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A Case Study: Gender Equality in The Workplace in Post-War Japan and its Global Implications

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by
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Dedication:

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Mark and Victoria Cummings, for making me who I am. Their love and unselfish support has inspired me throughout my studies at Bard. Throughout my life, they have actively supported me in my determination to find and realize my potential and help people in the world.

This thesis is also dedicated to my Professor and Advisor, Robert Culp, who guided and encouraged me in the completion of this project. I have had the honor of being his student, and I am so grateful to him for being my mentor.

Table of Contents:

Introduction:

The importance of gender equality issues in any country goes far beyond the sphere of feminism and human rights, affecting the economic course and survival of nations. It is important to examine and consider new ways governments and private sectors of different nations could better utilize women in the workforce. When talking about gender equality, most people consider the issue from a global perspective, thinking first about education, and then equality in the workplace. There has been enormous global progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, but women and girls still face serious discrimination in every part of the world. On the United Nations website, "Gender Equality" is listed under goals, declaring, "Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world." Providing women and girls with equal opportunities for education, successful work and political representation will fuel economies and help nations grow. Every country has different gaps in gender equality, even the most prosperous, and looking at how they each might fall short is a valuable comparison.

Many experts and government leaders believe that the World Order is shifting, and Asia is playing a very prominent position economically and politically. Women represent almost half of the workforce in most countries in Asia, and their position and how equally they are treated will also effect and influence this change in the World Order. While China has become the most dominant economic player in Asia, Japan once held that role and is now struggling to regain its footing. This project will use Japan as a case study for gender equality in the workplace, analyzing what the government and the private sector can do to improve it in order to better their economy. Japan is at a critical point in its economic growth, forcing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to face a major decision.

Their population is decreasing causing the number of workers to decrease, and the number of women working after giving birth to a child is not increasing. Nineteen years ago, Kathy Matsui, the head of Economics, Commodities and Strategic Research for Asia at Goldman Sachs in Tokyo, coined the term "Womenomics", which Prime Minister Abe adopted in 2012 as a label for his policies that encourage and promote women to stay in the workforce. Abe has promised that by 2020, he will increase the number of day care services for working mothers, increase paid leave for women after they have children and help create more job opportunities for women in the workforce. Thirty years ago in Japan, a law was introduced mandating equal employment opportunities for men and women. It was aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination in the recruitment, promotion and other treatment of workers. Female labor participation in Japan has since steadily increased, and some of the obsolete stereotypes, practices and outright discrimination against women in the workplace have either disappeared or been reduced, but they still have a long way to go.

The number of female workers in Japan increased from 15.48 million in 1985 to 24.36 million in 2014. Women now account for 43 percent of the labor force, up from 36 percent three decades ago. The ratio of women in the working-age bracket of 15 to 64 with jobs hit a record 64 percent in 2014, an increase of 6.2 points over 10 years, compared with 81.5 percent among men of the same age group. Workers in irregular positions, such as part-timers, whose share in Japan's labor force has reached 40 percent, account for 53 percent of employed women (Japantimes, 2016). The Abe administration touts greater female labor participation as one of the answers to the aging and shrinking population and calls for the promotion of more women to leadership positions.

Nonetheless, historically, Japanese culture has not welcomed the idea of the working mother. Stereotypes still exist in the workforce that portray women who continue their careers after marriage and having children as overly ambitious and bad mothers. Also, Japan has inadequate childcare resources for working mothers.

China's history is more accepting of the concept of working women compared to Japan and other Confucian based countries. From 1949 to 1976, under Chairman Mao Zedong's rule, when referring to gender equality, Mao insisted that, "women hold up half the sky". When the Communist leader endorsed it, the idea of women working alongside men became a norm that continues today. During his time in power, Mao promoted propaganda posters of working women also running a "proper" household. It created a vision of the Chinese female as a "super mom" who can do it all, and that ideal is still held up as a goal for women to achieve. It is common for women to hold leadership positions in business and to be employed as doctors, engineers and share equal standing with men in most professional fields. The current number of women in China's workforce is 43.7 percent, which is comparable to Japan's employment statistics. The United States scores only slightly higher with 46.5 percent (Shambaugh 2017).

In drastic comparison to China and Japan are the Nordic countries, which have come extremely close to complete gender equality. The World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Report consistently shows that Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden rank at the top of the list, with over eighty percent of the gender gap being closed, making them successful role models for the rest of the world. The beginning of that success is the 99-100% literacy rate for both sexes, as well as having a high rate enrolled in colleges. "While many developed economies have succeeded in closing the gender gap

in education, few have succeeded in maximizing the returns on this investment. The Nordic countries are leaders in this area — all five countries feature in the top 25 of the economic participation and opportunity pillar of the Global Gender Gap Index. This is because of a combination of factors: high female labor force participation; salary gaps between women and men among the lowest in the world, although not non-existent; and abundant opportunities for women to rise to positions of leadership"(Zahidi 2014). There are also strong policies in these countries to assist women to continue working after having children. Some of these policies include a mandatory parental leave with state mandated parental leave benefits provided by social insurance funds and employers. There are also post maternity re-entry programs put in place. The combination of all of these factors has lowered the costs of having children. This has lead to a rising of birthrates compared to other developed nations.

Looking at the United States, working women are still struggling to balance their obligations with work and family. Anne Marie Slaughter, international lawyer, foreign policy analyst and political scientist and public commentator, shook up the illusion of successful American career women when she wrote *Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family,* declaring that women cannot have it all. She talked about her struggles of trying to balance her dream job as the first female director of policy planning at the US State Department with being available for her family and kids. Looking at the United States, she pointed out the realities of women juggling a successful career and a family. She explained, "You can have it all as long as you sequence it right… as long as you succeed in having children when you planned to; you have an employer who both permits you to work part-time or on a flexible work schedule and still sees you as leadership

material…the most common point made is that while women who have careers and families can't pursue their careers as fully as they would like, men who have careers and families can't spend as much time with their families as they would like"(Slaughter 2015). Compared to fathers, mothers spend roughly twice as much time on childcare, and typically, the caregiver of elderly relatives is also a woman. This is common practice not just in the United States, but also around the world, and prevents women from being able to pursue more successful careers. She also said, "These statistics make it all too clear that the middle-class map has been redrawn by women leaving their traditional caregiving roles due to the economic necessity of having two breadwinners to support a middle-class family, and men losing their traditional breadwinning jobs and being unprepared, unwilling, or unable to take on work in the caring sectors of the economy" (Slaughter 2015). Women are often needed to help support their families financially and emotionally.

The economic state of the world, and more specifically the United States, is changing, and it is getting more expensive to live with only the man as a single breadwinner. Women are needed in order to grow the economy and to sustain the lifestyles that people were used to in the past. While this project will look at Japan as a case study, watching their population decline and their economy become stagnant, there are ideas and solutions to these issues that might be explored in other countries as well to encourage and support women in the workplace. The first chapter of this project focuses on defining and explaining the historical context of the Office Ladies and Salary Men, whose roles are the origins that have created the foundation of the Japanese workforce today. Looking at the traditional positions women played in the office shows how those

roles are still forced on them today, preventing them from advancing in their careers. The second chapter focuses on Prime Minister Abe and his administration, and what he has and has not been able to accomplish for women in regards to gender equality. Abe has boasted of his support for more gender equality in Japan, but this chapter will analyze how he is actually restricted in what he can achieve due to his political party. Finally, the third chapter will focus on the private sector's influence and ability to enact change. The businesses in the private sector are potentially able to achieve much more in terms of gender equality then the government has accomplished. The private sector is also more directly affected by changing women's roles in the workplace, and will benefit the most if the economy improves. By having more women in the workplace, it fills the gap in the current labor force that, in most other countries, immigration would fill. In turn, the private sector is greatly impacted by the public, and Japan, like many other countries, has a vocal young generation that is determined to change office life in their country in order to spend time with their families. The combination of corporate competition and transformation of the opinions of the public are changing the work culture in Japanese companies, and eventually, may determine what the government policy becomes in the future.

Overall, this project asks: What needs to change within the three areas of government, private and civil society in order to increase gender equality in the workplace and at home? Who is responsible for enacting these changes, and what are the obstacles that might prevent them from occurring? How does the culture of the Office Ladies and Salary Men affect working culture today? How is Prime Minister Abe hindered by his administration to make changes? How are reforms in the workplace and

corporate sector influencing attitudes in Japanese society about workplace culture?

Looking at these questions and using Japan as a case study, this project will explore the issues of gender equality and what is needed to create a greater balance between men and women. In order for societies throughout the world to be able to realize their fullest potential, these changes are necessary. Women make up almost half of the workforce in Japan, China and the United States, and their participation in government and in business is not likely to diminish in the future. If half of the population is being discriminated against and do not have equal participation and voice, and if work-family issues continually determine the economic choices that men and women must face, how can the members of a society thrive and become mutually committed to its values? Books have been written about these gender disparities in a historical context, but not many examine what these issues mean for the future in Japan, as well as other countries like the United States. Compared to Japan and other nations, the U.S. may be perceived to be more open-minded and equal, yet the reality is that, for many women, it is not much further advanced. Examining the problems and the progress that gender equality issues and the empowerment of women present in Japan as a case study will lead to a better understanding of solutions that can help the rest of the world move forward.

Chapter One: The Formation of The Modern Japanese Family and the Gender Division of Labor

The family system and the workplace in Japan are changing but many of the remnants from the post war period are held onto today. Ideas and values still remain strong, especially in relationship to the businesses and corporations that employ the "Salary Man" and uphold the security and wellbeing of the middle class. While these conventional ideals are under pressure to transform and become more flexible, they nevertheless continue to impact the younger generation that is attempting to challenge their elders. This chapter will analyze the conservative, restrictive gendered divisions of labor that developed in post-war Japan and how they affect the role of working women and the Japanese ideals of the family. It will examine the roles of two venerable icons of the country's work ethic, the Salary Man and the Office Lady, as well as how they balance and interact with each other. Finally, it will explore the relationship between a culture that is adverse to risk, the difficulties of encouraging entrepreneurism in Japan and how these negative attitudes may actually be the reasons that stimulate the growth of opportunities for women in leadership.

Before World War II, in the 1930's, moving away from the Edo, 1603-1868, and Meiji Era's, 1868-1912, the phenomena of the Modern Girl spread not only to Japan but also the rest of the world. In Japan, the Modern Girl, or Moga in Japanese, were young, working women who were seen as sleek and stylish. During the same time period, these young mogas were extremely influenced by the flapper girls in the US, who were the same age. Men began hiring them to work in their offices typing, or working in department stores. For women at the time, this was a great step forward. They were making their way out of the factories and into a more social environment for work. The

Modern Girl caused a lot of unease and controversy. The taunting lure of Westernized culture during this time was also desirable, but frightening. Young women were seen as a little rebellious and different then what they had been previously. The reality was that many young Japanese women at the time were aroused and engaged in a cultural revolution. In traditional Japan, young women who wanted to earn a living went to live in factory dormitories and would send their wages back to their families in order to support them (Freedman 2013). The young mogas, who rebelled to pursue their glamorous lifestyles, moved to cities and began living independently and supporting only themselves. Women began playing a more active role in the economy all the way through the war and into the present (Freedman 2013).

During the 1940's, the war disrupted the nation and forced women to take on working roles that men would have normally taken if they were not fighting in the military. This occurrence happened not only in Japan, but the United States as well. "World War II and the subsequent mobilization of millions of men for military service drew women into the workplace in unprecedented numbers"(Molony 2008). While men went to war to defend their country, women needed to support themselves and the nation by assuming the jobs which men would have done, such as working in factories. Then in 1945, at the end of the war, women wanted to have some more privileges after supporting the nation during the war. When the Japanese constitution was rewritten, women in Japan were given the right to vote and were elected to positions in the Diet. "Women went to the polls in the first postwar election on April 10, 1946. Two-thirds of eligible women voters cast their ballots; an extraordinary percentage when compared to other countries right after women gained the vote… Thirty-nine women were elected members of the

Diet… The first women Diet representatives were highly educated, and many were professionals"(Molony 2008). Even though women gained the right to vote, now that men were back from war, the country expected women to go back into the household in order to rebuild the population, and men to take their jobs back. In post-war Japan, the government and society had to deal with the scrambled roles that women had. They were expected to take on the role of the good wife, wise mother, but there were also still workers like the mogas or office ladies. There was a re-establishment of these roles where women were able to work until they had to take on the role of wife and mother.

After World War II, as Japan's economy started to expand and more corporations and businesses were created, the concept of the Office Lady, or OL for short, and the Salary Man started to become a trend. These two models have shaped the way men and women are viewed in the workplace in Japan. The modern Japanese family and household have been greatly influenced by the "traditional" roles of the Salary Man and Office Lady concept that was adopted by people. Historically, women in the Meiji period tried to be "the good wife, wise mother", which did not involve jobs and careers. Now, looking at the Office Ladies who were playing a new role in the job market, some traditional values carried over into their new roles. Japanese companies invest money, time and training into their employees, typically men, in order to create stability. Salary Men work in the same job until they physically cannot do it any longer. Their children are taught to do what they are told and follow the system, not to question it, and just do what their parents did. Due to these rigid attitudes, it makes it difficult for the culture to change and manifest into something new. When looking through this lens at this non-risk taking nation, in terms of politics, culture and the economy, it means that the traditional

roles that men and women play in society have not changed much. “Japanese working women of different ages are used to fill different slots in work organizations. What these slots— even the white-collar ones— have in common is that they are not career track positions, and they are ill paid relative to the slots filled by men”(Brinton 1994, pg 36). The Salary Man is regarded as permanent and stable, whereas the Office Lady is only temporary and can be easily replaced. These ideals and personas have often negatively impacted the way men and women are viewed in the workplace, motivating the newest generation to enter the Japanese workforce to demand change and to attempt to re-invent Japanese work culture. Before examining these demands to change and re-invent, it is necessary to understand the way that the Salary Man’s role evolved.

