

RESEARCH REPORT

# An Analysis of the Socio-Cultural Context of Child Abandonment and Baby Hatches in Japan and Poland

Sylwia Maria OLEJARZ

Health Sciences University of Hokkaido  
Email: gandrasan@gmail.com

## Abstract

This paper analyzes the issue of women in distress, due to an unwanted pregnancy, by comparing the socio-cultural backgrounds underlying child abandonment and baby hatches in Japan and Poland. The following topics are considered: availability of assistance options, the role of the baby's father in the context of a patriarchal family crisis, the status of unmarried single mothers, the status of babies born out of wedlock, and the respective cultural approaches toward "family issues" in Japan and Poland.

Since the Second World War, both Japan and Poland have experienced drastic transformations of their societies. The chaotic damage of the war and the wide influx of different values have profoundly influenced the evolution of the social landscape, including the family structure. A father's authority within the family was undermined in both countries, which in effect has dramatically changed the role of the mother, a role that has become "overloaded" with additional responsibilities.

As well, in both countries, a shift from a "collectivistic" approach to more individualistic thinking, a byproduct of the post-war social transition, became one of the leading causes of social transformation, manifested in many intricate and socially difficult problems such as serious family conflicts and the emergence of various social 'untouchables' (including unwanted pregnancies). This shift, however, has led to a weakening of the norm of community support for the more and most vulnerable members of society. An individual today is emancipated and free, but at the same time alienated and helpless. Today, a woman's right of self-determination is said to be improved because of this new personal freedom, yet a woman today must often encounter and resolve problems by herself, without the traditional support of the extended family. These factors, broadly described, have contributed significantly to the problem of anonymous child relinquishment in a baby hatch.

The existence of the baby hatch reveals several more serious, related problems, such as the strong social inequality of a woman and a man in the face of an unwanted pregnancy. Thus, we cannot dramatically change this inequality merely by implementing a practice based on a noble idea – of the protection of a baby by relinquishing it to a baby hatch – without also recognizing the specificity of the socio-cultural background of the country and without considering the presence or absence of sufficient human resources and budget. Members of each society must consider and understand the related social problems accompanying the phenomenon of anonymous relinquishment and acknowledge that both the woman and man involved must take responsibility for their baby.

**Keywords:** baby hatch, unwanted pregnancy, women in crisis, Poland, Japan

## Introduction

In Poland, the family model and a father's role in the family changed dramatically under the communist-led regime and has continued to evolve in the current socio-cultural landscape, while in Japan the same model and role have also changed, due, in large part, to American presence and broad influx of western values, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Before the war, Japan maintained familial relationships based on community lineage: as head of a family, a father had absolute authority over his extended family and took total responsibility over the family estate. During and after the war, the strong patrilineal system began to collapse. The trend toward the nuclear family<sup>1</sup> and introduction of Western individualism began to undermine the role and responsibilities of the father. Whether or not the result is considered a positive social development,<sup>2</sup> in earlier times, a father could adjudicate actions and resolve problems of family members. Today, a woman's right of self-determination is generally thought to be improved; a Japanese woman is indeed more empowered to act freely. However, this new independence is partly undermined by the fact that the wife/ mother today is often tasked with adjudicating actions and resolving problems of family members. As a result, this newfound, partly illusory freedom has contributed to women's sense of isolation and depression. In addition, despite such drastic social shifts, collective awareness of these transitions is lacking, and the legal system concerning the issue of unwanted pregnancy has failed to keep pace. The gap between the current situation and a lagging social consciousness still failing or unwilling to grasp and accept the reality of unwanted pregnancies in Japan might well contribute to the growing phenomenon of anonymous child relinquishment.

The traditional family in Japan has indeed experienced significant changes. First, according to Emiko Ochiai, the person responsible for the well-being of a household has changed noticeably from father to mother,<sup>3</sup> relegating the father's primary – and often sole – role to that of breadwinner. Second, puberty and sexual initiation start earlier than in former generations, and

sexual activity is not necessarily connected with marriage. In the case of unwanted pregnancy in an informal relation, a woman is at risk of single motherhood and experiences heavier social shaming than her male counterpart. As well, in Poland recently, significantly more babies are born in informal relationships than in Japan, and Polish women experience similar imbalances in enduring what is still considered a social stigma of bearing a child out of wedlock as a single mother.<sup>4</sup>

Considering the above-mentioned transitions of the family structures of Japan and Poland, we may ask how these transitions have influenced and contributed to anonymous child relinquishment and dispersion of responsibility for the younger, weaker, and more vulnerable members of Japanese and Polish societies: the unplanned birth of an unwanted baby. First, let us analyze potential harms and benefits of a baby hatch.

