

Intergenerational Relationships of Japanese Seniors: Changes during the 20th Century and Recent Patterns

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During the last 50 years, Japan has experienced drastic social changes. As the results of changes, lives of the today’s Japanese are more Westernized than used to. Family life of Japanese seniors has also drastically changed and still changing.

The ideal way of family life formally dictated in Japan before the end of World War II is known as *ie* (lineage) ideology. Typically, seniors lived with the successor’s nuclear family within the same household, and were given every kind of support by the successor and his wife. For the successor, co-residing and sharing all assets with elderly parents were legal, as well as moral, obligations. Further, providing support to elderly parents was an actualization of filial piety.

After World War II, as a part of the democratization of Japan, the *ie* ideology was officially renounced, and the conception of *ie* was completely removed from the constitution and civil law. During several decades after the war, the Japanese people changed their attitudes toward *ie* ideology and intergenerational relationships. For most of the today’s Japanese, filial piety and the conception of *ie* sound somehow old-fashioned, feudalistic, and irrelevant to their everyday lives.


Today, about a half of Japanese seniors are co-residing with their adult children in the same household. Although the percentage is still high compared with other developed countries, co-residence is no longer a normative way of living and not uniform. A detailed survey on social relationships of seniors clearly showed that co-residence had significant negative effects on emotional closeness with children though it significantly enhanced exchanges of instrumental support. Further, co-residence with a married son is likely to bring harmful interactions with daughters-in-law living together, characterized by frequent exchanges of instrumental support without emotional closeness. Including choices for co-residence, in Japan, intergenerational relationships between elderly

parents and their adult children become more affection-based, convenience-oriented, irrelevant to the ie ideology, and free from the norm of filial piety than they used to be. Old-age pension stimulated the changes in family life of Japanese seniors through reducing the necessity of financial support. The new universalistic system of long-term care services introduced in 2000 seems to stimulate further and complete the changes began in the 1960s also through reducing the importance and necessity of instrumental support.

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Ideal Ways of Family Life

Early Half of the 20th Century

Meaning of ie



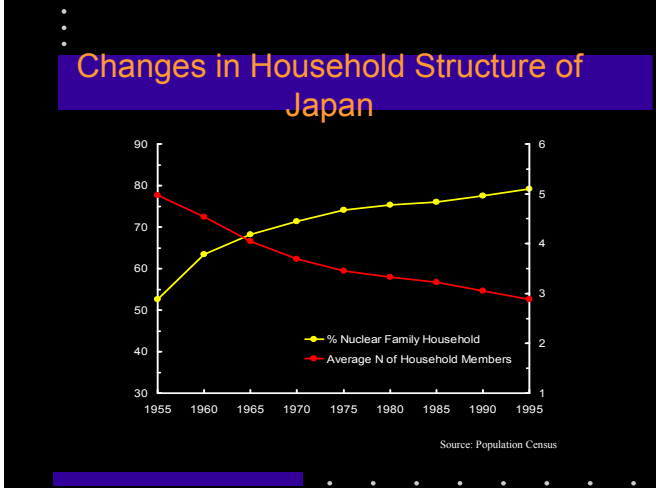
- Family
- Lineage**
- Home
- House
- In-group

Components of ie Ideology

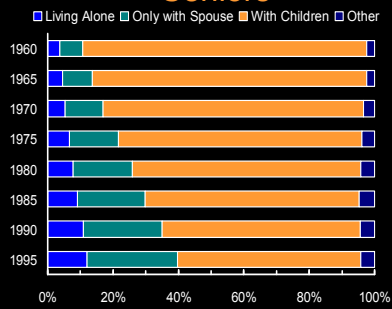
- Lineage**
 - Succession
 - By Eldest Son or Adopted Son
 - Family Name, Assets of Lineage, Tomb
 - Occupation / Social Status
 - Marriage for the Lineage
 - Ancestor Worship
- Paternalism**
 - Predominance of Household Head (Father)
 - Obedience of Family Members (Children) - **Filial Piety**

