policies and programs for pro-natality and preparations for the coming aged society in 2003. The Basic Law on Low Fertility and Aged Society was promulgated in May 2005. In June 2006, the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, upgraded from by CAFS, promulgated the First Basic

Planning for Low Fertility and Aged Society (2006~2010).

### 3.2. Policy Responses to Low Fertility

The First Basic Plan for Low Fertility and Aged Society (2006~2010), which was set up in 2006, aims to foster environments in favor of child-rearing, to establish the base for improving quality of life in an aged society, and to secure power for economic growth in low fertility and aged society. The First Plan will be followed by the Second Plan (2011~2015) with the aim of steady recovery of fertility rate and consolidation of the social system for an aged society, and then by the Third Plan (2016~2020) with the aim of increase of fertility rate to the average level of OECD countries and successful adaptation for an aged society.

In an effort to foster an environment appropriate for child-rearing, the Plan is geared to strengthening the responsibility of society for child-birth and child-rearing, fostering a family-friendly and gender-equal culture, and raising future generation in a wholesome way. Other areas of the Plan are establishing the base for improving quality of life in the aged society through stabilization of income security and health security, and fostering of circumstances for active social participation for the elderly; and securing power for economic growth in low fertility and aged society through fostering circumstances of labor market for the women and the elderly, introducing and utilizing professional and technical foreign workers and Korean brotherhood with foreign nationality, and activation of social integration program for adoption to multi-cultural society, and developing human resource and establishing life-time study system.

Firstly, responsibility of society for child-birth and child-rearing will be strengthened by the following measures; 1) extending supports for costs of

child care and education, and expanding the after-school education to attenuate the economical burden of households; 2) providing various incentives for families with children; reinforcing supports for the adoption family; expanding public and workplace childcare facilities, improving quality of service in the private child-care facilities, and extending child-care service to meet diversified demands; 3) establishing the health and nutrition system for maternity and children, providing economical support for couples suffering from infertility and aids for postpartum care and new-born infants of the poor class.

Secondly, fostering of a family-friendly, gender-equal culture is to be achieved by the following measures; 1) increasing compatibility between work and family responsibilities through expanding government's supports for maternity leave grant, support the women's return to the labor market after their childcare, diversification of childcare leave, flexibility of labor conditions, and support for the family-friendly establishments; 2) formulating gender-equal family and social culture by educational programs at school and society, and intensified publicity and strengthening the ties between the family members through supports for family leisure and culture, and provision of educational program for family life.

Thirdly, raising future generation healthy is to be realized through providing children and youths with safe environments, and observing children's rights.



Table 7. Policy Measures for Fostering Environments favorable of  
Childbirth and Childcare in Response to Low Fertility

<p>1. strengthening responsibility of society for child-birth and child-rearing</p> <p>1-1. attenuating socio-economic burden of childcare for family with children</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> extending supports for costs of child care and pre-school education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support for daycare and pre-school education for 0~4 years old children(subsidy)</li> <li>▪ support for free daycare and pre-school education for 4 years old children(free of charge)</li> <li>▪ support for daycare and education for the family with two children or more</li> </ul> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> expanding the after-school education to attenuate the economical burden of households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ improvement of after-school education system and support for the low income class</li> <li>▪ provision of voucher for low income class</li> <li>▪ expansion of primary daycare</li> <li>▪ integration of after-school daycare and education</li> <li>▪ improvement of cyber home education</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> expansion of tax and social insurance benefit for the family with many children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ revision of taxation system in favor of the family with many children</li> <li>▪ revision of assessment system for health insurance fee</li> <li>▪ introduction of credit system in national pension</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> providing various incentives for families with children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support for stability of housing for families with children</li> <li>▪ providing priority to use of daycare facilities families with children</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> reinforcing supports for the adoption family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ improvement for perception on adoption</li> <li>▪ strengthening support for adopting families</li> <li>▪ support for fees of adoption</li> <li>▪ support for free daycare and pre-school education</li> <li>▪ introduction of adoption allowance</li> <li>▪ increase in subsidy and medical cost for the adopters of disabled children</li> </ul>
<p>1-2. expanding childcare infra, with diversity and good quality</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> expanding public and workplace childcare facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expansion of public childcare facilities</li> <li>▪ establishment of and support for integrated daycare facilities</li> <li>▪ expansion of workplace childcare facilities</li> </ul> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> improving quality of service in the private child-care facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support for improvements of private child-care facility's services</li> <li>▪ enforcement of evaluation certification for child-care facilities</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> extending child-care service to meet diversified demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expansion of prolonged daycare services</li> <li>▪ expansion of all-day nursery school</li> <li>▪ support of helpers for part-time daycare facilities</li> <li>▪ establishment of and support for daycare facilities within cultural facilities</li> </ul>
<p>1-3. expansion of support for pregnancy and childbirth</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ establishing the health and nutrition system for maternity and children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ establishment of professional centers for health of maternity and infant</li> <li>▪ establishment of basis for systematic health management of new born babies</li> <li>▪ provision of credible information and counseling services for childbirth and childcare</li> <li>▪ support for reproductive health program</li> <li>▪ expansion national prerequisite vaccination</li> <li>▪ expansion of support for health diagnosis and nutritional management for maternity and infants</li> <li>▪ nutrition-supplementary management for maternity and infants</li> <li>▪ expansion of support for breast-feeding</li> <li>▪ protection of maternity from inadequate induced abortion</li> </ul> </li> <li>⊕ providing economical support for couples suffering from infertility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support for costs of test-tube baby</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> aids for postpartum care and new-born infants of the poor class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ provision of helper service for maternity protection</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>2. fostering of the family-friendly and gender-equal socio-culture</p> <p>2-1. increasing compatibility between works and home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ expanding government's supports for maternity leave grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ support for small-medium establishments in paying grants</li> <li>▪ providing grants for abortion and stillbirth leave</li> <li>▪ introducing partner's childbirth nursery leave</li> </ul> </li> <li>⊕ diversification of childcare leave and flexibility of labor conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ activation of childcare leave</li> <li>▪ introduction of curtailed labor hours during child-care period</li> <li>▪ increasing flexibility of working pattern</li> </ul> </li> <li>⊖ support the women's return to the labor market after their childcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expansion of support for subsidy for women's return to work after childbirth</li> <li>▪ support for subsidy for continuing employment of the temporary workers after their childbirth</li> <li>▪ perating programs of housewives' return to labor market</li> <li>▪ perating manpower bank of women with career stopped</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> support for the family-friendly establishments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ development of model for operating family-friendly enterprisers</li> <li>▪ support for family-friendly enterprisers such as providing enterprisers' certificate</li> <li>▪ development and spread of family-friendly education programs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>2-2. formulating gender-equal family and social culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊗ strengthening school and society educations and intensified publicity in lifetime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ school and society educations and intensified publicity in lifetime</li> </ul> </li> <li>⊕ strengthening the ties between the family members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ provision of educational program and family counseling for family life</li> <li>▪ supports for family leisure and culture</li> <li>▪ accommodating family-friendly community environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>3. raising future generation healthy "abbreviations"</p>

Source: Korean Government, The First Basic Planning for Low Fertility and Aged Society(2006-2010, 2006.)

#### 4. Evaluation and Suggestions

Although public concerns over low fertility arose since 2002 and some policy measures were enforced since 2003 to 2005, it is with the First Basic Plan for Low Fertility and Aged Society in 2006 when policy responses to low fertility were taken in a more comprehensive and active way. Therefore, it needs some more time for its authentic evaluation.

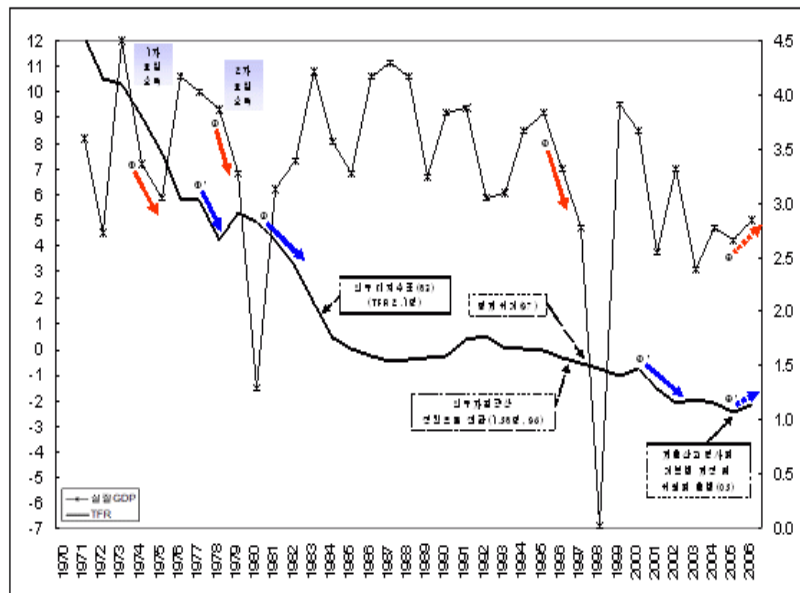
However, it is notable that the number of children increased for the first time since 1994 from 438 thousand in 2005 to 452 thousand in 2006, increasing TFR from 1.08 in 2005 to 1.13 in 2006. The only exception was in 2000, when the number of births increased, due to the new millennium baby boom. It was also estimated by the Government using 8 months' birth records based on Residential Registration System that the number of births would further increase to 468 thousand with a TFR of 1.22 in 2007.

From such a short-period result, it may be too early to note that the Korean fertility reached its lowest point and turned toward an increasing trend. However, such an increase is worth to evaluate for maintaining the increasing trend in the future. In this context, KIHASA in collaboration with Presidential Committee on Aging Society and Population Policy and Ministry of Health and Welfare, is now studying the causes of increase in fertility and its implications. The main factors under considerations in this study include demographic structure such as age structure of childbearing period, socio-cultural change, economic cycle, policy implementation, public concerns and atmospheres, etc.

It might be noted that the recent increase in TFR(empirically for the years of 2006 and 2007) is attributable to economic recovery accompanied by rise in employment rate since 2003, increase in marriages(especially first marriages) in recent years, fostering of social atmospheres in favor of

pro-natality, and partly launching of policy response. The current policy response will be expected to have greater effect on fertility, since it started just right now. Anyhow, the result of the study will be published by this December.

Figure 3. Real GDP Growth Rate and TFR, 1970~2006



It may be possible to make some suggestion for future improvement in policy response to low fertility by studying structure, quality, and delivery system of programs. Those suggestions are as followings;

- 1) Most of support for daycare, education, healthcare, etc. are too confined to low income class. It needs to expand the programs to all classes as early as possible.

2) It needs to increase the number of items and benefits, covered by Health Insurance System, since the medical costs for both preventive and curative purposes are too expensive for the families, especially with many children. It also needs to extend the benefits of certain insurance items to the older children such as high school students.

3) It needs to increase benefits of childcare leave to replace wage for the life of family. This will play a very important role in activating childcare leave system to increase compatibility between work and home.

4) Currently, the government's support is to cover a part of cost for daycare and medical care, which is covered by Health Insurance System. And most of the support tends to be confined to the low income class. In Korea, the cost of layette including clothing and food is expensive, from which the family with children suffer. In order to practically attenuate the family's burden for childcare, it needs to introduce the child allowance and education allowance, which covers all children under certain age, regardless of order of birth and without mean tests. Those allowances will help the families to rear their children in a better condition and will thereby help the fertility level to increase. The education allowance needs to be operated until the public education being realized.

5) An emphasis on men's obligations to housework will make it easier for women to balance child-rearing and work, positively working on having children. On the other hand, enhanced gender equality will help more women to take part in economic activities and have fewer children than in the past.

6) Although the lowest fertility was greatly attributable to postponement

and giving-up of marriage, the policy measures for raising the marriage rate were not included in the First Basic Plan, Currently, some local governments and private organizations devoted themselves to providing unmarried people with information and mediation to increase opportunities for marriage. The postponement and giving-up of marriage has been strongly associated with economic situations and change in values on marriage and childbirth. Therefore, it needs to provide the youth with employment opportunities with stable status as well as to put an emphasis on values in favor of marriage and children from their early ages under school and social education system. In addition, policy measures, rather systematical and effective, for encouraging and facilitating marriages need to be designed to enable the single males and females to marry at the time they desire to.

7) In order to avoid duplication and maximize effectiveness, all responses need to be designed in an integrated manner which can bring a synergy effect, in creating an environment favorable to child care and increasing the fertility level.

8) It needs to increase investments for the future generations. Currently, Korea Government plans to spend 19 trillion won, which is quite lower than those of OECD countries. Enlightenment and appeal with small investment would have limitations to achieve the reasonable fertility level for the future.