### 1. Controversies around baby hatch and the principle of preventing negative consequences

A baby hatch was established in Medieval times, in order to help women who bore a child out of wedlock or from a prohibited relation, to give a chance of a better future for that baby, without disclosing a baby's origin, since that knowledge could evoke prejudice or even lead to the killing of the mother and child. A mother using a baby hatch wanted her baby to live, but she was not in a position to ensure her and her offspring's future. The woman's life was highly dependent on her mate and her family; without them, she and her offspring would be social outcasts. As a result, there were cases when a mother had no other choice and was forced by her family to leave her baby in a baby hatch.

The original idea of a baby hatch emerged from a deep social inequality between a woman and a man. In the situation of unwanted pregnancy, a biological father of a baby enjoyed a superior position, because he had the power to acknowledge or renounce a baby as his family member and avoid his familial responsibility, without negative social consequences. In extreme cases, he had the power to use violence and force a woman to leave the household or even kill the

baby and betray the woman to authorities. The future of a mother and a baby depended on his decision alone. However, when a mother did not want to accept a child as her own, because of sexual abuse, poverty, social ostracism, and wanted to non-anonymously relinquish the baby, this action was considered socially unacceptable, and such a mother would have been morally shamed and socially ostracized.

In the past, as well as today, there are many pregnancies resulting from rape and the physical supremacy of a man's power over a woman. Such cases of coercion are often difficult to prove and scientifically research, even today, but the cases show that women, even as victims, not only suffer from sexual violence, but must also endure the humiliating consequences of the unwanted pregnancy, while the biological father, if undiscovered, gets off scot-free, or if known, is socially untarnished. The main aim of establishing baby hatches in Medieval times was to help mothers avoid social stigmatization and to give the unwanted baby a chance of having a future, not to deprive babies of eventual knowledge of their origins (an unfortunate side-effect).

Various dramatic circumstances of anonymously abandoning unwanted babies in public places have taken place, in Japan and Poland, in the hope that the baby would be quickly discovered by others and cared for.<sup>5</sup> To address this phenomenon, baby hatches were reestablished at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany and have proliferated to other countries, since the turn of the millennium. By providing safe conditions (food, shelter, basic medical care – minimum requirements for survival), baby hatches, properly staffed, have minimized the risk of greater potential harm and escalation of abuse toward the baby and mother (death, in the worst scenario). Sometimes, relinquishment in a baby hatch is an unspoken appeal from a woman to society, a silent, performative request, to give the infant a better future than the mother could offer. However, are such sentiments enough to justify a baby hatch?

In his landmark article, *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, Australian philosopher Peter Singer introduced a prominent argument, utilizing the "principle of preventing bad occurrences,"<sup>6</sup> to suffering from poverty. Singer states, "if it is

in our power to prevent suffering from lack of shelter and medical care, without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we should do it."<sup>7</sup> Singer's topic of that paper is neither related to the issue of unwanted pregnancy, nor child relinquishment in a baby hatch, but it could be thought-provoking (although maybe controversial<sup>8</sup>) to discuss a potential application of his principle to preventing bad occurrences in the problems mentioned. If we apply Singer's principle in the "earliest stage", then we would have help to prevent unwanted pregnancies, through better sex education, consultations, support systems, "without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance." We can modify Singer's principle the following: "if it is in our power to prevent suffering from" *unwanted pregnancy by sexual education and adequate support*,<sup>9</sup> "without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we should do it."<sup>10</sup>

If preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies are not entirely effective, can we still apply Singer's principle to unintended and unwanted pregnancies? Knowing of previous anonymous abandonment of infants in unsafe places, we can expect that there are mothers in despair who do not want consultation, social support, or hospital service to relinquish a baby, but at all costs want to relinquish the baby fully anonymously. With unintended and unwanted pregnancies, we can see a gradation of negative and yet more negative consequences. That is, baby abandonment to an institution is physically and mentally traumatic for the child's development; however, anonymous child abandonment to any public place can have even worse consequences, because the baby's health and life are at risk. Additionally, we must distinguish between mothers who abandon a living baby in public places with the intention of the baby being found, from those who purposely abandon a baby in a remote or hidden location, actively causing the baby's death.<sup>11</sup>