The following section is drawn from Yuko Ogasawara’s book *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender and Work in Japanese Companies*. The original idea of the Salary Man became popular in 1930, referring to white-collar male workers, including all ranks from newly hired to middle managers. It does not include executives, directors or senior managers. Typically, these are men working for large corporations on a salary-based income. The young Salary Man is dedicated to the company, and the company is committed to him for life. Most young men enter a company as a Salary Man when they graduate from university and are expected to work there for their whole career. The company then molds them into their exact specifications and trains them to do the work they need to do for the company, often making their college education obsolete. They are also given a promise from the company of the stability of working there until they are ready to retire. However, that also means that if the company wants to move the Salary Man to another branch, the employee has no choice but to follow orders. Once they retire,

they are given a pension to help them until they die. Originally, Salary Men received higher pay than regular wages and had regular hours and time off, but over the years, this has drastically changed. In the 1930's, the Salary Man reflected the new middle class that contributed to the company's industrialization and modernization. It became an ideal position after World War II, offering success and a solid spot in the middle class in Japan. Over time, the original appeal of being a Salary Man began to lose its value due to the change in the Japanese economy. In 1990, Japan's economic woes forced companies to scale back on employee benefits dramatically.

The concept of the Salary Man continues to exist in many of the more traditional Japanese corporations even today. Salary Men are still expected to work long hours as well as overtime, which is usually without extra compensation. As newcomers, young men might feel pressured to spend the night at the office, sleeping under their desks, only to wake up early and start working again. They are forced to do what their superiors tell them to do, whatever the task or the hour, although most of the time, Salary Men working overtime is just for the purpose of impressing their superiors. In reality, offices in Japan are one of the least productive in the world. These efforts are rarely rewarded because Salary Men are expected to work overtime with little or no extra pay. To leave after a normal eight or ten hour day would let the "team" down in many companies. While it is not written anywhere that Salary Men must stay in the office for long hours, it is a silent, unbreakable code that shows how dedicated to the company someone is. After being forced to work overtime, many employees are pressured by their superiors to go out for a drink at a bar near the office. Sometimes, this is the only time they have to "relax" before working again. "After work, the men stop off someplace to sit and chat, have a drink and

perhaps a bite to eat. Most company gangs have their own favorite hangouts: bars, coffee houses, small food-specialty shops, and the like… It is here that they talk and laugh freely about sports, nation and world events or the daily happenings in the company, complain about bosses and wives, and receive the consolation of their friends"(Vogel 1963). Many Salary Men will stay out until three or four in the morning, drinking with colleagues and clients, before paying for an expensive cab home, due to the lack of public transportation at that hour, and then proceed to repeat the cycle again the next day. This causes them to have little to no relationship with their wives and children. In these circumstances, it is often encouraged that women stay at home, out of the workplace, and focus on managing the household as well as the family's income. Salary Men today are also paid far less then they were when the term was originally created. Yet, they are still expected to never quit the company, and fearing that finding a job after quitting would be extremely difficult, many of these men see no other option than to stay at the company forever. Toshiyuki Tanaka, an assistant professor at Musashi University in Tokyo said in *The Japan Times*, "Many say men-at-work women-at-home is an outdated notion from a bygone era. But the work-centric way of life for men remains the same. In reality, for men in general, there is no option of quitting their job. Even though the number of working women is growing, many are part-timers who support their family budget while the majority of men remain the chief breadwinners"(Aoki 2017).

Along with being forced to work long hours, most Salary Men do not take vacation time or days off of work. They believe it shows a loyalty to the company that they keep working, even on their days off. Not only does the company pressure them to be dedicated, their fellow employees also make them feel guilty for taking time off and

leaving more work for them to do. The Japanese government plans to submit legislation that would make it mandatory for workers to take at least five days of paid vacation a year. This falls in line with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's notion to alter the Japanese work culture of long hours with little to no compensation. In 2013, the Labor Ministry of Japan conducted a survey that showed most employees only took nine out of their entitled 18 days of paid vacation. Another poll the same year by the *Japan Times* found that one-in-six workers took no paid vacation at all (Tharoor 2015). Most companies do not encourage or force their employees to take vacations. They also urge their employees to continue working strenuous hours without complaint and no pay. In many instances, to take a vacation shows that a Salary Man is not dedicated to the company. Leaving the company even for a few days is viewed as a betrayal and can ruin one's chance of a promotion or pay raise.

Death from overworking became so common in the 1970's that the Japanese created a term for it known as "Karoshi". The phenomenon is associated with Salary Men being pressured to work long hours without resting. There is such extreme pressure on salary men to work and provide for their families because of gendered expectations that it often leads to a lot of other health issues. This problem is so well known that there is a hotline, self-help book and a law that gives money to widows and children of Salary Men who work themselves to death (Harden 2008). Originally, the word Karoshi was associated with physical issues like cancer, strokes or heart attacks, but recently, its meaning has expanded to include mental issues like depression and suicide. There were 2,207 work-related suicides in 2007, and out of those, 672 were labeled as death by overwork. In 2010, 1,181 cases were filed with the Labor Department to receive

compensation for work-related mental illness, among this number, 171 of these cases were suicides (Harden 2008). However, the actual number of suicides is believed to be much higher. Only a fraction of families are willing to file a case under suicide, due to the prejudice and discrimination from society. Over time, rules remain so weakly enforced that the United Nations International Labor Organization has described Japan as "a country with no legal limits on the practice"(Harden 2008). It appears that some companies are willing to sacrifice the lives of their employees in order to keep their company ranked number one and Japan's economy running.

With all of the stress of working and the insane hours, originally, young Salary Men did not have time to have a social life or worry about marriage. If the Salary Man's family did not arrange a marriage, in some instances, the company would work on helping the young Salary Man find someone, typically a young woman working in the office. The company became everything for the Salary Man, involved in his private life as well as his typical work life. Often times, people in the Human Resources department would handle activities that would take a Salary Man out of the office, such as going to file tax returns or other issues at the city hall.

Along with the advent of the Salary Man, there emerged the Office Lady, a young female counterpart and subordinate to the Salary Man. The original term "Office Lady" dates back to the 1950's, after World War II, and extends to the present. In the 1980's, being an OL was the most common job for women and made up one-third of women in the workforce. The term Office Lady is used to describe any white collared female worker from the executive level down to temporary staff. Typically, Office Ladies are recent college graduates, and within the office, they are expected to work hard, but also

search for a marriage partner. Anthropologist Ogasawara says, "Although young men and women begin their work lives in similar ways, an increasing number of women move out of large firms and out of full-time employment status as they age, whereas men are less mobile"(Ogasawara, pg 11, 1998). Women are expected to be satisfied with their lower echelon positions, and it is more difficult for them to get into higher positions within a company since there is a societal pressure to leave the company in order to get married and raise children. "Many women in Japan choose not to apply for career-track jobs, believing that they cannot have both a family and a career. In Japan, it was noted, there are even fewer 'on and off ramps' for the career woman than in the United States, so it is particularly difficult to return to the management track after taking a break to care for a child or other family member" (JCIE 2017). Those who chose to focus on their career are expected to give up on the idea of having a family entirely because it is seen as impossible for them to balance both.

Although it might appear that as more younger women in Japan would want to become more independent and focus on their careers, the trend is not as widespread as one might expect. Even today, there is often a lot of burden on women within the office to encourage them to get married and leave their positions in order to focus on children. Often, women are urged to date and eventually, marry a young Salary Man in their office. Women who choose to stay on after they are married are expected to leave the company when they get pregnant with their first child. Women are then often discouraged from re-entering the company after they have given birth, and do not try to return until their children have grown. "A large number of women leave the labor market after marriage and childbirth. Many reenter the labor market later on. Because the overwhelming

majority of large and prominent companies in Japan recruit female fulltime employees only directly from school, reentrants seek employment either in smaller companies or as part time workers and receive less pay and fewer benefits than full time employees of large companies"(Ogaswara pg 18-19). Men are customarily considered to be the breadwinner for the family, making it more difficult for women to continue their careers. Originally, a lot of men viewed Office Ladies as "seat warmers", just temporary workers trying to support themselves until they got married. Women in Japan are typically viewed as the caregivers, not only to their children but their aging parents and in-laws. As times are changing in Japan and greater numbers of women might consider continuing to work, this stereotype is preventing them from working more.

The conventional duties of the OL were to serve tea during meetings, type and file reports and maintain the office for the men who work there. One of the most stereotypical jobs office ladies were expected to do was make tea for their supervisors, guests or other men in the office who asked them to do so. "OLs detested serving tea because it emphasized their subordinate position. In typing letters and making copies, women usually had the latitude to decide how and when to do a job. Because OLs were scarce resources, a man could not ordinarily order OLs to type a letter or to make copies immediately, except at a truly pressing moment … Tea pouring reminded women that they did not have control over their time"(Ogasawara pg 42, 1998). When women were given tasks such as editing documents or typing letters, they were able to point out mistakes and show off their skills. Whereas, making tea was seen as more demeaning, so the task was only given to women, since in the past, they filled more subservient roles.

Salary Men were often portrayed as lost and floundered without the help of Office Ladies. However, more recently, that former partnership in the office has often shifted into a battle. Originally, only a few brave Office Ladies stood up for themselves and defended their work when men in the office treated them poorly. Now, young women in these Office Lady positions are more aggressive and outspoken, fighting to get and keep a seat at the table. The Japan Center of International Exchange released a report in 2017 about a program they held between Japanese and American women discussing gender equality issues. The report stated, "With a deeply engrained expectation that women should prioritize their responsibility to care for the family, the opportunities for meaningful careers are still constrained both in the corporate and political sectors"(JCIE 2017). Today, in offices in Japan, even though the rules may have changed, it takes longer for the culture to actually change. The government has tried to force companies to improve their maternity leave and help women who wish to continue working while raising children in order to solve the problem of the declining birth rate and slow economy. Despite how in the past they encouraged women to leave after marriage, this culturally imposed deadline is now being pushed back until women are pregnant. More recently, some women have started to work after having children because Prime Minister Abe has attempted to put systems into place to assist them. Often, critics claim that these systems that are put into place are just for show and do not actually help mothers wishing to continue their work. Most of the time, women do not take these opportunities because they also experience criticism from their fellow Office Ladies, similar to how the Salary Man faces pressures when taking time off from work. "Even fewer women took childcare leave. One woman who succeeded in taking the leave remembers the great pressure

exercised against her… She was said to have selfishly pursued her own interests and to have 'disgusted everyone' by taking childcare leave"(Ogasawara pg 66, 1998). When an Office Lady took time off for maternity leave, her other co-workers were expected to pick up her extra work while she was gone. Due to the pressure from their fellow OLs, only a few women resumed working after only six months of maternity leave while most stopped working all together.

When women get married and leave their positions, their husbands often expect them to be in charge of the home, including all of its finances. Japanese women are often responsible for managing the money, paying the bills, and saving money aside for an emergency. They are the backbone of the domestic labor market, and without them, Japan would be at a loss and need to fill those positions. Women are in charge of managing their children's education, taking care of the elderly in their family and managing the household expenses. If they are not available to fulfill those roles anymore because they are going to continue to work after having children, then who will? Japan has not taken this question into consideration while the government continues to encourage women to keep working. The answer to this labor shortage is potentially easy to solve. Yet, most of the government is not encouraging or allowing foreigners to fill the gaps in the labor market. Another issue is that most Japanese mothers are unwilling to leave their children with a babysitter or a nanny. This common practice in Western countries is not a part of the culture in Japan and is not commonly recognized. Due to these two factors, the Japanese government must find an alternative solution to this issue.

Along with managing the household budget, many women had control over their husbands' pocket money, or "okozukai", every month. Women would decide out of the

budget from the Salary Man's income how much allowance he would get each month. "Pocket money, set by wives who are often put in control of the family budget, stands at an average of ¥37,873, about $400, per month so far this year, 2017, the third lowest level since the survey started in 1979, according to Shinsei Bank Ltd., a Tokyo based lender"(Fujioka 2017). This pocket money is used for going out to eat or drink, buying cigarettes or new clothes and any other recreational desires. Not only do husbands get an allowance, but wives also set for themselves an allowance in order to manage and save money well. Being able to control the amount of money their husbands get each month also allows the wives to determine how much freedom their husbands will have to go party or blow off steam from working. When the pocket money is limited, husbands are more frugal and spend more time at home with their families. The secret money that women set aside is called "hesokuri", which is a stash of cash that they have hidden from their husbands for emergency use or in order to buy something for the family (Ashcraft 2013). This is an age-old concept that is widespread throughout other societies in the world. Women in many cultures tend to hide away money in cash for a rainy day in order to prepare themselves for emergencies or to treat or take care of the family.

The ideal family system today in Japan is still based on the stereotypical Salary Men and Office Ladies behavior. The Japanese government historically made sure that everyone knew about this ideal family system and what was expected of them. "Until the end of World War II, the Japanese government saw that all its citizens, through school and mass media, learned in great detail about 'the family system.' As a whole, the government was amazingly successful. Not only did everyone learn about the ideal family, but many attempted to model their family on this ideal" (Vogel 1963). This

standard of behavior has continued to affect the Japanese family in society today. Since women were expected to work until they get married and then return to the inner sphere of the home to manage the house and raise a family, being the breadwinner placed enormous pressure on the man. For most families, this pattern still continues today. "The father's salary is ordinarily the only source of family income, and there is virtually no alternative in time of trouble" (Vogel 1963). Consequently, the father often feels a lot of pressure to succeed in order to support his family, especially as his children get older and need more tutoring and education.

In this scenario, the wife, who is home alone a lot, takes things in stride, but often feels deserted and misses her husband. "At times the businessman's wife feels lonely and complains that her husband is not home enough. Some wives are particularly distressed about the husband's visits to his favorite bars and geisha house where he receives special attention because of his prominence and the size of his expense account" (Vogel 1963). While the wife of the Salary Man feels lonely when her husband is at work, she also is often expected to obey her absent husband's decisions and orders, even if she does not agree with them or want to do what he is asking. "In the official ideology of 'traditional Japan', the wife not only obeyed her husband, but showed that she enjoyed obeying him" (Vogel 1963). This mindset is still often being imposed on the younger generation by their elderly parents, who want to continue having these customary Japanese values.

Fathers are also frequently distant from their children so that mothers take on a more active role in parenting. "Because her husband knows so little of the children's interests and activities, and the maid performs only the simpler tasks, the wife must take over almost completely the care and management of the children, and she turns to them

for companionship" (Vogel 1963). There is so much societal pressure on students to do well and succeed in school and get a good job that if a child fails, the blame is usually thrown back onto the mother for not managing and monitoring their child enough. Mothers spend many hours with their children, focusing on entrance exams and preparing them for a good job. Not only does the child feel an extreme burden from society to do well, but also towards their mother whom they do not want to fail. "Because of the societal stress on success, she (the mother) helps the young children with their homework and hires tutors for the older children. If the children have difficulty passing the entrance examinations on their own merits, she may send them to private schools where they can escape open competition with the salary man's children" (Vogel 1963). With fathers being as absent as they often are, it is up to the mother to plan and organize everything so all the father has to do is look it all over and approve it. "In the year preceding the examination, the mother spends much time, investigation, expenses, entrance requirements, and the school's records in successfully placing their graduates. She visits schools, reads advice columns and books, and gathers information from friends… The mother does most of the groundwork, but she must make sure that the father and the child approve her choices… The mother does not want to risk being solely responsible for the choice of schools in case the child fails, and she is likely to consult with the father" (Vogel 1963). When the exams are over, if the child succeeds, the mother is able to brag about their child, and teachers will boast about which students did the best to all of the other mothers, creating a hierarchy among them. While it brings honor to the family, it also highlights the mother's accomplishment of raising her children well.

