

# 博士論文（要約）

## Contemporary Motherhood in Northern Japan: An Ethnography Applying Social Capital and Network Theories

（東北における現代のマザーフッド：  
社会関係資本とネットワーク理論を利用した民族誌）

ミケーラ ケリー

Michaela Kelly

Against the backdrop of the '*shōshika* problem' (a problematized low total fertility rate) in contemporary Japan, an absence of vibrant, multidimensional understandings of women and the choices they make about motherhood led to limited public policy measures aimed at reversing the fertility rate decline. The research drawn upon invoked social capital theory as a solution to the fertility decline, suggesting that if social capital is increased in communities throughout Japan, fertility rates can be expected to increase. Across Japan, economic capital (monetary incentives disbursed to communities to build and foster daycare and childrearing support centers, or to individuals to pay for obstetrical services or expenses related to children) has been invested in an attempt to create and build social capital in local communities and affect a fertility rate increase.

This dissertation originates from and introduces two main questions critical to understanding motherhood and the effects of social capital on fertility: how do women in contemporary Japan experience and value motherhood and how does a woman navigate a complex arena of personal and social expectations for her and her relationships? To answer this, the research operationalizes Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital (an individual's ability to access resources via membership in a social network) and explores the concept that forms of capital (social, cultural and economic) can be converted from one type to another. It is hypothesized that resources can be accounted for, and in so doing, trace the networks of value that comprise social capital for mothers in Japan. Second, it is expected that economic capital distributed to childrearing women will be converted into social capital, and women can secure prestige from a social capital of motherhood.

This project traces the social capital of women with young children and uses an ethnographic approach relying on observation and the narratives of individual women. As part of understanding social capital, an egocentric network approach was adopted, whereby various resources offered by a woman's network alters ( $\approx$  members) were documented. Each woman categorized alters into groups based on the relationship she maintained in each. These communities are called 'relational role communities' – dynamic and changing groups of individuals with whom each woman exchanged resources based on shared social tasks and relationships.

Focusing fieldwork on the social environment - networks - women were asked to detail the people with whom they interact and depend, and the ways those interactions and environments contribute to the decisions they make about fertility, family and themselves. In detailing their networks, women illustrated how alters contributed to the everyday tasks and decisions they made, and the influence others had on the choices they made about work, fertility, and the allocation of their time and resources.

Secondarily, the work investigates social capital and the possibility of conversion of economic capital into a social capital attached to having children. In interviews, women spoke of the movement of resources between individuals or groups and the cachet of certain relationships, but motherhood was not seen as a prestigious position, nor were women influenced by the economic capital available from the government. However, women's explanations of how resources (either shared or withheld) impacted groups and individuals illustrates that in these exchanges, success, comfort, fairness and value were defined, and that networks are purposefully created to address needs or choices women hope to make.

In Chapter Three, having detailed previous work on motherhood in Japan and elsewhere, network theory, social capital, participants and the research site (a town in Iwate Prefecture called Ichinohe), the work shifts to an ethnographic description of participants' experiences with the processes of pregnancy, labor and childbirth. Following Megumi, a woman in her early thirties, as she marries, gets pregnant and has her first child, the chapter highlights the major changes women undergo socially, particularly the isolation some felt during this transition. This experience of transition can be the catalyst for crafting and maintaining a social network and will be explained in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four highlights women's voices, focusing on three major relationships of which research collaborators in Ichinohe frequently spoke – a marriage partner, parents-in-law, and fellow mothers (mama friends) from neighborhoods and childcare settings. This chapter introduces the key relationships women maintain, as well as the resources women receive from others in their networks. Seven types of resources are explicated, the main four being material, informational, participatory and emotional. Women explain these key resources and their utilization in interview narratives.

In order to illustrate how resources move within a network or a subset of people within a network, Chapter Five focuses specifically on the childrearing support center in Ichinohe called Nobi Nobi. Nobi Nobi was created in response to early *shōshika* countermeasures and is open several days a week for women with children under the age of three to play with their children and meet other mothers. A subset of research participants attended Nobi Nobi at the time of the research in 2012 to 2014, and the latter half of the chapter details women's participation in the network, their resource exchange, the accounting system for exchanges, and how within the network, women recognized and encouraged individual character.

After these three chapters of observations and narrative, Chapters Six and Seven return to the theoretical realm, reviewing social capital theory and clarifying the policy implications of a nuanced understanding of women's networks. Chapter Six offers a redefinition of social

capital based on the workings of resource exchange in Ichinohe. Resources are grouped into types and evidence is presented that particular relationships were relied upon for the acquisition of certain types of resources. This grouping of relationships and resources suggested the 'relational role community'.

Chapter Seven delineates the ways in which resources serve women's relational role communities of wife, mother, friend, co-worker, neighbor and others. Women try to balance resource transactions by accounting for resources and reciprocation (with some exceptions). Relational communities tend to exchange specific resources – for example, a group of mama friends might only offer informational, material or participatory resources. This tendency means that to access different types of resources, women must join various relational role communities.

Different from the relational role communities women maintain, they talked about trying to satisfy a sense of self through access to emotional resources from friends. While emotional resources were obtained from both family and friends, those from friends were utilized by women to explore who they believed themselves to be, beyond the social relationships they engaged in with others in their networks. Networks and connections to network alters are maintained to ease transitions between relational role communities – for example, that friends are able to remind women of who they 'really are' makes possible women's participation in other relational role communities as neighbors, co-workers, wives or mothers.

Women in Ichinohe maintain relationships in multiple communities, while also responding to a need to keep a sense of self. These multiple layers of relationship and the intricate allotment of resources sustaining them suggests that social capital (the system of relationships kept in balance, renewed or dropped by exchanges of resources) is important for women and for motherhood. For women with a complex arena of relational role communities that are begun, maintained and terminated with resource exchange, the state's incentives are only occasionally relevant. Women spoke of life and motherhood being based, not on the fecundity of government policies, but instead, on decisions made in consultation with those for whom they care, as they tend relationships and craft their lives.