In the contexts described above, a baby hatch can only minimize the results of anonymous child abandonment in an unsafe place. Singer's principle could be modified in the following way: "If it is in our power to prevent" *anonymous baby abandonment in unsafe places or minimize the risk of it*<sup>12</sup> "without sacrificing anything of comparable moral

importance, we should do it.”<sup>13</sup> Since the issue of anonymity of the mother and baby underlie child abandonments, we have to guarantee full anonymity<sup>14</sup> as a top priority. We can discuss the following adaption of Singer’s original statement, adding the anonymity factor:

“If it is in our power to prevent suffering” or *minimize the risk of suffering and the risk of exposure to death of an unwanted baby* “from lack of food, shelter, and medical care” *by providing a free choice between a non-anonymous or fully anonymous method of relinquishment (a baby hatch),*<sup>15</sup> “without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we should do it.”<sup>16</sup>

Difficulties, however, arise as a result, of adding the anonymity factor. We certainly sacrifice something – the baby’s eventual knowledge of his/her biological origin – which considered by itself, without the context of risk of physical harm or even death, is not a neutral, but generally a negative consequence.<sup>17</sup> However, we still have to ask one significant question of this adaptation: ‘Do we sacrifice something of comparable moral importance’? If so, who and by what means may someone judge whether the value X (minimizing the risk of suffering and the risk of exposure to injury or even death of an unwanted baby) and the value Y (maintaining the anonymity or divulging the identity of the baby and the mother) are of *equally comparable moral value*? That is, are the values X and Y of *equally comparable moral value*?

In the vigorous and contentious debate on baby hatches in Poland,<sup>18</sup> some opinions suggest that the value of life and the value of knowing one’s origins are not of *equal* and *comparable* moral value. In the modified adaptation of Singer’s principle, we can justify the higher status of the value X (minimizing the risk of suffering and the risk of exposure to death by an unwanted baby) by the deprivation argument coined by American philosopher Don Marquis, which he originally used in his argument concerning abortion: “When I die, I am deprived of all of the value of my future”.<sup>19</sup> In other words, to benefit from the knowledge about one’s past, we have to minimally guarantee one’s safe presence in the near future. So, a person is also deprived of the benefits from the value Y (a person does not benefit from the knowledge about his or her

origin), if he/she dies or is in the serious risk of exposure to death. Hence, we can assume that the value X and the value Y are not really of *equally comparable moral value*.<sup>20</sup> The objection “without sacrificing anything of *equally comparable moral importance*” may be then dismissed. But “sacrifice” is an important part included in the problem we want to address.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, there is a time gap of duties: first, protect the closest future of a person, by minimizing the risk of death, and after that, try to protect the more distant future with other values. However, many opponents of a baby hatch solution would strongly disagree and require empirical evidence that baby hatches in fact significantly decrease the risk of exposure to death, serious injuries and other harms to unwanted babies (for instance, whether a baby would had been killed or seriously harmed in another way, if the baby had not been placed in a baby hatch).

The opponents can certainly critique the use of the baby hatch because it utilizes a ‘presumed’ consent of baby relinquishment. Also, we do not know anything directly about the decision process itself, the identity of the decision-maker and what conditions (poverty, despair, isolation, threat of killing) the decision-maker is experiencing. But a baby hatch does not necessarily close the way to other non-anonymous methods. A person who uses a baby hatch assumes that a baby would have a brighter future, without ever having to know of his/her origins, to be free of any burden this information might cause the offspring, later in life. When we critique the anonymity afforded both mother and baby, as well as future adoptive parents, we focus exclusively on this point, rather than a broader and more detailed analysis of various benefits and harms caused by the action or inaction of the main parties. Table 1 affords us an overview of the variables and people involved, concerning the use or non-use of the baby hatch.