Some women in Japan are starting to slowly transform the work culture and step away from conventional roles. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law went into effect in 1986, but today, the idea of the Office Lady is still haunting women working in Japan. There are constant reminders that they are not equal to their male counterparts and are expected to fill long-established roles. Until the Office Lady label is abandoned and roles are redefined, real equal opportunity for women is not likely to be achieved. Women will still be viewed in a subordinate way and looked down on by their male counterparts. Despite this, a generational shift is happening in Japan with more liberal views on gender equality and less stress related to work. Young professionals today often refuse to follow in their parents' footsteps. Young men are refusing to let work be the center of their lives and keep them from their children, while women are demanding a place at the table. Young men watched their fathers and grandfathers work themselves to death and want a better lifestyle for themselves. More newly established companies are paying attention to the protests of the younger generation and changing their office principles to match their new employees. Although this generational shift is happening, it takes time for the culture of the office to change and for the mindsets of the older, more conservative, generation to disappear.

This generation of young college graduates wants to be involved with their children and have a social life as well as being able to work in a position that allows them to provide for their family. In an interview with a recent male college graduate, he said, "More of my generation wants to be there for their kids. People care more about their lifestyle and free time now. As the older traditional generation starts to die and go away the more modern generations will change. They become more accepting. It's hard to shift

quickly and it's coming slowly." The combination of this generation's mindset, along with Abe's decision to encourage companies to change their ways about overtime and other issues, opens the door for a cultural shift in Japan. "Now, recently, companies try to make a shift to be more flexible like American companies. Employees want to make the shift too. Japanese companies aren't as important or strong as they used to be, so now they have to compete with the rest of the world," the young college student explained, "Companies like Sony or Toshiba are more traditional and strict, but it's the twenty first century and things are starting to change. More companies like Line are forming and have learned from the West and implemented that mindset in Japan." Newer companies are trying to attract this young generation by changing their outlook, such as in terms of hours and vacation days, as a bonus for hiring. "Japan has realized they're behind the race in the world. But some people still think Japan is on top, the older people, but the younger generation knows it's not," he continued, " Results used to not matter, what mattered was your dedication and loyalty to the company." When the idea of the Salary Man was created, Japan's economy was much stronger then it is today. Now that the economy has changed, the mindset about the ideal worker is beginning to be modified.

The young people who are planning to enter the workforce are very much aware that Japan does not make it easy for new businesses to form or for people to become entrepreneurs. In an interview with a female college student, when asked how she felt about getting a job and starting her own family, she quickly admitted that learning to balance these life choices is difficult, and the Japanese government and companies are not offering a good support system. She explained, "I think it is ideal to keep working when I start family/ caring for my parents. However, I may quit job if my partner had

enough money to let me do so. Maybe it depends on what kind of job I could get in the future." There is still a lot of pressure on young girls in Japan to stop working and take care of their elders and their family, despite that there are many young women who wish to continue working after having children if their companies will permit it. Another young female college student interviewed about the generational shift said, "Since many of us know that overwork has been the dark side of Japanese work culture by watching news that features people who died by overwork, I think young people are trying to care about quality of life much more than older people." The lifestyle of a Salary Man is very secure. Once they sign with a company, they no longer have to worry about themselves financially as long as they stay loyal to the company. The female college student explained, "As far as I know, changing jobs has become more popular compared to the past. However, I think most people prefer the security because not all people have enough skills to work freely. Maybe it is related to low percentage of starting new business in Japan?"

Along with aversion to taking risks, the idea of being an entrepreneur is often frowned upon in Japanese society. The icon of the stable Salary Man is so embedded in the culture that it does not make it culturally acceptable to start a new business. The government also does not make it simple for entrepreneurs to make a living or grow their business. In the 1940's, Japan's economy grew because of start-ups such as Sony, Toyota, Mitsubishi and Honda. During the 1990's, that all changed when Japan got trapped in economic stagnation and deflation. These older, more established companies are still where most young people are striving to work, rather then creating their own version of these famous "start-ups". Yoshiaki Ishii, director of the New Business Policy

Office in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry told the *LA Times*, "Venture businesses innovate, and young companies create jobs. Older, established companies hire a lot of people, but they're not making new jobs. We have to find a way to support new ventures"(Makinen 2015). Although Prime Minister Abe claims that the key to improving Japan's economy could be through business start-ups, he has not done much to help entrepreneurs or those considering it. "Common problems faced by aspiring entrepreneurs include the lack of venture capital, labyrinthine government regulations, and the dominance of large companies"(Chuan). The government is not the only one holding people back from being an entrepreneur. Most of the time, it is their families that discourage them, pressuring them not to take the chance. Ishii also told the *LA Times*, "The fact is, even if a guy wants to start his own company, it's often their wife, their mother or their wife's mother who stops them. They'll say it's too risky to quit their job. Somehow, we have to get them to think that not taking a risk is also a risk." Japanese university students are also often discouraged from becoming entrepreneurs, even though some universities like Waseda have even started special divisions to teach students how to start their own businesses. Tadashi Takiguchi, president of Waseda University's Entrepreneurial Research Unit said to the *LA Times*, "For Japanese university students, the No. 1 goal is still to enter a big company; No. 2 is to become a bureaucrat, or maybe a teacher. An entrepreneur is still seen as a much lower position. At Stanford or Harvard, the No. 1 goal is becoming entrepreneurs. It's totally different" (Makinen 2015).

Even without the cultural and societal pressures to get a stable job, it is very difficult for start-ups to get the loans they need. "Banks are unwilling to lend to entrepreneurs, and even if they did, their onerous lending rules would impose harsh

conditions on start-ups. In particular, the banks would demand to collateralize all of the assets"(Karlin 2013). It is seen as too risky or reckless to many young people to attempt to be an entrepreneur in Japan. "Today, Japan has one of the lowest levels of entrepreneurship in the developed world, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor"(Oi 2015). Japanese culture has a very strong mentality of group affiliation, and because of that, the skills needed to become a successful entrepreneur are suppressed in school at a young age. "Abe wants to double the start-up ratio, but doing that requires a number of changes from incentivizing angel investors by modifying the tax code to encouraging established companies to partner with up-and-comers," says Ishii, "There's been an NIH — 'Not Invented Here' — syndrome in Japanese companies. If they didn't invent it, they're not interested. We want to change their attitude"(Makinen 2015).

When looking at entrepreneurs in Japan, it is a very male dominated world, and most of the time women are discouraged. However, many critics point out that when considering what Abe wishes to accomplish, it would be beneficial for him if more women became entrepreneurs after having children. It would allow them to continue contributing an income for themselves and their family while being at home to support their husbands and their children. In an interview with female business-owner Sayaka Watanabe, she explained, "The entrepreneurship system is very male dominated. The difference between male and female entrepreneurs is that women do not care as much as men do about making their companies into large companies but starting from their community that is close to them." Ms. Watanabe works closely with those affected by the 2013 earthquake and tsunami in the Tohoku region in Japan. She is a successful

entrepreneur who started her own business and encourages and helps women learn how to start their own business based off of skills they have that can help their community.

Another example of a woman starting her own business is Noriko Teramoto, who founded Digimom Workers in 1999. They specialize in Internet projects such as webpage design, database creation, systems development and homepage content creation for customers. Most Japanese entrepreneurs are unable to hire the best workers because they are already employed in large companies and have job security or hopes of lifetime employment. Also, the cultural fear of failure would cause many employees, particularly men who are deemed the provider for the family, to lose face if unproven ventures fail. If the venture was unsuccessful, they believe it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find employment in a large company. Teramoto agrees hiring female employees was a key way Digimom overcame the labor market barrier. Like her employees, Teramoto juggles her business and her family, which includes her husband and three children. In the beginning, her husband opposed her new venture, but slowly he has accepted her work.

The outdated mindset in Japan is gradually changing as young people speak out about the mistreatment that goes on within the working community. At the same time, the conservative mentality about what type of career path one should take and how long they should stay in it is still putting extreme pressure on young people and those who wish to pursue a career deviated from the norm. People are encouraged not to take risks and stay on their career path, even if it is killing them. Women today are still impacted by gender divisions of labor that were established in historical post-war norms. Changing these deeply embedded concepts will not happen overnight.

Chapter Two: What is Japan's Government Doing for Women?

The previous chapter focused on the Office Ladies and Salary Men who worked and lived in Japan during the "Economic Miracle". The rigid constructs of the social order and the emphasis on striving for ideal roles in work and at home had some unanticipated consequences. "Casual observers often suggest that one of the principal ingredients of the Japanese economic miracle is that women assume virtually all the emotional and care taking responsibilities for the family and leave men free to devote long hours to company life"(Brinton 1993). As the Economic Miracle fell apart and the reality of monetary instability and a seriously decline in the birth rate sunk in, the Japanese government has been forced to adopt a new approach. This chapter looks at the potential options that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are faced with when dealing with their population and economic problems. Japan is at a turning point where the government needs to make important decisions quickly in order for them to solve the major dilemmas of a declining birth rate and an economic standstill. Looking away from immigration as a solution and focusing on women, this chapter examines the struggles that women in Japan in the early 2000's faced. Why is the Abe administration focusing on what they refer to as "Womenomics" instead of immigration to solve this problem? Abe and the LDP have chosen to focus on women, and women's issues, instead of changing Japan's immigration plan, which some say is an obvious answer. The conservative party is more willing to utilize women from their own nation then turn towards outsiders.

It also investigates what the Abe administration has claimed they will do in order to support women going back into the workforce after having children. What is his

definition of Womenomics? How has Abe talked about implementing Womenomics and has he followed through with these statements? He has appropriated this word from Kathy Matsui, an executive at Goldman-Sachs, but follows its path differently. He still has not redefined it for himself and his party, instead making neutral statements and un-kept promises. Exploring not only the cultural but institutional struggles that Japanese women face can reveal what the Abe administration has proposed and has not done to make changes. These changes will benefit not only women, but Japanese society and the economy as a whole.

Japan has experienced twenty years of flat growth after a fruitful period of high-speed growth in the 1980's. Today, there is an on-going economic struggle that is caused by a declining population and a labor shortage. Observers and economists have suggested that increasing immigration might potentially improve the country's shrinking workforce. The United Nations estimates that Japan would need to receive seventeen millions immigrants between 2005 and 2050 in order to maintain its current population level of 127 million people (Peng 2016). Similarly to the United States, Japan has a difficult time finding workers to fill blue-collar jobs such as farming, caregiving and lower paid occupations. In the United States, illegal immigrants fill many of these lower paying positions. Japan, on the other hand, does not encourage immigration that might bring in foreign workers to fill these positions, and many of these industries are suffering from extreme labor shortages.

For instance, Japan is currently faced with a caregiver shortage. Professor Yuriko Meguro, a gender studies expert from Sophia University, explains, "Japan doesn't have people who want to become care workers for elderly and children. It is a lot of work and

the pay is low. The pay is low because traditionally care work has been free in the home of the children by the mother and wife of the family". To deal with this problem, the Japanese government is sponsoring internship programs to bring workers from other Asian nations like China, Cambodia, and Vietnam to fill empty jobs. They created agreements with both the Philippines and Indonesia to have 1,000 nurses and caregivers come to work in Japan. The government established strict requirements for those entering the country. Caregivers coming from these countries must be certified nurses, and once they arrive, they are required to undergo a six-month Japanese language intensive study program. After three to four years of on the job training, if they want to remain in Japan, they must pass a national certification exam. The exam is extremely difficult and is conducted in Japanese. If they fail the exam, they must return to their home country. According to Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, nurses from these two countries have entered Japan in 2009 but none of the applicants passed the national exam in 2009. In 2010, only three people out of almost 260 participants passed the exam (Matsui 2010/2014).

Despite these poor results and strict requirements, the demand for foreign nurses and caregivers continues to grow. In a Kyushu University survey conducted in 2010, more than eighty percent of Japan's large to medium sized hospitals were interested in employing foreign nurses to help care for the rising elderly population (Matsui 2014). There is a large demand and plenty of available foreign workers to solve this problem, but Japan's extremely strict immigration laws prevent it from changing. Unless Japan wants to lose these resources from the Philippines and Indonesia, they must be willing to loosen the requirements that they have imposed.

According to *Japan Today*, some of the proposed changes to immigration policies include extending temporary worker programs, expanding worker "trainee" programs and actively recruiting foreign students to work in social care services. These programs are referred to as trainee or internship programs and give foreign workers contract visas that last two to three years. In the last five years, the trainee program has doubled in size to over 200,000 participants. The government is considering expanding the visa time so trainees can stay in Japan for up to five years instead of three without taking the national exam. The government also is hoping to expand the types of businesses that can utilize this trainee system, such as nursing staff for elderly care and hospitals, as well as cleaning companies for offices and hotels (Soble 2017).

Nonetheless, opening the country to immigration is something that is easier said then done for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Abe and the LDP represent a very nationalist way of thinking, and for the past ten years, they have pursued a protectionist stance, similar to the present approach of President Donald Trump in the United States. When questioned why he does not change immigration laws, Abe declared that his country must first resolve its own domestic concerns about demography before it can welcome any new citizens. Foreign residents in Japan today still account for a small fraction of the population and face a lot of discrimination. Many people might think that Japan being a prosperous pacifist nation would be willing to integrate foreigners into their society and economy, but that appears to not be the case. Abe has indicated that immigration is not an option to solve Japan's declining population and labor shortage (Menju 2017).

Somewhat unexpectedly, the Prime Minister and the conservatives in his party

have chosen instead to focus their hopes and expectations for resolving these problems by seizing upon the idea of utilizing Japanese women who have been lying dormant as potential workers. Throughout his career, Abe has never shown any interest in women's rights or their role in society. Suddenly, four years ago, out of the blue, he decided to shift his party's focus to women's economic involvement as a way to revive Japan's declining birthrate and slowly failing economy.