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## IV. 주제발표 요약 및 토론내용

### 1. 세미나 배경 및 주제발표 내용 요약

#### 가. 배경 및 목적

1960년대에 합계출산율이 2.1명 이하인 국가는 독일, 덴마크, 핀란드 등 불과 3개국에 불과했으나 최근에는 60개국으로 증가되었고 이중 합계출산율이 1.5명 이하인 초저출산국이 28개국으로 증가되어 인구문제의 초점이 과거의 출산억제에서 출산장려정책으로 전환되는 경향을 보이고 있다. 특히 동아시아 국가 중 우리나라를 포함한 대만, 싱가포르, 홍콩은 과거 고도의 경제성장과 가족계획사업의 성공사례로 높이 평가 받았지만 이제는 세계 최하위의 출산율을 기록하며, 이를 극복하기 위한 정책대안을 강구하기 위한 노력을 경주하고 있다.

대부분의 저출산 국가가 직면하고 있는 저출산 원인은 미혼율 증가와 유배우 출산율 감소에 기인한 것이다. 현재 동아시아 저출산국에서 추진하고 있는 대응정책은 대부분이 프랑스를 포함한 OECD 저출산 선진국에서 경험했던 가족복지 중심의 정책사례를 면밀히 검토하여 수립되었다. 그러나 아시아 국가에서는 서구사회와는 달리 동거나 혼외출산이 사회적으로 수용될 수 없는 여건에 있기 때문에 동아시아 지역의 결혼 및 출산문화에 적합한 정책수단의 개발이 절실히 요구되고 있다.

따라서 금번 국제 세미나는 과거 우리나라와 같이 고도 경제성장과 가족계획사업을 추진한 경험이 있는 동아시아 저출산국이 중심이 되어 아시아 지역의 결혼 및 출산문화에 적합한 정책대안을 모색한다는 취지

하에서 개최하게 되었다. 이번 서울 세미나에서는 동아시아 지역의 사회·문화적 특성에 맞는 저출산 대응정책을 개발하기 위한 국제비교연구를 활성화하고 저출산 대책에 관한 각국의 경험과 지식을 교류하기 위한 지역단위 세미나의 정기적 개최의 필요성이 강조되었고, 특히 동아시아 지역에서 출산율 회복을 위한 결혼율 증대와 초혼연령의 단축 방안에 관한 국제적 관심을 촉구하는 계기가 되었다.

#### 나. 동아시아 저출산국의 출산율 변동추이

아시아 국가 중 일본과 싱가포르가 가장 먼저 경제개발을 경험하였고, 한국과 대만이 그 뒤를 따랐다. 이들 동아시아 국가에서는 경제개발과 동시에 출산율 전환(Fertility transition)이 일어났다. 일본과 싱가포르는 한국과 대만보다 훨씬 먼저 출산율 감소를 경험하여 이미 1970년대 중반에 인구대체수준으로 떨어졌다. 한국과 대만은 1960년대 후반부터 나타난 급격한 인구감소를 시작으로, 일본과 싱가포르보다 10년쯤 늦은 1983년에 처음으로 인구대체출산율(2.1명)을 경험하였다.

일본의 출산율은 인구대체수준으로 떨어진 이후에도 출산율은 완만하게 계속 감소하여 1992년에는 1.5명을 기록하였다. 싱가포르의 경우, 1976년과 2000년 사이 합계출산율이 1.5명과 2.0명 사이에서 유동적인 변화를 보였으나, 이후 다시 감소하여 1.5명 수준으로 줄었다. 대만과 한국은 출산율 감소에서 비슷한 양상을 보인다. 두 나라 모두 출산율이 인구대체수준으로 떨어진 이래 지속적으로 낮아져 1998년에는 1.5명을 기록하였다. 2004년에는 동아시아 4개국 모두 합계출산율이 1.3명까지 감소하였다(p. 46 부록 I 참조).

합계출산율이 1.5명 이하로 떨어지면 연령구조와 미래인구규모가 영향을 받게 되고 일정한 기간 내 출산율 회복이 어려울 수도 있다. 이 같

은 점을 고려해 인구통계학자들은 합계출산율 1.5명 이하를 심각하게 낮은율(critically lowfertility), 또는 초저출산율로 표현하고 있다. 합계출산율이 오랫동안 1.5명을 밑돌아온 동아시아 사회에서는 출산율 감소에 대한 우려의 목소리가 높아졌고, 각 국 정부는 이를 해결하기 위해 노력하고 있다. 싱가포르와 일본은 각각 1984년과 1992년에 출산장려 정책을 펴기 시작하였고, 한국은 2004년, 대만은 2006년에 저출산에 대한 정부의 진지한 대응이 시작되었다.

한국의 사례는 인구정책과 출산율의 밀접한 상호 연관성을 잘 보여준다. 1962년부터 가족계획과 경제개발계획을 실시한 이래, 한국의 합계출산율은 1960년의 6.0명에서 1983년에는 인구대체수준인 2.08명으로 감소하였으며, 1985년에는 1.67명으로 떨어졌다. 1985년과 1997년 사이 1.5명과 1.8명 사이의 유동성을 유지하던 출산율은, 2000년에 1.47명, 2005년에는 1.08명까지 다시 감소하였다. 세계에서 유례를 찾기 힘들 정도의 이런 낮은 출산율은 1997년 한국경제위기와도 관련이 있는 것처럼 보인다. 합계출산율의 저하는 신생아수가 1980년의 870,000명에서 2005년에는 440,000명으로 내려간 변화를 동반한다.

이와 같이 1985~1995년 기간 중 평균 1.7명 수준의 저출산이 지속됨에 따라 정부는 1996년 인구증가억제정책을 폐지하고, 인구자질 및 복지증진 정책에 초점을 둔 신인구정책을 채택하였다. 신인구정책의 목적은 1) 지속 가능한 사회경제개발에 필요한 출산 수준의 유지, 2) 가족 건강 및 복지 증진, 3) 출생 성비의 균형유지, 4) 여성 복지와 사회참여의 증진, 5) 노인 건강과 복지증진, 6) 인구의 지역별 균형분포를 달성하기 위한 것이었다.

신인구정책에 따라, 정부와 비정부 단체들도 초점을 건강과 복지 쪽으로 전환하였다. 하지만 출산억제정책의 폐지에도 불구하고, 합계출산율은 2000년 1.47명까지 하락했다. 이에 따라 많은 연구자들이 출산장려대책의 필요성을 제안하였으나, 2004년 전까지 출산장려정책은 마련되지

않았다. 한국보다는 늦게 빠른 출산율 감소를 경험한 대만의 경우에도, 2006년에 처음으로 저출산에 따른 대응책을 모색하기 시작하였다.

동아시아 사회의 출산율이 인구대체수준에서 초저수준으로 떨어진 시기와 속도는 저마다 다르다. 하지만 이 과정에서 몇 가지 공통적인 특성이 나타난다. 가장 주목할 만한 점은 유럽과 영어권 국가와 비교했을 때 혼외출산과 동거의 비율이 매우 낮다는 것이다. 인구대체수준으로의 저하 이후의 출산감소 분석에 따르면, 이들 동아시아 사회의 경우 25세와 34세 사이의 여성 미혼율 증가가 주원인으로 지적되었다. 수많은 연구가 이런 특성이 유교 사상에 근거한 강한 가족 규범에 기인한다고 분석한다.

#### 다. 동아시아 저출산국의 출산율 감소 원인

일본의 출산율 감소 원인과 한국, 싱가포르, 대만의 감소 원인에는 다소 차이가 있다. 싱가포르의 경우, 1960년경 여성 한 명당 약 6명이던 출산율이 1975년에는 인구대체수준까지 하락하였고, 한국과 대만의 경우에는 1960년의 6명에서 1984년에 인구대체수준으로 감소하였다. 출산율이 빠르게 감소하는 동안, 산업화, 도시화, 여성교육수준의 증가, 노동 시장의 여성 참여 증가, 영유아 사망률 감소 등과 같은 경제사회적 변화가 발생했다. 이런 경제사회적 변화들이 출산율 감소에 영향을 미친 것은 분명한 사실이다. 그러나 이들 사회가 실시한 강력하고 효율적인 가족계획 프로그램도 빠른 출산율 감소에 기여한 것으로 분석된다. 동아시아 사회의 가족계획 프로그램이 가지는 공통적인 특성으로는 가족계획 사업에 대한 풍부한 재정 지원과 핵가족 규범을 장려하는 강력한 규제 및 보상제도를 포함한 사회지원시책과 홍보교육 프로그램을 꼽을 수 있다. 이에 더해, 이들 사회의 가족계획 프로그램은 국가 경제개발 계획 및 지역

보건사업에 통합되었고, 정부의 많은 부처로부터 풍부한 재정지원과 행정 지원을 받았다.

일본의 경우, 정부차원의 공식적인 가족계획 프로그램은 없었지만 일본가족계획협회 등 민간단체 중심으로 매우 활발한 홍보계몽활동과 더불어 콘돔과 같은 피임방법이 널리 보급되었다. 그러나 인구통계학자들은 특정 상황에서 인공유산 허용한 1948년의 우생보호법의 통과가 일본 정부가 핵가족 규범을 지지한 신호라고 보고 있다. 이는 대가족을 장려했던 전쟁 전 입장에 비하면 상당한 변화이다. 일본의 출산율 감소는 2차 대전 이후 경제사회 발전에 따른 핵가족 규범의 빠른 확산, 자발적인 피임 사용 및 인공유산이 그 원인인 것으로 보인다.

요약하면, 이들 동아시아 저출산 국가는 고도의 경제성장과 가족계획의 확산으로 결혼, 가족, 자녀에 관한 가치관이 급변하고 1997년의 아시아 경제위기에 직면하면서 출산율은 최저수준으로 감소하였고, 이 과정에서 결혼과 출산의 연기 등으로 원치 않는 임신은 피임에 의해서 예방된 것으로 평가되고 있다.

## 라. 동아시아 저출산국의 출산율 감소추이

동아시아 사회의 출산율 감소는 서구 사회와 비교했을 때 몇몇 다른 특성을 가지고 있다. 그 중 한가지가 결혼 패턴이다. 서구사회는 출산율 전환 이전부터 혼인연령이 상대적으로 높았으며, 결혼의 보편성도 낮았다. 그러나, 동아시아 사회에서는 출산율 전환 이전 혼인연령이 낮았으며, 결혼도 보편적으로 여겨졌다. 출산율 전환의 시작 이래, 이들 사회는 혼인연령의 상승과 미혼율 증가와 같은 결혼 패턴의 변화를 경험하였고, 이는 다시 출산율 전환에 기여했다.

동아시아 4개국 모두, 혼외 출산은 전체 출산의 2% 미만으로 아주

낮은 편이다. 따라서, 이들의 경우, 기혼 여성의 비율 감소가 합계출산율 저하와 밀접한 연관이 있다. 출산율이 높은 수준에서 인구대체수준으로 감소하는 동안, 혼인율과 유배우출산율(marital fertility rate) 모두 상당히 감소하였다. 이들 사회의 출산율이 인구대체수준 이하로 떨어진 것도 전적으로 25세~34세 사이 기혼 여성 비율의 감소가 그 원인으로 지적되어 왔다. 그러나 최근에 와서는 이러한 분석이 반드시 옳지는 않다는 의견이 제기되기도 한다.

#### 마. 가족, 결혼 및 출산에 관한 가치관의 변화

동아시아 저출산 국가의 전통적인 가족체계는 부계계승과 엄격한 성 역할 구분을 강조하는 유교사상에 기반하고 있다. 현대 경제사회적 상황에서 나타나는 낮은 혼인율과 저출산에 관련된 행동은 동아시아 가족 체계의 몇몇 특성들에 의해 쉽게 영향을 받을 수 있다. 동아시아 가족체계의 두드러진 특성 중 하나는 결혼과 출산의 긴밀한 연관성이다. 앞에서 언급되었듯이, 출산은 거의 예외 없이 결혼이라는 테두리 안에서, 그리고 결혼에 곧이어 이루어진다는 것이 사회적 통념이다.

일생을 통하여 부모와 자녀 사이에 형성되는 강한 정서적·경제적 고리도 현대 산업화 사회에서 출산을 저해하는 행동을 야기할 수 있다. “결국 자녀를 가장 잘 돌보는 것은 어머니다”라는 생각이 많은 동아시아 지역에 팽배하고, 이런 태도는 현대 산업화 사회에서 저출산으로 이어지기 쉽다. 동아시아 사회에서 교육, 산업화 및 도시화 수준의 증가는 여성의 노동시장 참여를 확대하였다. 이제 여성이 결혼 전 노동시장에 참여하는 것은 거의 보편적인 현상이다. 높은 비율의 기혼 여성들이 직업을 가지기를 원한다. 이들 중 전통적인 어머니 역할에 대한 이상을 가지고 있는 여성들은 자녀가 어릴 경우 일을 하지 않기를 원할 것이다. 이들은

영유아를 보육원에 맡기는 것에 찬성하는 부모들에 비해 더 적은 수의 자녀를 낳거나, 자녀를 낳지 않을 수도 있다. 취학연령의 자녀를 가진 부모 중, 양질의 교육 제공에 대한 의무감을 느끼는 이들은 교육에 많이 투자하고, 종종 한 명 이상의 자녀를 키우는 것이 경제적으로 불가능하다고 여긴다.