Looking at Table 1, we can see some of the main potential benefits and harms of using – or not using – a baby hatch, for all participants involved. In particular, the moral position of the father needs further deeper analysis. Also, for many people, the principle of protecting infants from the risk of bad (even the worst) consequences is a sufficient reason to justify the existence of a baby hatch, since infants are incapable of self-determination and

**Table 1**

	Baby Hatch	No Baby Hatch
Potential risks of harm 1) for the baby	- will not know its origins (if no contact data are left)	- baby left unattended in unsecured public place: risk of threat or injury, hypothermia, hunger, death - in the future the baby may experience a threat of domestic violence (DV) leading to injury or death (even if not abandoned)
Potential risks of harm 2) for the mother	- medical complications from delivery performed in secrecy - cannot determine if decision was free or coerced	- uncertainty about what will happen to the baby - violence from a partner and family, for birth of unwanted baby - social ostracism and shame - regret resulting from unsafe abandonment - risk of depression, suicide, killing - criminal punishment for abandonment or murder
Potential risks of harm 3) for the father	- no further contact with the baby (we do not know about the will and intentions of the father)	- If the baby is not abandoned, risk of DV or other crimes towards the baby
Potential benefits 1) for the baby	- survives in a safe, warm place - chances for adoption by new parents	
Potential benefits 2) for the mother	- can avoid violence or killing from a partner - can hide the fact of having a baby from partner, family, society and remain anonymous - can escape from shaming and moral critique (also meeting her abandoned adult child in the future) - no criminal punishment - certainty that the baby will be safe and will likely find new parents	- when found by police – no benefits
Potential benefits 3) for the father	- no legal/financial obligations for a baby (child support, alimony)	- when found by police – no benefits
level of exposure to shaming and moral critique	- limited or no physical contact with anyone	- risk of being discovered by police: very high - criminal punishment
level of anonymity of a mother (family)	- high	- high, at the moment of abandonment - no anonymity when found by police
possibility of consultation/help at the time of abandonment	- in some baby hatches, possible to use intercom to consult	- none (unless actively sought)

self-protection, but are completely dependent upon others. But at the same time, there are many opponents of this method who criticize that a baby hatch does not resolve the real source of the problem of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

The point is, that while being in very critical and tragic situation, which is dangerous for a newborn's safety, a mother should at least have a choice between an anonymous or non-anonymous method of relinquishment. In the recent history of

Japan, there have been many cases when mothers, alone in despair (without support of a baby's father or her family), without other options, such as a baby hatch, instead chose an anonymous way – such as a coin locker. In Poland also, prior to baby hatches, unsafe places for abandoning unwanted babies were chosen.<sup>22</sup> Today, however, a mother with an unwanted pregnancy has the freedom of choice between several non-anonymous options of assistance. In the sections

following, these non-anonymous options and the perspective of a father are considered, in the comparative analysis between Poland and Japan

## 2. Options for women with an unwanted pregnancy

Poland and Japan have several relinquishment options for women who experience an unwanted pregnancy, but who also want to avoid abortion.<sup>23</sup> If a woman in Poland wants to remain anonymous, she has two options: leave the baby in a baby hatch or use telephone consultation. If willing to divulge her identity, the mother has the following options: relinquish the parental rights and leave her baby in the hospital after delivery or either leave the baby at an adoption center or look for help from various associations and foundations offering consultation and material aid to pregnant women in a difficult situation.<sup>24</sup>

In Japan, in some ways, still a traditional and collectivistic society, a woman who opts to legally relinquish her baby for adoption exposes herself to shame. As a result, some Japanese women, desperate to maintain anonymity, have used unsafe places, to leave their unwanted newborns.

There are at least three crucial points in the evolution of Japanese countermeasures regarding infanticide and child abandonment. First, activities initiated by Dr. Kikuta, the special adoption system in Aichi Prefecture, and, finally, establishing a baby hatch, initiated by Dr. Hasuda Taiji.

Dr. Kikuta, an obstetrician from Ishinomaki City, arranged about 100 false birth certificates for unwanted newborns, connecting them with adoptive parents. His activities were acknowledged as illegal, but it catalyzed a legislative debate that led to the amendment of the law in 1987, when the Special Adoption Law was introduced. However, the disadvantage of special adoption is that the anonymity of a biological mother is not protected.