Japan is ranked lower then most democratic countries in terms of equality in health, economics and politics. In 2016, the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Report placed Japan 111th out of 144 countries (Aoki, 2017), ten places lower than it was in the previous year's report. Women make up forty three percent of the labor force in Japan, but more then half of them are employed part time. By comparison, in the United States, women account for fifty seven percent of the workforce. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed thirty years ago in Japan, and while there has been some progress in decreasing the gender gap, other developed countries have achieved this reduction much faster. From 1990 to 2015, in Japan, the number of regularly employed women fell by 3.3 perfect from 10.5 million to 10.15 million (Akira 2015). Japan's population is projected to shrink another thirty percent by 2060, causing the proportion of elderly people to double and the working age population to diminish by half. Closing the gender employment gap, improving working conditions for women, including better childcare options would most likely improve Japan's GDP and boost the declining birthrate.

In September 2013, at the United Nations General Assembly, Abe surprisingly declared he would create a society where, "all women can shine". He promised to boost

female labor participation rates, increase the number of women in corporate boardrooms and improve gender equality. He also announced, "Women have the greatest potential and allowing them to demonstrate their full abilities is the core of our growth strategy"(Smart, 2014). His government began actively promoting what was called a 20-30 numerical target, which aimed to have 30 percent of management positions in every sector occupied by women by 2020. Abe proclaimed, "Our 'Womenomics' has just started. I am convinced it will move forward with considerable speed from now on"(Aoki 2017).

However, in 2017, the government conceded that it would not be able to reach its goal of getting women into thirty percent of management roles by 2020. This failure comes despite the fact that, as Chapter Three will show, many Japanese companies are actively implementing initiatives for women, such as setting target goals for the number of women they hire and the number of women they promote. Some also have created support systems for women, including extended maternity leave and shorter working hours for mothers.

Prime Minster Abe and his party gained total control in the Diet, Japan's parliament, and when he released his political platform for 2017, he added human resources development as a new pillar in his Cabinet's policy agenda. Critics of Abe have pointed out that the government is treating people as resources to be manipulated to improve certain areas in the economy. Abe also insisted in his platform that the government plans to initiate a "productivity revolution" by increasing wages. Abe told his Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, "Already, society is demanding wage rises from business. In next year's wage negotiations, with solid progress on the productivity

revolution, I would like you to realize wage rises of 3 percent" (Wakatabe 2017). Abe also declared that the government wants to promote easier access to education and preschool education. They want to create more scholarships for students who come from lower-income households. They also want to make preschool free for ages three to five years old by 2020 (Wakatabe 2017).

While Abe never really gave credit where credit was due, the true creator of Womenomics is Kathy Matsui, co-head of Economics, Commodities and Strategy Research in Asia and chief Japan equity strategist and co-head of Asia Investment Research at Goldman-Sachs Investment Group. Born in Nara, Japan, but raised by her parents in California, Matsui has an understanding of both the West and Japanese business culture. She wrote her Womenomics report in 1999 for Goldman Sachs while she was pregnant with her second child. In the report, she argued that increasing the participation of women in the workforce was a better solution to Japan's economic stagnation then increasing the birthrate or changing the immigration laws. In 2012, Abe incorporated her term Womenomics into his idea of Abenomics. He describes it as a vital component of his economic program.

In a 2014, Goldman Sachs updated Matsui's report about Womenomics, presenting three areas in Japan that need to change: the government, the private sector and society. In the report, they advised the government to deregulate daycare and nursing sectors, reform immigration laws, boost female representation in government, neutralize taxes and equalize part-time and full-time work. In the private sector, they suggested changing the work environment by creating more flexible environments and contracts, shorter work hours and setting diversity targets. The final area in which they

recommended change was in Japanese society, where they suggested there needs to be more encouragement of better gender equality at home to influence future generations.

When asked about Abenomics, Kathy Matsui said, "The statistics show hundreds of thousands of new jobs under Abenomics, but many of these are part time. Women are feeding an economic need because Japan is running out of bodies". The challenge Japan is facing is to not just to create new job positions for women, but to change the Japanese workplace culture. Since Japan's "Economic Miracle" in the 1970's and 80's Japanese companies have been known for long working hours, not being very productive, and late nights spent drinking alcohol with other colleagues to create a better office environment. Goldman Sachs has estimated that by closing Japan's gender employment gap, it could boost the country's output by thirteen percent.

In an interview with *Japan Today*, Matsui said, "Improving the capacity of daycare and elder care is obviously critical, but it is also important to educate society about the benefits from greater diversity. Perhaps the biggest obstacle is the mindset. There are many 'myths' about "Womenomics" that need to be overturned if we are going to make more progress from here"(Usuda 2016). In response to her ideas, critics that say having women in the labor force will not solve Japan's problem of the declining birthrate, Matsui has shown that female labor and fertility rates are correlated both in Japan and the rest of the world. In her TedXTalk she declared, "Let me tell you, the number one obstacle I encounter when talking about Womenomics in Japan is this: 'But Matsui-san, if your thesis is right and we have more Japanese women working in society, is that not going to lower the already very low Japanese birthrate?" She explained that the opposite is true. More women working in a country means that there will be a higher birthrate. In

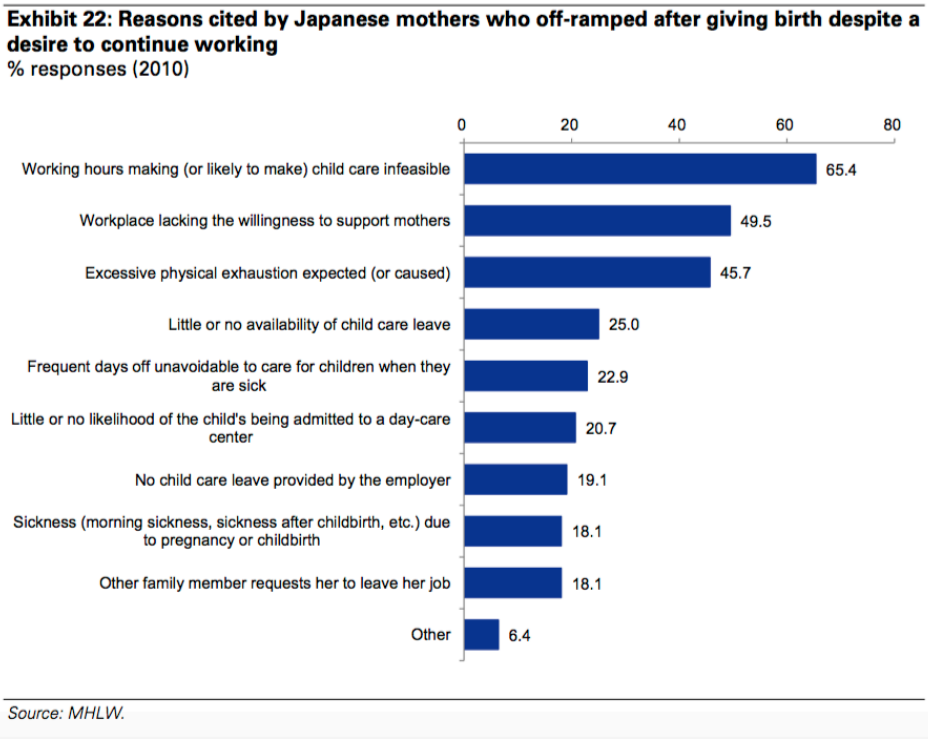
2012, the MHLW, Ministry of Health, Labour and Wealfare, conducted a survey that showed Japanese prefectures with some of the highest female participation rates that also had high fertility rates. These prefectures tended to be in more rural areas such as Shizuoka and Nagano (Sudo, 2014). Matsui pointed out that a reason for this could be that grandparents live either in the same home or near their children and grandchildren in order to help out while the mother is working.

Japan is a society bound by tradition, which causes change to come slowly. Unfortunately, that includes opportunities for women in politics and business. Traditionally, the husband was the breadwinner, and the wife was the homemaker. The employment rate for women with children is less then thirty percent. The combination of lack of childcare options along with the cultural pressure for women to handle household duties puts a societal pressure on mothers to drop out of working environments. The leader of Japan's main opposition party is Renho Murata, the first female leader of the Democratic Party. In a recent interview, she said, "Japan has long operated on the idea that men work outside the home, and women belong in the home. We need a society that offers choices"(CBS News 2017). Lower wages for men, the "breadwinners", has actually helped female employment numbers to rise. Men are now unable to marry and start a family because of their low income, meaning that men and women are marrying later or not at all.

Another option is that the woman will continue to work after their marriage until she becomes pregnant. Then, typically after she has her child, and they are in school, she will return to employment in a part-time position. This common phenomenon has increased the number of non-regular employees. When asked about Abe and his party's

use of the term Womenomics, Renho responded, “They should be ashamed to use the word ‘Womenomics’. It’s an embarrassment”(Reynolds 2017). She believes that Abe’s loudly proclaimed intentions are not being sincerely implemented. Unfortunately, the reality Japan faces is that roughly seventy percent of Japanese women continue to quit working after giving birth to their first child and do not return to their careers.

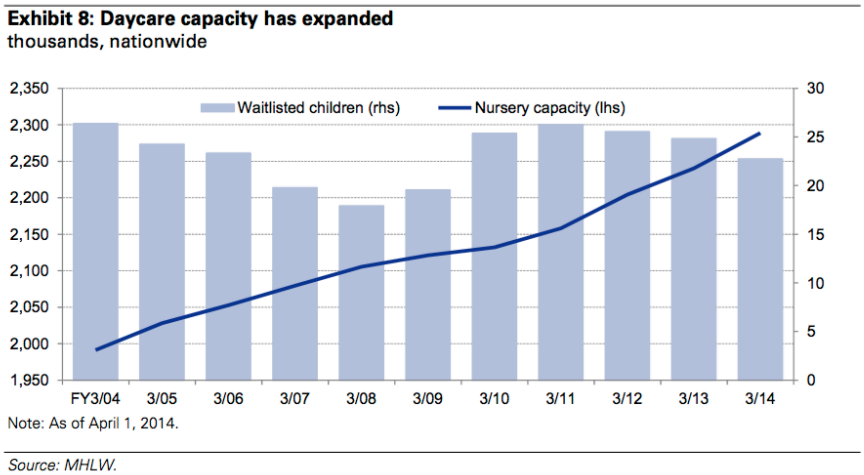
Social norms still dictate that women are the main caregivers to children and elderly family members, so working mothers are less likely to be offered higher positions given the workplace culture of long working hours. The MHLW conducted a survey that revealed the number one reason Japanese mothers stopped working after giving birth, even though they wished to continue, was the long working hours and the lack of support from the workplace (Matsui, 2010).



Right now, the challenge is not only to create greater opportunities for women, but to change the culture of the Japanese workplace. It has often been associated with the

longest working hours and the least productivity in the developed world. There are almost no incentives that will encourage women to continue to work. Renho explained, "About 80 percent of those who take childcare leave are women, and if they're forced to wait for daycare, that means unemployment. You either get demoted or you give up on work. What's Womenomics about if women are being forced to make such sad choices?" (Reynolds 2017). As the mother of twins, Renho fully understands the struggles that working mothers face in balancing work and home life.

According to the health ministry in 2016, there were more then 47,700 children on waiting lists for daycare (Reynolds 2017). In *Japan Today*, Kathy Matsui stated, "Many women want to return to work after having children, but there are few support mechanisms to help them re-enter the workplace"(Usuda 2016). She added, "Improving the capacity of daycare and elder care is obviously critical, but it is also important to educate society about the benefits from greater diversity"(Usuda 2016). This is a graph from the MHLW in 2014 that Goldman Sachs included in their report about Womenomics. It shows how daycare capacity has expanded.



In a recent TED Talk, Matsui said that at her company, Goldman Sachs, they have set up a support system for women who are mothers or expecting. They have built their own daycare for employees near the Tokyo office. Also, there are new programs in some of their offices that help bring women who left the financial industry back into it by giving them an opportunity to experience different divisions within the firm and eventually be offered full-time jobs.

In 2010, the Japanese government created "child-rearing allowances", referred to as Jido Fuyo Teate in Japanese. These incentives are for families with younger children, providing some financial support and encouraging parents to have more children. Also, families with children under fifteen are eligible to receive a monthly child-rearing allowance of 13,000 yen, which is about $153 US dollars, for each of their children (Matsui 2010). These allowances have become extremely beneficial to divorced families or single mothers trying to balance work and raising their child. In order to gain the benefits of this program, the applicant must be a single guardian for a child of 18 years or younger. There is also a list of eight conditions that the applicant must fulfill, such as one parent passing away and the other being a single parent or being a single parent out of wedlock. The family will continue to benefit from this program until the child's 18th birthday. The amount of allowance given to the family depends on the area in which they live. There is not only support from the Abe administration but also from local governments. For instance, in Kamogawa prefecture, a single parent with one child can receive around 42,330 yen ($397), and with two children between 14,990($140) to 52,330 yen ($490). However, the amount of allowance a family gets is also based on the income of the single parent or guardian.

Increasing the number of daycare centers in Japanese society would be helpful, but does not entirely solve the problem. Children, not only in Japan, need guidance and attention throughout their educational careers, and once children are past the age of being in day care and are in school, there are still many challenges facing working mothers. After school clubs, cram schools and college prep are just some of the things that mothers around the world are expected to coordinate in their children's lives. This is extremely hard for Japanese mothers because on average, the Japanese father only spends an hour a day involved in childcare and household chores (Matsui 2010). Most of the burden is placed on the mother, whether she is working or not. In Japanese society, there is a lot of societal pressure to be the ideal mother. This expectation of perfection extends all the way down to the bento box she packs her child for lunch. In Japanese society, there is a term called the "Kyoiku Mama", which means "Education Mama". It is described as a mother who drives her children to study, help develop their social and physical development and their emotional well-being.

Marie Thorsten in *Superhuman Japan: Knowledge, Nation, and Culture in US-Japan Relations*, explains that the Kyoiku Mama is a byproduct of the postwar period in Japan, when a nationalized competitiveness surrounding education was created. After World War II, most familial property was destroyed and other inherited wealth was gone, forcing children to rely on their education to get good jobs. As the middle class in Japan continued to grow, women started having fewer children and focused on mothering while their husbands worked. With the increase in household appliances like rice cookers and washing machines, mothers' roles became more focused on mobilizing their children to excel in school and become well educated. There was much more societal pressure at the

time for women to stay at home as mothers and focus on being good wives and mothers or “ryosai kenbo”(Thorsten 2016). Women in Japan during the postwar economic reconstruction took on the task of educational reconstruction with intensely relentless zeal.