동아시아의 미혼 남녀는 그들의 나이 혹은 취업과 상관없이 부모와 함께 산다. 이런 생활 방식은 대부분의 서구 사회와는 달리, 이런 생활 방식 내에서 젊은이들은 결혼을 하고, 집을 마련해서 스스로의 가족을 구성해야 하는 부담감에서 자유롭다. 반면에, 결혼한 부부에 대해서는 남편의 부모에게 사회적·정서적 지원을 제공하며 함께, 혹은 가까이에서 생활할 것을 기대한다. 이런 기대치는 여성들의 결혼에 대한 부담을 증가시킨다.

남편은 가족의 생계를 책임지고, 아내는 살림과 가족을 돌보는 전통적인 성 역할 분담은 서구사회에 비해 동아시아 사회에서 훨씬 더 강하다. 이런 식의 역할 분담은 어린 자녀를 키우거나 직장과 집안일의 이중 부담을 겪을 경우 여성을 노동시장에서 탈퇴하게 만든다. 이런 이유로, 여성은 가능하면 오랫동안 직장에 머무르기를 바라게 되고, 이는 결혼과 출산의 연기로 이어지기 쉽다.

강한 세대간의 고리는 출산에 긍정적인 영향을 줄 수도 있다. 부모와 함께 살거나 가까이에서 사는 것은 자녀가 있는 젊은 부부에게 육아와 가사 면에서 도움이 될 수도 있다. 부모의 도움은 젊은 부인들이 직장과 출산을 보다 쉽게 병행할 수 있게 할 것이다. 세대간의 유대관계가 긴밀한 사회의 경우에는 출산에 큰 가치를 부여하고, 이는 적당한 출산율 유지에 긍정적인 효과를 줄 수 있다. 동아시아에서는, 부모와 자식의 관계가 남편과 아내의 관계보다 더 중요하며 지속적인 것으로 간주된다. 예를 들어, 한 연구에 따르면 동아시아 사람들은 만족스러운 삶을 살기 위한 조건으로 출산이 결혼보다 더 중요하다고 본다. 또한, 동아시아 대부

분의 여성들은 두 명의 자녀를 두는 것을 이상적이라고 여기며, 상당수의 성인 남녀는 자녀를 두어야 비로소 결혼이 완전해진다고 생각하는 것으로 조사되었다.

비록 동아시아 가족 체계의 몇몇 특성들이 출산에 기여 한다 할지라도, 현대 산업화 사회에서는 부정적인 측면이 더 많은 것 같다. 즉, 결혼은 개인의 삶에 있어 중요한 부분으로 여겨진다. 그러나, 사회의 다른 경제사회적 조건들이 현대화되면서 여성에게 결혼은 따르기 어려운 제도가 되었다. 오늘날, 동아시아 사회의 여성들은 상당비율이 대학교육을 받으며, 일반적으로 높은 수준의 교육을 받고 있다. 대부분의 여성들이 결혼 전에 직업을 가진다. 그러나, 결혼 후 기혼 여성에 대한 기대 역할은 철저하게 전통적인 역할로 전환된다. 예를 들면, 시댁식구들에게 경제적, 정서적 및 물리적 지원, 시댁 식구들과의 동거 및 긴밀한 관계 유지, 출산과 양육, 직업 포기, 혹은 출산 후 "이중 부담" 등이 기혼 여성들에게 기대되는 역할이다. 이런 점들을 고려할 때, 동아시아 여성들의 만혼 경향은 놀라운 일이 아니다. 지난 25년 동안, 결혼 경험이 없는 30~34세 여성의 비율은 급격히 증가하였다. 최근 통계에 따르면, 이 연령층의 여성들 중 결혼한 적 없는 여성의 비율이 싱가포르와 한국은 약 20%, 대만 약 30%, 그리고 일본은 30% 이상인 것으로 조사되었다(p. 46 부록 II 참조).

## 바. 동아시아 사회에서의 가족 및 국가의 역할

동아시아의 강한 가족적 전통에 따라 이 지역 국가들은 가족복지에 있어 서구사회의 경우와 비교할 때 그 역할이 미미했다. 한국의 사회학자 장경섭은 가족이 가족구성원들에 대한 사회적, 경제적 정서적 지원의 모든 책임을 진다고 주장한다. 자녀들의 미래가 그들의 교육 성과에 크게 영향을 받게 되면서 양육의 비용은 현저히 증가하였고, 일반적인 교



육 수준도 상당히 높아졌다. 이런 상황에서는 가족 구성원들의 복지를 최대화하기 위해 적은 수의 자녀를 낳는 것이 합리적인 선택일 것이다.

동아시아 사회의 경제사회적 조건과 가족 체계가 변화함에 따라 가족 복지에 대한 정부의 기대역할이 점점 커지게 되었고, 최근 인구 정책도 이런 점을 반영하고 있다. 그러나 정책을 실행하기 위한 재정 및 인적 자원을 고려할 때 상당한 비용이 요구될 것으로 보인다.

#### 사. 동아시아 국가들의 저출산 대응정책

출산율이 처음으로 대체수준 아래로 떨어졌을 때, 동아시아의 여러 국가정부들은 변화 추이를 지켜보는 신중한 입장을 취했다. 출산율이 더 하락할 가능성에 대한 논의가 많이 있었지만, 인구 정책은 크게 변하지 않았다. 그 당시 두 명의 자녀에 대한 변하지 않는 선호도와 낮은 독신을 고려할 때 그러한 정부 입장은 놀랄 만 한 것이 아니었다. 더욱이, 인구의 타성효과로 인해 출산율이 매우 낮을 때에도 인구는 계속 증가하고 있었다. 인구 증가가 환경에 미치는 영향에 대한 고려도 출산장려정책으로의 전환을 더디게 하였다. 실제로, 한국은 1982년에, 대만은 1983년에 인구성장억제정책을 재차 강조하였다.

동아시아 사회에서는 처음으로, 싱가포르가 1984년에 출산장려정책을 실시하였다. 그 당시 싱가포르 정책은 두 갈래로 나누어진다. - 고등교육을 받은 여성에게는 출산을 장려하고, 이 밖의 여성에게는 핵가족 정책을 유지하는 것이다. 이 정책은 대학교육을 받은 여성의 출산율이 급격히 감소하고, 그 이하의 교육을 받은 여성의 출산율은 여전히 높은 가운데 인구 구조를 유지하기 위한 목적으로 실시되었다. 이 정책에 대한 평가는 이루어지지 않았다. 싱가포르 정부는 1986년에 출산 억제 정책을 완전히 폐지하고, 가족계획 및 인구 위원회도 폐지하였다. 1989년에는, "

세 자녀 갖기(have three children if you can afford)" 정책을 도입하였다 (p.47 부록 III 참조).

싱가포르는 1990년에, 일본은 1992년에 좀 더 구체적인 출산장려정책을 도입하였다. 싱가포르의 세금환급과 주거혜택 등을 통해 결혼을 장려하였다. 정책의 대부분은 일과 육아의 병행을 돕는 데 중점을 두었다. 외국인 가정부 고용에 대한 세금부과, 육아 /가족간호휴가의 개선, 자녀수당 지급 등이 이에 해당한다. 일본의 정책은 육아 /가족간호 휴가의 개선과 자녀수당 등을 통해 주로 일하는 여성들의 이중부담을 줄여 주는 데 초점을 두었다. 1980년대와 1990년대 이미 중국계 싱가포르 여성의 미혼율은 20%를 넘었다. 싱가포르 정부는 결혼을 장려하기 위해 주거혜택의 확대, 금전적 보상과 같은 다른 정책들도 도입하였다. 1990년대 일본정부의 정책은 주로 가족 소득원으로 일하는 여성들의 일과 가사의 병행을 돕는 데 초점을 두었다. 한편, 1990년대 한국과 대만은 출산의 억제도 장려도 아닌 "중립적인" 입장을 유지하였으며, 생식보건프로그램 향상에 집중하였다.

일본과 싱가포르의 출산장려정책은 2000년 이후 강화되었다. 모성휴가, 육아휴가, 부성휴가 및 자녀수당이 확대 실시되었다. 일본 정부는 지방정부와 큰 회사들이 출산장려정책의 실행에 동참하도록 하였다. 일본의 정책은 일과 가사의 병행을 돕는 데 계속 중점을 둔 반면, 싱가포르 정부는 자녀가 있는 행복한 가족의 이미지를 홍보하고, 여성문제에 보다 종합적으로 접근하기 위해 노력하였다.

한국의 출산장려 정책은 2004년에 시작되었다. 한국의 미래 인구정책에 대한 법률적 지원 마련을 위해 2005년에는 저출산고령사회기본법을 제정하였다. 본 법의 주요조항은 다음내용은 1) 인구정책에 대한 중앙 정부와 지방정부의 역할 및 기능, 2) 5년마다 저출산과 고령사회에 대한 종합적인 기본 계획 수립, 3) 대통령을 의장으로 한 저출산 고령사회 위원

회 설치 및 운영, 4) 연간계획 및 인구 프로그램의 성과를 국회에 보고 등에 관한 내용이 명문화되었다.

한국 정부는 저출산과 고령사회의 문제를 해결을 위해 2006년 6월, 종합적인 5개년 기본 계획(2006~2010)을 마련하였다. 기본 계획은 출산율을 적정수준까지 끌어올리고, 고령사회를 대비해 경제사회적 체계를 개선하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 일과 가정생활의 병행을 돕기 위한 경제적, 사회적 지원망 확충, 출산에 대한 경제적 인센티브 제공, 생식보건서비스 개선, 가족 친화적 사회 환경 조성, 양성 평등 촉진, 아동인권개선, 어린이를 위한 안전한 환경 제공 등이 기본 계획에 포함되어 있다. 한국정부는 한국의 종합출산율을 2020년까지 OECD 수준인 1.6명까지 회복한다는 계획이다. 이를 달성하기 위해서는 현실적인 중장기 전략이 요구된다.

대만은 저출산 인구정책을 현재 마련 중이다. 다양한 분야의 전문가 논의를 거쳐 정책이 형성될 것으로 알려져 있다. 이에 따라 대만의 인구 정책은 환경권과 개인의 권리를 포함한 매우 종합적인 정책이 될 것으로 기대된다. 정책이 효과적으로 실행되면 출산율에도 상당한 영향을 줄 수 있을 것이다.

#### 아. 동아시아 국가의 저출산 정책평가 및 전망

동아시아에서 가장 오래된 싱가포르 정책은 이미 여러 번에 걸쳐 평가가 이루어졌다. 평가 결과가 모두 일치하지는 않지만, 일반적으로 제한적 성공이라는 평이다. 일본의 경우에는 출산장려정책이 출산율에 미친 영향이 크지 않은 것으로 평가된다. 한국의 경우에는 출산장려정책을 도입한지 얼마 되지 않아 정확한 영향 평가가 이루어지기 어렵다. 대만은 이제 정책 실행을 앞두고 있다. 맥도날드(2006)는 동아시아 사회에 널리 퍼져있는 전통적인 가족 중심적 가치가 출산장려 정책이 성공을 거두는

데 장애가 된다고 분석한다. 또한, 그는 출산장려 정책이 성공적으로 실행되기 위해서는 사람들이 가족문제에 대한 보다 포괄적인 정부 개입을 허용할 필요가 있다고 주장한다. 그러나, 오늘날 동아시아의 젊은 부부들은 이미 육아와 노인간호 등 가족 복지문제에 정부의 적극적인 개입을 요구하고 있다. 그리고 인구 정책은 점차 이런 요구에 부응하고 있다.

동아시아의 출산장려정책은 현재의 저출산 현상이 원하는 수만큼 자녀를 낳아 기를 수 없는 현실적인 어려움에 기인함을 가정한다. 선호출산수준이 오랫동안 인구대체수준과 비슷하게 유지되어왔다는 사실도 이런 가정을 방증한다. 그렇다면, 출산 및 양육과 관련된 현실적인 어려움들을 최소화함으로써 출산율을 높일 수 있을 것이다. 이를 위해서는 현존하는 경제사회제도들이 다각도에서 변화되어야만 한다. 쉽지는 않겠지만, 불가능한 일은 아니다.

동아시아 사회는 지금까지 이주, 이민자복지, 다문화가족 문제에 대해 충분한 관심을 쏟지 않았다. 이들 분야에 관한 연구와 정책제안이 필요하다.