Changes

Latter Half of the 20th Century



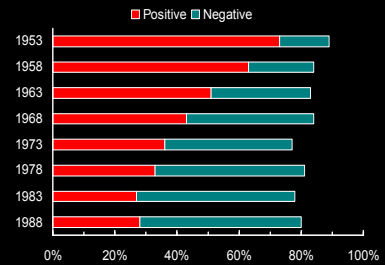
Changes in Living Arrangement of Seniors



Source: Population Census

Changes in Attitudes toward *Ie* Ideology

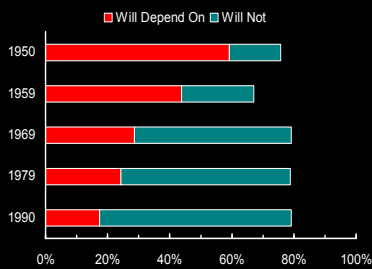
(a) Adoption of Successor



Source: Matsunari (1991)

Changes in Attitudes toward *Ie* Ideology

(b) Dependence on a Child in Old Age

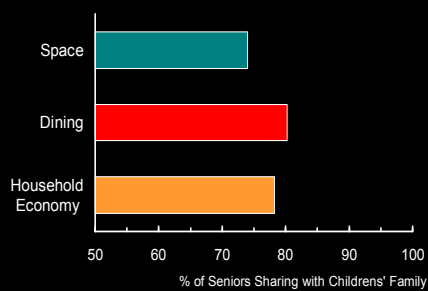


Source: Matsunari (1991)

Recent Patterns

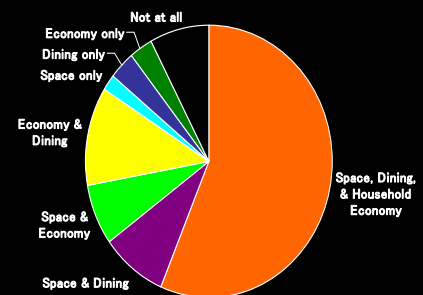
(1) Variety of Co-residence

Share of Living in the Co-residing Households



Source: Nishimura, et al. (2000)

Patterns of the Share of Living



Source: Nishimura, et al. (2000)