The second option is the method of special adoption of infants established in 1982, in Aichi Prefecture, by Yamanta Tokaji. A pregnant woman could find assistance in the Child Consultation Center, where she could decide to give up her baby for adoption. Staff at the Center were responsible for finding foster parents before

a baby was born. In this system, a biological mother's name was also not anonymous. First, it was indicated on a birth certificate, together with the address of foster parents.<sup>25</sup>

The third method was an anonymous baby hatch<sup>26</sup> established in 2007 by Dr. Hasuda Taiji, in Kumamoto. It should be noticed that the prototype of this system was Angel's Inn (Tenshi no Yado) in Maebashi City, in Gunma Prefecture, opened in 1986, but closed in February 1992, due to finding a newborn frozen to death at the facility.<sup>27</sup> A baby hatch in Kumamoto protected the anonymity of parents, mainly mothers, who do not have another way of escaping from unwanted pregnancy and the social stigma of being "a bad parent abandoning a baby". It is surprising that Japan still has only one baby hatch, although active and positive discussions still appear periodically, concerning the preciousness of life, through the "Kounotori no Yurikago".<sup>28</sup>

Other anonymous options in Japan are free on-line and telephone consultation platforms,<sup>29,30</sup> thanks to which a wide range of real problems of pregnant women in distress could be revealed and resolved.<sup>31</sup> There is also a free dial line in Jikei Hospital.<sup>32</sup>

Non-anonymous options in Japan include special adoption centers, child consultation centers, and similar public centers at the local level. In September, 2018, an interview-style consultation facility in Mana Midwifery Maternal Center, in Kobe City, was opened.<sup>33</sup> The original idea was to establish the second baby hatch in the Kansai area.<sup>34</sup> However, due to the absence of a residing medical doctor, that idea has not yet been realized.

In contrast to Poland, Japanese options for women with an unwanted pregnancy, who want to avoid abortion, are much more limited, and the care system for such women is also quite underdeveloped, because of a lack of human and financial resources as well as a lack of sufficient local community and governmental support for this issue. In Poland, the matter of women with unwanted pregnancies has gained the continued interest and support of the Child's Ombudsman, the Catholic Church, and pro-life organizations. In contrast, because a majority of Japanese perceive the issue as an "individual matter" – government agencies' or the religious

communities' attention does not affect this issue as much as in Poland – there is no strong motive for members of Japanese society to interfere.

### **3. The crisis of fatherhood and anonymous child relinquishment**

Poland faced a drastic transformation of social structure after the Second World War. According to statistics, in 1950, about 46 percent of women were left without a husband; therefore, women in post-war Poland often had to be both breadwinner and single-parent.<sup>35</sup> Occupational emancipation of women helped to undermine the authority of the father figure and the patriarchal model of a family. In the Stalinist period, the Communist Party based on Marxist-Leninist ideology, propagated the idea of a "new man", who contested all the traditional values of the old generations, including the value and role in a family as a father.<sup>36</sup> Paweł Śpica noticed that the common access to the culture and education in 1960s made a new generation of young people more critical, where children started to "teach" their parents and contest their authority.<sup>37</sup> The father stopped being a teacher to his children, as he started to rely more on the public school system for the education of his children. The same change occurred in Japan, from the private instruction by a father to his children, during the Edo era, to a nationwide system developed in the Meiji era.<sup>38</sup> Żarnowski has ascertained many socio-economic factors that have undermined the role of father in Polish society in the post-war period.<sup>39</sup>

In Japan, the traditional model of a family was also a patriarchal one. However, as time passed, the social changes described and incorrectly understood concepts of 'individualism' challenged the role of a father. Hsu describes a Japanese family as a "Kintract" – the combination of kinship and contract, where father applied the discipline of samurai and Confucian ethics for controlling and ruling; where blood relations were essential.<sup>40</sup> However, a crisis, as in Poland, started in Japan, after the Second World War. The linear and extended family changed to a nuclear family.<sup>41</sup>

Yamazaki stressed that the drastic changes in the father's role in Japan brought the society to a critical turning point, in general, leading to the

disorganization of the family.<sup>42</sup> In this context, the role of the mother became "overloaded" with duties and moral responsibilities previously held by the father, along with her other traditional roles as mother and wife.