## 자. 종합결론

회고해 보면, 과거 가족계획사업은 출산력 전환을 촉진하고 경제발전에 기여한 것으로 높이 평가되었다. 이와 유사하게, 출산장려정책이 출산율을 매우 낮은 수준에서 대체수준까지 높일 수 있다는 확실한 증거는 없지만, 출산과 양육을 포함한 저출산 및 고령화 정책의 수립 및 지원은 현 상황에서 합리적인 선택이다.

고출산 시대에 많은 여성들은 자신이 원하는 수보다 많은 자녀를 낳았고, 피임법과 가족계획사업의 도입은 원치 않은 임신과 출산의 비율을 최소화 하였다. 아동생존율의 상승과 더불어, 가족계획사업은 이상자녀수를 과거의 3~4명에서 약 2명으로 감소시키는 데 기여하였다.

동아시아 사회에서 상당수의 여성들이 자신들이 원하는 가족의 규모 (desired family size)를 이루지 못한다. 어떤 여성들의 경우에는, 출산 능력이 너무 일찍 끝나거나 혹은 너무 오랫동안 출산을 미뤄 원하는 가족의 규모를 이루는데 충분한 시간을 갖지 못한다. 최근 연구들에서 나타나는 행복한 가족과 출산 사이에 상관관계가 놀라운 결과는 아니다.

인구정책이 이들 가족이 원하는 가족 규모를 구성하도록 도와줄 수 있다. 이를 위해 경제 사회적 조건과 상관없이 이들을 평생에 걸쳐 지원할 수 있는 종합적인 인구정책이 필요하다. 종합적인 인구정책은 기본적으로, 생식보건, 육아, 아동교육, 아동건강, 청년층을 위한 고용기회 확대, 가족 친화적 직장 환경, 고용 친화적 가족 환경 (예를 들어, 남편의 가사 분담 비율 증대), 노인간호 등의 가족복지 분야에서 정부의 보다 확대된 역할이 요구된다.

동아시아의 가족 체계 전통에 따라, 국가는 지금까지 가족복지 분야에서 최소한의 역할을 담당해왔다. 이에 따라, 앞으로 위에서 언급한 인구정책들을 실행하기 위해서는 많은 투자가 필요하며, 수반되는 사회적 정서적 비용도 만만치 않을 것이다. 그러나, 관련연구결과들은 매우 낮은 출산율이 장기간 지속될 경우, 독일의 경우와 같이 저출산의 늪에서 탈출이나 출산율 회복이 어려워진다고 밝히고 있다. 지금이 바로 대책을 마련하고 모든 지혜와 노력을 경주해야 할 때이다.

## 2. 지정토론자 토의내용

### 가. 메이린 리, 대만 아시아대학교 사회복지학과 교수

세미나에 참석한 모든 국가들은 인구대체수준 이하의 출산율을 경험하고 있다. 일본이 가장 먼저 대체수준에 도달하였고, 싱가포르가 그 뒤를 이어 1975/1976년에 대체수준에 이르렀다. 한국과 대만은 같은 해인 1983년에 인구 대체수준에 도달했다. 한국과 대만의 경우에는 상대적으로 늦게 대체수준에 도달했음에도 불구하고, 최근 몇 년 사이 주변 국가들 중 가장 낮은 출산율을 기록하고 있다. 한국과 대만은 이 밖에도 이혼율, 남녀 혼인 연령, 합계출산율 등 인구통계학적 면에서 유사점이 많다.

결혼율 변화에서 비롯된 출산율 하락은 4개국 모두에서 심각하다. 스즈키의 분석에 따르면 일본의 결혼율 변화가 출산율 감소에 미친 영향은 시대별로 차이가 있으나 대체적으로 최저 37%에서 최고 75%까지 이른다. 한국의 경우도 혼인출산율 감소와 더불어 초혼 연령 증가가 출산율 하락에 미치는 영향이 1960년대 이래 점점 증가하여, 1990년대는 102%까지 상승하였다.

북유럽 및 서구사회 문화권과는 달리, 4개국 모두에 있어 출산은 거의 예외 없이 결혼의 테두리 안에서만 이루어진다. 모든 국가에서 혼외 출생수가 2%를 넘지 않는 것이 이런 점을 입증한다. 따라서, 결혼율 변화가 출산율 감소에 미치는 영향을 최소화하는 것이 이들 4개국이 해결해야 할 첫 번째 과제가 되었다.

싱가포르는 1980년대 중반에 고등교육을 받은 여성들의 결혼과 출산율을 장려하는 정책을 도입하였다. 그러나 긍정적인 결과는 없었다. 사실, 결혼을 장려하는 정책은 입안하기 어렵고, 입안된 정책 또한 그 효력을 평가하기란 더욱 어렵다. 현재까지 어떤 정부도 결혼감소와 동거율의 증

가를 포스트모던사회의 자연스러운 현상으로 인정하지는 않는다. 아직까지 어떤 정책도 혼외출생을 출산율을 증가시키는 방편으로 고려하지 않는다. 대만은 2007년 현재 고등교육과 군 복무가 결혼에 미치는 제도적인 부담을 줄이기 위한 방안을 고심 중이다.

전통적인 결혼과 가족체계를 유지해 온 동아시아 사회는 1990년대에 초저출산 (lowest-low fertility)현상을 경험하였다. 이런 현상은 가정과 사회에서의 전통적인 성 역할 분담이 더 이상 가능하지 않으며, 오히려 출산에 부정적인 영향을 준다는 것을 의미한다. 산업화 이전에는 결혼과 출산의 결정이 부계중심의 가족에 의해 이루어졌다. 그러나, 현대 사회에서는 여성이 임신 및 출산과 관련하여 동등한 결정권을 가지게 되었다. 여성의 지위와 영향력은 여성의 노동시장 참여 확대와 함께 성장하였다. 비록 아직까지 양성평등 문제가 존재하고 사회적으로 여성의 지위가 남성의 지위에 미치지 못하지만, 여성이 가지는 저항권(resistance to right) 혹은 동의하지 않을 권리(not-to conform power)는 큰 영향력을 발휘한다.

이런 상황에서 과거 보수적인 가족 가치를 회복하고자 하는 것은 이치에 맞지 않으며 실패하게 되어있다. 그러나, 양성불평등의 관습이 오랫동안 아시아 문화에 자리잡아 왔기 때문에, 여성의 일과 가사의 병행을 도울 수 있는 정책 수단이 도입되어야 한다. 모성휴가, 부성휴가, 공공탁아서비스, 가족 친화적 직장환경, 근무환경의 유연성 등이 이에 해당한다. 그러나, 이런 정책 수단들도 육아와 관련된 다른 사회 환경과 얼마나 효과적인 정책이 입안 되느냐에 따라 그 성과가 달려있다.

오늘날 경쟁이 치열한 사회에서 인적자원에 대한 투자의 중요성은 더 강조된다. 모든 국가가 늘어나는 아동교육비용이 출산율에 미치는 부정적인 영향에 대해 고심하고 있다. 일본은 이 분야에 가장 지원을 많이 하고 있다. 세금감면과 더불어 아동 수당을 통해 자녀의 교육비 부담을 줄여 주고 있다. 싱가포르의 주로는 세금 인센티브와 주거 정책을 통해 자

녀가 있는 가정을 지원한다. 대만의 경우에는, 제한적이거나 취학 전 아동을 대상으로 한 수당지급 정책이 제안되었으나, 그것마저 실행되지 못하고 있다. 한국은 2006년에 처음 도입한 저출산 고령사회 기본계획에 아직까지 아동수당이나 교육 수당 등은 포함하지 않고 있다.

아동 수당 정책은 많은 예산을 필요로 한다. 그럼에도 불구하고, 정책이 출산율 촉진에 미치는 영향을 검증하기란 쉽지 않다. 일본의 연구들을 비교 분석한 스즈키는 아동수당정책이 출산율 증가에 큰 영향을 미치지 못하는 못하지만, 긍정적인 효과를 주는 것으로 보았다. 최근 “OECD 국가의 저출산율: 현황과 정책대응” (Low Fertility Rates in OECD Countries: Facts and Policy Responses) 연구에서 Sleebos(2003)는 연구 조사된 대부분의 국가에서 현금보조나 가족수당이 합계출산율에 미미한 영향을 준 것으로 분석하였다. 그러나 가족재정지원의 효과는 재정지원이 가족생계에 미치는 영향과도 관련이 있을 수 있다. 또한, 인구통계학적 변화는 그 특성 상 단기간에 효과가 나타나지 않으므로, 정책의 실행 기간을 고려한 분석도 필요할 것으로 보인다.

서구사회와 북유럽 그리고 영어권 국가들은 동아시아와 다른 사회 문화를 가지고 있다. 그럼에도 불구하고 그들 국가들의 성공적인 초저출산 탈출 경험은 동아시아 출산장려정책에 시사하는 바가 크다. 양성평등은 가족 구성원 사이에서 반드시 이루어져야 한다. 전세계적인 가족 체계 변화에 따르지 않고 전통적인 남녀 관계를 회복하려 한다면, 이는 장기적으로 부정적인 효과를 가져 올 것이다. 효율적인 일과 가사의 병행에서 오는 혜택이 오직 여성에게만 돌아가는 것이 아니다. 양성평등이 개선될수록, 남성 또한 일과 가사의 병행에서 오는 어려움을 겪을 수도 있다. 아동의 가치는 가족이나 부모뿐 아니라 국가와 사회적 차원에서 존중되어야 한다. 따라서 출산율에 미치는 영향과 관계없이 자녀가 있는 가정에 대한 사회적 지원은 그 자체로 가치 있는 일이다.



#### 나. 지아오잉 쟁, 중국 북경대학교 인구연구소 소장

우선, 한국 보고서는 우리나라의 저출산 경향 및 정책적 대응에 대해 정리하고 있다. 1950년대 베이비 붐에 의한 인구 급증은 경제 발전의 저해요인이었으며, 빈곤의 악순환을 낳았다. 따라서 한국 정부는 1960년대 경제개발 계획을 실시하면서 인구증가억제정책 및 강력한 가족계획을 추진하였다. 가족계획이 그 효과를 나타내고, 경제발전 및 교육 여건 향상으로 생활수준이 높아지는 등 사회경제학적 변화가 나타나면서 고출산에 긍정적이던 사회적 인식이 사라지기 시작했다. 한국의 합계출산율(TFR)은 1960년에 6.00이었던 것이 1983년에는 인구대체수준으로까지 떨어졌다. 그 이후에는 합계출산율이 2.1 미만인 저출산 추세가 계속되고 있다.

일본은 1970년대 이후 오랫동안 출산율 감소를 경험하고 있다. 합계출산율은 1980년에서 2005년 사이 28% 감소했고, 합계 유배우 출산율은 같은 기간 15% 감소하였다. 그러나 일본의 경제 회복으로 최근 합계출산율과 합계 유배우 출산율 모두 증가 경향을 보이고 있다. 2004년에서 2005년 사이 합계 유배우 출산율은 1.9% 증가하였고, 합계출산율은 2005년에서 2006년 사이 4.8% 증가하였다. 가장 최근의 일본 인구추계에 의하면 앞으로 50년 동안 고령인구 비율은 20.2%에서 40.5%으로 증가할 것이고, 전체 인구는 크게 감소해서 현재의 12,780만 명에서 8,990만 명으로 줄어들 것이다.

여러 연구 결과에 의하면, 일본의 저출산 추세는 오랜 기간 지속될 것이다. 이러한 경향은 유배우 출산율의 감소와 결혼율의 감소에 따른 것이다. 여러 연구를 통해, 결혼율과 유배우 출산율은 그 중요성이 시기에 따라서 달라지긴 하지만, 두 요소 모두 출산율 감소에 영향을 미치고 있음은 연구를 통해 입증되었다. 비록 혼외출산을 국가적으로 장려할 수는 없지만, 선진국가의 오랜 경험에 비추어 볼 때 혼인율을 높이려는 정

부정책도 효과를 기대하기 어렵다. 현재의 추세를 뒤집으려는 정책은 현 경향을 북돋으려는 정책보다도 덜 효과적일 것이다. 또한, 북서유럽 국가가 남녀평등이나 일과 가정의 조화 등 오랜 기간에 걸쳐서 극복한 사회적 이슈들을 일본은 앞으로도 계속 해결해나가야 한다. 젊은 세대의 조기 출가와 동거를 장려하는 정부의 정책이 국민의 지지를 얻을지는 의문이다. 정부가 미혼모의 복지를 증진시키는 정책으로 혼외출산을 장려해서는 안 된다. 정부가 적극적으로 개입해서는 안 되는 부분이 있다. 하지만 효과적인 개입은 그 방향이 분명하다. 가족변화의 세계적 추세에 반해 전통적인 가족구조를 회복하려는 노력은 결국에는 실패로 끝날 것이다.