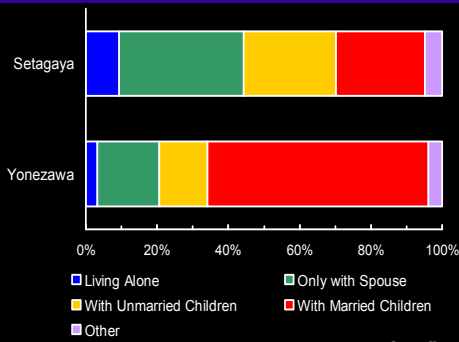
Recent Patterns

(2) Everyday Interactions

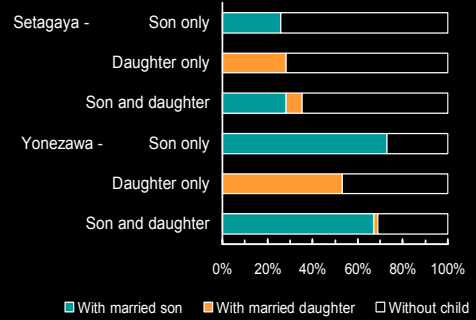
Two Study Areas



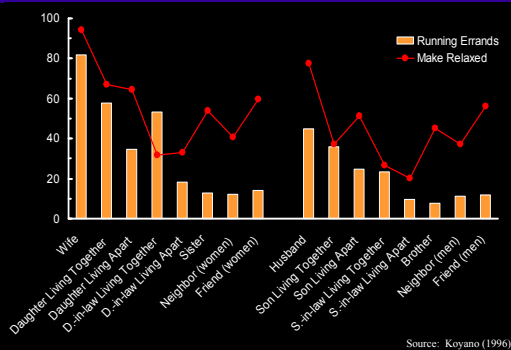
Living Arrangement of Seniors



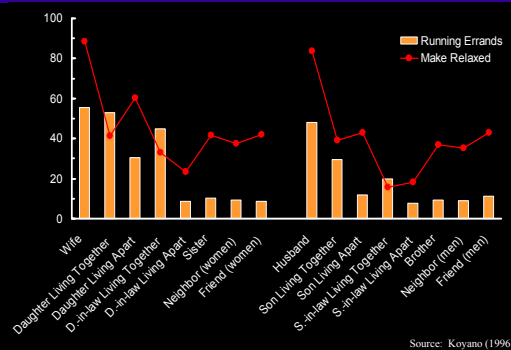
Gender-composition of Children and Co-residence



Interactions with Others (Setagaya)



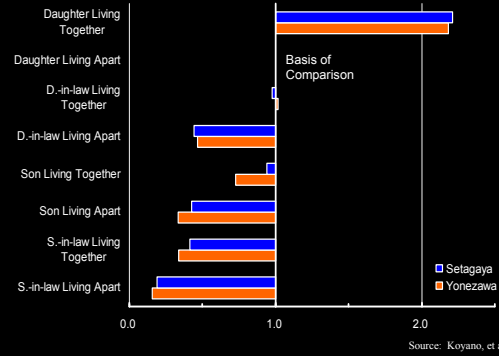
Interactions with Others (Yonezawa)



Odds Ratios by Relation, Gender, and Geographical Distance of Children or Children-in-Law (Make Beloved)



Odds Ratios by Relation, Gender, and Geographical Distance of Children or Children-in-Law (Running Errands)



The Meaning of Change

Meaning of *Fuyo*

扶養 Support

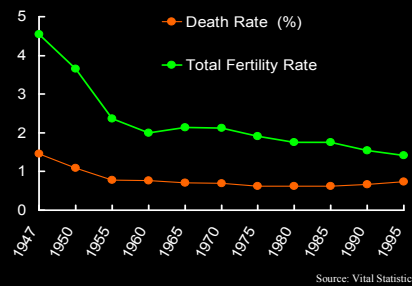
Mainly Instrumental Support
(Financial Aid and Caregiving)

Reduced Importance of *Fuyo*

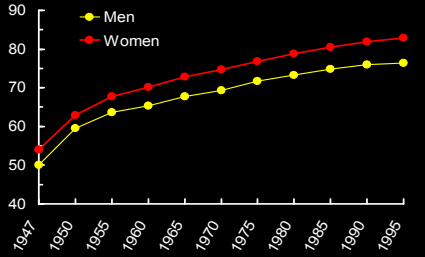
Financial Aid ← Old Age Pension became effective and visible in the 1960s

Caregiving ← Insurance Against Care came into force in April, 2000

Changes in Death Rate and Fertility

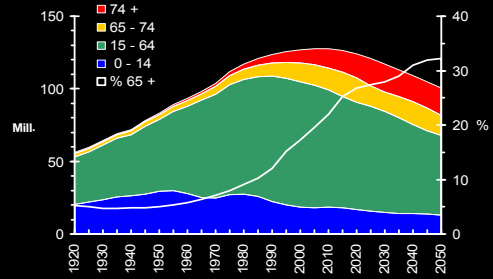


Changes in Life Expectancy at Birth



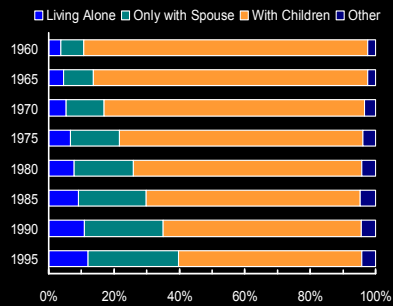
Source: Complete Life Table.

Aging of the Japanese Population



Source: Population Census and 1997 Population Projection

Changes in Living Arrangement of Seniors



Source: Population Census

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