Both in Japan and Poland, there is still a stigma about being a single mother. In contrast, the baby's father is neither stigmatized nor punished in any way and is often completely anonymous, although the father bears equal moral responsibility with the mother for their child. In Japan, there are serious legal problems related to rights,<sup>43</sup> inheritance, and family registry of babies born out of wedlock.<sup>44</sup> Some single unmarried mothers feel that they are stigmatized in various ways.<sup>45</sup> The crisis of fatherhood's responsibility for conceived life, the threat of single motherhood's poverty, and an enduring social stigma may significantly contribute to a higher risk of anonymous child relinquishment.

### **4. Social changes and the problem of shame in disclosing family problems**

The experience of shame from unwanted babies born out of wedlock abounds in both in Poland and Japan; however, in the latter, it is even more vivid, because of a very clear border between the "public" and the "private" sphere of certain issues. So-called '*katei mondai*' (family issues) are solely within the purview of a family and should be resolved, especially in the case of unwanted pregnancy, by the woman and man involved. Thus, when a desperate mother cannot find support in her own family or a partner and tries to reach out to her acquaintances and friends, they may remain aloof, unresponsive. Typically, in Japan, a listener outside the family will feel embarrassed to hear of the hardship and may merely say: "It is difficult." or "Discuss it well with your family."<sup>46</sup> Importantly, in Japan there is a strongly held view that a person should not be a burden/trouble/difficulty ('*meiwaku*') to others, but should tackle alone the problems he or she has caused. The main question is whether this strongly held view is a major cause for the suppression of true feelings, isolation and despair.<sup>47</sup> This pattern of social reaction and clear separation of public and private sphere is accepted in Japan, so women under duress and

despair give up trying to disclose their personal problems to anyone. Therefore, the problem of unwanted pregnancies (DV, sexual abuse) often remains solely with the woman.

However, the wall separating the private and the public sphere of a certain problem falls, when human dignity is threatened and violated. If human dignity is violated and we still claim that this is a private matter, we will never escape from a vicious circle; matters are irresolvable when people involved in a problem have ill will or can no longer communicate with one another. If a woman with an unwanted pregnancy seeks help, it is already a public matter ('anonymity' disappears). Although some human matters can be regulated by legal procedures, others must be refined, explored, and resolved through moral argument.

While shifting from collectivistic to individualistic norms, some important points in Japan were missing, such as support from the community for individual failures, mistakes in judgment, and uncontrollable circumstances. There is a commonly spread slogan: 'Only you are responsible for your deeds and mistakes.' However, this view is the result of social change and atomization of the society. People in the community used to be connected and responsible for each other: parents, children, and members of the local community related to each other. However, old norms and values were altered and shifted to individual responsibility for one's own deeds. The atomization of society contributed to the dispersion and weakening of responsibility for the weaker and the weakest members.

Women often abandon their babies primarily because a biological father of a baby, the woman's family, and the local community fail to take responsibility and decline to care for the distressed woman with an unwanted pregnancy. Such women in Japan and Poland reside on the outer borders of their respective society.<sup>48</sup> They abandon their babies in part because they themselves feel abandoned by everyone.

Historically, in Japan, strong social bonds were not limited to a mother and a father, but also included close and distant blood relatives, neighbors, and members of the local communities. They served as 'social support'. Nowadays, people feel guilty and are ashamed to ask for help. People both in Japan and Poland

must pay money for assistance and help, which significantly transforms relationships into 'service provider – client' relations. For women with an unwanted pregnancy, such a lack of voluntary, selfless relationships and emotional support really matters, because their absence increases women's isolation, deepens their despair, and contributes to a higher risk of crimes or anonymous relinquishment.

As we can see, the context underlying unwanted pregnancy and anonymous relinquishment in a baby hatch is very intricate and multifaceted. It is often said that a just society is responsible for its weaker and weakest members. If society does not show solidarity and practical assistance to such mothers and leaves only the passive one (baby hatches), to eliminate the problem, then such a situation is morally unacceptable.

## Conclusion

This paper has discussed controversies surrounding the potential adaptation of the principle of preventing bad occurrences, originally used by Singer in the argument concerning famine relief, in his article, *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, in the context of unwanted pregnancy and harms and benefits of anonymous relinquishment in a baby hatch.

This article also has described the dramatic change in the model of a family and the crisis of fatherhood's responsibility for conceived life, both in Poland and Japan, as the result of an influx of values, following the close of the Second World War. This article has also explained how wrongly perceived individualism has contributed to the atomization of Japanese society and the alienation of its weaker and weakest members, where asking for someone's help with a personal trouble is regarded as something shameful and burdensome. These factors contributed to the fact that women in distress may prefer full anonymity of a baby hatch, so as not to cause trouble to anyone.