싱가포르는 아시아에서 가장 낮은 출산율을 보이는 국가 중 하나이다. 합계출산율이 1.25로 대만과 일본보다 낮고, 한국과 홍콩보다는 조금 높은 수준이다. 지금까지 싱가포르의 출산율은 그 변화폭이 매우 컸다. 합계출산율이 1965년에는 4.7이었는데, 2006년에는 1.25로 떨어졌다. 40년이라는 길지 않은 시간 동안 싱가포르의 인구정책의 기조는 인구억제에서 출산장려로 변하였다. 이것은 경제발전, 구조변화 및 사회변화를 반영한다. 인구구조의 변화가 심화되면서 싱가포르 정부의 가족정책도 중심이동을 한 것이다.

싱가포르 보고서는 국가 가족정책의 발전과 출산율에 대한 영향을 살펴보고 있다. 싱가포르의 인구정책 발전과정은 1965년부터 1975년까지의 포스트독립 시기, 1975년부터 1985년까지의 고속 경제성장 및 인구감소 시기, 1986년부터 1999년까지의 일과 가정의 공존을 강조한 시기, 그리고 2000년 이후의 가정에 초점을 맞춘 시기 등 4단계로 나뉜다.

또한 오늘날 싱가포르에서 가족 형성을 막는 갖가지 사회문화적 장벽과 최근에 종료된 출산율문제 대응프로젝트의 결과를 설명하고 있다. 그 중에서도 가정과 직장, 그리고 여성의 역할에 대한 가치관적 충돌에 대해서 초점을 맞추고 있다. 이 보고서는 출산율의 지속적인 상승을 위해

서는 정부가 이러한 가치관적 충돌을 어떻게 해결하는지가 관건이라고 본다. 앞으로의 가족정책은 이러한 모순된 가치관들을 조화시키는 방향으로 나아가야 한다. 왜냐하면 많은 사람들이 이러한 가치관적 충돌로 자녀를 낳을지, 자녀 없이 살지를 선택하는 데 혼란을 겪고 있기 때문이다. 만약 양자택일을 강요당한다면 대부분이 아무래도 사회적 반대가 덜한 쪽을 선택할 것이다. 물론 현대 사회에서 가정을 이루는 것은 쉽지 않다. 그러나 그 어떤 사회에서도 가정 이룸에 대한 반대가 규범으로 받아들여질 수는 없다. 따라서 앞에서 언급한 가치관적 충돌을 극복하고 가정형성을 장려하는 사회적 분위기의 조성이 필요하다.

대만의 경우 1950년대 이후 출산율이 계속 감소하고 있다. 이것은 출생률과 합계출산율 모두에 잘 나타나 있다. 1984년, 대만의 합계출산율은 2.1 아래로 떨어져 장래에 총인구가 감소할 조짐을 보였다. 1986년에서 1997년 사이에는 합계출산율이 1.75 수준에 머물러 있다가 그 이후 다시 큰 감소추세를 보이며 1.23까지 떨어져 대만은 세계 최저출산율 국가 중 하나가 되었다. 2004년과 2005년에는 합계출산율이 더욱 감소하여서 1.2 미만까지 내려가기도 했다. 대만보고서는 인구구조의 변화 및 정부의 정책적 노력을 다루고 있다. 이 보고서에 따르면, 대만은 20세기에 인구구조의 큰 변화를 경험하였다. 정부는 가족계획의 일환으로 출산억제를 골자로 하는 ‘인구정책 가이드라인’을 1969년에 처음으로 발표하였다. 1992년에는 ‘인구정책 가이드라인’의 수정판이 나왔지만, 구체적인 정책방향은 제시되지 않았다. 여성학자와 환경주의자의 견해는 대만 인구정책의 변화과정을 이해하는 데 큰 도움이 된다. 최근 대만의 인구정책은 몇 가지 점에서 개선되었는데, 여성학자들의 주장을 받아들여서 인구개발위원회에 “여성권익증진 및 개발 재단”을 포함시킨 것도 그 중 하나이다.

대만보고서에는 저출산 대응을 위한 7가지 정책적 제언이 포함되어 있다. 첫째는 전아동 공적보호 제도의 개발, 둘째는 출산휴가 및 양육휴

가의 개선, 셋째는 아동에 대한 재정적 지원, 넷째는 임신한 여성 노동자를 위한 편한 직장 분위기 조성, 다섯째는 생식보건시스템의 개선, 여섯째는 아동의 권익 및 보호시스템 강화, 일곱째는 결혼 및 출산에 대한 긍정적 가치관 조성이다. 이런 제안이 정부정책에 반드시 반영된다는 보장은 없다. 정부 부처간에 많은 대화와 협력이 필요하며, 시의 적절한 정치적 노력도 중요할 것이다. 또한, 출산율 제고를 위한 정책 개발에 앞서 정부 내외에서의 합의점 찾기도 시급한 과제다.

#### 다. 김두섭, 한양대학교 사회학과 교수

오늘 발표된 4편의 논문들은 한국, 대만, 일본, 싱가포르 4개국 출산율의 최근 변화과정과 그 요인, 그리고 출산력 및 결혼력 제고를 위한 정책에 관련된 논의를 하고 있다는 점에서 공통점을 지닌다. 단지 이삼식 박사의 논문과 Lee/Chuang 교수의 논문은 저출산에 대한 정책적 반응 및 앞으로의 정책방향에, Suzuki 박사의 논문은 혼인력과 출산력의 관계에, Straughan 교수의 논문은 가족정책의 변화과정과 출산율과의 관계에 보다 초점을 맞추고 있다는 점에서 구분될 수 있을 것이다.

#### 〈질문 및 논평〉

1. 이삼식 박사의 논문 Table 2 에서 출산율 변화에 대한 두 구성요소 (FAFM, MFR)의 기여분 계산은 추가적인 설명을 요한다. 이 표에는 유배우율의 변화, 연령구조의 변화와 같은 구성요소들이 추가로 포함되는 것이 바람직할 것으로 판단된다.
2. 아울러 Suzuki 박사의 논문에서 언급된 바, 일부 기존 연구들이 혼인출산율의 저하를 간과하고 출산율 변화가 nuptiality 변화에 의해

서만 초래되었다고 주장한 논문들도 납득하기 힘들다.

3. Suzuki 박사의 논문 Table 2에서 상이한 시점의 자료를 가지고 이루어진 상이한 형태의 분석모형에서 얻은 regression coefficient들의 값을 상호비교하는 것은 문제가 있는 것으로 판단된다. 아울러 financial support 와 number of births 간의 관계를 직선적인 것으로 가정한 것에 대해서도 문제가 제기될 수 있다.
4. 발표논문들이 출산을 저하에 대한 진단에 있어서 초혼연령, 혼인율과 같은 중간변수들의 역할에 초점이 맞추어져 있다. 이러한 변수들을 변화시킨 거시경제적 요인에 대한 조직적 분석이나 해석, 또는 이에 관한 기존의 연구결과들을 비중 있게 다루지 않고 있다는 공통점을 지닌다. 정도의 차이는 있으나 네 나라 모두 1990년대 후반부터 경제의 침체 내지는 불안정한 역동성이 강하게 부각되고 있다. 그리고 세계화의 흐름 속에서 노동시장의 불안정성이 심화된 것이 초저출산으로의 이행에 결정적인 영향을 미쳤을 것으로 판단된다. 이러한 거시경제적 환경의 변화가 각 계층집단의 출산을 변화에 어떻게 작용하였는가를 파악하는 것이 매우 중요하다. 이러한 이해를 바탕으로 구체적 출산장려정책의 우선적용대상집단을 선정하는 작업이 이루어져야 할 것으로 판단된다.
5. 이들 네 나라가 공통적으로 자녀에 대한 교육열과 교육수준이 매우 높고 생존경쟁이 매우 심한 사회환경을 지니고 있다는 점에도 주목할 필요가 있다. 그리고 경제발전과 함께 사회경제적 불평등이 심화되는 과정에서 status-related 또는status-differentiating expenditure 의 지출이 높아지는 경향이 출산율 수준을 더욱 저하시

키는 결과를 가져왔다고 판단된다.

6. 이 네 논문을 비교해보면, 대만 인구정책의 입안과정에서 environmentalists 와 feminists 의 영향력이 다른 나라에서보다 상대적으로 강했다는 느낌을 받게 된다. 다른 나라들의 경우, 정부의 인구정책방향과 맥을 달리하는 주장들은 어떠한 것이 있었는지에 대해서도 관심을 기울일 필요가 있다.

#### 〈인구정책의 방향과 재검토〉

현재 저출산을 경험하고 있는 대부분의 나라에서 인구정책의 방향은 출산장려 및 가족정책과 여성고용정책으로 압축될 수 있으며, 이는 한국의 경우에도 예외가 아니다. 그런데 현재 한국정부에서 추진하고 있는 정책의 방향과 대응책들이 과연 한국 출산율의 수준을 변화시키는 데 효과적인 것인가? 이러한 정책들은 자녀양육의 환경을 개선하고 사회복지 증진한다는 점에서 우리 사회가 나아가야 할 방향임에는 틀림없다. 그런데 문제는 이런 출산장려정책들이 출산수준을 높이는 데 그 효과가 그리 크지 않을 것이라는 점이다.

대부분의 국가에서는 각종 출산보조금, 자녀양육을 위한 경제적 지원, 가족친화적 작업환경개선, 신축적인 노동시간과 노동기회의 부여에도 불구하고 출산율이 지속적으로 감소하고 있다. 출산보조금을 비롯한 직접적 경제지원정책은 효과가 별로 없는 것으로 이미 확인된 바 있다. 프랑스와 룩셈부르크의 경우에는 자녀양육시설의 확충과 경제적 지원이 다른 국가들에 비해 상대적으로 출산율을 증진시키는 결과를 초래한 것으로 알려지고 있다. 그러나 2003년 가족 및 육아보조 부문에 564억 유로를 투입하여 합계출산율 0.1~0.2를 상승시키는 효과를 거두었다는 프랑스의

정책방향을 한국사회에 그대로 적용하는 것은 실용성의 측면에서 문제가 제기될 수 있다.

특정 정책의 효율성에 대한 판단은 각 나라의 사회경제적 환경에 따라 달라질 수 있다. 한국은 일본이나 유럽 국가들에 비해 출산장려를 위한 재원이 턱없이 부족한 실정이다. 자녀양육의 직접 및 간접 비용을 실질적으로 경감시키고, 그리하여 출산율에 의미 있는 영향을 미칠 정도로 충분한 수준의 출산보조금과 육아시설 재원을 확보하기가 매우 어려운 실정이다. 예를 들어, 2004년 현재 GDP 대비 가족지원정책 재정지출비율이 0.1% 정도에 불과한 한국이 그 비율이 2.8%에 달하는 프랑스의 다양한 가족지원사업 프로그램을 모방하여 쫓아가는 것은 현실적으로 그리 쉬운 일이 아니다. 더구나 앞으로 고령화 추세에 따라 노인부양을 위한 복지재원이 크게 확대되고, 여성경제활동 수준도 더욱 높아질 것으로 예상된다. 따라서 육아시설을 충분한 수준으로 확충하기 위한 공공재원을 마련하는 것은 더욱 어려워질 것으로 판단된다. 최근에 공표된 제1차 저출산·고령사회기본계획도 결국은 32조 원에 달하는 소요재원을 어떻게 안정적으로 꾸준히 확보하고, 확보된 재원을 어떻게 배분하고 활용할 것인지에 성패가 달려 있다고 해도 과언이 아니다.

또한 상당수 정책들이 결혼과 출산 시기를 앞당기고 장려하기보다는 이미 자녀를 출산한 부부들의 육아를 지원하기 위한 것이라는 점도 지적할 수 있다. 젊은 부부들에게 지원될 수 있는 약간의 경제적 지원금으로는 감당하기 어려울 정도로 엄청나게 높은 자녀양육비를 실질적으로 경감시키는 효과를 거두기가 어렵다. 학생이 있는 가정에서는 이미 오래 전부터 자녀교육비가 가장 큰 지출항목으로 자리 잡았다는 사실을 직시할 필요가 있다.

최근 한국의 출산수준 저하는 IMF 경제위기 이후의 경기침체와 실업률 상승 등 노동시장의 불안정으로 20대 청년인구가 결혼과 출산을 미루

거나 기피하는 데 기인하는 바 크다. 따라서 한정된 가용재원을 감안할 때, 출산장려정책의 초점을 청년인구가 빨리 결혼하고 출산하도록 유인하는 데 우선적으로 맞추어야 한다. 그리고 출산장려정책은 대상집단을 구체적으로 설정하고 해당 집단의 특성에 맞게 조정하는 것이 바람직하다. 최근 한국사회의 출산율 저하는 사회경제적 조건이 가장 열악한 계층과 최상위 계층에서 상대적으로 민감하게 일어났다는 점에 주목할 필요가 있다. 그리고 결혼과 출산의 지연으로 인하여 출산율의 변화양상이 연령집단에 따라 다르게 나타나는 것도 감안하여야 한다. 특히 30대 여성의 출산율이 지난 10년간 약간이나마 상승하였다는 사실도 정책의 우선순위 설정에 고려할 필요가 있다.