At the time, women did not have as much information about parenting as they do today and about what other parents at the time were doing with their children. Often, this caused women to push their children to the utmost limit. The Kyoiku Mama became a symbolic warning to Japanese mothers that by expecting too much and pushing your children too hard, it can be harmful to them in the future. On the other hand, it still encouraged women to be active participants in their children’s educational lives. Some of the involvement that women had in their children’s education is still in effect today. Mothers continue to be involved in monitoring their children’s homework and test grades and helping them get into good cram schools known as “juku”. The Japanese education system is still extremely competitive and sets a standard that continues in the working world. Children take intense exams for high schools and later for colleges to set them on a good career path in the future. The education system is interconnected to the employment system, and by going to a good school, it allows them to get a good job and advance in society (Thorsten 2016).

Doing well on exams and getting placed into a good school and a good job is very stressful to many young students in Japan and across Asia. Societal pressure is continuing to grow, and parents are starting to put more of a burden on their children to do well on their exams and get high paying jobs to support themselves. It is well known that Japan has some of the longest working hours in the world. Some employees literally work

themselves to death. According to the BBC, nearly a quarter of Japanese companies have employees working more than eighty hours of overtime a month and often unpaid (Lane 2017). Abe and the Japanese government have tried to put pressure on companies to break the decades old work culture, but it is more difficult than it seems. It is not unusual for new employees to work extremely long hours, believing that they have no choice because they are just starting out and must follow orders. Young women are taught to work just as hard as men in the workplace, but they also are expected to eventually leave for reproductive purposes. "Japanese parents' lifelong expectations of sons and daughters have traditionally been quite different. Under the Japanese family system, not only was men's economic role important but parents expected to live with a son and/or rely on him financially in old age"(Brinton 1994). This continues to influence the mindset that women are to remain in the home while the men are the breadwinners to support their family.

By comparison, in China, women also face a lot of pressure to get married very young and start a family. Women with high education and a good career are often viewed negatively when it comes to marriage. "In China, the derogatory term 'leftover' women or 'shengnu' is widely used to describe an urban, professional female in her late twenties or older who is still single" (Fincher 2014). The Chinese government does a lot of population planning, and if Chinese women were to delay marriage or reject it all together, it would be detrimental to the government's efforts. That is why the Chinese government has put together many campaigns and advertisements advising and warning women about being a 'leftover' woman. Women who fear becoming a 'leftover' woman often turn to matchmakers or their families in order to find a suitable husband. Others

who are in relationships will put large amounts of their savings into buying a home or apartment with their boyfriends or fiancés, despite the risk of it not working out. With that large of an investment on the line, many women endure many struggles in their marriages in order to keep their share.

Similar to the term "leftover" women in China, Japan has a derogatory term "Makeinu", which means "loser dogs". The term was popularized by freelance writer Sakai Junko in her book, "Makeinu no Tobe", Howl of the Loser Dogs, where she defined it as being a single woman in her 30's without children. The low birthrate in Japan is often blamed on women rather then men. In the business culture of the office, women are often judged by when they will get married and have children. By writing her book about the Makeinu, Sakai hoped to convince Japanese society to be more accepting of women who continue to work and do not follow the traditional family path. Sakai has taken a positive approach to Makeinu life by writing about the fun and interesting things the single women have the freedom to experience. She described them as being fashionable, highly cultured and hard working. With so much societal pressure to do well in school and work, women are caught in a double standard. Japanese society still focuses on the notion that women can only be good workers until it is time for them to reproduce and have children. Then, they are forced to leave the workforce whether they wish to or not due to societal pressures (Yamaguchi 2004).

Leftover women and Makeinu are terms that still stigmatize unmarried women who are in the mid-twenties to thirties. Unlike China, Japan's Makeinu are held responsible for the birthrate crisis and are made to feel guilt from society and the government to get married and have kids. Abe's Womenomics could be an

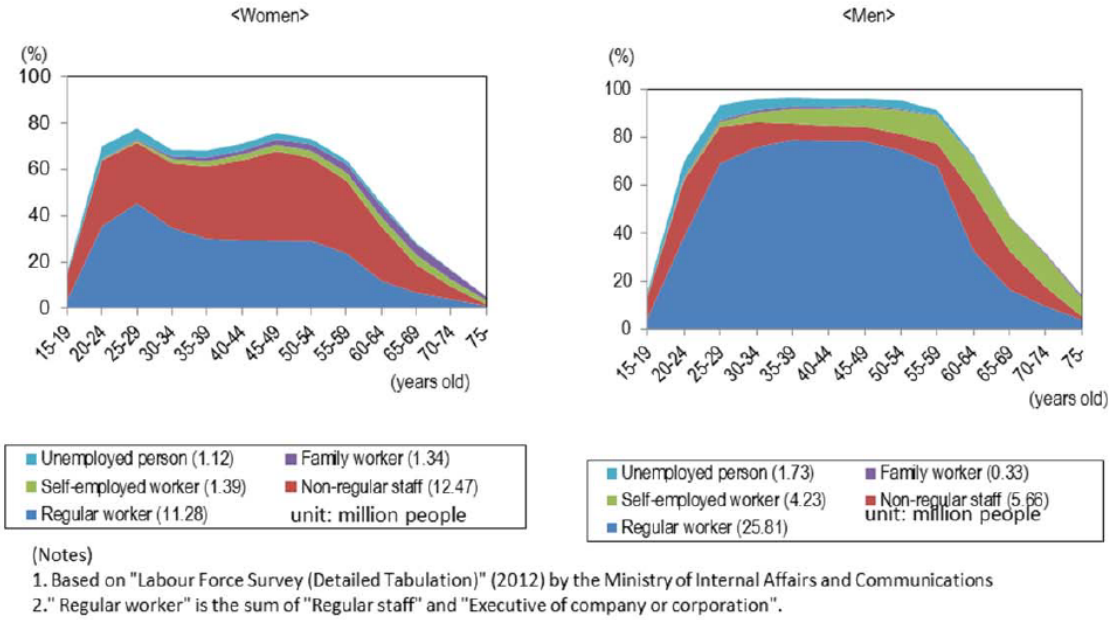
encouragement to abandon the insulting use of the term Makeinu, but his critics point out that he is not trying to get rid of this concept in Japanese society. By saying that women need to continue to work and have children in order for the Japanese economy to be stable and the declining birthrate to stop, such negative stereotypes flourish. Mary Brinton in her book *Women and the Economic Miracle in Post War Japan* wrote, "The dilemma facing Japanese women is that they encounter strong pressures to marry 'on time,' but, if they succumb to these, they are written off by employers, who consider them poor risks for investment in human capital via on-the-job training"(Brinton 1994). In order for Abe's ideal plan to work out. society must make it acceptable for women to either continue working after having children or to return to work after their children enter school.

Another problem Japanese women face is that the marital tax laws are outdated and discourage them from moving into higher paid positions while in a married relationship. Since the 1960's, these laws reward women who stay in part time and low paid positions, devaluing their labor and putting more of a focus on reproduction. The maximum income one spouse can receive in order for the household to receive the exemption in the Japanese income tax is 1.03 Million yen, or about $10,000 US dollars. It is often referred to as the "Wall of 1.03 Million Yen". The spouse with the higher income can deduct 380,000 yen only if the lower earning spouse makes less then 1.03 million yen. Companies also offer benefits to their employees who spouses earn less then that income, such as paying for their health insurance, which creates another incentive for women to not take on higher paid positions (Potosky 2016).

In this graph from The Tax Foundation, women are less likely to work in higher

paid positions than men across all age groups. They are also more likely to be "non-regular staff", such as part time workers who have little to no benefits and low pay (Potosky 2016).

Figure 4 Employment Type Breakdown of Labor Force Participation Rate by Age Group (By Sex in 2012)



(Notes)
1. Based on "Labour Force Survey (Detailed Tabulation)" (2012) by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
2." Regular worker" is the sum of "Regular staff" and "Executive of company or corporation".

This inequality of wages was created in a society when men were the breadwinners of the household and women would quit working for reproductive purposes. It was enacted when Japan was in the middle of its postwar modernization and was experiencing rapid economic growth. At the time, it was a welcome tax break that helped support the typical Japanese family that was living off of a single income. Now that Abe has started to push for more with his Womenomics plan, many working women believe that it is the perfect time to change this tax law. This system is often called obsolete. Today, the number of wage earning households with both the husband and wife having paid jobs is higher then it was twenty years ago. In 2014, Abe instructed the government's Tax Commission to review the spousal deduction system and to create a

new system. Many businesses use this system as a way to determine the allowances that they give to their employees. Some fear that by changing the system, the tax burden would increase, include those who are currently benefiting from the spousal deduction.

The government is proposing to create a deduction plan for married couples in exchange for obliterating the spousal deduction. In this change, a set amount would be deducted from the taxable income of a household, regardless of how much their spouse earns. *The Japan Times* has proposed to exclude high income households from such a deduction in order to prevent the government's tax revenue from shrinking, as well as affecting households where one spouse is not working at all (Kodera 2016). If the reform is made in a positive way, it could unlock the dormant potential of many women who are not working and raising their children, similar to what Abe is hoping his Womenomics will do. There is a lot of data that might encourage him to change the present tax system. In 2010, in a national census, the working population was set between the ages of 15 to 64 and totaled 81.7 million, representing 63.8% of the population. The National Institute of Population and Societal Security Research said that looking ahead to 2060, Japan may have only 39.7 million workers or less than half of the population. Many opponents of Abe declare that now is the time for him and the LDP to revamp this system to allow women to continue working without tax inequalities being yet another reason for them to quit (Kodera 2016).

Old and out dated cultural norms that have affected the institutions and the government have had great impact on women in Japan. Prime Minister Abe and the LDP have claimed they will be enforcing and creating benefits to help women with their emphasis on Womenomics. Yet, when looking at what has been said versus what has

actually been done, it becomes obvious that not much has been done to complete the goals they have set. Abe has led the country for ten years and has been using Womenomics as a platform in his party for almost five years now. How is Abe prioritizing Womenomics? Why is it that his proposals have not had more of an impact? Is he serious about his Womenomics program? Does the success of Womenomics fall back onto the capacity of the state? And if so, is it working? If not, should it rely more on companies to make a difference or a change? After explaining in this chapter how Abe and his party, the LDP, have used and manipulated Womenomics for their own political gain, the next chapter will analyze the current situation for women in Japan's corporate workplace. It will focus on women's roles in business today and how historical and cultural actions have impacted these positions. It will also examine how, the policies of specific companies and changing attitudes in society have influenced women's roles and where they will continue to go in the future.

Chapter Three: The Changes in the Corporate Sector and Societal Views

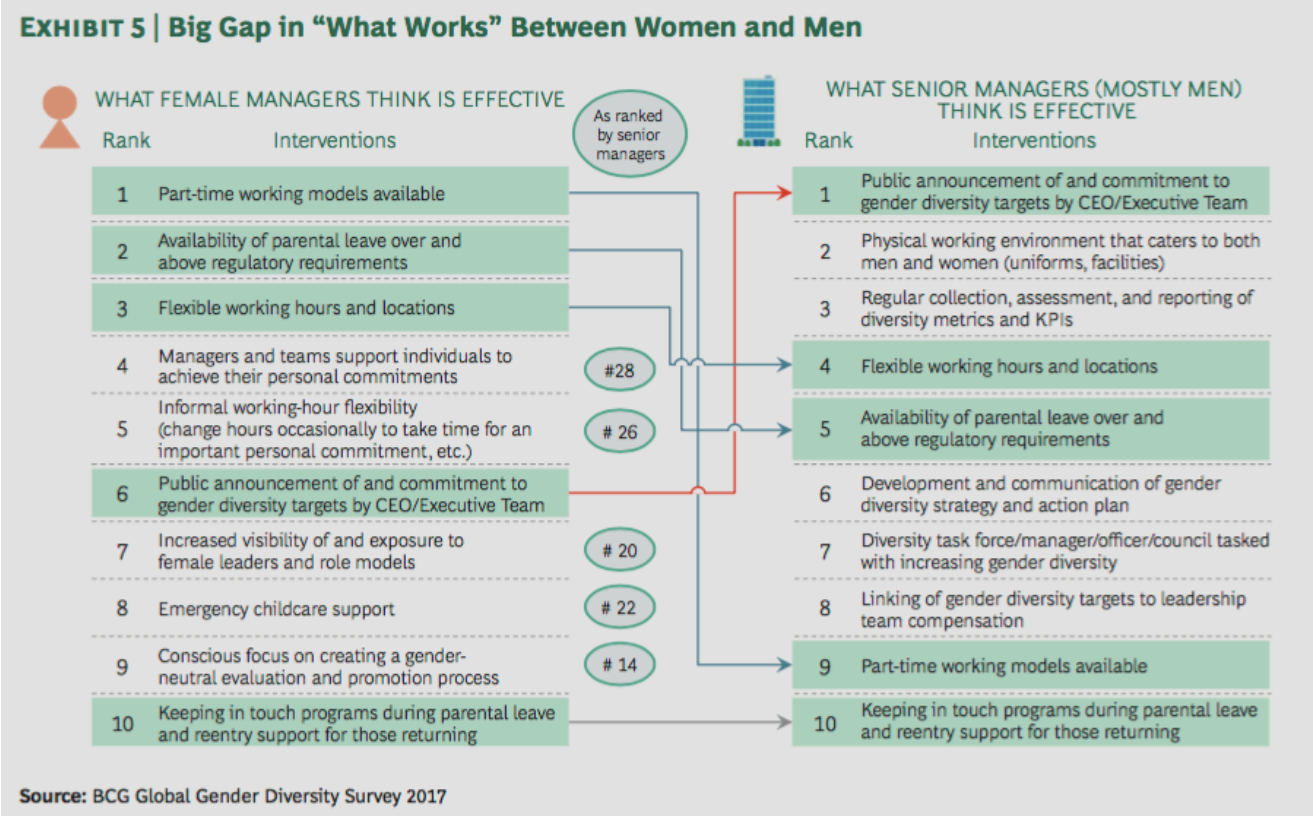
Change is coming to the Japanese workplace, regardless of inability of the government to "walk the talk", as Goldman-Sachs' "Womenomics 4.0" report pointed out over four years ago. While the previous chapter focused primarily on Prime Minister Abe and his political party, this chapter will concentrate more on the private sector, as well as society. The issues facing the Japanese economy are only an abstract concern for Abe, whereas they are an immediate reality for the corporations looking for future employees. With the lack of immigration change and population decreasing, companies are fighting to hire the most qualified students to join their companies. This young generation, that has been highly influenced by other countries' work cultures and lifestyles, is now seeking comparable treatment in Japan, forcing Japanese corporations in the private sector to make changes faster then the government is. Along with this young generation putting pressure on companies, the private sector is seeing how the government will not change the immigration laws in order for them to get more labor. Therefore, these corporations are turning to women and finding ways to invest in and keep women working just as long as men are.