The existence of a baby hatch reveals much deeper problems, such as a strong social inequity between the position of a woman and a man in the face of an unwanted pregnancy. Thus, we cannot make a significant change only by the adoption of a noble idea of protecting a baby, by

relinquishing it to a baby hatch, without nuanced and enduring support from the society at the local, regional, and national levels of government. In the case of Japan, only the idea of a baby hatch was imported, but not the structures of social support, traditions, values, and norms that must underpin the baby hatch. A baby hatch without established comprehensive support and education strategies in society, without sufficient human resources and adequate budget will remain only the demonstration of an idea.

This paper concludes that baby hatches already existing in Japan and Poland should be maintained, but, at the same time, responsible authorities of both countries must precisely diagnose what are the real sources of suppression of true feelings, isolation, and despair of a woman with an unwanted pregnancy. There are two major tasks at hand. First, we need revolutionary changes at the pedagogical level. The school systems in Japan and Poland need new strategies of teaching not only so-called ‘sex education’, but also the issues of emotional management in distress, strategies of building mutual help, empathy, and compassion for others’ problems. As well, the ethos of a father as one who, along with the mother, is equally responsible for a conceived life, should be rebuilt and emphasized. Second, the Ministry of Health, responsible also for the mental well-being of citizens, should develop fresh strategies of non-judgmental support for women distressed by an unwanted pregnancy or endangered by the challenges of single motherhood, and assure them that it is not shameful to rely on others, while in desperate need. Support gained from being together can minimize the risk of bad occurrences.

## Endnotes

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- 1 E. Ochiai analyzes many changes of the Japanese family, a shift to a nuclear family. See more in: [4] (1997).
- 2 A father controlled his family and took responsibility in a good and in a bad sense. A daughter’s marriage was arranged, and she had to follow the father’s will. In the case of unwanted pregnancy, a father could force a daughter to leave his household or get rid of the baby.
- 3 See: [4] (1989), p. 237.

- 4 In Japan, there are only 2 %. See: [11] (2017); in Poland, in 2017, every fourth baby was born out of wedlock, in informal relationships (65079 babies). Statistics from 2017. See: [15], p. 281.
- 5 There are women who, from the beginning, psychologically, do not accept or repress the fact they are pregnant. Such women will probably not use a baby hatch, because they do not consider a newborn as a person.
- 6 Singer writes: “if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.” See: [9], p. 231.
- 7 Ibidem.
- 8 Peter Singer is well known for his controversial views on abortion and infanticide.
- 9 Modifications in italics added by the author of this paper.
- 10 See: [9].
- 11 The mechanism of infanticide and its multifaceted context will not be discussed in this paper.
- 12 See: Endnote 9.
- 13 See: [9].
- 14 Unlike during anonymous birth, where is a direct contact with medical personnel (not available both in Poland and Japan).
- 15 See: Endnote 9.
- 16 See: [9].
- 17 Singer mentions that: “By ‘without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance,’ I mean without causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral good, comparable in significance to the bad thing that we can prevent.” See: [9], p. 231.
- 18 Which was discussed in the previous paper. See: [6].
- 19 Don Marquis uses expression: “a category of having a valuable future-like-ours” to defend his argument, why killing is wrong. He writes: “Some parts of my future are not valued by me now, but will come to be valued by me as I grow older and as my values and capacities change. When I am killed, I am deprived both of what I now value which would have been part of my future personal life, but also what I would come to value. Therefore, when I die, I am deprived of all of the value of my future.” See: [3], pp. 189-190. Don Marquis also stresses later in his paper that: “[...] the account of the wrongness of killing defended