현재 한국 정부의 출산장려정책 방향은 자기 직업의 장래나 경기회복에 대하여 불안감을 느끼고 있는 젊은이들에게 자녀를 두고자 하는 동기를 충분히 부여하지 못하고 있다. 더욱이 앞으로 여성에 대한 차별이 해소됨에 따라 고소득 전문직 여성의 규모는 과거보다 한층 더 증가하게 될 것이다. 이 젊은 여성들은 경제적 자립능력을 지닌 상태에서 자신의 일을 더 중시하고 전통적인 육아부담에서 벗어나고자 하는 성향이 강하다. 따라서 이들을 일찍 결혼하고 출산하도록 유도하기는 쉽지 않을 것이다. 현재의 상황이 크게 변하지 않는 한, 이들에게 결혼과 육아에 대한 부담은 그리 매력적인 '선택 사양'으로 여겨지지 않을 것이기 때문이다.

젊은이들이 일찍 결혼하고 자녀를 두는 것은 이들이 직업 안정성에 대한 확신을 가질 때 비로소 가능해진다. 따라서 한정된 가용재원을 그 효과가 제한적일 수밖에 없는 각종 단기적 처방책에 분산적으로 투입할 것이 아니라 좀더 근본적이고 장기적인 차원의 정책이 필요하다. 또한 출산증진 목표를 효과적으로 달성하기 위해서는 각종 정책을 백화점식으로 나열하기보다 그 우선순위를 조정하고 주요 대상집단을 선정하는 작업이 이루어져야 한다. 궁극적으로는 경기회복과 교육제도의 개선, 일하



는 여성에 대한 배려 등 사회의 전반적인 분위기가 달라지지 않는 한, 광범하게 정착된 저출산 지향의 사회적 규범, 가치관과 태도를 바꾸기는 적어도 당분간은 매우 어려울 것으로 판단된다.

마지막으로 지적할 것은 앞으로의 인구정책이 초저출산의 사회경제적 원인과 파급효과에 관한 종합적 이해와 아울러 인구변동에 대한 종합적인 조망을 바탕으로 수립되어야 한다는 점이다. 비록 한국에서 과거의 출산억제정책이 성공적이었다 하더라도, 출산장려정책은 단기적으로 그 효과가 나타나기 어려우며, 획기적인 성과를 거두기도 어렵다고 판단된다. 이에 따라 출산을 장려하기 위한 정책적인 노력과 아울러, 사회의 여타 부문들이 초저출산으로 인하여 초래될 절대인구의 감소와 인구구조의 변화에 적응하기 위한 노력이 더 강화될 필요가 있다.

#### 〈한국 2006년 합계출산율 증가의 설명〉

통계청의 최근 자료에서 2006년의 출생아수와 합계출산율이 2005년에 비해 상승한 것은 여성의 초혼연령 상승과 첫째아 출산의 연기가 다소 주춤해지면서 30대 초반의 첫째아 출산이 증가한 것에 주로 기인한다. 연령별 출산율, 유배우출산율, 출산순위별 출산율 모두 20대 연령층에서는 지속적으로 감소하는 추세를 보인다. 또한 그동안 감소추이를 보이던 여자 초혼건수가 2005년에 2004년보다 1,572건 증가하였고 2006년에는 24,114건이나 증가했다. 이는 제1차 베이비붐 세대(1955~1963년) 세대의 의해서 많이 태어난 1979~1981년생이 2006년 현재 25~27세에 도달하여 제3차 베이비붐 세대를 형성중이라는 것을 지적할 수 있다. 그러나 초혼이 향후에도 지속적으로 증가하리라고 기대하기는 어렵다. 그동안 지속되던 20대 후반의 여성인구 증가가 2007년 이후 감소추세로 돌아선다는 것도 지적할 수 있다. 연령별로는 30대의 지속적인 초혼건수 상승이

2006년 출생아수 증가에 가장 큰 공헌을 했고, 2006년에 많이 이루어진 20대 후반의 초혼증가는 2007년 이후 출생아수의 증가를 초래할 가능성이 높다. 또한 이혼은 2003년을 정점으로 이혼건수 및 조이혼율, 55세미만의 연령별 이혼율, 유배우이혼율 모든 지표에서 하락하는 추세를 보인다.

### 〈기타 제언〉

1. 앞으로 혼외출산과 혼전출산에 대해 보다 관심을 기울일 필요가 있다. 지금까지 우리 사회에서는 결혼을 통하지 않은 출생아의 규모도 작았고 이들에 대한 사회적 수용도가 매우 낮은 편이었다. 이에 따라 혼전임신의 상당 부분이 인공유산으로 이어지고, 출생아는 보육원, 고아원에 버려지거나 해외 입양아를 양산시키는 결과를 초래하였다. 혼외출산 역시 꾸준히 존재해 왔지만 이에 대한 연구는 이루어진 바 없다. 앞으로 성적 개방성의 증대와 부모의 통제력 약화로 혼전출산과 혼외출산의 규모는 지속적으로 증가할 것이다. 이들에 대한 조직적 관심과 분석이 인구정책의 차원에서도 요구된다.
2. 상주외국인 및 불법체류자에 대한 인구통계가 마련되어야 한다. 인구센서스에서 이들 외국인들은 조사누락이 많다. 또한 출생과 혼인 동태통계에서도 당사자 2명 중 어느 한쪽이 한국인인 경우만 포함되며, 양쪽 모두 외국인인 경우는 제외된다. 그 동안 국제결혼의 급격한 증가에도 불구하고 출생통계에서 부모의 국적이 조사되지 않았다는 것도 지적할 수 있다. 현재 외국인 배우자의 비중이 20% 이상인 구시군은 23개에 달한다. 최근 급격한 증가추세를 보이는 국제결혼 부부와 이들의 이혼이 출생아수 및 출산율에 미치는 영

향력에 대한 분석이 요구된다.

3. 출산율 산출방법이 개선될 필요가 있다. 현재 통계청의 출산율 계산에서 분자는 국내외 거주 한국인의 호적신고가 대상이나 분모는 한국인 주민등록인구로 되어 있다. 그러나 약 3,000건에 이르는 해외출생신고에는 주민등록 미등록인구가 포함되어 있기 때문에 출산율이 상향추정될 가능성이 높다.

## 라. 김서중, 보건복지부 저출산대책팀장

### 〈출산율 회복이 경제성장의 초석〉

최근 신생아수가 큰 폭으로 증가하고 있다. 지방자치단체의 주민등록 전산망 집계결과 금년 3/4분기 현재 신생아수는 365,492명으로 지난해 동기기간보다 28,721명 증가하였다. 이러한 추세가 지속된다면 2007년 총 출생아수는 48만 명이 넘고, 합계출산율(한 여성이 평생 동안 낳을 것으로 예상되는 평균 자녀수)도 작년의 1.13명에서 1.25명으로 높아질 것으로 전망된다. 이렇게 신생아수 및 출산율이 큰 폭으로 증가하고 있는 것은 출산에 대한 인식 개선, 외환위기 이후의 경기회복, 범국가적 저출산대책(새로마지플랜2010) 추진 등이 어우러진 결과이다.

출산율이 오르고 있으나 인구대체수준(2.1명) 및 OECD 평균(1.6명)에도 미치지 못하는 세계 최저 수준으로서 우리가 저출산의 트랩을 완전히 벗어났다고 판단하기엔 아직은 시기상조이다. 이렇게 낮은 출산율이 지속된다면 생산가능인구의 감소, 평균 근로연령 상승, 저축·소비·투자위축 등에 따라 경제활력 저하와 국가경쟁력 약화를 초래할 것이다. 또한 사회적 측면에서 노인인구 부양을 위한 생산가능인구의 조세·사회보장비 부담 증가로 세대간 갈등이 야기될 가능성이 높다.

결국 우리 경제의 성장 및 우리 사회의 지속 가능성을 높이기 위해서는 출산율 회복이 반드시 전제되어야만 하고, 출산율이 회복되기 위해서는 선진국의 사례처럼 출산·양육관련 투자를 확대하고 일과 가정의 양립이 가능한 사회를 만들어야 한다.

OECD의 2004년 자료에 따르면 자녀양육 가정에 대한 경제적 지원이 고출산 국가인 프랑스와 스웨덴은 각각 GDP의 2.8%, 2.9%를 투자(OECD 평균은 1.8%)하고 있는데 반해 저출산 국가인 일본과 우리나라는 각각 0.6%, 0.1% 수준을 투자하고 있다.

프랑스가 저출산의 위기를 극복한 것은 국민적 합의를 바탕으로 자녀양육 가정에 대한 투자를 확대한 결과라고 할 수 있다. 보육·교육비 지원 및 아동수당 등의 경제적 지원을 통해 자녀양육 부담을 덜어주고, 일과 가정을 함께 할 수 있는 가족친화적인 사회 분위기를 조성했기에 프랑스는 저출산을 극복할 수 있었다. 스웨덴이 과거 급격한 경기 변동에도 불구하고 출산율이 1.5명 이상을 유지할 수 있었던 것도 이러한 경제적 지원이 완충작용을 하였기 때문이다.

우리나라가 「새로마지플랜2010」에 따라 보육·교육비 및 임신·출산 지원 등 자녀양육 가정에 대한 경제적 지원을 확대하고 있는 것은 IMF 외환위기 이후 사회안전망이 부재하여 급락했던 출산율 하락의 전철을 다시 밟지 않기 위한 미래투자인 것이다. 새로마지플랜2010은 출산율 하락추세 반전을 목표로 영유아기 자녀 양육 지원에 5년간 13조원을 투자해 나갈 계획이다.

이러한 미래투자와 함께 양성평등 사회문화를 조성하는 것이 또한 중요하다. 통계청이 제안한 ‘2007 대한민국 행복테크’에 따르면 우리나라 맞벌이 주부의 가사노동시간이 3시간28분으로 남편의 32분 보다 6.5배 많은 것으로 나타났다. 우리사회에 ‘가사·양육=여성’이라는 의식이 아직은 많은 것이 현실이다. 하지만, 자녀 돌봄과 가사부담이 전적으로 여성

에게 지워지는 한 여성의 경제활동 증가와 출산을 회복이라는 두 마리 토끼를 잡을 수는 없다.

결국 자녀양육 가정에 대한 경제적 지원 확대와 가족친화적 사회를 만드는 것이 우리 경제성장의 초석이기 때문에 결코 소홀히 해서는 안 되는 국가적 과제라고 할 수 있다.

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Toru Suzuki 박사의 일본 저출산 연구, Mei-Lin Lee and Yi-Li Chuang 박사의 대만 저출산 연구, Tay Straughan 박사의 싱가포르 저출산 연구 그리고 이삼식 박사의 한국 저출산 연구를 통해서 한국을 포함하여 동아시아 국가의 인구현상 및 인구정책에 대한 고민과 문제 해결 방식이 한층 심화되고 문제의 핵심에 다가서고 있다는 점을 느낄 수 있었다. 오늘 국제세미나에 참석한 4개 국가의 공통점은 역사적으로 또 문화적으로 가족주의와 남녀유별주의가 견고하고 우수한 인적자원을 보유하여 놀라운 경제성장을 이룬 경험을 갖고 있다는 점일 것이다. 따라서 현대 서구사회에서 보편적으로 나타나는 현상들 예를 들어 혼외출산의 보편화, 여성의 노동시장 참여 증대와 같은 현상이 매우 저조한 나라들이다. 서구사회가 오랜 기간 동안 인구규모의 변동 못지않게 급격한 인구구성상의 변동, 관계양식의 변동을 겪으면서 이와 같은 변동 추세를 '2차 인구학적 변천'이라고 명명하며 이에 대한 해법을 마련해 온 동안 한국사회를 포함한 대부분의 동아시아 국가들에선 인구규모 변동에 국한된 인구정책만이 명맥을 유지해 왔다고 볼 수 있다.

오늘날 동아시아 국가가 직면한 인구현상은 거스를 수 없는 거대한 흐름 속에서 개별국가들이 지금껏 유지해 온 그 사회의 제도적, 규범적 작동 메커니즘에 대해 근본적으로 성찰할 것을 요구하고 있다. 새로이

부상하는 화두, “일과 가족·생활의 조화(work-family life balance)”, “가족 친화 사회환경 조성” 등은 이와 같은 근본적 성찰의 한 결과이다. 이와 관련된 구체적인 정책제언은 이삼식 박사의 논문에 잘 나타나 있고 또 이에 대한 강조는 다른 토론자에 의해서 이뤄질 것으로 기대하며, 필자는 동아시아국가들이 직면한 저출산 현상에서 “여성의 경제활동참여 증대”라는 측면이 갖는 중요성에 대하여 논함으로써 토론에 대신하고자 한다.