After looking at the stagnation of the roles of Japanese women in the workplace and at home during the past 73 years since World War II, it is important to now explore the present and the future. The current generation of young students who are in university and who have just graduated are paving the way for change in Japan. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his party have tried to implement change with their Womenomics movement, but have not been successful in transforming the culture and mindset of the workplace. It continues to be dominated by the old-school mentality of the Office Lady

and Salary Man, believing that women are replaceable. The new generation is trying to alter the workplace, starting with core issues of not having long working hours and no time off. They are interested in spending more time with their families, something that most of their parents did not and could not have done. This chapter will focus on this generation and what they are doing to modify the workplace, along with what some corporations are doing to create support for them. Along with that, it will examine the future of gender parity for Japan, which if successful can be used as a model for other nations dealing with similar issues.

Economic success in new corporations that have modified their ideas and culture in the workplace, like social media giant Line, are lending clout to the cultural shift. Recently, in Japan, there are thriving new corporations being created with a work culture similar to Western countries, with office hours from nine to five and encouragement to actually take vacation days off, allowing workers to spend time with their families. These new corporations are paving the future in a way that Prime Minister Abe has not been able to do because of his party's opposition to his proposed amendments. "The issue is changing the traditional work style. For some time, long working hours and uniform, inflexible work–time management have been common in many Japanese companies. These practices likely derive from the view that long hours contributed to manufacturers' success during Japan's high-growth period. Men with full-time housewives have been able to take advantage of this work style, but it is not one suited to working couples, particularly where working mothers are concerned. Work-style reform is essential both to secure the continuation of women's careers during the childcare period and to improve their chances of career development and promotion"(Iwata 2017). Now that times are

changing and the economy in Japan has changed, the companies and the approaches that they have towards their employees are going to be altered if they want to continue to succeed. Kimie Iwata, the chairperson of the Japan Institute for Women's Empowerment and Diversity Management, who was previously serving at the Ministry of Labor and helped write the Equal Opportunity Act, believes that corporate growth is dependent on enhancing diversity. "The late Masaru Ibuka, one of the founders of Sony Corporation, said that innovation occurs where common sense and extraordinary sense meet. To borrow this idea, common sense is an accumulation in companies from Japanese men working long hours. Of course, this is important. But women, foreigners and people who are employed halfway through their career could bring extraordinary sense to work places. I believe that innovation will be created by putting more importance on people who have not had the chance to perform well until now"(Chiba). One of the things that women bring to the corporate table is a distinctly different style of management as the Boston Consulting Group gender graph below shows.



One well-established company, cosmetic giant Shiseido, is responding to these challenges and actually paving the way like newer companies, helping women continue working while and after having children. "The head of Shiseido's human resources department, Yuki Honda, who made her own way up the ladder while raising two children, said women's careers depend on their own ability to put in effort to meet the company's needs. She added that the company's shift in policy was to encourage female employees to seek promotion opportunities"(Reynolds 2017). Eighty percent of Shiseido's employees are female, including their beauty consultants working at the counters across Japan, so it is understandable that they would be inclined to support women in the workforce. They are moving quickly in order to keep the labor they need to succeed economically, especially since the immigration laws are not changing.

The company recently started a majority owned joint venture called Kodomology with JP Holdings, Japan's biggest daycare provider. The plan is to build childcare facilities in Shiseido's factories and eventually, in the company's offices and outlets. "Shiseido has been offering in-house daycare in its main office in Tokyo since 2003, and the facility, called Kangaroom, is open to workers in nearby companies in the Shiodome area, home to major corporations like advertising giant Dentsu and airline ANA. Even in the 1990s, Shiseido offered flexible working arrangements, including shorter work days for people who had children in school up to fourth grade, and time off for those who had to take care of elderly family members"(Steger 2017). With companies like Shiseido receiving positive publicity in the media, they are offering a new role model to be emulated by other companies in Japan and the United States. Not only is Shiseido working on better equality and opportunity for women in their own offices and factories, in April, 2017, they partnered with UN Women in order to promote more gender equality in Japan. The UN Women press release states, "Grounded in UN Women's universal mandate to advance gender equality and Shiseido's commitment towards women's advancement, the partnership aims to raise awareness of gender inequality and develop capacities of young women and men to act as agents of change". Shiseido has pledged to help assist UN Women in promoting their HeForShe initiative by participating in joint events targeted towards the youth of Japan.

Nissan, like Shiseido, is another traditional company, which is becoming more diverse in gender equality. Their approach can also be used as a role model for other corporations in Japan. Nissan Motor's Japan created a program called "Women in the Driver's Seat: Gender Diversity as a Lever in Japan", which increases women's

participation and contribution in all areas of business. "The business case for having women as decision-makers and in positions of influence within the company was developed in response to research identifying women as influencers of two-thirds of all car purchases"(Catalyst 2008). Nissan focuses on three areas: engagement, education and the advancement of women. Some of their initiative includes career advisors for women only and career coaches for all high-potential employees. They also have a variety of work-life programs and policies, including flextime, family leave for women and men, and programs to reduce overtime work. Mandatory manager training and increasing the visibility of women role models through networking events and diversity forums are other programs they also implement in their company. Nissan sees that women in the workforce are good for their company to continue to grow, but also as a way to reach out to potential buyers and clients. For them, having more women in their organization is also a good marketing strategy.

IBM is yet another example of a large company that is making great strides for gender equality in the Japanese workforce. Historically, IBM has been in the forefront of empowering women in the workplace. In 1935, in the United States, IBM recruited 25 female college graduates, the firm's first female employees. Another milestone in the company's history was in 1943, when Ruth Leah Amonette became IBM's first female vice president. Since 1995, the number of women executives at the company throughout the world has increased by 562 percent. This is not just the case for IBM in the United States and other Western countries. In Japan, they have implemented positive action measures to help with diversity management long before Abe's "Womenomics" was introduced. Positive action measures were first implemented in IBM Japan in 1998. "The

share of female employees increased from 13 percent in 1998 to 15.7 percent in 2003. In the same time period, the promotion of women also made progress. Between 1998 and 2003, 290 assistant managers, 67 deputy managers, 85 division managers and 3 female executive members were appointed. Finally, IBM Japan made efforts to improve the retention rate of female employees, which was successful. In 2003, 90 percent of women who had been working for IBM for five years were still in employment. The share of women who continued working for IBM for more than ten years stood at 50.9 percent"(Assmann 2014). In March 2018, IBM hosted a new series of events called Deepen the Dialogue, a Tokyo based movement to fight gender inequality. "And this time, the workshop brought together men and women from more than 40 companies, all of whom share a similar drive: they need change and are ready to contribute with whatever they can to establish it. The hope is to improve the notoriously poor workplace culture for women in Japan that is perpetuated by gender roles that also, as a result, negatively affect men. Another goal is to involve as many people as possible from different circles, and as the name suggests — to go deeper than a venting session to accomplish substantial change."(Vlisides 2018). The concept for this dialogue was based on cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead's research. It leans toward shifting the gender equality movement away from being an issue about women for women and including men in the conversation.

Japanese auto giant, Toyota, is also starting to improve conditions for women and especially working mothers. In 2016, Toyota Motors announced they would be expanding its work-at-home program. "Under an existing program, telecommuting is allowed only for employees who are raising children under the age of one. But the

automaker is set to expand the practice so that hundreds of its employees, mainly those raising children or looking after elderly parents, can work from home on a steady basis. Employees who take part in the program are required to work at least two hours a week at the office and need to obtain permission from their bosses. Of Toyota's 72,000 employees, excluding those in subsidiaries and affiliates, around 13,000 will be eligible for the program"(Kyodo 2016). This is a major victory for women who had felt pressured to resign from work in order to care for their families. When companies invest time and education into training skilled employees, it is a loss when they quit working. With the working culture of not changing companies for life in Japan, it is really difficult to find employees to fill higher positions without training new ones. Toyota's work from home strategy allows women, and even men, to work from home more easily. "The work-from-home program allows office workers in charge of general and personnel affairs, or technical personnel involved in development, to work from home the majority of the time during their children's first year of life. The idea is that this will give parents more time to bond with their babies and figure out a good long-term child-care system that will work for their family without being rushed into a decision. With the introduction of this program, Toyota joins other Japanese companies like Nissan, who already have similar programs in place and have found them to be successful" (News Wheel 2015). However, there is a catch to being able to do this: those who partake in the program must focus solely on work while they are at home. "One stipulation of the program is that employees are required to hire babysitters or enlist the help of parents or other family members to watch their children while they are home, so that they can concentrate on work. To help with this, Toyota is considering helping employees out with the cost of childcare, which

can be considerable"(News Wheel 2015). If Toyota is willing to contribute what a babysitter would cost, then that would make the program much more successful. An unexpected or unplanned consequence of telecommuting is that it does allow for women to work from home. However, it also means they might be expected to work from home whenever they are needed, even for late hours or on the weekends because they are still at home and not in an office.

Toyota has also established another program to help female engineers in Japan. The official Toyota Motors website says, "Progress is being made in Japan with recent public and private sector initiatives aimed at promoting more active participation by women in the workplace. The utilization of the perspectives and sensibilities of women in product development and design is also expected to have a number of positive benefits for the manufacturing industry such as contributing to the creation of new markets. The Toyota Group understand that greater participation by women in the field of technological development will be vital in the creation of ever-better cars and in achieving sustainable growth. Women currently only account for approximately 10 percent of the students majoring in applied sciences at universities in Japan. The proportion is even lower among students studying electrical and mechanical engineering, a large proportion of whom are hired by companies in the transportation equipment/automotive industry." This new program is dedicated to young women in high school and college who are interested in having a future career in engineering. They provide career development support and encourage women who have studied engineering in college to consider a career in the automotive industry and the manufacturing industry. Students who are fostered into these programs are given the opportunity to have

internships with the company, go on observation tours of the facilities, get career counseling from other women in the field, and if needed, financial support for university in the form of a loan. In order to find students to participate in this program, representatives from Toyota visit high schools, specifically from the Aichi Prefecture, and universities where they hold seminars. Reaching out to a younger generation of women allows the company to invest in potential employees, and by having the work from home program, it ensures that the company will not lose their investment in the future due to the societal cultural norms that force women to be care takers and bread winners (Toyota). Similarly to many Western companies, Toyota in Japan is trying to attract more young women to become engineers. Clearly, in Japan's case, it is because of the declining birthrate and immigration laws affecting the declining labor market. Toyota is interested in attracting young women to a male dominated field in order to widen their potential labor market.

A theme brought up in the JCIE dialogue between Japanese and American women in government was that Japan does not have as large of a nonprofit sector as the United States does. "In the United States, women have long played a dominant role in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. In Japan as well, these are sectors where women have been able to take more of the lead, making up a disproportionately large segment of the nonprofit sector's labor force. As such, strengthening the nonprofit sector tends to improve the lot of professional women"(JCIE 2017). Investing in the nonprofit sector in Japan would lead to investing in women. So why has this not succeeded until now? NGO's in Japan did not officially exist until 1998, when what has been commonly known as the NPO Law came into affect. One of the major things that sparked all of this

attention that awakened the importance of non-profits was a major earthquake, known as the Kobe Disaster, in 1995. It motivated Japanese people to come together for one of the first times to respond to the government's shortcomings. It was described as a "shimin shakai", or civil society boom, with various groups providing aid that the government and people themselves could not deal with during a major disaster. Sara Jean Rossitto, an NGO adviser told *The Japan Times*, "This legislation was very significant, as it helped to liberalize the incorporation of public-benefit groups. It gave them legitimacy and a status they never previously had. Historically, Japanese people have always looked towards the government during times of trouble and, while that's still predominantly the case, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations have gradually become a little more influential here"(Hernon 2016). This law helped enhance the credibility of volunteer organizations; they were then recognized as companies rather than just a charity group. Since that time, the number of nonprofit organizations has been slowly growing.

One example of an innovative, new hybrid of a non-profit and for profit organization is called re:terra, founded by Sayaka Watanabe, a former IBM employee. The organization focuses on business development in rural areas and developing countries to support human talent incubation and cultivation. After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, Watanabe and re:terra created the Kesen Tsubaki Dream Project, which focuses on revitalizing the local community through the development of products using Camellia oil, made from seeds found in the area. Residents of the Kesen area and the cities of Rikuzentakata and Ofunato in Iwate Prefecture have traditionally handpicked camellia seeds to extract oil for cooking, skin and hair care. These products cannot be easily mass-produced, and over time the number of factories producing

camellia products in that area dwindled down to one because cheaper alternatives for cooking became available. Watanabe took a cue from the popularity of argan oil, explaining, "I thought it would be a good idea to add value to Kesen camellia oil so that it can be marketed"(Kaneko 2016). Since launching a hand cream in 2012, the cosmetic company that supports this non-profit, has expanded to making lip balm, tea and now a body cream. "Watanabe drafted a business plan with founding partners in late 2011—Hollywood Cosmetics co. and Enjoykai, a charity group comprising female doctors—to develop a camellia oil hand cream. The Tokyo-based cosmetics company's president was keen to engage in corporate social responsibility, while the doctors were looking for a new project after demand waned for the free health checkups they had been offering disaster survivors"(Kaneko 2016). The company also partnered with the last remaining camellia oil factory in the area. The demand for their products and the oil grew. In 2014, Shiseido joined the bandwagon and started producing a camellia oil salad dressing for a limited period of time to support the disaster area. Determined to not use imported camellia oil Watanabe started more farms in areas like Rikuzentakata with local partners. Women employees and the local communities profited from these efforts.