- in this essay does straightforwardly entail that it is *prima facie* seriously wrong to kill children and infants, for we do presume that they have futures of values. Since we do believe that it is wrong to kill defenseless little babies, it is important that a theory of the wrongness of killing easily account for this.” See: [3], pp.191-192.
- 20 The point is that we should not compare at the same level the value of present security with a value that could actually be realized someday in the future (A baby will benefit from eventually knowing his or her origins.), which the author mentioned in the previous paper. See: [6].
- 21 Ensuring complete anonymity in giving birth to a child is compromised by the personal contact with other people during the procedure and therefore may not satisfy the desire for complete anonymity some woman may have (anonymous birth not available both in Poland and Japan).
- 22 Even after establishing a baby hatch, there still occur some cases of anonymous abandonment and infanticide, but women are at least given a chance to choose the baby hatch option.
- 23 Abortion in Poland was discussed in previous paper. See: [6]. Abortion due to economic reasons has been available in Japan and until 1973, it could be performed until the 24th week (23w 6d), and from 1990 until the 22nd week (21w 6d). See: [18]
- 24 Various organizations provide assistance. See: [17].
- 25 The privacy of the biological mother was also not protected by this method. A great advantage was that after birth, a newborn baby could go directly from the hospital to the foster family home, without waiting even a day in the public nursing facility. After six months, foster parents could apply to the Family Court for making a special adoption, if biological parents were not against the motion. Then, after the procedure of a special adoption is finished, a baby could be included in the family registry of the adoptive parents. See: [13], pp. 35-38.
- 26 A Japanese “Stork Cradle” (“Kounotori no yurikago”) is not perfectly anonymous. After the October 3, 2014 accident of finding a dead newborn left in a baby hatch, Kumamoto local police strongly recommended putting a surveillance camera in the facility. See: [2], pp. 97-98.
- 27 See: [19].
- 28 See: [16].
- 29 See: [24]. In the e-mail contact form, you have to disclose your e-address, but do not have to disclose your personal information, such as name or address.
- 30 See: [23].
- 31 Between April and November 2017, there were 768 cases of consultation, among them 177 related to “Did I get pregnant?”, 58 related to consultation about abortion, 47 about the intention to relinquish a baby for special adoption, 30 about a money problem, 19 about “I cannot raise a baby”. See: [20].
- 32 However, they had to pay a huge amount of money per year, so they set an NPO. A. See: [2], p. 100.
- 33 See: [21].
- 34 Nevertheless, Ikuko Nagahara, Director of Mana Center, decided to open an interview-style consultation facility “Chiisana inochi no doa” (“A door for a small life”) to support isolated mothers in unwanted pregnancy. Unlike a baby hatch, there is a possibility of direct consultation with vulnerable mothers, while protecting their privacy. All expenses incurred by a mother are covered by that institution. Nagahara recalls the memories of Kazuko Shimo, who was a nurse president in Kumamoto. Shimo, while working there, had an overwhelming feeling that babies are not saved, but simply thrown away. This feeling of treating a baby as an unwanted, useless object was the crucial reason for Ikuko Nagahara to make a better support system. She aimed to make a place where pregnant women can consult with someone on a 24-hour basis, sleep and stay. Nagahara stresses that it is time for society as a whole, to think about the importance of life. See: [25].
- 35 See: [7], pp. 103-104.
- 36 Cf.: [1], pp. 48-49.
- 37 See: [10].
- 38 See: [12], p. 46.
- 39 The crucial factors which influenced a family model were the following: proclaimed equality of women and man (in order to use the women extensively in the labor force); affording them easy access to child care institutions; open access to occupational work for women, stimulating their ambitions and aspirations and undermining the patriarchal model of a family; sexual revolution of the contraceptive pill, changing the perspective of responsibility for family planning. See: [14].
- 40 See: [12], p. 49.
- 41 Ibidem.
- 42 See: [12], p. 51.

- 43 See: [8].  
 44 See: [5].  
 45 Their social and economic hardships are often portrayed in TV programs and newspaper articles. Financial aid offered to single mothers in both countries is very minimal and insufficient in meeting the needs of the single-parent family. In particular, higher education in Japan is very expensive; thus, single mothers find it difficult to afford it. Their children also face financial and institutional difficulties. See: [22] (NHK).  
 46 For example, when a wife informed a city ward officer that her husband had an alcohol addiction problem, she could hear a scolding response, "The wife's role is to support her husband." See: [22] (NHK, Heart Net TV).  
 47 In Poland, people are more accustomed to complaining out loud about their hardships, just to receive words of understanding and gain emotional support.  
 48 In Japan, there are many examples of people who have "dropped out" of society and continue to be forgotten by their communities: children with school refusal, sufferers of bullying, *hikikomori* (included in "80-50" problem), housewives bringing up babies (*hikikomori ikuji*) etc.

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