현대 사회에서 여성에게 ‘경제활동을 한다’는 의미는 여성취업이 단지 여성의 자아실현을 위한 활동이라거나 추가적 수입을 위한 부가 노동자로서의 필요 때문이라고 할 수 없다. 즉 현재 그리고 다가올 가까운 미래사회는 여성도 남성과 동일한 노동자로서, 일생 동안 자신과 자신이 부양해야 할 가족의 생존을 책임져야 하는 사회적 단위이다. 그들은 살기 위해서, 그리고 가족을 살리기 위해서 필수적으로 일을 해야 한다. 저출산·고령화로 대표되는 인구구조의 변화 및 2차 인구학적 변천으로 일궈어지는 라이프스타일의 다양화는 여성에게 ‘일’을 필수적인 것으로 변화시키는 환경이다. 이와 같은 환경 변화는 여성에게 일을 필수화시키면서도 동시에 사회재생산과 관련한 모순적인 필요와 요구를 여성에게 부가함으로써 여성노동의 미래를 상당히 가변적인 것으로 만들고 있다.

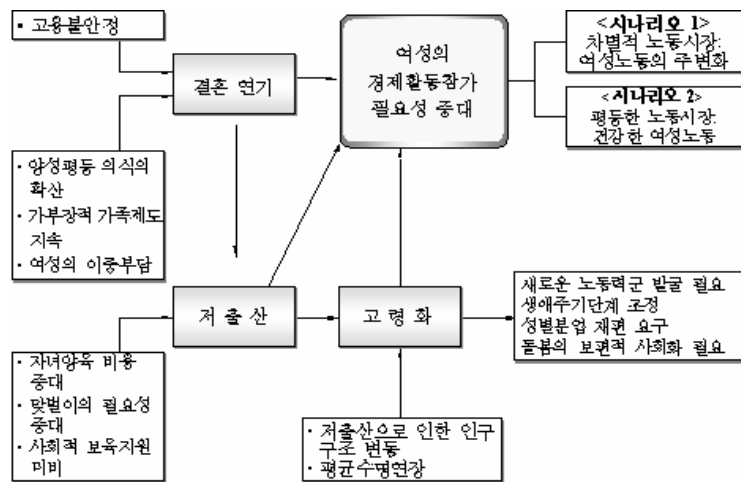
이제 저출산 고령사회를 맞이하여 우리 사회가 대비하는 다양한 전략의 기저에는 개인의 노동권이 최우선적으로 고려되어야 할 것이다. 즉 어떤 개인이 성과 연령, 국적 또는 장애 여부를 이유로 노동권에 제한을 받게 된다면 그것은 그 개인의 생존권을 위협하는 것이며, 사회적인 측면에서 볼 때는 차별적인 처우가 예상치 못한 외부효과를 발생시킴으로써 비싼 대가를 치러야 할 것이다. 인구구조의 변화 즉 노동공급구조의 변화와 여성의 노동권 확보가 상호 연결되면서 어떻게 펼쳐질지에 대해서는 다음과 같은 두 가지 예측적 시나리오가 가능하다.

### 〈성별분업규범과 차별적 노동시장 관행이 지속되는 미래〉

첫 번째 가능한 시나리오는 현재의 성별분업규범이 여전히 우리 사회의 공사 영역을 규율하고, 노동시장의 성차별적 관행이 지속될 때 펼쳐지는 미래이다. 앞에서 살펴본 것처럼 현재 급속하게 진행되고 있는 한국사회 인구구조의 변화는 내용의 측면에서나 속도의 측면에서나, 전체 사회는 말할 것도 없고 사회구성원 개개인의 생활세계에 근본적인 변화를 야기하는 수준이다. 특히 ‘일하는 여성’ 또는 ‘여성의 노동권’의 측면에서 볼 때, 현재의 성별분업규범 및 차별적 노동시장의 지속은 여성 개인에게 뿐만 아니라 개별 가족들에게 심각한 위협이 될 수밖에 없다.

[그림 1]에서 볼 수 있듯이, 여성들이 자신의 인적자본(human capital)에 부합하는 노동권을 확보하기 위해서는 현재의 노동·가족 관련 관행을 전제할 때 결혼 기피 또는 결혼 연기를 선택하는 것이 불가피하다. 경력 단절을 예상케 하는 노동시장 및 가족문화 규범은 최소한의 생존을 위해 일하지 않으면 안 되는 여성들은 물론이려니와 커리어 지향적인 여성들 모두에게 출산 기피를 강요한다. 결혼 기피 및 출산 기피는 저출산 현상을 고착시킴으로써 이미 예정된 초고령 사회를 앞당기게 되고 이는 생산인구의 감소를 결과한다. 생산인구의 공백을 메우기 위해서 양질의 여성노동력군이 대체 노동력군으로 주목받으며 이들을 집에서 끌어내기 위한 일·가정 양립정책이 도모된다. 그러나 이들이 진입한 노동시장이 성차별적 관행으로 일관된다면 여성들은 노동시장의 주변을 맴돌며 여성노동의 계토화 속에 함몰되거나 혹은 더욱 강력하게 결혼시장으로의 진입을 포기할 것이다. 이것은 다시 저출산과 초고령화를 앞당기며 끊임없는 악순환 속에 빠지는 것이다.

[그림 1] 저출산·고령 시대의 여성노동 전망 분석틀



실제로 외국의 사례들은 젊은이들이 잦은 취업 실패를 경험하고 돌봄 영역에 대한 사회적 지원을 받지 못할 때, 국가 수준에서 급격한 출산율 저하 현상이 수반됨을 보여 준다. 저출산 국가들의 공통된 출산 연기 결정요인은 초기 성숙기의 높은 경제적 불확실성이다. 이 불확실성이 출산 결정과 같은 장기적인 결정을 미루게끔 하는 요인으로 작용하고 있다. 대신에 개인으로 하여금 교육이나 다른 형태의 인적자본에 투자하도록 하는 요인을 제공하기도 한다. 예를 들어, 남부유럽의 경우를 보자. 남부 유럽 국가들은 소득수준은 중상위권에 랭크되어 있고 점진적인 성장을 하며, 낮은 인플레이션을 경험했다. 이와 동시에 청년층의 노동시장 진입이 매우 어려워 높은 청년 실업률을 나타내고 있다. 그리고 북유럽에 비해 이들 국가의 청년 실업률은 남성보다 여성에게서 더 높게 나타난다. 남부유럽에서의 만성적인 청년실업의 증가는 청년들이 노동시장에 들어



가는 것을 방해하고, 고등 교육을 받는 것을 더 매력적으로 만들어 왔다. 남부유럽 국가에서 불확실성은 높은 청년 실업률과 불안정한 고용에서 비롯된다. 그렇기 때문에 그들은 안정적이고 좋은 직업을 얻기 위하여 교육기간을 연장하는 것이 필수적인 것으로 되었다. 불확실성을 회피하려는 개인 수준에서의 합리적 선택은 국가 단위의 거시적 수준에서 출산 연기 및 출산을 저하로 나타난다.

뿐만 아니라 저출산 국가들의 출산 연기(birth postponement) 현상 발생에는 또 하나의 공통된 사회적 환경이나 제도가 존재한다. 예를 들면, 남부유럽 저출산 국가의 경우(이탈리아나 스페인), 자녀 보육에 대한 사회적 지원이 매우 부족하다. 노동 시장 또한 시간제 근무수요나 출산휴가 후의 복직 등과 같은 문제에서 비교적 유연성이 떨어진다. 다른 서유럽 국가들과 비교할 때, 이탈리아와 스페인은 세금 수당이나 직접적인 지원 등과 같은 가족에 대한 정부의 지원이 최저 수준이다. 이러한 정부 지원의 부족분이 부분적으로 강한 가족적 연대로서 보충되는데, 예를 들어 경제적 지원이나 자녀보육 등이 조부모에 의해 이루어지는 것이다. 공공 지원을 가족이 대신하는 것은 현대 산업화된 국가에서는 불충분하며 그 자체 한계로 작용할 수밖에 없다.

결론적으로 말해서, 현재의 성차별적 노동구조가 지속되고 사회 구성원들이 돌봄노동에 대한 사회적 지원을 받지 못할 때, 사회 구성원들 그 가운데에서도 특히 여성들의 결혼 기피, 출산 기피 현상은 지속될 수밖에 없다. 결혼 기피, 출산 기피로 인한 인구구조 변화의 가속화 현상은 또다시 생산/재생산 영역의 공백을 결과하며 상생(相生)의 기회를 상실하게 되는 어두운 미래로 이어질 수 있다.

### 〈낳고 싶은 만큼 낳아서 함께 일하고 돌보는 미래〉

모순되게도 가까운 미래에 여성노동에 대해 사회가 요구하는 바와 개

인이 요구하는 바는 일치하는 듯하다. 노동력 부족으로 위기감이 감돌고 있는 사회는 양질의 여성노동력을 필요로 한다. 그러기 위해서 사회는 개별가족에게 과부하 되어 있는, 즉 여성의 경제활동 참여를 저해하는 가사 및 돌봄노동과 같은 무급노동 문제를 해결해 주고자 한다. 그 방식은 공보육 시스템의 구축을 통해, 혹은 출산장려를 목적으로 하는 직·간접의 인센티브 확대를 통해 여성들의 일·가정 양립을 꾀하는 형태로 진행되고 있다. 우연히도 인구구조의 질적 변화는 여성들로 하여금 일하지 않을 수 없는 사회를 만들었다. 따라서 여성들도 사회적으로 인정받는 일, 즉 유급노동을 하고 싶고 또 해야 한다. 여성들의 요구와 사회의 요구가 맞아떨어지는 대목이다. 그러나 일하고 싶고 일해야 하는 여성들의 요구가 제대로 관철되기 위해서 해결되어야 하는 문제들의 수준과 내용에 대한 인식에서는, 사회와 여성들 사이에 일정한 괴리가 있는 듯하다.

인구구조의 변화가 여성노동과 연결되면서 예측할 수 있는 바람직한 미래상의 하나는 ‘낳고 싶은 만큼 낳아서 함께 일하고 돌보는 사회’이다. 저출산·고령화라는 인구환경의 변화에 대해 우리 사회가 우려하는 바는 정확히 생산인구의 감소와 그에 따른 경제 침체이다. 국가의 평균 연령이 증가하면서 우리 사회가 나이 든 사회(old population)가 되고 절대 인구마저 감소하면서 지구상에서 사라질지도 모른다는 끔찍한 시나리오를 전제하고 있다.

그러나 우리 사회성원들의 이상적인 자녀수는 여전히 2명을 넘어서고 있다. 사람들의 라이프스타일이 달라지면서 독신율도 늘어나고 이혼율도 늘어나지만 이것을 사람들의 친밀성에 대한 욕구의 감소로 해석하는 것은 오산이다. 오히려 친밀성에 기반한 새로운 공동체에 대한 욕구, 기존의 친밀성 구조 즉 기존의 ‘가족’에 대한 근본적인 반성을 반영하는 것으로 해석할 수 있다.

한국여성의 경제활동참가율은 2005년 현재도 여전히 낮은 편이다. 그

렇다면 이 경제활동참가율을 선진국 수준인 80~90%대로 끌어 올려야만 할까? 필자는 바람직한 미래상으로 제시하고자 하는 시나리오의 관점에 입각할 때, 감히 그렇지 않다고 말한다. 즉 일하고 싶은 여성이 제대로 일할 수 있도록 노동시장의 차별적 관행들이 사라져야 하듯이, 보다 넓은 의미의 ‘일’, 즉 돌봄노동을 선택하면서도 여전히 차별받지 않는 사회가 우리가 지향하는 미래상이다. 다른 말로 하자면, 사회 성원들 특히 여성들에게 끊임없이 시장노동의 의무와 재생산노동의 의무를 강조하는 사회가 아니라, 시장노동의 권리와 재생산노동의 권리가 보장되는 사회를 지향한다. 노동을 권리로 표현하는 것은 그것을 하지 않을 권리도 포함하는 것이다.

그것보다 더욱 주목해야 할 것은, 모순되게도 현재 우리가 살고 있는 사회는 사회 성원들 그 중에서도 특히 여성들에게 끊임없이 시장노동의 의무와 재생산노동의 의무를 강조하는 사회이면서도 그 두 가지 노동을 도저히 병행할 수 없도록 한다는 점이다. 그것은 돌봄노동이 개별가족에게, 그 중에서도 여성에게 전담되어 있는 현실과, 이것을 지원하는 사회적 지원체계의 미비, 정당하게 평가받지 못하는 노동시장, 일 속에서 헤어 나올 수 없게 만드는 장시간의 노동관행 등 수많은 관행들이 난마처럼 얽혀서 결과한 것이다.