In Japan, more corporations are stepping up and taking on what Abe and the LDP proposed with Womenomics. Watching how the government has tried unsuccessfully to create and execute more opportunities for women, parts of the corporate sector are beginning to assume that role. Goldman Sachs is a strong example of the new corporate mindset, with a growing number of women in high positions and their support of programs implemented by Kathy Matsui, the original creator of Womenomics. In 2008, Goldman-Sachs created the 10,000 Women project, which provides female entrepreneurs

around the world with business management education, mentoring and networking, and access to capital. Currently, the initiative has reached over 10,000 women from over 56 countries and created immediate and sustained business growth for those who graduated from the program. They point out similar issues, that the JCIE also identified, that female entrepreneurs face in Japan and around the world. One of the biggest obstacles is access to capital to grow their businesses. In 2014, Goldman Sachs and the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation created the first ever loan facility for women-owned small and medium enterprises to enable 100,000 women around the world to access capital. Kathy Matsui said in an interview representing Goldman Sachs, "While Womenomics is not the only solution, it is definitely, in our view, part of a solution to get the economy growing on a sustainable path". Goldman Sachs is taking initiative in solving one of the biggest obstacles women, some who are young mothers, face when trying to start a business (Matsui 2014).

In an interview with female entrepreneur Sayaka Watanabe about gender inequality issues, she explained, "It is extremely hard for women to find jobs when their children are older. It is extremely hard to find a job when you have been out of the job market for more than a year yet most women who want to continue just find ways to work and have a child". She told me that many women who have children still want to work, but cannot get hired, so they wish they could start their own businesses in order to help support their family. She understands that many women do not try and work freelance because, "I thought that freelance could be an option for women who want to work and raise their children, but it is really hard for women because women are not good at selling themselves compared to men, who are confident in themselves. To sell

themselves confidently to the client on what they do and why they should do it". The government is promoting more women to become entrepreneurs, yet it is still very difficult for them to get any capital to grow and start their business. At this time, the government only promotes this idea, but has not done anything to help support women with these goals. Kimie Iwate, from the Japan Institute for Women's Empowerment and Diversity Management, points out, "Companies, bosses and women themselves need to have appropriate recognition that the accumulation of work experience leads to female career development. On the other hand, we are also seeing an increase in the number of women who start up their own businesses. In the past, many women who gave up their career due to childbirth and child-rearing started a business by making use of their experience as housewives. But in recent years, we have seen an increase in cases in which young men and women start business by making use of their IT skills, coming up with good ideas"(Chiba). She points out, however, that while many young men and women that want to start their own businesses, it is extremely difficult for them to get any funding to support them. "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says a key missing ingredient has been a lack of business start-ups, and he's made fostering them one of the pillars of his 'Abenomics" program"(Makinen 2015). However, Abe has been unsuccessful in helping both male and female entrepreneurs, so the market for startups has not been able to grow. It has been especially hard for women hoping to create a start up, as Watanabe explained, "The entrepreneurship system is very male dominated. The difference between male and female entrepreneurs is that women do not care as much as men do about making their companies into large companies but starting from their community that is close to them". She suggests that there needs to be more ways for women to sustain their businesses by

educating and helping them set up their enterprises, similar to what Goldman Sachs is doing with their 10,000 Women Project. This is another example where a company from the private sector is able to actuallydo something that Prime Minister Abe has only ever mentioned in public. Watanabe points out that it is very difficult for women to get loans from local banks because most small businesses do not need to take out such a large loan so the banks are not as inclined to assist them.

Many have questioned why companies in Japan are starting to change their culture to include and help women. Iwate answered this question, "Because the current Japanese administration has regarded female empowerment as a core strategy for economic growth, companies changed. Companies have come to realize that they would be unable to achieve sustainable growth and would lose competitiveness with their past treatment of female workers. Many issues continue to exist, but this recognition is very significant."(Chiba). More corporations are seeing that Japan's economy cannot continue to grow without the help of either women or immigrants, and with immigration laws being as tight as they are, more companies are starting to take advantage of women working in Japan. In order to keep their companies stable and growing to compete on the international stage, women are needed to reach these goals. This concept is part of the popular international adoption of a code of conduct known as "Corporate Social Responsibility". The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan began attempting to define and measure Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). There are highly regarded reports on this subject by Keizai Doyukai, the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, and Keidanren, the Japan Business Federation, who have represented Japan's employers since 1956. "According to Keizai Doyukai's reports, that

corporations are responsible not only for their shareholders but also for a variety of stakeholders including the society at large is not a new concept in Japan. CSR often includes workplace diversity as one of the objectives and accompany various human resource management policies that are particularly conducive to career development of women (e.g., onsite day care facilities, telecommuting, flextime, satellite. Female employees take advantage of such policies, and advance their careers. In short, WLB (Work Life Balance) practices may work as a powerful mediator for the effect on gender diversity in the workplace of CSR."(Kato, Kodama 2016). In the early 2000's, many Japanese companies started to incorporate and introduce the framework and idea of Corporate Social Responsibility, which had been developed in more Western countries. "Female workers consider strong CSR a credible signal that the firm is serious about ethical concerns in general and workplace fairness in particular, and that workplace diversity and gender equality are promoted wholeheartedly. As a result, CSR helps the firm recruit and retain gifted women with career aspirations, resulting in increased gender diversity in the workplace"(Kato, Kodama 2016).

Companies in Japan are also starting to change their mindsets about their workplace culture because of this newly graduate young generation. Unlike their parents and grandparents before them, the attitude of this young generation is starting to change. Previously, interviews with some individuals from this younger generation were included in Chapter One, and they discussed how they plan to live differently than their parents did. In an interview with a recent male college graduate, he said, "People my age don't want to spend their entire day and night working. They grew up with their fathers and sometimes mothers working incredibly long hours and not being at home. They do not

want that for themselves. They want to be able to relax and have their own free time. They don't want to be stressed all the time about work." This is the trend with this generation, after watching the news with stories about Karoshi and experiencing the effects of their parents working too hard and never being home, they want to break this cycle. Yet who is to say that this will be the generation to disrupt this cycle? Other generations have tried to change things to no avail, so what is so different about this generation? It is possible that once they start working, they will have no choice but to fall in line, but there are good indications that this generation is different then before.

Most of this young generation watched their fathers go to work everyday, but some have the opportunity to watch both of their parents working. The idea of having working parental role models was another theme that was common in the interviews I conducted. One female college student spoke about having her mother as a role model and how that impacts her, "Because I will work in near future and choose my priorities. When I think about career, I recall my mother, who works as a teacher and raised three kids. Since I have a model, I know I can do the same if I work hard. However, not all people can have such role model. So I think to have opportunities where kids can meet working women/men who respect both job and private life should be set in schools." For young girls to see not only their mothers working, but have women in politics, running for office, shows them that they are capable of doing the same thing.

This is a common theme around the world, creating more role models for young girls gives them hope they can do the same. Entrepreneur Sayaka Watanabe said the same thing about her mother, who was also a teacher, "My parents don't understand what the private sector is. But they were supportive of me because my mom worked as a teacher

till she was 60 in Nagano which was very rare". Having a working mother not only creates a role model, but it also creates more acceptance for parents when their children, especially daughters, start to have ambitious career goals. Professor Yuriko Meguro also agreed, "Children raised by working moms have fathers with more understanding and are a part of the solution. Women should raise boys to be gender responsible men." Having a father that helps with household chores and helps the mother with cooking or daily tasks shows their children about equal divisions of labor. It begins to challenge the idea that women only labor within the household and men are laborers in the workplace.

Many students in this young generation have studied abroad, most of the time in Western countries, seeing how education and work is different there. Bringing that perspective back to Japan, they want things to change and be better. Companies are watching how this young generation is being attracted to Western organizations because of this. Japanese companies are trying to change their work culture to be more appealing to this younger generation in order to get the labor they need to grow their companies. This young generation is also doing something their parent's generation did not do; they are quitting their positions and finding new jobs at companies that have a similar mindset to them if the companies they are working at do not suit their needs. In order for these companies to hold onto their employees they just invested in, they will have to make the workplace appealing to them.

Not only are students studying abroad and bringing back new ideas while they are at university, but more programs are being created to encourage high school students to study abroad as well. When applying to colleges and taking entrance exams, students are required to declare in which department they want to study, and most of the time, it is

difficult to switch into another department later if they decide to do something else. In a discussion between women members of the Diet, Japanese parliament, and US congresswomen held in 2017 by the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE 2017), the importance of cultural exchange in young students was emphasized. “The fact that many of the participants in the dialogue had studied or lived abroad underscored the ways in which US-Japan relations are bolstered by people-to-people exchange. The participants were particularly concerned that the number of Japanese students studying in the United States has dropped significantly and felt that more needs to be done to promote US-Japan educational exchanges in order to strengthen the underpinnings of the alliance”(JCIE 2017). Organizations like the Japan Society in New York City have created opportunities with their Junior Fellows Program for students from both the US and Japan to travel to each other’s country and participate in a study tour. This cultural exchange has greatly impacted many of the students participating in the program and has helped them determine what they are interested in for their future. Another non-profit, called H Lab, involves Japanese high school students being mentored by Harvard University students during summer sessions in four cities in Japan. The young people are exposed to a liberal arts curriculum and freely express their own opinions in ways that are not usually encouraged in their own communities. With the creation of more programs like these where students can travel, experience new cultures and learn about how other people live, it opens the door for alternative mindsets and encourages this younger generation to reconsider the way things are done. By living in another country and experiencing its culture, students are able to see another way of life and compare them to their own. This encourages them to question their options and decide how they want to live their lives.

Once those students get older, it influences how they make decisions about where they will work, and it puts pressure on the labor market. Companies are fighting to get the best students working at their companies when they graduate, due to the immigration issues mentioned in Chapter 2, so in order to attract these high achieving students, these corporations need to make their offices and work culture more appealing to this more progressive generation.

Within the Japanese school system, there is a cultural convention known as the "sempai- kohai system", which is indoctrinated into young students from middle school on through college. The system imposes the idea of respect for your elders, even if they are only the grade above you. In school clubs and sports all the way up into the workforce, the sempai-kohai mindset is engrained in Japanese culture. A young male college student explained in his interview, "This culture is there since we are in middle school. You can't say whatever you want anymore and you have to do what your sempai wants. If you want to change everything, you have to change the school system. Teachers value obedient students over creative ones. You can't speak yourself if your teacher doesn't agree. Everything is about paper tests. The pressure on exams is so hard, students just memorize and follow instructions for the exam so they follow that same way in the company."

More well-established companies who are creating programs and opportunities for women to continue working after having children set an example for other organizations to follow. If more corporations started changing their work culture in small ways or by developing programs Shiseido, Toyota, IBM, and Nissan have adopted, then more women would be able to stay in the workplace, allowing the economy in Japan to grow as Kathy Matsui predicted in her Womenomics report. Although cultural change

cannot be the responsibility of corporations alone, at this point in time, they are the most effective agents to alter these deeply ingrained genetic inequalities. While Prime Minister continues to talk about creating a change for women in Japan, the corporations are the ones who right now are most directly impacting the roles that women will play in society. By changing the attitude and rules within the company regarding the advancement of women, it makes it possible for the low birth rate in Japan to go up, as well as improve the economy.

The private sector in Japan has been able to accomplish some of the goals that Prime Minister Abe set for himself with his 'Womenomics' program. Without the private sector feeling pressure from society, and especially the young members of society, they would not be as willing to change. Companies in Japan are more likely to make changes than the government is in terms of gender equality and the work culture because it directly impacts them and their economic gain. A recent report from the Boston Consulting Group bluntly addresses these issues, "An in an age of global competition, Japanese companies that do not improve diversity will suffer from a significant lost opportunity. When women cannot thrive long-term in the workplace, neither can the companies for which they work"(BCG 2017). The private sector has been quick to see that the Japanese government was unwilling to change its immigration laws to help benefit the economy. As a result, they opened their minds to the kind of approach that Goldman Sachs and Kathy Matsui are advocating and turned towards a large labor force that had been ignored for a long time: women and especially older women who have had children. With the private sector supporting the changes desired by people in the public

sector, there is more of a movement forward than the government has been able to set in motion.

Conclusion: Connecting The Dots

There has been widespread attention by both the government and private sector identifying the increase of women's participation in the workplace as a viable solution to improving Japan's stagnant economy and the shortage of workers due to the declining birthrate. What is important to remember while looking at options for Japan when considering this subject is that women should not be forced to continue working if they want to be a stay at home parent. On the other side, the same is true for men who might decide to be stay at home parents. They should not be judged by society for having a wife who wishes to pursue a career. The Goldman Sachs Womenomics 4.0 report stated, "To be clear, we are by no means arguing that every Japanese woman should work outside the home. The decision to work outside the home or not is obviously an individual and personal choice. Rather, our argument is that Japanese women who desire to work outside the home (especially on a full-time basis) should not only be given the opportunity but encouraged to do so"(Matsui 2014). There is still a strong culture in Japan that supports traditional gender roles of the man working and the woman staying within the home, but as mentioned in the previous chapters, these views are starting to change significantly.

As explained in Chapter 3, the private sector has stepped in to identify the problems and possible solutions more decisively at this point than the government has, presenting some concrete steps that might result in real change. In public discussion of the best way to address the issue of increasing diversity in the workplace, "The Three Prong Approach" is often recommended and mentioned in major publications. This concept was originated by Kathy Matsui at Goldman Sachs, and referred to as

"Womenomics", which has been earlier described. The Three Prong Approach requires participation from the government, private sector and civil society, such as cultural norms, in order help women return to the workforce (Matsui 2014). This model has also been brought up by organizations like the Japan Center of International Exchange (JCIE), the Boston Consulting Group (BDG) and Heidrick & Struggles, a global leadership consulting company. All of these groups had similar recommendations and solutions that were encompassed within the Three Prong Approach.