저출산·고령화 사회에서 사회가 여성노동력에 요구하는 바와 여성들 자신이 요구하는 바의 표피적 상동성이 실질적 상동성으로 전화되는 미래도 가능하다. ‘일’의 개념을 확장시키고 그 ‘일’을 해야 할 주체들을 확장시키면 가능하다.

한국사회는 ‘구 사회위험’(old social risks)과 최근 급속하게 제기되고 있는 ‘새로운 사회적 위험(new social risks)’이 뒤섞여 있는 나라이며 이와 같은 사정은 이웃 아시아 국가들도 마찬가지일 것이다. 돌봄노동의 공백에서 비롯되는 ‘새로운 사회적 위험’은 말 그대로 저출산, 고령사회

의 위기 요인과 동일하다. 여성, 고령자 등 사회적 약자들의 노동권 보장을 정책입안의 핵심에 놓을 때 ‘구 사회위험’(old social risks)과 ‘새로운 사회적 위험(new social risks)’에 동시에 대응할 수 있을 것으로 여겨진다.

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우리나라를 포함한 유교문화권 아시아국가의 경우, 저출산을 넘어 초저출산 현상을 보일만큼 인구문제가 심각합니다. 이러한 시점에서 일본과 싱가포르의 출산동향 및 저출산 대책을 살펴보는 것은 같은 문제로 고민하는 우리 사회에 중요한 정책적 함의를 제공해줄 것입니다.

첫 번째로 무엇이 일본과 싱가포르 양 국가의 출산을 저하를 불러왔는지 살펴보면, 몇 가지 공통적인 원인들을 발견할 수 있습니다. 스즈키 박사님과 스트로판 교수님이 지적한 바와 같이 이른 시기에 부모로부터 독립하고, 전통적 가족가치관이 팽배해있는 일본과 싱가포르, 한국은 결혼제도, 가족유대, 가정 내 성별분업이 굳건하여 여성의 자녀출산·매우 큽니다. 스즈키 박사님의 지적처럼 전통적 성역할 및 가족규범에 변화가 오지 않는 이상 아시아 국가들이 초저출산현상에서 벗어나기란 쉽지 않을 것 같습니다. 이밖에도 싱가포르는 우리나라의 ‘쌍춘년’이나 ‘황금돼지해’와 같이 띠에 대한 전통문화적 관습이 국민의 출산의도에 중요한 영향을 미치고 있음을 알 수 있습니다.

두 번째로 일본, 싱가포르, 한국 모두 지속적으로 감소하던 합계출산율이 2006년 들어서 회복세를 보이는 공통점을 발견할 수 있습니다. 이러한 출산율 반등은 모두 경기회복에 기인한 것으로 풀이됩니다. 최근 우리나라의 신생아 수 증가는 1997년 외환위기 이후 경기회복으로 인한 일시적인 혼인을 증가와 연계하여 해석할 필요가 있습니다. 즉 그동안 혼인을 유예했던 젊은 층 인구가 경기회복으로 뒤늦게 혼인을 하는데다

2006년 ‘쌍춘년’ 효과까지 겹쳐져서 혼인러쉬가 발생하고, 이것이 출산을 반등으로 이어졌다고 할 수 있습니다. 스즈키 박사님의 지적처럼 산업화된 국가에서 혼인장려정책을 통한 출산을 제고는 효과가 그리 크지 않은 것으로 예상됩니다. 그보다는 젊은이들이 불안정한 고용여건이나 낮은 소득으로 혼인과 출산을 연기하거나 포기하지 않도록 일자리를 창출하고 기업하기 좋은 환경을 조성하는 것이 무엇보다도 우선되어야 한다고 생각합니다.

또한 결혼만족도가 높은 여성일수록 자녀출산의도가 높다는 스트로판 교수님의 분석 결과를 참조할 때, 출산을 제고를 위해서는 평등하고 건강한 부부관계가 전제되어야 함을 알 수 있습니다. 산업화된 국가에서 보편적으로 나타나는 고이혼·현상에 대처하기 위하여 아동복지를 증진시키고 사회 안정을 가져다주는 ‘사회적 선(social good)’으로서 혼인의 중요성을 강조하기 위해 결혼준비교육프로그램, 생애주기에 적합한 부부관계 증진교육, 그리고 이혼 전 상담의 제도화 등 혼인친화적 정책방안을 생각해볼 수 있습니다.

일례로 미국 루이지애나주의 ‘서약결혼법(Covenant Marriage Act)’은 서약결혼옵션을 선택하는 예비부부를 대상으로 결혼 전 상담을 의무화하고, 별거하는 부부들이 이혼을 원하는 경우, 12~18개월(무자녀 부부의 경우 12개월, 유자녀 부부의 경우 18개월)의 이혼숙려기간을 의무화함으로써 경솔한 이혼과 그로 인한 미성년 자녀들의 피해를 예방하고 있습니다.

그리고 플로리다주에서는 1998년 ‘혼인보호법(Marriage Preservation Act)’을 제정하여 고등학교 학생들의 결혼준비교육 수강을 의무화하고, 혼인신고 시 4시간 이상 결혼준비교육을 받은 예비부부들에게 결혼허가증 신청비용을 할인해주는 인센티브 정책을 시행하고 있습니다. 이들 외에도 오클라호마, 유타, 애리조나, 미시간, 버지니아주 등이 ‘친혼인(pro-marriage)정책’에 복지예산을 배분하고 있으며, 부시정부는 친혼인정

책에 3억\$의 복지예산을 투입하고, 2003년에는 '혼인보호주간(Marriage Protection Week)'을 제정하였습니다. 고 이혼국가인 우리나라도 2005년부터 협의이혼 시 3주일의 숙려기간을 갖고, 이혼 전 상담옵션을 선택한 부부에 한해 1주일의 숙려기간을 거쳐서 협의이혼의사를 확인해주는 이혼 전 상담제도를 운영하고 있으며, 2007년 세계최초로 '부부의 날'을 법정 국가기념일로 제정하였습니다. 이처럼 각국에서 추진하고 있는 혼인 친화정책은 혼인율과 출산율간의 관련성이 높기 때문에 저출산대책으로서 간접적인 효과를 얻을 수 있다고 생각합니다.

세 번째로 이민자에 대한 수용성을 살펴보면, 한국과 일본은 초저출산 현상에도 불구하고 이민자에 대한 사회적 수용성이 낮은 국가입니다. 싱가포르의 경우 주류민족(75.2%)인 중국계에 비하여 말레이계 등 비주류민족의 출산의도가 더 높다는 스트로판 교수님의 분석결과는 국제결혼 가정자녀 4만 명 시대에 돌입한 한국의 정책에 시사하는 바가 큼니다. 현재 한국정부의 정책은 이민자를 지역사회 주민으로 수용하여 권리와 의무를 동시에 부여하기보다 '결혼이민자', '이주노동자' 등의 타이틀을 붙여 내국인과 분리된 서비스를 제공하는데 급급한 인상입니다. 2000년 이후 결혼이민자의 급속한 유입과 함께 향후 30~40년 후에는 한국의 전체 인구 중 20%가 국제결혼가정과 관련될 것으로 전망되고 있습니다. 따라서 국제결혼을 통한 출산율을 제고하기 위해서는 다문화가족의 부부와 자녀를 위한 정책적 지원이 강화되어야 할 것이며, 이민자나 다양한 문화에 대한 우리 사회성원들의 인식 전환도 시급합니다. 또한 이민자를 위한 복지뿐만 아니라 지역사회주민의 한사람으로 적극 참여할 수 있도록 역할과 책임도 부여해야 합니다.

저출산고령화시대에 인력수급의 측면에서 출산과 여성의 노동공급은 양자택일의 문제가 아니라 두 가지가 공존해야 할 정책목표입니다. 싱가포르나 일본, 한국 모두 초저출산현상과 함께 여성의 노동시장 참여 제

조현상이 동시에 나타나고 있습니다. 이는 스즈키 박사님이 비교관점에서 분석하신 바와 같이 여성의 노동시장참여가 출산율에 긍정적인 영향을 미치는 노르딕국가와 상반된 결과입니다. 두 분의 발표에서 이미 지적된 바와 같이 아시아국가의 전통적인 성별분업은 이념적으로, 그리고 현실에서 여성의 일-육아 양립에 장애요인으로 작용하고 있으며, 그 결과 현재와 같이 지극히 낮은 출산율이 나타나게 됩니다. 일본의 보육취원율이 낮은 것은 일본 어머니들의 전통적 성역할 태도 때문이라든지, 24시간 자녀 곁에서 헌신적으로 어머니 역할을 수행해야 한다는 싱가포르 여성의 관념은 모두 일과 육아를 양립하기에 지극히 비현실적인 태도로서 노동시장의 현실에 부합하지 않고, 정책적 지원도 여성들의 기대수준에 못 미치기 때문에 결국 출산대신 일을 선택하게 되는 것입니다.

이에 대하여 일본, 싱가포르, 한국정부 모두 일과 가족생활의 양립을 통하여 출산율을 제고하고자 다양한 가족친화정책을 시행하고 있습니다. 싱가포르의 정책 중에서 우리가 주목해야 할 것은 중산층 이상 다자녀 가구와 출산 이후에도 일과 육아를 병행하는 취업여성을 위한 세제혜택이라든지 조부모 양육자 세금감면, 3세대 가정을 위한 주택정책, 그리고 1,000만 싱가포르\$ 규모의 정부가 조성한WOW(Work-life Works!) Fund 등입니다. 또한 자녀출산 가능성이 높은 여성의 프로파일을 통하여 경제적 지원제도는 효과가 제한적인 반면, 이념적 차원의 정책이 성공적이었던 스트로판 교수님의 결론은 향후 우리의 저출산 대책이 보편적인 경제적 지원책보다 차별출산력에 근거하는 맞춤형 정책들을 시행할 필요가 있으며, 가족의 가치를 강조하는 사회인식 변화에 보다 많은 정책적 관심을 기울여야 한다는 시사점을 주고 있습니다. 최근 KDI(2006)의 연구결과에서도 입증되었던 바와 같이 아동수당과 같은 보편적인 급여도 중요하지만, 무엇보다 노동시장 참여를 조건부로 하는 보육지원금이나 근로소득에 비례한 소득감면정책을 시행함으로써 여성의 노동시장참여와 출산율

제고를 동시에 모색하는 정책들을 적극적으로 추진해야 할 것입니다.

일본과 싱가포르를 장기적인 안목을 가지고 인구동향을 분석하여 저출산대책을 마련해왔습니다. 일본은 1970년대부터 장기적으로 하락해온 출산율이 1989년 합계출산율 1.57명을 기록하자 1990년 저출산대책을 마련하여 오늘에 이르렀습니다. 또한 싱가포르 역시 1983년 합계출산율이 1.61명을 기록하면서 이듬해부터 출산억제에서 출산장려정책으로 방향을 전환하였고, 2000년 이후 출산율이 반등하는데 6년이 걸렸습니다. 반면 우리나라는 이미 1983년에 합계출산율이 인구대체수준 이하로 하락한 이래 지속적인 출산율의 급감으로 2001년부터 초저출산 사회로 진입했습니다. 그러나 1996년에서야 출산억제정책을 폐지했고, 저출산대책을 본격적으로 다루기 시작한 것은 2000년대 초반에 들어서였기 때문에 정책적 대응에 뒤늦은 감이 있습니다. 그럼에도 불구하고 출산율의 반등이 2006년 저출산고령사회기본계획이 수립된 직후 나타나고 있습니다. 이러한 출산율 반등현상에 대하여 다양한 원인이 제시되고 있으나, 그 원인이 무엇이든 사회의 지속적인 발전을 위하여 가족과 출산의 가치를 확산시키는 데 매우 고무적인 현상이라고 할 수 있습니다. 끝으로 싱가포르에서 2000년에 도입한 부성휴가 3일이 아버지의 육아참여에 대한 규범적 기대를 뿌리내리는데 성공적인 역할을 했다는 점 역시 2008년부터 아버지 출산휴가 시행을 눈앞에 두고 있는 한국사회에 희망을 주는 소식이라고 하겠습니다.



연구보고서 2007-19-9

Proceeding Paper

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**International Seminar on Low Fertility and Policy  
Responses in Selected Asian Countries**

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발행일 2007년 12월 일      값 7,000원

총    괄    조 남 훈 외

발행인    김 용 문

발행처    한국보건사회연구원

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대표전화: 02) 380-8000

<http://www.kihasa.re.kr>

등    록    1994년 7월 1일 (제8-142호)

인    쇄    대명기획

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ISBN 978-89-8187-485-8 93330