The first part of this Three Prong Approach begins with the government. Goldman Sachs recommends that the government should deregulate daycare and nursing care sectors, reform immigration laws, neutralize the tax and social security codes, mandate gender-related corporate disclosures, equalize part time and full time work, and boost female representation in government. The JCIE also advocates similar actions, with an emphasis on including more women in government and allowing their voices to be heard. They point to other thriving societies who have supported gender equality, "Women have a special role to play in promoting liberal democratic values. Around the world, women have tended to take the lead at the grassroots level in advocating for human rights, civil rights, public safety, women's rights, disability rights, free speech, and free elections"(JCIE 2017). The JCIE also encouraged more discussion of how to keep women working in the corporate sector after having children and also in the government. "Professional women continue to find that the responsibilities of caregiving—for both children and elderly members—pose obstacles to their career achievement… even simple measures—like having the Japanese Diet follow the US Congress's example of providing on-site childcare facilities—can make it easier for

Japanese women leaders to stay in politics"(JCIE 2017). In order for women in the government and the corporate sector to grow and succeed, companies and the consultants they hire to advise them appear to be in agreement that there needs to be more assistance from the government. Abe's version of womenomics has not paned out as promised. "Atsuko Muraki, visiting professor at Tsuda University and a former vice-minister for Health, Labour and Welfare, says female employment in Japan has increased in quantity but not in quality. This is borne out by a closer look at the type of work women are doing - only 12.4% of legislators, senior officials and managers are female, according to the WEF figures. Mr Abe's government enacted a law aimed at achieving gender equality in the workplace in 2015. It made companies with more than 301 employees set targets for increasing women in management and publish their results. However, there are no penalties for failing to comply"(Reality Check Team, 2018). While Abe may have been able to pass laws with good intentions, if there are no penalties imposed for companies that do not comply, what is the motivation to obey them? "In 2016 the government revised an ambitious national target of filling 30% of senior positions in both the public and private sectors with women by 2020. The new targets were 7% for senior government jobs and 15% at companies"(Reality Check Team, 2018). Observers like the *BBC News* suggest that another problem with the Abe's good intentions for promoting Womenomics is that the deadlines he sets keep being pushed back while the goals when the goals are not fulfilled.

The second part of this approach relies on the private sector, which was mentioned in more detail in Chapter 3, focusing on how companies are starting to get more heavily involved in gender equality and work/life balance issues. Matsui and

Goldman Sachs believe that the private sector needs to stress the business case for diversity and create more flexible work environments. They also recommend adopting more objective evaluation schemes and set diversity targets. The Boston Consulting Group endorsed this approach as well, believing that companies need to "understand why diversity matters and commit to closing the gap from the top down, find what is most important to employees and concentrate efforts there, change men's and women's mindsets on the need for women in the workforce, and reform the work culture"(BCG 2017) In order for the corporate world to get more involved and implement real change, companies like Toyota and Shiseido, as mentioned in Chapter 3, are helping convince and show other corporations that being more accepting and changing their work culture will benefit them and the Japanese economy.

The JCIE thinks that another way to help women in business and the private sector, besides making work more flexible, would be to grow the philanthropic and nonprofit sector. "As such, strengthening the nonprofit sector tends to improve the lot of professional women"(JCIE 2017). It was also mentioned in the JCIE report that women in both the US and Japan find it very challenging to try to target more career track jobs out of fear of not being able to succeed. "Participants noted that there are a variety of methods that can be explored to insure that parental leave does not negatively impact the business or the new parent's career" (JCIE 2017). One response from many companies is to extend maternity leave, but in most cases, by doing that, Japanese women are less likely to return to work. Nissan and Toyota are offering alternative options to placing daycare centers in their offices, but they still are acknowledging that there must be a

system in place to help women who are working find suitable daycare for their children would make it easier for them return to work.

The third prong is society, which may be the hardest to transform because it slowly changes over time. In the Goldman Sachs report, Matsui explains, "Society at large also needs to work to dispel various myths about Womenomics and encourage greater gender equality at home"(Matsui 2014). Japan has a strong culture that is not easily manipulated. The young generation in Japan is starting to become more vocal about what they are looking for in a company and what kind of lifestyle they wish to live. At the same time, in order to support themselves and their family, many often succumb to the old ways. "Although the younger generation tends to think differently about issues concerning household management and family duties, some things haven't changed: 70% of women still leave their jobs when they have their first child… The availability of more domestic helpers would certainly be helpful, but at the same time in Japan there is social pressure for women to do housework" (Black and Linuma 2014). This mindset is slowly changing as the public becomes more educated about the different types of roles women and men can play. Women in high-ranking positions in companies and those active in government are encouraging other women to see that it is possible for them to continue working if they wish and to not be discouraged. As mentioned in interviews in previous chapters with women entrepreneurs and young college graduates, they suggest having more adult role models for young children and high school students is important and influenced them to pursue their careers. They also pointed out that showing young boys and girls examples of female role models who are working and raising children sends an important message, especially if their mothers are unable to work, explaining that it is

valuable to show young boys that it is okay to let women be the breadwinner while the man stays at home.

Having more female role models for young women and men to look up to is another concept that the public and private sector are working on together. “Our research shows that the likelihood of achieving real diversity in Japan is high. Both men and women understand the need and have a positive attitude towards women’s abilities. There are powerful women leaders in Japanese companies who can provide a wealth of advice experience and encouragement”(Black and Linuma 2014). Traditionally, Japanese companies have relied on full-time male workers, as mentioned in Chapter One with the Salary Men. Work culture reforms would require a shift in this mindset and having female roles models might influence both young women and men in this regard.

It appears there are many ways that the private sector can stimulate change in Japanese society more easily than Prime Minister Abe can, due to his political position. IBM has discovered that one of the most basic improvements companies can start to do is open up discussions and conversations where women can express their concerns and desires within the company. “More frank discussion is needed to share experiences and propose workable solutions to these problems”(Black and Linuma 2014). They have found it allows women to speak openly about the issues within the company initially points out the problems or disparities, as well as creating a discussion. “It is important to listen carefully to female employees and find out their true needs – and then embed policies and programs based on those needs in the foundation of the company”(BCG 2017). These discussions have allowed for these issues to come to the surface and be brought to the attention of the corporations.

Another issue that has been raised not only by major organizations' reports, but also in public discussion, is the concept of more flexible working hours in order to improve the work/life balance needs to be explored more thoroughly. In other countries like those in Scandinavia, flexible working hours are not just be made available to women who are mothers, but also men who are starting a family. Japan has one of the worst rankings for shared housework between husbands and wives. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that Norwegian men put in an equal mix of housework and paid work, where as Japanese men do the least. Most men in Japan have to work extremely long hours, making it difficult for them to participate in household chores or childcare. In interviews with young male college graduates, they say they wish to be more involved with their families and children by having more flexible and less taxing working hours, such as less overtime, would allow for both men and women to continue working more. "Several of our clients have made significant progress in this area. At one company, a CEO works from home one day per week, taking advantage of the organization's flexibility program and encouraging others to do the same. He was also proponent of investing in iPhone-based communications and IT tools that could be used from home in order to create a virtual office and discourage the tendency to burn the midnight oil in the office"(BCG 2017). This mentality is similar to the programs that Toyota and Nissan have put into place. If other companies are able to follow these successful role models, it can be used to help grow their businesses.

Even though most of the analysis, including the Goldman Sachs Womenomics report, focuses on the government and what it can do to help women, Abe faces restrictions with his government. Without debating if Abe's use of Womenomics is lip

service or not, it is clear that he is facing much conservative opposition within his political party. There are many who believe that turning to the private sector to make a change may be the best option. The private sector is more invested in supporting women and is impacted by it more than the government. As discussed in the third chapter, major multi-national corporations are becoming motivated to help women with easy and inexpensive solutions that companies can follow and implement in their own work culture both in Japan and the United States.

The impetus for the government to create more support for women to remain the in the workplace increases as the working population of Japan decreases. The private sector is perhaps beginning to feel the pressure of this decline more acutely than anywhere else. Corporations are aware that within their own ranks, the number of experienced male executives is growing older and retiring. "The world's most aged society is facing an unprecedented demographic shift with important lessons for other developed countries. The share of Japan's population over the age of 70 is expected to surge to 24 percent by the end of the decade, while its young and working age populations shrink and immigration stagnates," explains Sho Kawano, head of Japan's Equity Research and Business Unit at Goldman Sachs, "Looking at how Japan corporations are adapting to these changes would set a milestone for other economies when they face the same social change." One obvious answer to this problem that Goldman Sachs recommends is to hire more women and encourage them to stay in the workplace longer and climb the corporate ladder (Boles 207).

After looking at Japan as a case study for the more global issue of gender equality, it appears that the government and the private sector are acknowledging that an effort

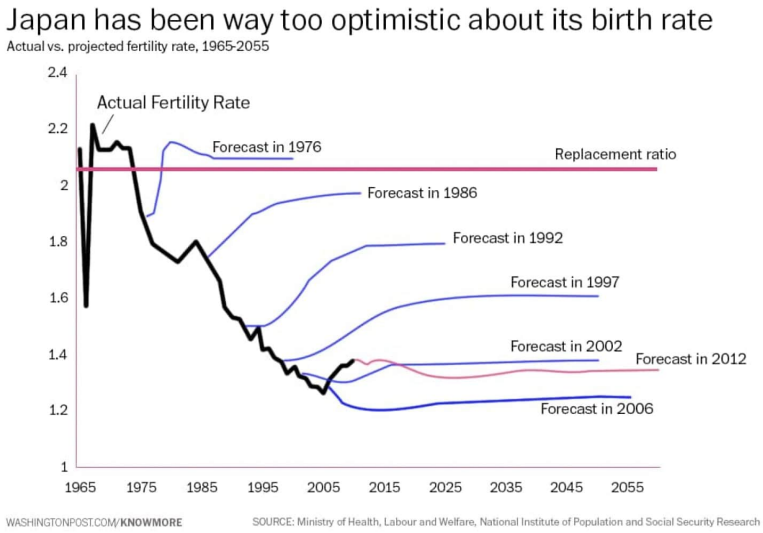
needs to be made to develop and support it. According to the experts, these are problems that can indeed be solved, even if the government is unwilling to make changes to alter gender role dynamics. The private sector serves to make major economic gains if women continue to work after having children rather than businesses having to import labor from abroad. It will take time to see if the Japanese model is successful or not.

Perhaps the most important reason from a global perspective of why it is worth paying attention to Japan as a case study is because their problem of declining birthrate is an issue which many developed countries around the world are being forced to confront. Contrary to public belief that population explosion is going to be a crisis in the future, more and more countries that are economic leaders, like China, nations in Europe and even the United States, are facing dwindling populaces. The birth rate in the United States dropped to the lowest level ever in 2016. "Dropping by another full 1% from 2015, there were only 62 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44. Overall, there were a total of 3,945,875 babies born in the United States during 2016"(Longley 2018). There are many factors that can cause birth rates to drop. For Japan, it is the large elderly population, while in the US, it is the drop in teen pregnancies. "Far more than an indicator of societal trends, a nation's birth rate is one of the most significant gauges of its overall demographic health. If the fertility rate falls too far below the replacement level, there is a danger that the nation will lose the ability to replace its aging workforce, leaving it unable to generate the amount of tax revenue needed to keep the economy stable, maintain or grow the infrastructure, and become unable to provide essential government services"(Longley 2018). This is a ticking time bomb in Japan, where it is ranked number

one in the lowest birth rates in the world, but the United States is not that much farther down the line.

Demographic studies indicate that declining birth rates can and will lead to economic problems in the future, and if it is not handled correctly, the outcome will be very hard to reverse. "As we continue to see a decrease in the populations of many countries with low birth rates, there is increasing concern for the future economic growth of a country. One troubling consideration arises from the realization that fewer people will be able to join the workforce in coming years. Without adequate numbers of people to fill positions within certain occupations, then a decrease in the overall productive capacity of a country is likely to occur."(Dillinger 2015). Many social scientists believe that this is the hard reality that Japan is currently facing, and the question of changing the immigration laws or helping women to continue working has been put on the table. The government's reaction up until now has been to not change the immigration laws and barely help women continue to work after having children. "Japan's declining population has a powerful impact on its economic situation, and not for the better. An aging population leaves the country with fewer workers and more dependents. And conventional wisdom says aging leads to slower economic growth and more deflationary forces, both of which make it more difficult for Japan to chip away at the substantial debt burden from its economic crisis at the beginning of the 1990s"(Swanson 2015). Waseda University in Tokyo recently did a study that tested how accurate the forecasting of fertility rates would be in Japan. With estimates beginning in 1965, the results showed that the government's predictions were dramatically wrong. The chart below represents their predictions versus the actual fertility rates. The government in the past interpreted

the sharp decreases in the birth rate as a temporary dip instead of a sustained trend (Swanson 2015).



Not only is this an issue facing Asian countries like Japan and South Korea, but also Germany and Bosnia are two European countries that have exceptionally low birth rates. Some of these countries, especially Japan and South Korea, have been studying France, who found a solution to their declining birth rate. "Since the early 2000s, France has consistently topped European rankings. After two decades of decline, in the 1970s-80s, the fertility rate started picking up again in the late 1990s. Since then, the country has registered scores just short of the mythical threshold of 2.1 children per woman, which would secure a steady population"(Chemin 2015). France's approach is similar to the Scandinavian one, combining the idea of a modern family based on government policies and gender equality.

Demographer Ron Lesthaeghe, member of the Belgian Royal Academy of Sciences and emeritus professor of Brussels Free University explains, ""Nowadays, both

ingredients are needed to sustain the population. At first sight it seems a simple recipe, but it's far from easy to put into practice: it takes a lot of time to design and establish a new family model"(Chemin 2015). However, the dynamics of the family are different in every country and culture, so there is no straightforward formula or solution. As discussed in Chapter One, in Japan, women are expected to stay in the home and care for the family while the man works. She is supposed to care for her children, manage the household and eventually care for the elderly. In comparison, "in France the package is more flexible: one doesn't have to get married or have children. Norms are more open and families more diverse"(Chemin 2015). The picture of what a family is expected to look like is very different in France and the Scandinavian countries. "In these countries the family norm is much more flexible, with late marriages, reconstituted families, single parents, much more frequent births outside marriage and divorces than further south. People are far less concerned about the outlook for the family [as an institution]"(Chemin 2015). The traditional ideals of what a family should be are apparently holding back Japan from increasing their birth rate and growing their economy.

The key factors in this family model are that women are free to work and that gender equality is accepted and enforced. According to experts who have studied the Scandinavian countries and France, in order to achieve a successful high fertility rate, societies must get rid of the traditional family model, which focuses on the sole breadwinner. They also point out that there needs to be strong support from the state. "Policies to boost the birthrate in France date back to the early 20th century, when paternalistic companies awarded bonuses to the parents of young children. In the 1930s and again after the war, the state took over, setting up a family-allowance system for all

parents, backed by tax incentives"(Chemin 2015). These policies have had a positive impact on fertility rates because they allow for a more flexible model. The birth rate is higher in countries where family norms are more flexible and women are free to work and raise their children with support from their husbands.

Gender equality is an issue that is coming to the forefront of all nations, not just because of feminist ideals, but economically as well. Looking at how Japan handles gender equality issues through the government and private sector can be either a role model or an example of what not to do for other countries. While corporations will most likely have a great effect on the outcome of this dilemma, women themselves will ultimately be the ones who are going to decide the direction that these gender equality concerns moves forward.

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